

ACT I

Scene 2

SETTING: Early evening.
White Hart Pub.
Corner of Commercial and
Shoreditch Streets.
Rectory of St. Botolph Church.

AT RISE: KATE, LIZ and ANNIE are seated at
a table.

SERGEANT HILL paces.

PENELOPE kneels and removes the
leg braces of BARNETT who, is
seated in a wheelchair.

LIZ

Kate, you best lay off the gin this evening. Remember what that
squirt told you a few weeks back? Them juniper berries will get
the best of you, if you don't slow down on the drink.

KATE

To hell with the damn juniper berries and double hell to the
ramblings of that squirt with his stiff white coat.

(DALE enters approaching
HILL.)

DALE

Sergeant Hill?

HILL

Who wants to know?

DALE

Dale, sir. Constable Albert Dale, reporting. Station house said I'd find you on the corner of Commercial and Shoreditch and here you are.

HILL

And here I am, Constable ... Dale, is it?

DALE

Yes, sir.

BARNETT

Good God, woman! Why do you plague me with these ridiculous questions?

PENELOPE

But these women are also God's children. Their hearts are deep and rich with goodness. Take Miss Nichols for example. She's never met a stranger. Always with a smile and a kind word. And Miss Stride. Miss Stride was a domestic in Hyde Park.

BARNETT

Iniquitous sinners. All of them. Not worthy of the air they breathe. Fetch me a brandy. My legs are aching dreadfully today.

PENELOPE

To whom should we minister, if not to the least of these poor lost souls who have strayed?

ANNIE

Now Katie dear, I don't want to be nibby, but just between us mates,

(stroking the gin bottle)

that gentleman what you were with a fortnight past, was he really ...

KATE

Bigger!

(All laugh.)

HILL

So, tell me Constable Dale, have you ever worked the East End?

DALE

No, sir.

HILL

Well, then. Follow me and I will introduce you to the bowels of hell.

(SERGEANT HILL exits.
DALE follows.)

LIZ

Annie! Out there. Looking in. That tall one's got his eye on you. Looks to be just one eye, but make no mistake, he's got that one eye on you.

KATE

Now, if I was you, I'd step outside and meet him. Eye to Eye.

LIZ

Go on, Annie. Step outside and show him how eye-catching you are. You might even score some coin.

(PIZER enters and the
merriment falls silent.)

PIZER

Anybody seen that no-account Polly Nichols.

(The patrons remain
silent. PIZER exits.)

PENELOPE

Are we not morally bound to bring lost sheep back into the fold? My ask is really quite simple. I will ask these ladies to attend Sunday service along with an invitation for a cup of tea after.

BARNETT

Need I tell you again? I have no use for these unworthy souls in my church.

PENELOPE

"And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly,' I say to you, 'inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me.'"

BARNETT

How dare you question my authority by goading me with a scripture lesson you ungrateful, pride-filled wench. I forbid you to bring these common whores into my church. You are more like your mother every day.

PENELOPE

Of that Sir, I am certain. Just as I am certain that her life was a blessing to those lost souls of the street.

BARNETT

Why, you viper tongued insolent. I showed your mother every consideration regarding her never-ending support for these despicable creatures. I warned her as I am warning you. These lost souls of the street, as you call them, are Satan's demons. They will destroy you as they did her. Furthermore, for your continued defiance of my authority, you will wash the outer steps of this church, morning and evening. Is that clear?

PENELOPE

But Sir, they run with blood from the slaughterhouse next door. To clean them every day is useless. What would you make of me, a sisyphus?

BARNETT

Enough! I will have clean steps and an obedient servant. Is that understood? Now, go. And if you so much as speak with one of those root-gummers, there will be retribution.

(END OF SCENE)