

Mariette, Sara's personal maid, enters.

Mariette: Sara, a new dress has arrived from your dear Papa, but I think it will need altering. He has not realised how quickly you are growing!

Sara: Mariette, who is the little girl who cleans in here? She seems so young and thin to be doing such hard work.

Mariette: Ah, that is Becky, Miss Sara. She is a scullery maid. She is worked so hard, poor little thing.

Erm: What does she have to do?

Mariette: What *doesn't* she have to do you mean! She blacks boots and grates. She carries heavy coal scuttles up and down stairs. She scrubs floors, and cleans all the windows...

Lottie: ALL the windows, but there must be about a thousand windows in this school.

Mariette: *(laughs)* Well not quite, but there are a LOT of windows.

Erm: How old is she? She doesn't look any older than we are.

Mariette: She is actually 14 years old, but she is so thin that she looks much younger. I don't think she is fed much. I try and give her some little treats whenever I can, as long as Miss Minchin or Cook doesn't catch me.

Sara: Poor Becky. We are lucky that we do not have to live a life like that.

Mariette: Ah Miss Sara, you will never have to do what Becky does. I feel so sorry for her. Everyone is always ordering her about – Becky do this...Becky run and do that... and frequently I hear cook shouting at her, which is generally followed by a beating.

Sara: Surely that is not allowed?

Mariette: If only that were true. There is no-one to look after anyone who becomes an orphan. These young children are either thrown into the workhouse, or they beg on the streets, or they end up working in a place like this. I expect Becky feels she is one of the lucky ones.

Lottie: LUCKY! O my. Where does she sleep?

Mariette: In one of the attics right at the top of the building.

Erm Oh I've seen those stairs. One day when I was escaping from Lavinia and her taunts, I ran off to hide and found myself at the bottom of these really creepy stairs. Miss Amelia found me and told me never to go there again, unless I wanted to meet rats and mice andUGH!!

Mariette: Yes, I'm afraid that is where Becky lives.