Mary

PEG. Mr Pitt went to Eton College with Lord Wax. They are dear friends. Mr Pitt came to dine last summer and sent special compliments to David on the very high quality of his cucumbers.

HELEN. I do not understand why there must be a war at all.

ANN. To seize power. To take the American territories. To avail ourselves of the fruits of West Africa and the Caribbean. To gain an Empire.

MARY. Why d'we want to do that then?

ANN. So that by the end of this century we might be masters of the world.

CHARLOTTE. Rather than the French.

ANN. Rather than the French, exactly.

PEG. I am not afraid to say it, I hate the French.

JUDITH. I wouldn't say I hate them, but I shouldn't like to be under them.

Start

MARY. Thing is though, you take all that off someone else, you're liable for someone to come along and take that back off you and then where are you? Example, two years in a row Peg and David won that flitch of bacon. Now let's suppose next year, they don't win.

PEG *laughs*.

PEG. No, I, I think we will.

MARY. Let's say Helen and Tom win that instead.

PEG *laughs again*.

Then that's a whole year you and David got to live knowing one time you was the happiest pair in town with so much bacon you didn't know what to do with it, and now you's only a gardener's wife eating porridge for supper again with a baby what won't sleep the night and a smoky chimbley.

PEG. The bacon is really only a symbol, so.

MARY. Now Amos and me, we ent never been the most happily married couple. But we ent killed each other yet. And if we can go on not killing each other for another thirty years, well. Reckon that's good enough for me, and there ent none of that anyone else can rob off us.

End

SALLY. Thomas said, if someone robs off you, you can rob off them, and if anyone has more than you, that's only cos they've robbed you a long time ago, so you can rob them too. There was a ruby on her finger, with seed pearls all around it.

ELIZABETH. Sally, stop it.

SALLY. Eleven years old and a ruby. What?

Pause. EMMA *is still humming with her eyes shut*. CHARLOTTE *shakes her gently*.

CHARLOTTE. Mrs Jenkins. You may return to us.

EMMA *opens her eyes*. *Surveys the* MATRONS.

EMMA. Are we women once again and not pigs?

CHARLOTTE. It is time we took a vote. Those who believe the prisoner to be lying, and not with child, raise your hand.

CHARLOTTE, EMMA, SARAH HOLLIS, HANNAH, KITTY, SARAH SMITH *and* PEG *raise their hands*. CHARLOTTE *counts the vote*.

And those who believe her to be telling the truth, and with quick child, raise your hand now.

ELIZABETH, ANN, HELEN, MARY *and* JUDITH *raise their hands*.

We are split. Seven votes to five.

PEG. But we have the majority.

EMMA. That settles it, to my mind.

ELIZABETH. Surely we must all be in agreement?

MARY. Was that the final count?