Lizzy

ELIZABETH. what?

MARY. hasten the thing.

ELIZABETH. That will take as much time as that takes Mary. We are deciding whether to put a woman to death.

,

MARY. Please. That's a very big field, that is. If I ent out there by three there'll not be enough daylight.

Some of the MATRONS *express exasperation.* ELIZABETH *fights not to hit her.*

Anyway, you can tell just looking at her can't you?

ANN. That she isn't with child?

MARY. That she's a liar.

Pause.

CHARLOTTE. So we are now eight to four.

JUDITH. But we must be twelve all-in.

ANN. How do we proceed?

Start

ELIZABETH. Does no one else wish to change their opinion to give the girl the benefit of the doubt?

EMMA. Why?

ELIZABETH. Why? In truth?

Because she has been sentenced to hang on the word of a cuckolded husband. Because her mother Janet says she was not unaccounted for on the night in question but at Janet's house, weeping and frightened with a bloody nose, a fact I learnt from the prison laundry maid, cos it was not admitted to the court. Because every card dealt to her today and for many years before has been an unkind one, because she has been sentenced by men pretending to be certain of things of which they are entirely ignorant, and now we sit here imitating them, trying to make an ungovernable thing governable, I do not ask you to like her. I ask you to hope for her, so that she might know she is worth hoping for. And if you cannot do that for her sake, think instead of the women who will be in this room when that comet comes round again, and how brittle they will think our spirits, how ashamed they will be, that we were given our own dominion and we made it look exactly like the one down there.

End

She points, meaning the courtroom below.
Pause. Then SALLY *blows a raspberry at* ELIZABETH*'s words.*
ELIZABETH *sits, exhausted.*

CHARLOTTE. There is a chill on the air in here. Let us light the fire.

COOMBES *coughs extravagantly to demonstrate this is not permitted.*

HELEN. I don't believe we are allowed to light it. No fire was one / of the

KITTY. Laid isn't it?

JUDITH. I do think we should respect the conventions of the court.

CHARLOTTE. When was the chimney last swept?

EMMA. Some time in the last century, I expect.

JUDITH. Anyway, we have no tinderbox, so

ELIZABETH *produces a tinderbox. Throws it to* SARAH SMITH.

SARAH SMITH. No, I dassent do it if Mr Coombes forbid it.

CHARLOTTE. Mr Coombes is all on a-dudder himself, he might be grateful.

They look at COOMBES. *He shivers, his teeth are chattering.*

KITTY. Mr Coombes, it is so rafty in here and you so still, we are concerned for your remaining extremities. Would be an awful shame for the other one to drop off, do you not agree?