Charlotte



HELEN. some tenderness / or

ELIZABETH. No.

HELEN. At the very least you must have thought of her / every day.

ELIZABETH. No. Honestly, I did not. Helen listen to me

*She reaches for* HELEN.

HELEN. No.

ELIZABETH. But

HELEN. Please do not touch me.

SALLY *starts to laugh.*

SARAH SMITH. Why you laughing gal?

SALLY. I don't know. I think I am nervous.

ELIZABETH *looks around at the* MATRONS, *who keep their distance from her.*

ELIZABETH. Please. Believe me. I did not come here in love. I come here in rage, being as I knew this building could not be decent to her. It was not built for her. It was not built for none of us. It weren't built for me, and it weren't built for Janey Nelson when her husband knocked her teeth out, or when they hanged her for catching rabbits, or when, I tell you what, tell you what, it weren't built for your old aunt, Helen, was it? When she petitioned this court for protection from her neighbours accusing her of witchcraft, did they give it?

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Did they give it Helen?

HELEN. No.

ELIZABETH. No, and what happened?

HELEN. She was put to swim in the lake.

ELIZABETH. She was, and she nearly drowned did she not?

HELEN. Yes.



ELIZABETH. Yes, which is a horrible death but luckily for her it was the pneumonia that got her two weeks later instead, cos that Justice downstairs couldn't bring himself to keep an old woman out of a cold lake on a winter's day, and maybe you think what I done is shabby but this building is shabbier, that's a shabby useless rotten place that wants burning down, you ask me.

JUDITH. I do think we need to have that doctor in, don't you?

MARY. I do.

ANN. I have to say, I am finding this very discombobulating.

KITTY. Aye, it's a shit show.

EMMA. And Mrs Smith, I would've expected better from you. Why did you not speak up?

SARAH SMITH. I did not want her to be blamed. That child is not her fault.

Start

CHARLOTTE. Then whose fault is she?

CHARLOTTE *has been trying to maintain her composure, a battle she gradually loses as her accent begins to slip from RP to Norfolk.*

Who are we to blame, if not you? She is a devil of your making. I don't doubt it was hard for you to cast off a child, but you have destroyed the lives of countless people Mrs Luke, how dare you boast of your dispassion! The girl has visited horror upon horror upon the world, and had Mrs Hollis not bravely spoken up she might be free to do it again, and again, / and again

EMMA. Calm yourself Mrs Cary, we will speak to the Justice.

CHARLOTTE. I do not want to speak to the Justice. I want that doctor brought in, and I want the drab hung, today.

COOMBES *moves towards the door,* ELIZABETH *blocks it.*

ELIZABETH. No.

EMMA. Really Mrs Cary, you will do yourself a / mischief

CHARLOTTE. Please stop calling me Cary, my name ent Cary, it's Tompkins, I ent a colonel's wife but a widowed housekeeper to the Bray family in Cratfield, s'nine miles from here.

SALLY (*surprised*). I know it.

CHARLOTTE. I know you know it.

SALLY. Tompkins? It's not!

EMMA. I do not understand. Mrs Cary

SALLY. Annie Tompkins. My Ge

CHARLOTTE. Some years ago

SALLY. What happened to the rest of you?

CHARLOTTE. Some years ago, Sally was

SALLY. Honest, she were pudding-bed before and twice as wide.

CHARLOTTE. If I may be allowed to / continue

SALLY. Big as a house, how d'you do it girl?

CHARLOTTE. I HAD A TAPEWORM ALRIGHT MAY I CARRY ON?

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Sally was nursery maid to a girl of six and boy of four called Albert. One day Albert caught on fire and died. Sally claimed it was an accident, but left the household shortly after.

SALLY. That was a bad business, that. Very bad business. But you must believe me, I had nothing to do with it Mrs Cary.

EMMA (*bitterly*). Tompkins.

CHARLOTTE. Later on Albert's sister told us Sally was cross the boy would not eat his carrots and had pushed him into the hearth.

SALLY. The boy was blind from German measles but would run about as if he could see! I come into the nursery, he's



fallen into the fire. I rolled him in a rug but… I dunno what to say, that were dreadful. Really.

CHARLOTTE. That is lovely play-acting, very sincere, I am sure Lavinia Fenton is quaking in her boots, in the meantime, my mistress is quite mad with grief. She does not eat, does not sleep, will not even wash herself, lies awake beside me all night in a terror. I apologise for the deceit Mrs Jenkins, but when we heard they had finally brought the bitch to trial, Eliza begged me, on hands and knees she begged me to come here and make sure the filthy piece did not slip the gibbet as she has slipped it before.

ELIZABETH. Right, right, and you agather, tell me why what I done is worse than what she has done?

CHARLOTTE. COS I HAVE COME TO MAKE SURE JUSTICE IS DONE AND YOU HAVE COME TO PERVERT IT, BRING THE DOCTOR.

End

ANN. Yes, I do think the doctor's counsel / would be

KITTY (*to* CHARLOTTE). Why'd you share a bed?

CHARLOTTE. What?

KITTY. Is it not a big house?

SALLY. S'fucken huge.

CHARLOTTE. I – our arrangements are none of your business.

SALLY. I have told you the truth, from soup to nuts, I have not lied to you.

CHARLOTTE. You *have* lied! Over and over, in court you said you knew nothing of Alice Wax's death.

SALLY. No, I said I would not *tell* nothing, it is quite different.

CHARLOTTE. To know the truth and not tell it is as wicked, worse even!

SALLY. That was no one else's affair.

CHARLOTTE. It was Lady Wax's affair, was it not? To know how her daughter left this world? Pieces of her body buried