

THE GIRLS ARE BACK IN TOWN

by

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Characters

Constance (Lady Constance Bulwer-Lytton)	<i>Any age</i>
Emmeline (Emmeline Pankhurst)	<i>Any age</i>
Mary (Mary Richardson)	<i>Any age</i>
Emily (Emily Davison)	<i>Any age</i>
Waiter	<i>Any age</i>
Hope	<i>Twenty Four</i>
Alan	<i>Late teens/early twenties</i>
Beatrice	<i>Late teens/early twenties</i>
Edward	<i>Late teens/early twenties</i>
Sergeant	<i>Any age</i>
Private Priestley	<i>Twenty-one</i>
Louise	<i>Early thirties</i>

There are a number of different locations in the play which it is envisaged would be achieved by simple staging i.e. through different lighting states and minimal props not through elaborate scene changes.

SCENE 1

A RESTAURANT IN LONDON IN 2017 WITH A TABLE SET FOR FIVE. ENTER LADY CONSTANCE BULWER-LYTTON, EMILY DAVISON, MARY RICHARDSON AND EMMELINE PANKHURST.

CONSTANCE: Five?

EMMELINE: One of the “moderns” is joining us.

CONSTANCE: Yuk.

EMMELINE: (INTERRUPTING) This one’s OK. She’s our new intern. We’re trying her out.

MARY: She’s a beginner?

EMILY: A first timer?

EMMELINE: She’s got potential.

CONSTANCE: She’s done nothing for The Cause...

MARY: For the sisterhood.

EMILY: For us.

EMMELINE: Give her time.

MARY: What’s her name?

EMMELINE: Hope.

CONSTANCE: That why you chose her? The name?

EMMELINE: We had hundreds of candidates. She was the best.

EMILY: How old?

EMMELINE: Twenty four.

MARY: (SCORNFUL) Twenty four!

CONSTANCE: We’d done it all by then...

MARY: We weren't just starting out.

EMILY: She's late. I need a drink. (LOOKING AT WINE LIST)
The Two Thousand and Seven Chablis Premier Cru
everyone?

EMMELINE: Fine with me.

MARY: I'm on a budget.

CONSTANCE: You're Canadian. Waiter!

ENTER WAITER.

The Two Thousand and Seven Chablis Premier Cru.

WAITER: Are you ready to order?

CONSTANCE: We're waiting for one.

WAITER: Thank you.

EXIT WAITER.

EMILY: (GAZING LONGINGLY AFTER WAITER) He's nice...

MARY: He's gay...

EMILY: How do you know?

MARY: Trust me. He's gay...

CONSTANCE: (TO EMMELINE) If she's not here soon we'll order and
start without her. I'm starving...

EMILY: What are we going to talk to her about?

EMMELINE: The usual. Mary, can you to start chatting to her? Make
her feel welcome. You know the drill. You were around
longer than us. You're more in tune with the moderns.

MARY: Why's it always me that has to break the ice? A lot's
changed since 1961!

EMILY: I couldn't possibly do it. 1913 was ages ago. I'm the most out of touch of all of us.

MARY: You only died in 1913 because you couldn't get out of the way of that damn horse!

EMILY: Don't you dare say that to me!

MARY: Emily we all know you didn't *mean* to run in front of that horse. You only meant to put some stupid banner round its neck!

EMMELINE: (TO MARY) Leave her alone. You know what her being killed by the King's horse did for us.

MARY: Upset the public and alienated them against us?

EMMELINE: Don't start...

MARY: I'm just saying that she's a martyr by accident. She never meant to commit suicide. I should know, I was the one with her at Epsom. I was the one who got chased and beaten by the mob. I was the one who had to be hidden by a railway porter at Epsom Downs Station. He saved my life.

CONSTANCE: I hope you appreciated it.

MARY: I showed him my gratitude.

EMILY: That wasn't all I did for The Cause. You forget Mary. Everyone forgets. They all forget I was jailed nine times and force fed on forty nine occasions. You slashed one painting, issued a press statement and became an overnight sensation.

MARY: I rioted. I burnt things.

EMMELINE: Let's not argue about what we did for The Cause. We all did our bit.

CONSTANCE: It was easier for some of us.

EMMELINE: Meaning?

CONSTANCE: We didn't all have a supportive lawyer husband in tow.

EMMELINE: He died when I was forty.

CONSTANCE: You had a husband. You had children. I had nothing. I wasn't allowed to marry.

EMMELINE: Don't have a go at me. I got us the vote.

MARY: You got us the vote all right. But only because you sold out. You stopped us protesting. You stopped our militancy. You made us support the war effort. We got the vote. We got it alright. We got it like a patronising pat on the head for being "good girls" and "playing the game"...

RE-ENTER WAITER WITH WINE.

WAITER: Is everything alright?

EMILY: Fine. Just leave the wine. Everything's fine. We'll pour it.

EXIT WAITER.

(POURS WINE FOR EVERYONE) Let's not argue. Let's have a good night out.

HOPE ENTERS AS EMILY IS POURING THE WINE.

HOPE: Hello. Sorry I'm late. Problems on the District Line. Couldn't get a signal to text you.

EMMELINE AND HOPE KISS.

EMMELINE: Good to see you again. (TO OTHERS) This is Hope. Hope, this is Lady Constance Bulwer-Lytton. Call her Constance. Emily Davison and Mary Richardson.

HOPE: Amazing to meet you all. Read so much about you. Wow. I'm meeting icons!!

CONSTANCE: Never mind all that. Just read the menu and choose something. We're ready to order. We've been waiting for you.

EMMELINE: She's hungry.

EMILY: We all are.

MARY: Don't mind them, Hope. Come and sit next to me.

HOPE SITS NEXT TO MARY. THE WAITER RE-ENTERS TO TAKE THE ORDERS.

CONSTANCE: Crab Cakes and Rack of Lamb.

MARY: Smoked Salmon and Ribeye Steak. Medium rare.

EMMELINE: No starter. Moules Frites.

HOPE: Niçoise Salad and Sole Véronique. Thanks.

CONSTANCE: I see we like fish.

EMILY: Crab Cakes and the Pork.

THE WAITER COLLECTS THE MENUS AND EXITS.

EMILY: (TO HOPE) Think he's nice?

HOPE: Very.

EMILY: Mary thinks he's gay...

MARY: I *know* he's gay...

EMMELINE: Girls! We're here for Hope. (BEAT) Mary...

MARY: (TO HOPE) We think you can help us.

HOPE: I'm flattered.

CONSTANCE: You should be.

EMMELINE: Constance. Drink your wine and be nice.

MARY: We got back together in the early sixties to give the Woman's Movement, Feminism – whatever you want to call it - we call it The Cause - a helping hand. We thought it needed a final push. We'd all done our bit individually in our day...

EMILY: (INTERRUPTING) Some more than others...

MARY: We thought we'd come back to finish what we started.

HOPE: How did you...?

EMMELINE: Come back?

HOPE: Yeah...

MARY: Long story...

EMILY: For another day...

CONSTANCE: Tell her now.

MARY: Fuck off Constance.

CONSTANCE: Don't you *dare* speak to me like that...

EMMELINE: (SHOUTING) Stop it! Both of you. Stop it! (BEAT) Back in the sixties. When we came back. We set up this training scheme. Handpicked the trainees, trained them up and set them off...

MARY: Things were a bit slow at first. Probably our fault.

EMILY: We did have *some* success...

CONSTANCE: If you count Barbara Castle as a success...

EMILY: First female Minister of State. I'd count that as a success!

EMMELINE: *And* that girl who led the 1968 Dagenham Ford car factory strike. What was her name...?

EMILY: She was one of ours.

MARY: Wonder what happened to her?

CONSTANCE: Probably got married and had babies...

EMILY: We had *several* girls throwing flour bombs and smoke bombs at the 1970 Miss World Competition.

EMMELINE: Things really took off after that. We had lots of success with all sorts of people...

MARY: Then we took a long break...

EMILY: Looked in to check on things in 2016...

CONSTANCE: Didn't like what we saw...

MARY: So now we're back...

EMMELINE: Recruiting again...

EMILY: And you're our first recruit...

THE WAITER RE-ENTERS WITH THE STARTERS AND HANDS THEM OUT.

CONSTANCE: (TO WAITER) More wine.

THE WAITER EXITS.

EMMELINE: (TO HOPE) We're going to set you a little task. A test. Should be easy for someone with your marketing background. Do you know anything about theatre?

HOPE: I saw a J B Priestly play last month. Time and The Conways. Loved it.

MARY: We were thinking more of "new writing".

HOPE: When you say "new writing"...??

MARY: Plays written by new writers.

HOPE: I like "Top Girls".

CONSTANCE: That's hardly new writing dear. That was first performed in 1982.

EMMELINE: Caryl Churchill *is* new writing. She defines the term.

THE WAITER RE-ENTERS WITH THE WINE.

CONSTANCE: (TO WAITER) My friend fancies you.

EMILY: (EMBARRASSED) Constance!

WAITER: Your friend is very attractive.

CONSTANCE: And I'm not...?

WAITER: You are all very attractive. But I know who you all are. Apart from this young lady... (LOOKS AT HOPE)

CONSTANCE: Hands off her!

THE WAITER SHRUGS AND EXITS.

EMMELINE: (GLARING AT CONSTANCE) As I was saying (TURNING TO HOPE) we have a small task for you. Something to test your potential. The brief is here. (HANDS A FOLDER TO HOPE) It's all about getting more plays written by women on in UK theatres. The current rate is something ridiculous like seventeen per cent. Do this well and we'll give you a really *big* task. Read it tomorrow and contact me if you have any questions. (BEAT) That's enough of that. Let's have some fun!

CONSTANCE: At last! I thought we were never going to get to that bit. Waiter!!

SCENE 2

A FEW MONTHS LATER. SAME SETTING AS FOR SCENE 1 – A RESTAURANT WITH A TABLE SET FOR FIVE. LADY CONSTANCE BULWER-LYTTON, EMILY DAVISON, MARY RICHARDSON AND EMMELINE PANKHURST ARE SEATED AT THE TABLE.

CONSTANCE: She's late. She was late last time as well.

EMMELINE: She'll be here.

CONSTANCE: (TO EMMELINE) Are you really going to make us go to Edinburgh on the fucking night coach?

EMMELINE: It's either that or miss the Festival altogether...

CONSTANCE: I don't want to do that. I want to go to the Festival. But the night coach!!

MARY: It *is* pretty grim.

EMILY: Last time I got a coach to Edinburgh some dreadful fat man sat next to me with his legs wide open. He took up about two thirds of my seat as well as his own seat.

CONSTANCE: Last time I got a coach to Edinburgh the man next to me tried to put his hand up my skirt.

EMILY: What did you do?

CONSTANCE: Stabbed him with my biro.

EMMELINE: That sort of thing would only ever happen to you Constance.

MARY: Can't we afford to go by train or fly?

EMILY: If we can afford to eat in expensive restaurants like this, we should be able to afford plane tickets to Edinburgh.

EMMELINE: You know we don't pay for this. You know what the arrangement is.

EMILY: Can't we have the same arrangement with the airline or the train company?

EMMELINE: Not possible.

MARY: I might not go this year.

CONSTANCE: What! Not go to Edinburgh!

MARY: It's not what it was. Too many stand-up comedians.

CONSTANCE: It's still fun though.

MARY: Suppose so...

ENTER WAITER WITH WINE LIST.

WAITER: The usual?

CONSTANCE: If you knew what my "usual" was you won't ask that!

EMMELINE: The Two Thousand and Seven Chablis Premier Cru please.

.
EXIT WAITER ROLLING HIS EYES AT CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE: That waiter rolled his eyes at me.

MARY: You encouraged him.

CONSTANCE: I did not!

EMMELINE: Ladies! Please! Hope will be here any minute.

EMILY: How did she do?

EMMELINE: That's what we're here to find out. She passed her test with flying colours – now we'll going to find out how she did with the main event.

CONSTANCE: What's the point? Feminism is dead!

EMILY: Don't you dare say that. After all we've been through!

EMMELINE: How could you Constance?

CONSTANCE: Hold on. Hold on. I'm being nice. I'm paying you all a compliment.

MARY: It didn't sound like one.

CONSTANCE: I'm just saying that it's over because we won. We've got everything we started out to get and more...

EMILY: What exactly have we got?

CONSTANCE: The vote. Equal pay. Autonomy over our bodies.

EMMELINE: We've won some important battles. The war continues. That's why we've come back.

EMILY: The Cause can never end.

EMMELINE: I hope it will. One day. When we've got *everything*.

CONSTANCE: What more do you want? Some sort of feminist Utopia?

EMMELINE:: Why not...

CONSTANCE: Good luck with that. You can try for it without me.

EMMELINE: Wait Constance. Wait till Hope gets here. If she's done her bit we'll have funds.

CONSTANCE: Funds?

EMILY: Ammunition...

MARY: Wherewithal...

EMMELINE: To finish what we started.

EMILY: All those years ago.

CONSTANCE: I don't understand...

EMILY: We discussed it.

CONSTANCE: Not with me you didn't.

MARY: You were busy.

EMMELINE: It's a new campaign...

EMILY: To get total power...,

MARY: For women...

EMMELINE: *All women...*

EMILY: *All over the world...*

ENTER HOPE.

HOPE: Sorry. Don't think the District Line likes me.

RE-ENTER WAITER WITH THE WINE.

Perhaps we could have some champagne? We're celebrating!

THE WAITER LOOKS AT EMMELINE FOR GUIDANCE.

EMMELINE: (NODS TO WAITER) The best.

WAITER: On the house.

EXIT WAITER.

MARY: (TO HOPE) Thought everything was on the house here.

EMMELINE: It is.

EMILY: Wish he was.

EMMELINE: You sold it?

HOPE NODS EXCITEDLY.

How much?

HOPE: Fifty Five million.

EMMELINE: Pounds?

HOPE: Of course.

EMILY: You sold the Constable painting for *how much!*?

MARY: Who bought it?

HOPE: A Russian.

CONSTANCE: You sold a Constable to a Russian for Fifty Five million pounds?!!

HOPE: I wanted Sixty...

CONSTANCE: Which one?

HOPE: Russian or painting?

EMILY: I think Constance means which Constable painting...

HOPE: The Cornfield.

CONSTANCE: How *could you* possibly...

HOPE: Contacts.

EMMELINE: Hope is incredibly well connected – we did our research on her before we took her on.

CONSTANCE: The Cornfield's hanging in the National Gallery. Or it was last time I looked. How the fuck could she sell that?

EMMELINE: The painting in the National Gallery is a fake. It's been a fake since 1918.

CONSTANCE: I don't care how you got the money (BEAT) we don't need it!

HOPE: What!?

CONSTANCE: Feminism is dead. Women have got everything they want. We don't need to spend Fifty Five million on it!

HOPE: You're joking...

EMMELINE: Of course she is. You are aren't you Constance?

CONSTANCE: What's this new project? This worldwide thing you were talking about?

EMMELINE: Project Maelstrom.

EMILY: We're going to enter the maelstrom.

CONSTANCE: Of what?

MARY: The meeting point of politics, religion and power.

CONSTANCE: What?!

EMILY: We're going to control the oil.

EMMELINE: To get worldwide equality for women, we'll need power. To get power, we'll need to control the oil.

CONSTANCE: You're not going to control much oil with fifty five million. Fifty five billion would barely scratch the surface!

THE WAITER RE-ENTERS WITH THE CHAMPAGNE.

EMILY: (TO WAITER) Thank you. We'll pour.

THE WAITER EXITS.

EMMELINE: Fifty five million is a starting point. It will buy us a base. Fund some training. Get us started. Get us started on our long term mission to get our team into positions of power in different companies and organisations all over the world. It may take a while but we'll get there. One day. (BEAT) A toast. (EMMELINE POURS OUT THE CHAMPAGNE AND THEY ALL RAISE THEIR GLASSES) To the person who made Project Maelstrom possible. To Beatrice, the station painter.

CONSTANCE: Who?

EMMELINE: You must remember her! She was one of our first ever interns. She stole the Constable for us! It was stored in a crate on a disused underground station platform in the first world war! She was meant to give us the painting to sell...

CONSTANCE: What happened?

EMMELINE: Beatrice hid the painting and took off to France to try and find her boyfriend the day after she stole the painting. He was a soldier who'd gone missing in action.

MARY: How did she get over to France while the war was on?

EMMELINE: She disguised herself as a man, joined the army and went out to try and find him. She fought on the Western Front.

EMILY: I'd forgotten that.

EMMELINE: She went missing in action as well. There's no record of what ever happened to either of them.

MARY: You had the painting though...

EMMELINE: She never told us where she'd hidden it. It stayed hidden for over a hundred years...

EMILY: Until Hope found it...

EMMELINE: And sold it for us! (RAISING HER GLASS IN A TOAST)
Here's to Beatrice (BEAT) and Hope!

THEY RAISE THEIR GLASSES IN A TOAST TO
BEATRICE AND HOPE.

You alright Constance? You've hardly touched your drink.

CONSTANCE: I was thinking about that woman. Beatrice, the station painter. Disguising herself as a man and going off to fight on the Western Front. That was brave.

EMMELINE: What you put yourself through was braver.

CONSTANCE: Count me in on Project Maelstrom. You're right. We've done OK for women in this country but there *are* other battles to fight, other wars to win for women all over the world. It might take years to achieve anything but if we start training people now – who knows? If we can place them in the right organisations – in the right companies – they might work their way to the top - maybe we *can* get control of the oil – or some of it – let's give it a go.

HOPE: I'm so pleased everyone is so happy. Let's order? I'm starving.

CONSTANCE: Waiter!

SCENE 3

THE STRAND UNDERGROUND STATION¹, LONDON IN 1914. BEATRICE, DRESSED IN PAINT SPLATTERED DUNGAREES, AND ALAN STAND ON THE PLATFORM. BEATRICE IS READING A LITERARY MAGAZINE CALLED "THE EGOIST". SOME ANNOUNCEMENTS PLAY OVER THE TANNOY.

TANNOY ANNOUCEMENT 1: Women have a much better time than men in this world; there are far more things forbidden to them.²

TANNOY ANNOUCEMENT 2: By the next war, the message will have got through. There will never be another war.³

TANNOY ANNOUCEMENT 3: Things will always be forbidden to women.

TANNOY ANNOUCEMENT 4: There will always be wars.

ALAN: (WORKING CLASS/EAST END ACCENT) Could you hear any of that?

BEATRICE: (WORKING CLASS/EAST END ACCENT) Not very well. Something about the trains being delayed.

ALAN: Thought we'd been waiting for ages.

BEATRICE RETURNS TO READING HER MAGAZINE. ALAN DESPERATELY TRIES TO THINK OF SOMETHING TO SAY, TO KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.

Never seen a woman in dungarees before.

BEATRICE : You'll see a lot more soon.

ALAN LOOKS SURPRISED.

Women will soon be doing all the jobs men used to do.

¹ The Strand was renamed The Aldwych in 1915.

² Oscar Wilde.

³ Susan Hill.

ALAN: Cos of the war?

BEATRICE: Yeah.

ALAN: It won't last long.

BEATRICE: That's all right then.

ALAN: What's your job?

BEATRICE: I paint underground stations.

ALAN: This one could do with a fresh coat of paint.

BEATRICE: (TRYING TO READ HER MAGAZINE) Doing it next week. Before they bring the pictures.

ALAN: What pictures?

BEATRICE: The pictures from the National Gallery. They're gonna store them on one of the disused platforms. 'Til the war ends.

ALAN: Why?

BEATRICE: So they don't get bombed!

ALAN: Not much chance of that...

BEATRICE: You sure? London's the main target. People are so scared of getting bombed they come down here at night to shelter!

ALAN: It's just an excuse.

BEATRICE: For what?

ALAN: Canoodling.

BEATRICE: Canoodling!

ALAN: Yeah.

BEATRICE: You think people come down here at night to canoodle (BEAT) not 'cos they're scared of being bombed or burnt to death by the Zeppelins!?

ALAN: Yeah.

BEATRICE: (SIGHING) The Government agree with you...

ALAN: (PLEASED WITH HIMSELF) Do they?

BEATRICE: They think sheltering on The Tube at night will encourage "improper and immoral behaviour by the working classes" (ALAN LOOKS CONFUSED) They think it will encourage canoodling.

ALAN: What were you before you painted stations?

BEATRICE: A kitchen maid.

ALAN: You don't sound like a kitchen maid.

BEATRICE: Meaning kitchen maids are stupid?

ALAN: I didn't mean that. You like painting stations?

BEATRICE: I love it. I hated being a kitchen maid.

ALAN: You one of those suffragettes?

BEATRICE: Trying to be one.

ALAN: You seem more like a man than a woman in those dungarees...

BEATRICE: I can assure you I'm all woman! It's just that some days I feel more like a man. Other days more like a woman. I can't really explain it properly. Maybe that's what being a suffragette is all about...

ALAN: I thought it was about hurting horses and smashing up pictures that people like looking at!

BEATRICE: They're protests. To get attention!

ALAN: There must be other stuff you can do? That sort of thing doesn't make you popular.

BEATRICE: We're not trying to be popular. We're trying to achieve things!

ALAN: I don't think it's working...

BEATRICE: We do other stuff. My friend did the census protest. That was a peaceful protest! She spent all night away from home on census night...

ALAN: Can't see the point...

BEATRICE: She walked around Trafalgar Square at midnight with all the other suffragettes...

ALAN: Waste of time.

BEATRICE: You wouldn't understand. There were concerts, shows and poetry readings. All organised and performed by women!

ALAN: I wouldn't want to see a show put on by a woman!

BEATRICE: A vegetarian restaurant in Covent Garden stayed open all night so the women could eat! My friend said it was amazing. She said it was the best thing she'd ever done!

ALAN: (SCORNFUL) A vegetarian restaurant!

BEATRICE: We've stopped all the protests while the war is on.

ALAN: Pleased to hear it. You don't want to be force fed.

BEATRICE: You know about that?

ALAN: Read it in the paper.

BEATRICE: They're doing terrible things to suffragettes in prison. Men are doing terrible things to women!

ALAN: I've not done anything...

BEATRICE: (CALMING DOWN) I didn't say you had (SMILING RUEFULLY) but until men's attitudes change nothing will ever change...

ALAN: My Dad wouldn't like talk like that...

BEATRICE: I'm glad you're not your Dad!

ALAN: I'm glad you've stopped the protests.

BEATRICE: If we support our country during the war, they've got to give us the vote.

ALAN: What you reading?

BEATRICE: The Egoist. They're serialising "A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man".

ALAN: Never heard of it. Is it a good read?

BEATRICE: Very good.

ALAN: Is it a penny dreadful?

BEATRICE: A lot of people say it's dreadful. I like it though. It'll cost a lot more than a penny, if it ever gets published as a book.

ALAN: How much you reckon it'll cost?

BEATRICE: Four or five shillings.

ALAN: For a novel! That outrageous!! What's it about?

BEATRICE: It's about a young man in Ireland who challenges all the things he's been brought up to believe in.

ALAN: Who wrote it?

BEATRICE: Someone called James Joyce. I think he'll be famous one day.

ALAN: No chance with a plot like that!

BEATRICE: What's your name?

ALAN: Alan.

BEATRICE: I'm Beatrice.

ALAN: Nice name.

BEATRICE: What's your job, Alan?

ALAN: Tailor's apprentice. Not for much longer though. I'm off to fight. I volunteered.

BEATRICE: Why?

ALAN: Everyone's doing it.

BEATRICE: You're mad...

ALAN: Mad to want to fight for my country?!

BEATRICE: What's your country ever done for you?

ALAN: You can't say things like that!

BEATRICE: I just did...

AS ALAN IS SPEAKING A TRAIN ARRIVES. THE NOISE OF THE TRAIN PREVENTS BEATRICE FROM HEARING WHAT ALAN SAID.

ALAN: Could I call on you one day?

BEATRICE: What did you say?

ALAN: Nothing. Nothing...

BEATRICE: This your train?

ALAN: Next one's mine.

BEATRICE: (GETTING ON TRAIN) Nice to have met you Alan.

BEATRICE WAVES TO ALAN AS HER TRAIN LEAVES.

SCENE 4

A PUB IN LONDON IN 1914. ALAN AND HIS MATE EDWARD SIT DRINKING PINTS OF BEER. THEY ARE BOTH A BIT DRUNK.

EDWARD: (WORKING CLASS/EAST END ACCENT) It's my right. Not just *my* right. It's the right of every working man in this country to have his daily pint. Not just one pint, *several* daily pints. We can't let DORA take that away!

ALAN: Bloody price increases. This pint cost me a fortune.

EDWARD: Bloody Government.

ALAN: Bloody Asquith.

EDWARD: He's trying to change the drinking culture of the British working man!

ALAN: My Dad says he won't survive the war. Says he's not a "war leader".

EDWARD: Anyone who cuts pub opening hours and gets the beer watered down deserves to get kicked out. This beer is rubbish. It used to be a really nice pint. (SIGHS) Want another?

ALAN: DORA says we can't buy rounds. We've got to buy our own beer.

EDWARD: Ruddy DORA. Forgotten what it stands for...

ALAN: Defence of the Realm Act.

EDWARD: Ruddy Defence of the Realm Act. It's an attack on the rights of the working man, disguised as something to help the war effort.

ALAN: Careful what you say. Don't say anything in public that can be construed as undermining the war effort.

EDWARD: Get you! "Construed", "Undermining". That's posh talk for an east end boy.

ALAN: It's Beatrice's fault. She talks like that.

EDWARD: (SURPRISED) You still seeing that station painter?

ALAN: Yeah.

EDWARD: Didn't think you two would last.

ALAN: Why not?

EDWARD: She's not your type.

ALAN: Meaning?

EDWARD: She's too strong-willed for you.

ALAN: She says pubs are evil...

EDWARD: Evil?

ALAN: She says men get drunk in pubs then go home and beat up their wives...

EDWARD: You need to stop seeing that one!

ALAN: (LOOKING AROUND THE PUB) She may have a point!
(BEAT) Can I ask you something? I need some advice.
About Beatrice.

EDWARD: About you know what?

ALAN: No. Not about that! About where to take her out.

EDWARD: Thought you'd already taken her out.

ALAN: We've been for a couple of walks to Regent's Park and I've taken her to an art gallery. She likes that sort of thing. I've called at her house. Her mother's got very old fashioned views about courting.

EDWARD: Courting! This is Nineteen Fourteen! People go on dates these days. You don't call on women anymore! You take them out on dates!

ALAN: I know. I know what I *should* be doing. Where would you take her if it was you taking her out?

EDWARD: From what you've said about Beatrice. I'd take her to a dancehall. She sounds like she'd love that.

ALAN: She probably would. Don't you think that might be a bit too... too... much on a first proper date?

EDWARD: Where are you thinking of going?

ALAN: A teashop?

EDWARD: You've got a lot to learn. Take her to see a moving picture.

ALAN: The cinema?

EDWARD: Take her to the Angel Picture Palace. Get her in the back row and Bob's your uncle!

ALAN: I could. Actually that's a really good idea. Not the back row though...

EDWARD: Your choice.

THERE IS A BRIEF PAUSE WHILST ALAN AND EDWARD SUP THEIR PINTS OF BEER.

ALAN: (POINTING AT A NEWSPAPER ON THE TABLE) Did you read about that speech that American woman gave yesterday?

EDWARD: What American woman?

ALAN: The one all the fuss is about. (LOOKING AT PAPER TO FIND NAME) Margaret Sanger. She's over here giving speeches. It says she's a socialist, a feminist and an atheist! My mother calls her "the she-devil". I can't believe what she says in public. (READING ALOUD FROM NEWSPAPER) "The basis of feminism is a woman's right to be an unmarried mother". My mother will go mad if she reads that!

EDWARD: Times are changing.

ALAN: Really?

EDWARD: The war's changing things. Changing the way people think. They're fed up with the church and the government telling them how to behave. More people are starting to think that it's all right to have sex for fun - not just to have babies.

ALAN: You can't say "sex" in public...

EDWARD: I can and I did. This is Nineteen Fourteen. Things are changing. Women are changing. I'm all for it.

ALAN: Never saw you as a women's rights supporter...

EDWARD: I'm all for women's rights if it brings in birth control!

ALAN: How does "birth control" work?

EDWARD: I don't know. But it means women aren't scared about getting pregnant.

ALAN: That's good?

EDWARD: Of course it is! Think about it...

ALAN: Guess it would be...

EDWARD: We need the suffragettes to win.

ALAN: So all women can use birth control?

EDWARD: Yeah.

ALAN: Let's drink to that.

THEY RAISE THEIR GLASSES IN A TOAST.

EDWARD: Here's to the women's movement.

ALAN: And birth control!

BRIEF PAUSE WHILST ALAN AND EDWARD SIT AND REFLECT.

EDWARD: When does your training start?

ALAN: Two weeks. You?

EDWARD: Next month.

ALAN: That's why I'm keen to go out on some proper dates with Beatrice. Before I leave for France.

EDWARD: Having second thoughts about joining up?

ALAN: No. Not really.

EDWARD: You just want the uniform to impress Beatrice and all the other girls. They love a man in uniform - like it says in that song.

ALAN: The Khaki Song?

EDWARD: That's the one.

ALAN: Everyone's volunteering. We'd look like cowards if we didn't.

EDWARD: We've just popping over to France for a bit to whack a few Germans. We'll be back by Christmas. It'll be a laugh. An adventure. I can't wait.

ALAN: Some of the suffragettes are handing out white feathers to men in the street who haven't joined up. It was that Emmeline Pankhurst's idea. Don't want one of those.

EDWARD: One of those pacifist blokes said he'd been given so many he had enough to make a fan.

ALAN: It's not funny Edward. It would humiliating to get given one.

EDWARD: You didn't volunteer not to be called a coward. You volunteered cos you wanted to!

ALAN: It's Beatrice. She keeps telling me I'm being exploited by the "ruling classes".

EDWARD: She should concentrate on women's stuff and leave men's things to men!

ALAN: You're right. Don't know what's the matter with me. It will be an amazing adventure.

A VOICE OFF-STAGE SHOUTS OUT "TIME GENTLEMAN PLEASE!".

EDWARD: I never heard them call last orders. I was gonna get another pint.

ALAN: Too late now. Never mind, we'll have an extra pint tomorrow to make up for it.

EDWARD: Good idea. Let's sing that song.

ALAN: The Khaki Song?

EDWARD: Know the words?

ALAN: Heard it so many times I reckon I know it off by heart.

EDWARD: Me too. Let's give it a go.

THEY STAND UP, LINK ARMS AND START SINGING THE SONG RATHER DRUNKENLY AS THEY EXIT.

THE LIGHTS IN THE PUB ARE SWITCHED OFF. FOR A WHILE THE AUDIENCE CAN HEAR ALAN AND EDWARD SINGING (OFF-STAGE) AS THEY WALK AWAY FROM THE PUB. THE SONG SLOWLY FADES AWAY TO NOTHING AS THEY GET OUT OF HEARING DISTANCE.

“Now, I do feel so proud of you, I do honour bright.
I'm going to give you an extra cuddle tonight.
I didn't like yer much before yer join'd the army, John.
But I do like yer, cocky, now you've got yer Khaki on”.⁴

⁴ Extract from the song “**Now You've Got Yer Khaki On**”, written and composed by **Charles Collins & Fred W. Leigh** in 1915 and sung by **Marie Lloyd** (1870-1922)

SCENE 5

THE WESTERN FRONT, FRANCE, 1915. ALAN, DRESSED IN A SOLDIER'S UNIFORM AND COAT, SITTING ALONE ON A TINY BROKEN WALL. HE IS COLD, WET, MUDDY AND SHIVERING. HE IS WRITING A LETTER. WHILST HE WRITES, A MAN DRESSED IN A SERGEANT'S UNIFORM ENTERS AND RECITES A POEM. THE READING OF THE POEM IS PUNCTUATED BY THE SOUND OF GUNFIRE AND OTHER WARLIKE SOUNDS.

SERGEANT:

Hope is the thing with feathers
That perches in the soul,
And sings the tune without the words,
And never stops at all.

And sweetest in the gale is heard;
And sore must be the storm
That could abash the little bird
That kept so many warm.

I've heard it in the chilliest land,
And on the strangest sea.
Yet, never, in extremity,
It asked a crumb of me.⁵

THE SERGEANT EXITS. ALAN STOPS WRITING AND STARTS READING WHAT HE HAS WRITTEN OUT ALOUD TO HIMSELF.

ALAN:

(READING ALOUD FROM HIS LETTER)

Dear Beatrice,

I am writing to you as I promised I would. I don't expect you will write back to me as you will be far too busy painting stations and doing your suffragette things. If you do get a chance to write to me however that would be really grand and would cheer me up.

Things weren't too bad when we first got here. I'm not allowed to tell you where we are. Then, on our second day, we came under fire for the first time. Everything was

⁵ "Hope is the thing with feathers" by Emily Dickinson

fine then, suddenly, out of nowhere, bullets were screaming at us. We all dropped face-down into the mud in terror. There was a huge explosion over our heads. I've never been so frightened. The others were the same. They were terrified. I could see them shaking and twitching. Their teeth were chattering. After a while it stopped. There was a deathly silence – then one young lad said, "If this is what it's like, I hope I'll be killed off now".

Things have got even worse since then. Today I'm freezing cold, soaking wet and covered in mud with not the slightest hope of drying my clothes, which means I will stay wet and cold for several days.

Our Sergeant is a nice man and he gives us good advice. His best piece of advice was about the trenches. He told us to make sure that we kept our heads, arms and legs inside the trenches at all times.

There's lots of our horses over here. I feel so sorry for them. The Germans are using them as well. It's not right. Wars aren't for horses. Horses aren't for wars. Horses are for nice things. Horses are for...

ALAN STOPS READING. HE CRUMPLES UP THE LETTER AND ANGRILY THROWS IT AWAY.

ALAN: What's the point? (TEARFUL) What's the fucking point?!

ALAN SITS VERY STILL FOR A MOMENT AND THEN SLOWLY AND VERY DELIBERATELY STARTS TO EMPTY HIS POCKETS. EVERY ITEM HE TAKES FROM HIS POCKETS HE STACKS VERY CAREFULLY AND VERY NEATLY (AS SOMEONE SUFFERING FROM OCD WOULD DO) IN A LINE ON THE BRICK WALL. THE ITEMS INCLUDE A SMALL BIBLE, A PHOTO, A CIGARETTE TIN, HIS PAY BOOK, A DIARY, SOME LETTERS AND A PACK OF PLAYING CARDS. WHEN HE HAS FINISHED, HE TAKES OFF HIS COAT, THROWS IT ON THE GROUND AND SITS STARING DESPONDENTLY AT THE ITEMS ON THE WALL. PRIVATE PRIESTLEY ENTERS, SMOKING A PIPE.

PVT PRIESTLEY: (YORKSHIRE ACCENT) You alright?

ALAN: Not really.

PVT PRIESTLEY: I could tell that.

ALAN: How?

PVT PRIESTLEY: From the way you were lining up those things on the wall. So neat. So careful.

ALAN: Don't understand.

PVT PRIESTLEY: It means you've got a mental disorder.

ALAN: I'm not mad.

PVT PRIESTLEY: Not saying you are. You're suffering from anxiety.

ALAN: Of course I'm fucking anxious. I'm on the Western Front. I feel dreadful. One mate's got typhoid. Another's got trench foot. His feet are blue and covered in open sores. Chances are he'll get gangrene. My best mate's got trench fever. Do you know how you get trench fever? Body lice! Body lice pass it on. I've got lice! They're in my hair! They're in my clothes! I can't get rid of them! I'm freezing cold and soaking wet. Off course I'm fucking anxious!

PVT PRIESTLEY: Let's start again. (HOLDS OUT HAND FOR ALAN TO SHAKE) John. John Priestley.

ALAN: Alan Jackson. I won't shake hands. Just in case.

PVT PRIESTLEY LOOKS PUZZLED.

The body lice...

PVT PRIESTLEY: (WITHDRAWING HAND) Of course. Most considerate.

ALAN: You new here?

PVT PRIESTLEY: Newish.

ALAN: What was all that mental stuff?

PVT PRIESTLEY: People don't understand what war does to soldiers mentally.

ALAN LOOKS PUZZLED.

How it messes up their minds. Most of the blokes here – if they somehow survive and get home – will never be the same again. Their minds will never be the same again.

ALAN: How do you know all that?

PVT PRIESTLEY: I know lots of things. I know that back home the official line is that this is a “glorious” war “our boys” are fighting. It’s not. It’s a cruel, stupid war, with cruel, stupid, arrogant officers in charge. It’s a class thing. We’re cannon fodder. The officers couldn’t care less about the sort of thing that’s happening to you and your mates.

ALAN: Our sergeant’s a nice man. He reads us poetry.

PVT PRIESTLEY: I don’t mean sergeants. They’re not ruling class. I mean officers. The ones back at HQ swilling down the best French wines while you and your mates are sleeping in liquid mud, with trench foot, trench fever and God knows what else.

ALAN: Typhoid?

PVT PRIESTLEY: Exactly.

ALAN: Is it true the Germans are going to use gas to attack us?

PVT PRIESTLEY: There’s a big battle coming up. They’ll use anything they can get their hands on. The rules have changed. The Zeppelins started it – killing innocent civilians and burning babies to death. Things will never be the same again.

ALAN: Think you’ll get out alive?

PVT PRIESTLEY: If I do, I’m going to write a book about it. Tell the world what it was really like. What our officers were really like.

ALAN: Blokes like us don’t write books.

PVT PRIESTLEY: Blokes like us can do whatever we want. That’s the point! We need a revolution when we get back home! You’re shaking. Put your coat back on. You shouldn’t take your coat off if you’re cold. (HELPS ALAN PUT HIS COAT ON) Who were you writing to?

ALAN: My girl. I’ve chucked it away. I couldn’t tell her all the really bad stuff. It would have upset her. I told her a bit of some it. I told her about the horses. I hate what they’re doing to the horses. Horses aren’t for fighting. Horses aren’t for killing. They’re doing terrible things to the horses. (ALAN BREAKS DOWN AND SOBS)

PVT PRIESTLEY: Horses will win this war. That's why they're using them.

ALAN: I'm going. (HE TAKES OFF HIS COAT. THROWS IT TO THE GROUND AND RUNS OFF)

PVT PRIESTLEY: (PICKING UP THE LETTER ALAN HAS WRITTEN AND SMOOTHING IT OUT) Me and my big mouth.

SCENE 6

BEATRICE, ON THE PLATFORM OF ALDWYCH UNDERGROUND STATION IN 1915, READING A LETTER.

BEATRICE: (READING ALOUD FROM THE LETTER)

Dear Beatrice,

Please forgive the muddy and crumpled condition of the enclosed letter. One of my men found it and passed it on to me. It's a letter that Private Alan Jackson started writing to you but never finished. Private Jackson is, as you know, missing in action. I decided to send this unfinished letter on to you as my men tell me that you were always in Private Jackson's thoughts. He often spoke warmly of "Beatrice the station painter" and my sergeant tells me that he was planning to ask you "something very special" next time he was home.

Private Jackson was very well liked by everyone in "B" Company and he always did his duty. We are all proud to have known him. We all honour him and I trust you will feel some consolation in remembering this.

In true sympathy.

Captain R. Hulbert Smith, "B" Company, 4th Machine Gun Battalion.

BEATRICE SITS QUIETLY FOR A WHILE AND THEN IN A SUDDEN FIT OF TEMPER SHE TEARS THE LETTER UP AND THROWS IT AWAY.

What the hell is he talking about? "In true sympathy"!! He's missing in action. He's not dead. He'll turn up. I'm not giving up on him!

SCENE 7

BEATRICE IN A FOREST IN 1915 RUNS AND DANCES ALL OVER THE PLACE AS IF SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING. THERE IS A DREAMLIKE QUALITY TO THIS SCENE WITH LONG SHADOWS EVERYWHERE. FOR THE FIRST PART OF THE SCENE GUNS AND OTHER SOUNDS OF WAR CAN, FROM TIME TO TIME, BE HEARD. LOUISE, VERY SMARTLY DRESSED, ENTERS. BEATRICE STOPS RUNNING AND DANCING AS SOON AS SHE SEES LOUISE.

BEATRICE: You stayed to supper?

LOUISE: (UPPER CLASS ACCENT) Simply had to. They wouldn't hear of my going before. You know how kind they always are.

BEATRICE: I've not met them.

LOUISE: Forgot. Sorry. They made things as jolly for me as they could, right up to the moment I left. But I felt a brute all the time. I could see they were unhappy, though they tried to hide it. He's missing. Missing in action. His father thinks such a lot of him, though he never says much about it.

BEATRICE: People go missing in action. They turn up again.

LOUISE: He's been missing for several days now. The father's not the fellow to be nervous about any son of his before it's time. And now he *is* nervous. He spends most nights sitting out in the paddock behind the farm house.

BEATRICE: Why sit there?

LOUISE: It's where he taught Alan to ride. It makes him feel close to Alan if he sits there.

BEATRICE AND LOUISE ARE SILENT FOR A WHILE, THINKING ABOUT ALAN'S FATHER.

Time to go I suppose.

NEITHER LOUISE NOR BEATRICE MAKE ANY ATTEMPT TO MOVE.

BEATRICE: We can't go. We've got to look for him. We've got to try and find him.

LOUISE: Just what I was thinking.

LOUISE AND BEATRICE RUN AND DANCE EVERYWHERE DESPERATELY SEARCHING. AS THEY RUN/DANCE, THE GUNS AND OTHER SOUNDS OF WAR REACH A CRESCENDO. LOUISE AND BEATRICE COLLAPSE EXHAUSTED IN A HEAP. THE GUNS AND OTHER SOUNDS SUDDENLY STOP. THERE IS COMPLETE SILENCE. THE MOON COMES UP AND SHINES ON LOUISE AND BEATRICE.

BEATRICE: Full moon.

LOUISE: That will help.

BEATRICE: I can hear water. There must be a river nearby.

LOUISE: Maybe he took a boat?

BEATRICE: Why would he do that?

LOUISE: To get away. To find some peace. To get away from the fighting.

BEATRICE: Why would he want to do that?

LOUISE: You have no idea what this war is really like Beatie.

BEATRICE: Don't call me that. You know I hate it. I know what the war is like.

LOUISE: You don't. You only know what you read in the newspapers. It's all propaganda. If the working classes really knew what was happening in the war no-one would volunteer to fight. They'd have to bring in conscription.

BEATRICE: You think Alan ran away?

LOUISE: I didn't say that. I just said your chap may have taken a boat to get away from it all for a bit. I'm sure he meant to go back. Maybe he got lost? Maybe he couldn't find his way back to his Company?

BEATRICE: We'll find him. (BEAT) It's so quiet. So peaceful. All the guns have stopped. I feel wonderful. More than wonderful. I've got this feeling I've never had before.

LOUISE: Beatie. I mean Beatrice. You look absolutely fabulous. You're... you're...

LOUISE TRIES TO KISS BEATRICE. SHE PUSHES HER AWAY.

BEATRICE: Leave me. Go. Leave me. I've got to find him.

LOUISE: Alan?

BEATRICE: Not Alan.

BEATRICE RUNS/DANCES OFF STAGE FOLLOWED BY LOUISE TRYING TO CATCH UP WITH HER. MOMENTS LATER SHE RE-ENTERS ALONE. SHE STANDS CENTRE STAGE TREMBLING WITH SEXUAL EXCITEMENT/ANTICIPATION. A GOLDEN LIGHT SHINES ON HER, SLOWLY INCREASING IN BRIGHTNESS. SHE STANDS ALONE, BATHED IN THE GOLDEN LIGHT, WORKING HERSELF UP INTO A FRENZY OF EXCITEMENT. THE SOUNDS OF A RIVER AND THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH REEDS CAN BE HEARD, GRADUALLY BECOMING LOUDER AND LOUDER.

BEATRICE: He's here. He's here. I know He is. He's here. Let me see Him. Let me see Him. Please. Please. Please let me see Him...

BEATRICE, TREMBLING WITH EXCITEMENT, RECITES THE FOLLOWING LINES FROM A POEM.

Thrill with the lissom lust of the light,
O man! My man!
Of Pan! lo Pan!

Io Pan! Io Pan! Come over the sea
From Sicily and from Arcady!
Roaming as Bacchus, with fauns and pards
And nymphs and satyrs for thy guards,
On a milk white ass, come over the sea.
To me, to me,
Come with Apollo in bridal dress
Shepherdess and pythoness
Come with Artemis, silken shod,
And wash thy white thigh, beautiful God,
In the moon of the woods, on the marble mount,
The dimpled dawn of the amber fount!
Dip the purple of passionate prayer
In the crimson shrine, the scarlet snare,
The soul that startles in eyes of blue
To watch thy wantonness weeping through
The tangled grove, the gnarled bole
Of the living tree that is spirit and soul
And body and brain - come over the sea,
Io Pan! Io Pan!
Devil or God, to me, to me,
My man! My man!⁶

LOUISE RE-ENTERS AND GRABS HOLD OF
BEATRICE. AS SOON AS SHE TOUCHES HER THE
GOLDEN LIGHT DISAPPEARS AND THE SOUNDS OF
THE RIVER AND THE WIND BLOWING THROUGH THE
REEDS STOP ABRUPTLY.

LOUISE: Found you!

BEATRICE: (VICIOUSLY ATTACKING LOUISE, HITTING HER
HARD AND SCREAMING AT HER WITH TEARS
RUNNING DOWN HER FACE) You've ruined it! You've
ruined it! That was it! That was my moment! You've taken
it away!! (SUDDENLY STOPS SCREAMING AND
HITTING LOUISE. HER SCREAMS TURN TO SOBS)
That was it. That was my moment. You've taken it away
from me. He was there. He was in front of me. He was
mine. I was his. I hate you. I'll hate you forever...

⁶ Extract from "Hymn to Pan" by Aleister Crowley

(BEATRICE BREAKS INTO UNCONTROLLABLE
SOBBING AND COLLAPSES ONTO THE FLOOR)

SCENE 8

A TEAROOM IN 1915 – BEATRICE AND LOUISE ARE SEATED AT A TABLE DRINKING TEA AND EATING CAKE.

BEATRICE: I had this really strange dream about you last night, Louise.

LOUISE: I'm flattered.

BEATRICE: Don't be. Nothing untoward happened.

LOUISE: Shame.

BEATRICE: We were in a forest. Think it was in France. Searching for a friend of mine.

LOUISE: Was he lost?

BEATRICE: Missing in action. He's in the war.

LOUISE: Did we find him?

BEATRICE: I can only remember the first bit of the dream. When we started looking for him...

LOUISE: (LOOKING AROUND THE TEA ROOM) This alright for you?

BEATRICE: Bit posh.

LOUISE: Not what I call posh.

BEATRICE: Looks posh to be. Surprised they let me in.

LOUISE: You're with me. The world's your oyster.

BEATRICE: That waitress gave me a very snooty look when she took our orders.

LOUISE: Don't worry about her. She's just a waitress.

BEATRICE: Is that what you used to say about me when I worked for your father - "she's just a kitchen maid"?

LOUISE: I'd never say that about *you* Beatie.

BEATRICE: I prefer Beatrice these days. I like this balcony seat. I can watch all the people on the pavement below. I like watching people. You can learn a lot by watching people.

LOUISE: What have you learnt by watching me?

BEATRICE: Not to trust you Louise.

LOUISE: (LAUGHING) Well watched! Know why I choose a table on the balcony?

BEATRICE: To watch the people?

LOUISE: (PICKS UP SUGAR LUMP FROM A BOWL ON THE TABLE) To throw sugar lumps into their hats!

BEATRICE: (HORRIFIED) You can't do that!

LOUISE: (LOUISE THROWS A SUGAR LUMP OVER THE BALCONY) Bullseye!

BEATRICE: Stop it! You'll get us in trouble.

LOUISE: She didn't feel a thing. Her hat was so big, she didn't even notice. She will when she gets home. She'll take her hat off and find a sugar lump and wonder how it got there. (PICKS UP THE SUGAR BOWL) You've got to throw one...

BEATRICE: I couldn't possibly.

LOUISE: Thought you wanted to change the world for women. You're not going to get very far with that if you're too scared to throw a sugar lump into a passerby's hat...

BEATRICE TAKES A SUGAR LUMP FROM THE BOWL.
Take two. The first one's a sighter...

BEATRICE TAKES ANOTHER SUGAR LUMP. SHE LOOKS OUT OVER THE BALCONY AND TAKES AIM.

LOUISE: Hold your fire. Rules of the game.

BEATRICE: Rules?!

LOUISE: All games must have rules otherwise there's no point to them. In this game you are only allowed to aim at the pompous or the nouveau riche.

BEATRICE: The nouveau riche?

LOUISE: Trades people who have made good.

BEATRICE: How do I tell if they're nouveau riche?

LOUISE: By the cut of their jib. (LOOKING OVER THE BALCONY)
There's one. Dreadful clothes sense. Everything too new.
No breeding. No style.

(BEATRICE THROWS A SUGAR LUMP OVER THE
BALCONY)

Bad luck Beatie. Just a fraction out. Shall I find you a
pompous one?

BEATRICE: I can recognize pompous. (LOOKS OUT OVER
BALCONY) He'll do. (SHE THROWS ANOTHER SUGAR
LUMP)

LOUISE: Great shot. I know him. He's a judge.

BEATRICE LOOKS HORRIFIED.

Just teasing.

BEATRICE: (BEATRICE PLAYFULLY SMACKS LOUISE ON THE
ARM. LOOKS EMBARRASSED AND CHANGES THE
SUBJECT) How's your father? Still a sadistic bully?

LOUISE: Beatie, you *have* blossomed. I can't imagine you saying
that sort of thing to me eighteen months ago. Must be
this woman's movement thing you're got yourself involved
with. It's really toughened you up. (REALISING SHE IS
SOUNDING PATRONISING AND BEATRICE IS
GETTING ANGRY, SHE CHANGES THE SUBJECT) My
father's the same as ever. He'll never change. I've done
what I can to keep him away from the servants but it's not
easy. He'd kill me if he knew I was having tea with you!
Fortunately no-one I know would be seen dead here. Far
too middle class!

BEATRICE: (SMILING) I'm not meant to like people like you.

LOUISE: Meaning?

BEATRICE: The arrogant, ruling class.

LOUISE: But you do?

BEATRICE: Your charm pulls you though Louise.

LOUISE: I've missed you (TOUCHES BEATRICE'S HAND) ...

BEATRICE: (REMOVING LOUISE'S HAND) *That* was over a long time ago. (BEAT) I've got a favour to ask. Two favours.

LOUISE: You've got paint on your face...

BEATRICE: Where?

LOUISE: Corner of your eye. (TAKES HANDKERCHIEF OUT OF POCKET AND GOES TO WIPE BEATRICE'S FACE) Let me...

BEATRICE: (TAKING HANDKERCHIEF FROM LOUISE) I'll do it. (WIPES FACE) All gone? (LOUISE NODS. BEATRICE HANDS BACK THE HANDKERCHIEF) Occupational hazard.

LOUISE: (PUZZLED) Paint?

BEATRICE: I paint underground stations. It's my job.

LOUISE: I've heard it all now...

BEATRICE: And I earn five times what your father used to pay me for being his kitchen maid...

LOUISE: You should be painting canvasses, not stations, with your talent.

BEATRICE: Does your father still have his War Office connections?

LOUISE: Absolutely. Daddy is still frightfully well connected.

BEATRICE: (TAKING A PIECE OF PAPER FROM HER HANDBAG) There's a soldier, Alan Jackson, he's "missing in action" in France. (GIVES THE PAPER TO LOUISE) All his details are there. Can you get your father to find out what's happened to him?

LOUISE: I can try. Is that who you were dreaming about? (BEATRICE NODS) Doubt if it'll do much good. Difficult to find out what's happened to people. Have to wait for letters to arrive. All takes time. (SEES BEATRICE IS LOOKING UPSET) I can try. Might be able to find out something. You never know. (LOOKS AT PAPER) He's a private! Is he your (BEAT) chap?

BEATRICE: He thinks he is...

LOUISE: I'll see what I can find out.

BEATRICE: Do you still have that studio in Curzon Street?

LOUISE: Might have. Why?

BEATRICE: With all the paints, canvasses and stuff?

LOUISE: Are you going to take up painting properly? I told you should. You've got a great talent which you wouldn't have known about but for me and our visits to my studio. I've still got it.

BEATRICE: Can I use it? Can you lend me the key?

LOUISE: You can have my spare key for a while. We'll have to agree the dates and times you are going to use it. Won't want your visits to clash with my painting...

BEATRICE: When was the last time you actually *Painted* in your studio?

LOUISE: Do you want it or not? You can have it on Monday and Tuesday evenings. For the time being.

BEATRICE: I'll take it. Thank you.

LOUISE: What are you going to paint?

BEATRICE: I want to try and do a full size copy of The Cornfield (BEAT) by John Constable.

LOUISE: I know who painted The Cornfield. Why do you want to try and paint a copy of it?

BEATRICE: It's a present for a friend.

LOUISE: Strange present. (GIVES BEATRICE A KEY) There's the key. I'll call in from time to time to see how you're getting on...

SCENE 9

A DARK, DISUSED PLATFORM AT ALDWYCH STATION IN 1915 FULL OF CRATES CONTAINING PICTURES STORED BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY. BEATRICE ENTERS WITH A LIT LANTERN AND LARGE BAG.

BEATRICE:

I hope I can find it. There're loads of them. (TAKES A PIECE OF PAPER OUT OF HER POCKET) Crate ten, come on crate ten, where are you? (SHE STARTS LOOKING AT THE CRATES. AN UNEXPECTED NOISE STARTLES HER AND SHE BLOWS OUT HER LANTERN, THROWS HERSELF ON THE FLOOR AND CRAWLS BEHIND ONE OF THE CRATES. AFTER A WHILE SHE COMES OUT AGAIN AND RELIGHTS THE LANTERN) Must have been a rat. A very large rat! There shouldn't be anyone else here at this time of night. (SHE CARRIES ON SEARCHING FOR CRATE 10 UNTIL SHE FINDS IT) Got you! (SHE TAKES A CROWBAR OUT OF HER BAG AND LEVERS OFF THE LID OF THE CRATE. SHE LOOKS THROUGH ITS CONTENTS AND PULLS OUT A LARGE FRAMED PAINTING) The Cornfield. John Constable. All four foot six by four foot of you. You beauty! (BEATRICE TAKES A KNIFE FROM HER BAG AND BRANDISHES IT) I'm doing this for women everywhere! (SHE CAREFULLY REMOVES THE BACK OF THE PICTURE, REMOVES THE PAINTING FROM THE FRAME, ROLLS IT UP AND PUTS IT TO ONE SIDE) Where are all the great pictures painted by women? All still in the hearts and minds of the women who were never allowed to paint them! (SHE TAKES SOME ROLLED UP CANVAS OUT OF HER BAG AND CAREFULLY UNROLLS IT TO REVEAL A SUPERB COPY OF THE CORNFIELD. SHE PUTS THE COPY IN THE PICTURE FRAME AND REPLACES THE BACK OF THE FRAME. SHE STOPS TO LOOK AT THE FRAMED REPLACEMENT) Not bad for a girl who was made to leave school at twelve! (SHE PUTS THE FRAMED FAKE PICTURE BACK IN THE CRATE) See what they make of that! (SHE PUTS THE LID BACK ON THE CRATE, TAKES A HAMMER AND SOME NAILS FROM HER BAG AND HAMMERS THE LID SECURELY BACK ON THE CRATE. SHE THEN TIDIES UP AND PUTS

EVERYTHING BACK IN HER BAG, INCLUDING THE ROLLED UP ORIGINAL CONSTABLE PAINTING) I'm going to find Alan, then I'm going to change the world! (SHE EXITS. THE FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENTS PLAY OVER THE TANNOY)

TANNOY ANNOUNCEMENT 5: The three hundred paintings stored on Aldwych Station during World War One were removed and returned to the National Gallery shortly after the Armistice on Eleventh November Nineteen Eighteen.

TANNOY ANNOUNCEMENT 6: In recognition of the contribution made by women to the war effort, The Representation of the People Act Nineteen Eighteen granted women property owners over the age of thirty the right to vote. Whilst not securing equal voting rights for women, it was seen by many as a benchmark in the fight for equality. The process of change had finally begun...

TANNOY ANNOUNCEMENT 7: A clerk overseeing the unpacking of the pictures on their return to the National Gallery experienced a vague feeling of unease regarding The Cornfield. However, not wishing to appear foolish, he decided not to voice his concerns and the picture was duly re-hung in the National Gallery where it remains to this day.

CURTAIN