San Fernando Valley State College

SARA CREWE

A Play in Three Acts

Adapted from the Novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in

Drama

by

Nancy Thompson Scale

June, 1971
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ABSTRACT

SARA CREWE
A Play in Three Acts
by
Nancy Thompson Seale
Master of Arts in Drama
June, 1971

The play, Sara Crewe, adapted from the children's classic by Frances Hodgson Burnett, as well as from her dramatization of the story, titled The Little Princess, is designed to fill a need in children's theatre. The goals of children's theatre are several; entertainment of the young is only one of them. The growth of the aesthetic sense in children can only result from exposure, not only to various media in the arts, but to styles within the separate art forms. It is hoped that this play will serve to introduce a young audience to the mannered dramas typical of the first part of this century, a time when sentiment was expressed unapologetically, when values were absolute, and when virtue, though its own reward, generally triumphed -- at least on the stage.

Several generations have grown up with the romantic story of Sara Crewe, the once wealthy pupil at Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies, who is later banished to the attic and the scullery.
It would be a loss if today's children with their laudable inability to accept over-sentimentality (as in Mrs. Burnett's play version) should therefore miss the story's unique charm entirely. This adaptation, while keeping the spirit and most of the characters of the original, has been updated in interest, humor, and action required to hold a young audience of the 1970's.

In this script, it will be noted, several songs have been inserted where they develop naturally from the characters and the plot. While the play could not be called a musical, music used as an integral part of several of the scenes should add to its appeal.

The treatment of the play in production will have a great deal to do with its acceptance by an audience. It should be played quite theatrically in the manner of the period in which it unfolds -- the early 1900's -- on a set which suggests the atmosphere rather than attempting realism. Costumes will also be rather stylized, as will the manner of acting. The play Rags to Riches, by Aurand Harris, (Anchorage Press), may be referred to as one which has been done in a similar manner.

The author feels that the story's intrinsic values, such as Sara's indomitable spirit, her friendship with Becky, the scullery girl, and with Raw Dass, the Indian lascar, as well as the triumph of justice, and the downfall of the wicked Miss Minchin, are worth presenting and will be an addition to the store of theatrical literature for youth.
SAHA CREWE

Production Notes

The treatment of the play in production will have a great deal to do with its acceptance by an audience. It should be presented seriously, theatrically, in the manner of the period in which it unfolds -- the early 1900's. No attempt should be made to achieve realism in sets; they should merely suggest the atmosphere. The opening scene, as well as the third scene of Act Three, is played in front of the curtain against a backdrop stylistically depicting a London Street which, as Mrs. Burnett wrote in her story's opening, was a "large, dull square where all the houses were alike, and all the sparrows were alike, and where all the door-knocks made the same heavy sound, and on still days -- and nearly all the days were still -- seemed to resound through the entire row in which the knock was knocked." The three interior scenes should be done in wing and drop, which will both facilitate scene changes and further the theatrical style appropriate to this production. Lighting will be of importance in the attic scene flashbacks. Ram Dass' entrance and his transformation of the attic must be handled deftly to be effective. The addition to the cast of a real monkey would highlight the last act if a reliable animal is available.

Directors and actors are cautioned that the play should not be done as a burlesque of the period, but rather in a manner which will reveal the stage conventions of the time, with some exaggeration, but never melodrama.
Music for the songs is available by contacting the author, or by writing to the composer, Melissa Sweeney, 20055 Wells Drive, Woodland Hills, California, 91364.
Characters

Sara Crewe

Captain Ralph Crewe, her father, British Army Officer, about 38

Miss Minchin, about 50, headmistress of Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies

Miss Amelia Minchin, her sister, a few years younger

Seminary Students:

Lavinia
Ermengarde
Lottie
Carrie
Jessie
Laura
Tilly
Bertha Marie

Other girls if desired: Arabella, Charlotte, Mable, Sophronia

Becky, scullery maid, about 13

Barrows, a lawyer, balding, brisk, business-like

Cook

Baker Woman

Beggar Child

Ram Dass, Indian lascar

Thomas Carrisford, former partner of Captain Crewe, about 45

Parker, about 40, small, bumptious, impressed with his own importance
ACT ONE

Scene One

A London Street, Midafternoon, Autumn, about 1900.

A backdrop suggests a street of large, old-fashioned houses. The one at stage left, reached by a flight of three steps, is different from its neighbors in that over the door is a brass plate on which is enscribed in black letters: "Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies". Music in the background suggests a 19th century dancing school, single piano, measured rhythm is played for a moment then fades as light focuses on this door for a minute or two.

The light now spotlights the entrance of Captain Crewe and his daughter, Sara, from an entry which permits them to walk along one of the auditorium aisles.

Captain Crewe is about 38, distinguished looking, in the uniform of a British officer in India, circa 1900. He is carrying a small valise and leading Sara by the hand. Sara is dressed rather unsuitably for the street in royal blue velvet dress with lace collar and cuffs. She wears a large, picture hat. Sara is about 12, dark haired, rather thin angular features, not pretty but interesting-looking...will some day be beautiful.

They walk slowly but with a purpose. They mount the steps to the stage apron at right and walk along as
if on a sidewalk in front of the house. The conversation is timed to come out with "Here we are!" as they reach the steps to Miss Minchin's.

SARA
And I am to live here in London, Papa, for a whole year while you are in India?

CAPTAIN CREWE
A whole year, Sara! But it will go quickly.

(Sara starts to protest)

Now...the Indian climate was making you delicate, child. And you need other young girls to play with.

SARA
I had other girls in India. I had Beauty and Alice, and Marie Antoinette, and Little Nell, and Princess...

CAPTAIN CREWE
(laughing)
Oh, yes, your imaginary companions, you little bookworm! I mean flesh and blood...like you!

(turns to inspect brass plate)

Ah, here we are!

SARA
(a little fearfully)
"Miss Minchin's Select Seminary for Young Ladies." I don't feel like a young lady...and I'm not at all sure about select.

CAPTAIN CREWE
Sara, my own girl, it's going to be just the thing for you. Now, try the knocker.
(Sara reluctantly goes up steps and
knocks dutifully with door-knocker. A
pause, then Sara turns and runs down
and puts arms around her father)

SARA

Papa, I'm frightened. Suppose an ogre lives here... or a witch!

CAPTAIN CREWE

(jovially)

Then the Princess Sara will use her magic wand and turn it into a toad
or a lizard!

(the door opens just as he says the
word "lizard"... Miss Minchin has opened
it and stands looking down at them...
she is in a high-collared black dress,
her hair piled up on her head...
altogether formidable in appearance)

MISS MINCHIN

I beg your pardon!

(she is looking her most witch-like)

CAPTAIN CREWE

(laughing)

And I beg yours. Miss Minchin, I believe?

MISS MINCHIN

(proudly)

The same.

CAPTAIN CREWE

I trust that you received my letter a week or so ago. I'm Captain
CAPTAIN CREWE

(continuing)

Crewe; and may I present my daughter, Sara?

SARA

(curtsying)

How do you do, Miss Minchin?

MISS MINCHIN

(her manner changes to become ingratiating... evidently she liked what was in the letter)

Captain Crewe! Certainly, certainly! And this is your precious daughter! Sara is to be our parlor boarder! I know she'll be very happy here at the Seminary. Her room is all ready for her, and, as you instructed me in your letter, Captain, no expense spared. She will be an asset to the school.

CAPTAIN CREWE

Thank you.

MISS MINCHIN

(coyly)

And I don't mind saying, Captain, that my sister, Miss Amelia, and I feel that we do a great deal for our young ladies.

CAPTAIN CREWE

I'm sure you do, Miss Minchin.

(turning to Sara.)

Well, Sara?

(he sets down valise on steps)

SARA

Goodbye, Papa. You will send for me when the year is up? It won't be
SARA

(continuing)

any longer? Promise?

CAPTAIN CREWE

On my oath as an officer and a gentleman, not a second longer!

Goodbye, Sara, Dear, I'll write to you every week.

(he bends down to kiss her and Sara clings to him for a moment...then Miss Minchin moves in, puts a hand on Sara's shoulder...Sara flinches a little; we sense that Miss Minchin's hand is cold...

Captain Crewe walks slowly off, down step, and through auditorium exit)

SARA

(over a sob)

Goodbye, Papa. Goodbye!

(she tries to wipe away a tear unnoticed)

MISS MINCHIN

Now, my dear Sara. No time for tears. One of the first things all the young ladies in our Select Seminary learn is that a well-bred child never gives in to her feelings.

(turns and precedes Sara into doorway)

Come along, my dear.

SARA

Yes, Miss Minchin.

(she looks after her father a moment, then turns and follows Miss Minchin inside)
ACT ONE
Scene Two

The curtain lifts to reveal the school-room parlor of Miss Minchin's. There is a stairway and landing upstage, left center. Right center is a piano and stool. Down right is a couch with small table in front of it. A large armchair left near stairway. Several other chairs, footstools. Up right is a door leading to hall and outside entrance. Door down right leads to other parts of the house. Girls are engaged in various activities about room. Miss Amelia is teaching several little girls to curtsy, down left. Other girls are reading, writing sums on blackboard propped on piano rack. Two or three on couch sewing.

Enter Miss Minchin, leading Sara, from up right.

MISS MINCHIN

This is, as you can see, my dear Sara, a most select Seminary. First introductions. Girls, this is our newest boarder...a young lady of a fine, genteel, and wealthy background, naturally.

GIRLS

(chorusing)

How do you do, Sara?

SARA

(curtsying)

How do you do?
MISS MINCHIN

My sister, Miss Amelia.

SARA

(going toward her, down center...
curtsying)

How do you do, Miss Amelia.

MISS AMELIA

(weakly)

Poorly, child, poorly. My sciatica is troubling me again; I have simply no appetite, and...

MISS MINCHIN

(severely)

Amelia, the young lady is not interested in your medical history. She just said, "howdyd you do."

MISS AMELIA

And I'm trying to tell her, Sister.

SARA

(sincerely)

I'm sure you'll be feeling well again, soon, Miss Amelia. It's lovely meeting you.

MISS MINCHIN

And these are the girls: Lottie, Laura, Ermengarde, Arabella, Jessie, Tilly, Sophronia, Mabel, Bertha Marie, Carrie, Charlotte, and Lavinia.

(as she names each girl, that girl curtsies and smiles. The only discourteous response is from Lavinia who merely sniffs and turns her back.)
MISS MINCHIN

(Sara is a bit puzzled at this but then
her attention is caught by looking about
the room)

And now, young ladies, let us tell dear Sara about our school.

(she takes a pitch pipe out and sounds
beginning note...Miss Amelia leads song
with her, but much more weakly than Miss
Minchin's vigorous approach...One of the
girls is at piano)

Song: MISS MINCHIN'S IS A MOST SELECT SEMINARY
(Miss Minchin, Miss Amelia, Girls)

MISSSES MINCHIN & AMELIA

This is, of course, a most select seminary.

We here impart the essences of ladyhood.

We teach each girl

To dress, to curl

In the most exacting style as she should.

GIRLS

At Minchin's Miss Minchin,

No silliness, giggling, or pinchin'

MISSSES MINCHIN & AMELIA

Sobriety, not levity is the rule!

GIRLS

At Minchin's Miss Minchin,

Take punishment without flinchin'
GIRLS
(continuing)
At this exclusive, never abusive school!
(pantomine of one girl hitting other's
hand with a ruler)

MISS MINCHIN & AMELIA
In our distinguished and most select seminary
Good breeding is the thing we try to look for first.

GIRLS
In the family tree
There'd better not be
A crooked limb, bent twig, or something worse!

GIRLS
(refrain)

ALL
Miss Minchin's is a most select seminary
For daughters of the upper, upper, upper-upper.

Though they're none too bright
They can all recite...
And a blunder means they go without their suppers!

GIRLS
(refrain)

SARA
(clapping her hands as they finish
with all holding curtsy)

Why, that was ever so splendid...though a bit frightening. I feel as
if I know you all already. I do hope you'll be my friends.
Of course, Sara. I know I will, I'm glad you've come, etc.

Lavinia (on top of ad libs)

Friends? Certainly they'll be friends. Who wouldn't be with the richest girl in the school?

(girls are crowding about Sara.

Lavinia down right, obviously miffed)

Ermengarde

How do you know she's rich?

Lavinia (scornfully)

You can tell just by looking at her! Can't you see that lace...those boots...her velvet dress and hat? Besides, I've heard Miss Minchin talking about her to Miss Amelia. Her father is an officer in India... with heaps and heaps of money.

Ermengarde

Well, I don't care about that. I just think she seems nice.

Lavinia (scornfully)

Nice!

Lottie

Tell us about India, Sara.

Carrrie

Are there lions and tigers there?
JESSIE
And strange looking people with funny clothing?

SARA
(trying to answer all questions at once)
It's a fascinating country...and parts of it are beautiful...with jungles and rivers...and ancient temples. There are tigers, and elephants, and crocodiles...but no lions...and the people aren't strange...they're fine, handsome...and as to their clothing...

MISS MINCHIN
Girls, girls, not so fast. Dear Sara must be shown her room and given a little chance to rest. After all she's only been here a few moments.

SARA
Yes, I would like to see my room. Is it upstairs?

ERMENGARDE
I hope it's near mine.

JESSIE
We have an extra bed in Tilly's and my room. You could share with us.

LOTIE
Or with Laura and me.

BERNHA
Or with me and Lavinia.

LAVINIA
(under her breath)
Not if I have any say in it!
MISS MINCHIN

Girls, girls, silence! Dear Sara is far too important a pupil to share a room with anyone. She will have her own room, downstairs, next to mine and Miss Amelia's. Dear Sara is our "parlor boarder" you know.

(reaction from girls to clarify)

LAVINIA

Of course! Only the finest for Lady Sara!

ERMENEGARDE

(disappointed)

Oh - well -- We'll see you soon then Sara?

SARA

(a bit apprehensive)

Oh, Miss Minchin, I'd really like to be closer to the other girls...

MISS MINCHIN

Not another word, my dear. Amelia, show Sara her room. Ermengarde, call Becky to fetch Sara's bags.

(Ermengarde goes to door up right and calls)

ERMENEGARDE

Becky. Miss Minchin wants you.

SARA

Becky?

MISS MINCHIN

The scullery girl.

SARA

Oh. But I can carry my things... and I'm sure the girls would help.
MISS MINCHIN

Sara, my dear, that is servant's work. We will leave it for Becky.

BECKY

(timidly entering...curtsies to
Miss Minchin)

Yes'm?

MISS MINCHIN

Becky, you are to help the new young lady with her things. Here, take the bags and packages.

(Becky awkwardly tries to pick up several things at once)

Don't be clumsy, girl!

(she drops a package and is terribly embarrassed)

SARA

(kindly)

Thank you for helping me, Becky.

BECKY

(trying again to get hold of things)

It's a pleasure, Miss.

MISS MINCHIN

You do not thank a servant, Sara. Run along, Becky, and hurry back for more. Sara's room is first off the hall there.

(pointing off right)

Now girls, it's almost time for tea. You'd all best go and clean up to be ready for our first tea with our new pupil.
GIRLS

Yes, Miss Minchin.

(exit up stairway)

MISS MINCHIN

Come along now, Sara, Miss Amelia will show you to your room.

(exit down right)

SARA

That's kind of you, Miss Amelia. I'm sure it's a nice room.

MISS AMELIA

(sadly)

It is. I was always very fond of it.

SARA

(unbelieving, but a bit amused)

You don't mean that it was your room, Miss Amelia. You shouldn't have done that.

MISS AMELIA

I had very little choice in the matter, my dear.

SARA

You mean that Miss Minchin made you give me your room? I'll speak to her at once.

MISS AMELIA

(quavering)

Oh, no, Sara...that wouldn't be wise at all...Sister has made up her mind.

SARA

But, Miss Amelia, I'm sure that...
BECKY
(entering down right)
Will there be anything more, Miss?

SARA
Just my doll, Becky...I put her down over there when I came in.

BECKY
(enraptured, slowly approaching it
as if it were a living princess)
Oh, Miss, ain't she beautiful, just?

SARA
Papa gave her to me just before he brought me here. Her name is Emily.
Would you bring her for me, Becky?

BECKY
I'd be that honored, Miss. I've never been close to such a doll
before, Miss.

(she slowly and reverently picks
up elaborate doll)
Oh, my!

MISS AMELIA
Just follow me, my dear.
(curtain as Amelia exits down right,
followed by Sara, trailed by Becky,
carrying doll)
ACT TWO

Scene One
Several Months Later...Schoolroom Parlor. Laura is seated on upstage part of couch, Tilly on downstage part. Lavinia is at piano, playing a simple music-book tune. Lottie is seated in armchair embroidering; Jessie is on upstage arm of chair. Other girls group about as wished. Ermengarde enters onto stairway landing, holding history book. She looks over banister.

ERMENGARDE

What's that you're sewing, Lottie?

LOTTIE

(holding it up)

It's embroidery. Isn't it beautiful? Sara's father sent it from India. We're each to have one to work if we like.

JESSIE

You may spend your time with needles and yarn if you like.

(rising and crossing to footstool near couch)

I'd rather play Parchesi!

(sits on footstool)

LAURA

It's a new game, Ermengarde. Sara's papa sent it from India. All right, Jessie. Your turn.

(gives dice box to Jessie who throws dice and moves counters)
ERGENGARDE

I wish my papa would send me things like that. All he ever sends are books!

(she continues down into room and goes over to watch girls' game)

LOTTIE

The loveliest things came in the last box. Sara says her papa...

LAVINIA

(bangs a discord at piano and swivels around on stool)

Sara this...Sara that! Can't you stupid girls talk about anything else?

JESSIE

Why, Lavinia!

LAURA

(reproachfully)

She's given you things, too, Lavinia.

LAVINIA

(spitefully)

Oh, yes! The Princess Sara is generous with all her subjects!

(rising, mockingly)

My papa sent me this package of rubies and emeralds given him by the Maharaja. Please take some, girls. There are ever so many more than I need...You make me ill, all of you! Ever since Sara came to this school, all any of you can think about is Sara!

SARA

(enters on landing...laughingly)
SARA

(continuing)
You summoned me, my lady?

LAVINIA

(turns her back on Sara...under her breath)
Not if it were my last act on earth, I wouldn't!
(exits up right)

SARA

(puzzled)
Did I do something wrong?

(she comes slowly down stairs into the room)

JESSIE

Don't mind Lavinia, Sara.

LAURA

She's just jealous 'cause she's not Miss Minchin's pet anymore.

TILLY

Want to play, Sara.

LOTIE

No, sit here and do embroidery with me, Sara.

ERMENGARDE

(rising)
Wait a minute, girls.

(down toward Sara)
Sara, have you read our history lesson for tomorrow?

(she hands her book to Sara)
SARA  

(lightly)  
You mean about the poor queen who just couldn't keep her head about her?  

(Becky comes in to dust)  

ERMEN GARDE  

(seriously)  
I don't know.  

(crossing to chair down left and sits down with discouraged air)  

It's so dull. And it has such awful names. I can't pronounce half of them. Myra...Myraboo... 

(as Sara starts story, Becky forgets work and listens with other girls, enraptured)  

SARA  

(helping her)  

Mirabeau. He was a count, Ermengarde, who defied King Louis the Sixteenth. He told the King's messenger: "Go tell your master that we are here by the will of the people and nothing but bayonets shall drive us out."  

(during this time, Sara has dramatically stood on the footstool, supplied her by Jessie who likes to help Sara with her theatrical effects. Girls have all stopped what they are doing to listen)
SARA
(continuing)
That gave the people courage and just three weeks later they stormed the Bastille, freed the men unjustly imprisoned...and it was the beginning of the French Revolution!

ERMENGARDE
(rising and coming toward Sara)
Why, you make it sound just like a story!

SARA
It is a story! Everything's a story. Everything in this world.

ERMENGARDE
(unimaginatively)
Everything?

SARA
You're a story, Ermengarde. I'm a story. Miss Minchin is a story.

LOTTIE
(giggling)
Miss Minchin?

LAURA
Me, too?

TILLIE
Am I a story, Sara?

SARA
Of course!

Song: YOU'RE A STORY (Sara and Girls)
(during song girls gather around Sara
to form a picture grouping...Jessie
sits on footstool. Other girls move in kneeling or seated on floor, center)

SARA
You can find stories all around you --
By the river, in a cottage, in the town.
Though these stories aren't in books,
They're in people: soldiers, cooks --
They're all stories only just not written down.
You're a story, I'm a story.

GIRLS
We're all stories?

SARA
True.
She's a story; also Laura.

GIRLS
Me? Me? Me?

SARA
Yes, you!
Life's a story, gloomy, gory,
Sad and happy, too.
You're a story.
I'm a story.

GIRLS
Me? Me? Me?

SARA
Yes, you!
(continuing)
You can find stories all around you
In the schoolroom, in the scullery, in the shed.
There's adventure and romance
In a gesture, word, or glance
More exciting far than many books you've read.
You're a story, I'm a story.

GIRLS
We're all stories?

SARA
True.
She's a story, also Dory,

GIRLS
Me? Me? Me?

SARA
Yes, you!
Mistress Mary, quite contrary,
If we only knew,
She's a story, full of glory,

GIRLS
Just like me?

SARA
Yes, you!
(during the second stanza, Miss Amelia and Miss Minchin appear on landing...Miss Amelia, dumpy, vague, rather gets
into the spirit of the song, nodding
her head, and keeping time with one
plump hand...Miss Minchin gives her a
withering look...the girls are having
too much fun and must be stopped)

MISS MINCHIN

Young ladies! Young ladies!
(claps her hands for attention)

Such behavior. This is our quiet time. You know our rules...books,
sewing, letter-writing...
(coming down steps towards Sara)
(girls begin edging away from Sara,
some toward couch, some to chair)

SARA
(rising)

I'm sorry, Miss Minchin. I started to tell them a story and...

MISS AMELIA
(weakly)

It was just a story, Sister...

SARA

It was really all my fault.

MISS MINCHIN
(changing)

Oh...well, Sara, my dear...if it was just a story...just be certain
that it had some educational value.

SARA

Yes, Miss Minchin.
(she replaces piano stool)
(Becky exits up right)

BARROWS

(this is Mr. Barrows, the lawyer... Off)

I'm here to see Miss Minchin. Most essential. Must see her at once.

BECKY

(off)

Yes, sir. Just a moment, sir.

(pause...enter up right)

If you please, mum.

(crossing to right center)

There's a gentleman to see you, Miss Minchin, mum.

MISS MINCHIN

Really? Run along, then, girls. No, not you, Amelia!

(Amelia has started for stairs with girls but turns and stands near chair at her sister's call)

Show him in.

(girls exit, up stairway except for Sara and Ermengarde who go off right)

BECKY

(in doorway up right)

Mr. Barrows, mum.

BARROWS

(a no-nonsense man, balding, brisk, business-like...entering up right...)
BARROWS

Of the legal firm of Barrows, Skipworth, Bodley and Basset.

(approaching Miss Amelia)

Miss Minchin, I presume.

MISS AMELIA

(looking at her sister in alarm...weakly)

Oh, no, I...

MISS MINCHIN

(setting him right)

I am Miss Minchin. That is my sister, Miss Amelia Minchin.

BARROWS

Quite so. Should have realized.

(extends hand to Miss Minchin who
takes it coldly, barely touching
fingertips)

MISS MINCHIN

Be seated, Mr. Barrows. We have had some correspondence from you, of
of course, since Captain Crewe has entrusted his lovely daughter to our
care. I suppose you are here with another of his generous checks to
reimburse me, and my sister, of course, for the many little extras we
have purchased in order to make Sara happy here. Amelia, the accounts
are in the writing desk...I believe it comes to...

(Amelia starts to rise)

BARROWS

Brings me to the point of my visit, ma'am. Afraid there won't be any
more checks from the late Captain Crewe, ma'am.
MISS MINCHIN

You can't mean he's sending for her already...he said it would be for at least a year...

(suddenly comprehending)

The late Captain Crewe...you don't mean...

BARROWS

I do mean, ma'am. Captain Crewe is dead.

MISS AMELIA

Oh, mercy!

MISS MINCHIN

(calculating)

The poor child...an orphan...how shocking...so sudden...

BARROWS

Yes. Quite sudden. Jungle fever...terrible...uncivilized country, India. So many foreigners.

MISS MINCHIN

And I suppose you are here to put Sara's inheritance in my hands...

Quite right, isn't it, Amelia. We'll have to provide a home for the dear girl, with suitable recompense, naturally. She will need our care more than ever.

(she puts her hankerchief to her eye...but it is difficult to squeeze out a tear)

BARROWS

You are right about that last, ma'am. She will certainly need your care. No relatives...none at all, I understand.
MISS MINCHIN
(delighted at the prospect of a share in the inheritance)
Her home, then, will be here...for as long as she wishes...Amelia...perhaps you should fetch the poor girl. Have her dress in black...you needn't tell her why.

MISS AMELIA
(wiping eyes as she exits)
Yes, sister.

BARROWS
Yes. She will need care. Feel better to know that you are willing to assume responsibility. Otherwise, she'd simply be a charity case.

MISS MINCHIN
(not understanding)
Charity case...certainly not...why her father was a wealthy man...Sara will inherit...

BARROWS

(rising)
However, pleased to know she is in your hands. The firm, of course, could do nothing for her. Matter of fact, Barrows, Skipworth, Bodley and Basset is out a pretty penny as it is.

MISS MINCHIN
(rising)
But...that's impossible. Captain Crewe assured me that...
Yes, he did have money...too much of it, ma'am. And he was too trusting. Invested it with a friend...investments went bad...friend left the country...not entirely honest, this friend, if you ask me...the poor young Captain already weak from malaria...simply died of the shock. Pity, ma'am...but there you are.

MISS MINCHIN

I don't know what you mean -- there I am.

BARROWS

There you are...left with the young daughter, mean to say.

MISS MINCHIN

It's monstrous. Utterly monstrous. He had no right...

BARROWS

Even paupers have a right to die, ma'am.

MISS MINCHIN

But to leave the child on my hand...without a farthing...

BARROWS

(seeing an opportunity to leave)

Exactly ma'am. That sums it up rather nicely. Well, good-day ma'am. I'll report to the firm that the child is in...good...that is...adequate...hands.

(at door)

Good-day.

(exits up right)

MISS MINCHIN

Monstrous. Gross imposition...utter irresponsibility on the part of the Captain.
MISS MINCHIN

(continuing)
(calling)
Amelia! Whatever is keeping her all this time?

SARA

(off)
You make it sound so mysterious, Miss Amelia... a gentleman here to see Miss Minchin about Papa. It's like an exciting story... perhaps he has had a sudden change of circumstance... and is to take me back with him sooner than he had planned... perhaps...

(enters from down right, Miss Amelia follows her)
But... I don't see the gentleman... what is it all about, Miss Minchin?

(Sara has doll in arms, sets it on corner of couch as she enters)

MISS MINCHIN
The gentleman has left... irresponsible fool!

MISS AMELIA
Mr. Barrows, sister?

MISS MINCHIN
No, you stupid goose. Not Mr. Barrows, Captain Crewe!

SARA

(startled)
Miss Minchin, you can't be speaking about my papa...

(pause, looking at her, realizing Minchin's completely changed attitude)
SARA

(continuing)
Something has happened. Something has happened to Papa.

(imploring)
What is it, Miss Minchin? Tell me. Tell me!

(tries to take hold of Miss Minchin's hands...Miss Minchin shakes her off)

MISS MINCHIN

(in a terrible voice)
Yes. Something has happened to your papa. He is dead.

SARA

(hardly believing her)
Oh.

(she sinks down on chair, down right)
(sobbing)
Oh, Papa, Papa, Papa!

MISS AMELIA

(going to Sara and patting her shoulder)
There, there, dear.

(almost bravely defying Miss Minchin)
Sister, you might have told her in a more gentle fashion...It's a shock for the poor child.

MISS MINCHIN

Yes, it's a shock. It's a shock for me to realize that I am out hundreds of pounds...all the money I have spent on this girl...for her pony...her winter clothing...silk hangings over her bed...
SARA

(trying to control herself)
I don't care about the money...you can take it...all of it...I don't care about anything...except that my papa is dead!

MISS MINCHIN

Listen to the princess talking about money.

(cruelly)
You have no money, Sara...none at all. Your papa lost everything before he died.

MISS AMELIA

(trying to stop her)
Sister...

MISS MINCHIN

Hush, Amelia. And I shall never be paid a cent of what I have spent for you here. I've been robbed. Robbed!

SARA

(controlling herself with effort)
My papa did not mean to rob you. He was fine...and honest.

MISS MINCHIN

Whether he meant to rob me or not is immaterial. He entrusted his money to a friend who lost it in foolish investments. It was done and I am left with you on my hands. Do you understand?

SARA

Yes. I understand.

(picks up doll and hugs doll to her for comfort)

(softly)
SARA

(continuing)
Papa, Papa!

MISS MINCHIN

Stop crying...and put that ridiculous doll down.

SARA

(holding doll defiantly)

Emily was the last thing Papa gave me before he left me here. I shan't put her down.

MISS MINCHIN

You will have no time for dolls now. Everything will be different. You have no relatives, no friends, no money. Your pony and carriage will be sold at once...and your most extravagant frocks. Perhaps I'll realize a portion of your father's debt to me. You will wear your plainest and oldest frocks. You're like Becky, now. If you are to remain here you will have to earn your own way. You will have to find some way to make yourself useful.

(Sara looks at her but says nothing)

What are you staring at? Are you so dull that you don't understand what has happened? You are quite alone in the world and have no one to do anything for you unless I choose to keep you here.

MISS AMELIA

Sister, of course we'll keep her. What would become of her?

MISS MINCHIN

(with silencing look at Amelia)

Sara, listen to me. If you work hard and prepare to make yourself useful I shall let you stay here. You are only a child, but you are a
MISS MINCHIN

(continuing)
sharp child and you pick up things almost without being taught. You speak French very well...you may be able to help with the younger pupils, at least.

SARA

(matter-of-factly)
I can speak French better than you. I always spoke it with my papa in India.

MISS MINCHIN

Don't be impudent. You will have to improve your manners if you expect to earn your bread. You are not a parlor boarder now. If you do not please me, I shall send you away. You will have no home but the street.

(Sara rises and starts to leave)
Wait. Don't you intend to thank me?

SARA

What for?

MISS MINCHIN

For my kindness to you. For my kindness in giving you a home.

SARA

(going closer to Miss Minchin)
You are not kind.

(bursting out)
You are not kind.

(she walks slowly toward down right exit)
MISS MINCHIN

Sara!

(Sara turns)

You are not to go in there. That is not the way to your room.

SARA

Where am I to go?

MISS MINCHIN

You are to sleep in the attic. There is a small room next to Becky's. Come, Amelia. We will sort through Sara's things. What we cannot sell will be sent to the garret.

MISS AMELIA

But sister...

MISS MINCHIN

Come, Amelia!

(exeunt, Amelia following Miss Minchin and weakly protesting)

SARA

(picks up Emily)

Did you hear what the wicked sorceress said, Emily? Did you hear it? We have been put under an evil spell...we have been banished from our rightful kingdom...we've...

(stops...hugging Emily close)

Oh, Emily...I can't keep pretending. We're all alone, Emily. Papa is dead!

(she turns slowly and starts up stairway as curtain falls)
ACT TWO

Scene Two

Several Months Later...Sara's Attic Room...bleak, pinched-looking, slanted ceiling at rear with skylight over window seat...old brass bedstead along right wall, shabby bedding. A chair and table quite rickety-looking and in need of paint at left center in front of an un-used fireplace. Door up left. An old trunk at foot of bed with doll Emily propped against it.

Enter Sara through door up left. She crosses slowly toward bed, sits, takes off hat, coat which is threadbare and wet from rain, inspects shoes and removes them. She hangs the coat on bedpost, gets shabby slippers from under bed then crosses down left to chair and table and sinks down in chair evidently exhausted. There is a sound of tapping on wall up left. Sara listens...then rises and cautiously taps back against left wall upstage of fireplace. There is an answering tap and then after a pause the door opens to reveal Becky. She is carrying a plate of food.

BECKY

I heard you comin' up the stairs, Miss, and I knew you'd missed your
BECKY

(continuing)
dinner again so I brung you something.

SARA

Oh, Becky, how kind you are...

BECKY

It ain't much, Miss. Jist...

SARA

Becky, you must stop calling me "Miss". You know you're my only friend now...we're both in the same position.

BECKY

(enthusiastically)

Both prisoners of the evil witch, Minchinska, ain't we just, Miss... Sara?

SARA

Held in her wicked spell...and awaiting rescue by a handsome prince.

(she takes the plate from Becky
and sits down at table. Becky
sits on hearth)

(eating a bite)

Oh, Becky, what magnificent viands thou hast procured...nectar and ambrosia, verily!

BECKY

Strange, ain't it, Sara...when I sneaked them from Cook, I could have swore they was cold potatoses and a bit of boiled mutton.

SARA

Look again, Rebecca...and behold the transformation.
SARA

(continuing)

(laughing as she takes another bite)

Mighty are the powers of hunger.

BECKY

It's true, Sara. Many's the time I've cleared away tea for the young ladies and they've hardly touched a nibble.

SARA

Well, we know how to appreciate the taste of cold cabbage and thin porridge, don't we, Becky?

BECKY

Yes'm...when we're lucky enough to git it.

(pause)

Where did they send you today? You was awful late getting home.

SARA

Uptown to buy some crocheting thread...to the chemists for some rubbing ointment for Miss Amelia's sciatica...to the green grocers for turnips for Cook...my boots are a pretty sight, I can tell you, what with the rain that's been falling all day...to the bakery for some more of those little tea cakes...you know how they are when they send me out.

BECKY

Don't I, though!

SARA

And today they had a list that went the length of the Thames River.

(stage darkens slightly and we hear voices of Cook, Miss Minchin)
and Miss Amelia off right)

**VOICES**

(off)

Sara! Sara! Sara!

(Cook, Miss Minchin and Miss Amelia enter from down right and point menacingly toward Sara who stands down left center)

**Song:** SARA, YOU'RE LATE (Cook, Miss Minchin, Miss Amelia, Sara)

**MISS MINCHIN**

(speaking)

Sara, you're late! Don't dawdle!

(singing)

And mind you keep account of what you pay.

I need darning thread and carrots,

Weigh each one and check its merits.

Run along, you know we haven't got all day!

**COOK**

I must have a jar of mustard;

Some vanilla for the custard;

Also barley, beans, and curds without the whey.

**MISS AMELIA**

I need salve for my lumbago,

In my back and arm and leg, oh!

And some tint to keep my hair from going gray!
MISS MINCHIN

(speaking)
And while you're about it, there're some letters to be posted.

(singing)
And mind you keep account of what you pay!
I need ink and blotting paper
And a butter-paddle-shaper--

SARA

(despairing)
How can I keep track of everything they say?

COOK, MISSSES AMELIA & MINCHIN

(speaking)
Hurry now! If you're late, no supper! Be quick miss. Never saw such a lazy good-for-nothing!

(lights fade on three as they exit and comes up on Sara with Becky seated on hearth, arms around knees)

BECKY
And did you get everything? Did you remember?

SARA
Yes, finally, Becky. I had everything. I felt as if I'd walked 700 leagues -- and without the 7-league boots to help me. And then - Oh Becky - what an adventure I had!

BECKY
A story, Sara?

SARA
Yes - a story - listen...
(light changes again...Sara suits action
to words, dragging along with heavy
shopping bag...very tired)

SARA

(continuing)
I was so tired...and so hungry I thought I couldn't go another step.
I was looking at the ground trying to keep my feet as far from mud-
puddles as possible...and then...

(speaking in role)
What is that? It's...

(stooping down)
It can't be...a sixpence! I've found a sixpence...all my own. It
must be magic. I've never found a coin before...it's been so long
since I had any money to spend.

(walks a moment...sniffing)
What a delicious smell. It must be...it's the bake shop! And there
are buns in the window...for sixpence!

(beggar child can be seen down right
sitting in front of bake shop...she
moves aside as Sara goes toward shop
entrance)

BAKER WOMAN
What can I do for you, young miss?

SARA

Please...I'll take some buns...for sixpence.

BAKER WOMAN
There you are, missy.
SARA

(faintly)
Excuse me...you've put in too many...you've given me 6 buns...and well...
...I can pay for but four.

BAKER WOMAN

Never mind, missy. Two of them's day-old.

(accepting coin)

Thanky, missy.

SARA

(turns to exit...sees beggar child)

(to self)

She's...hungrier than I am. I'll give her one or two.

(taking bun from sack)

Are you hungry?

CHILD

(hoarsely, grabbing for bun)

Ain't I jist?

(stuffs bun in mouth)

SARA

(giving her another bun)

How long since you've eaten?

CHILD

Don't know. They wouldn't give me nuthin' yesterday...nor the day before...

(Sara continues to hand buns to child
until she has one left...and reluctantly

goes off...Child continues eating and
Baker Woman

Blessed if she didn’t give them all away save one for herself. And I’m sure she could have eaten them...all...she looked that hungry, so she did.

(to child)

Come inside, child. Perhaps you can warm yourself by the oven a while.

(child shuffles past Baker Woman)

Bless me if I won’t try to help the youngster...for that young miss’ sake.

(light fades on Baker scene...Sara is now back by her chair, talking to Becky)

Becky

Oh, Sara, that was a good story! Do you think it has a happy ending?

Sara

When I looked back, the Baker Woman was showing the child inside the shop...so you see there are fine people in this world, Becky...in spite of the wicked sorceress. And then, just as I was nearing home, I met Ram Dass.

Becky

Ram Dass?

Sara

Remember? The lascar, the servant of the Indian Gentleman who lives in the house next door.

(light change...Sara walking toward down left...lascar enter from off left...)
Sara has her shopping bag of packages again...
looking very worn)

RAM DASS
(bowing)
Mem Sahib. Allow me to help you with the many packages. Too many for a young miss, Mem Sahib.

SARA
Oh, thank you, Ram Dass. I am tired. I've been on so many errands today.

RAM DASS
Ram Dass is aware of this. In my country, young miss would be treated more kindly.

SARA
I know that. I used to live in India...when my papa was alive. He died there...of fever.

RAM DASS
Very bad...fever. My master still suffers from it.

SARA
How is your master today? I've only seen him once or twice and you've lived here for months now...I remember it was just after I had the news about my papa that...

RAM DASS
Yes, Mem Sahib, we changed our habitation - moved here to London - my master and I, to hope he would regain his health. But Sahib Carrisford still very weak.

SARA
Mr. Carrisford - Is that your master's name.
RAM DASS

Yes, Mem Sahib - very fine person...

SARA

Tell your master I hope he'll be quite well again soon. Goodbye then, Ram Dass. Namaste meherbani.

RAM DASS

Namaste accha.

(black out...back to Becky and Sara in attic)

BECKY

Weren't you frightened to be close to him...He's so strange-looking...

SARA

Ram Dass isn't strange to me, Becky. It makes me feel almost as if I were back in India with my papa when I see him. I'll introduce you to him some day.

BECKY

Lor, miss, I'd be that scared...him with his funny hat and pointy boots and all.

(sound - knock on door)

BECKY

(Frightened)

Oh, Lor...what if it's Miss Minchin?

(she looks around frantically for a place to hide)

SARA

(sternly)

Becky! We aren't doing anything wrong. What if it were Miss Minchin?
SARA

(continuing)
She has no right to keep us from visiting... even if she does have us under her wicked spell!

(nevertheless she goes cautiously to door)

Yes, who is it?

(door opens and it is Ermengarde in night gown and robe and carrying a huge stack of books)

SARA

Ermengarde. Come in.

(Ermengarde comes into room)

ERMENGAARDE

(disconsolately)

Oh, Sara... he's sent another boxful.

(she puts books on trunk)

It's terrible to have a father like mine. And he expects me to read them all... and to be able to answer his questions about the stories, and...

(Sara is tensely fingering books, picking up first one and then another... with controlled excitement)

SARA

Never mind, Ermengarde. I have a plan.

ERMENGAARDE

(sitting down on trunk, glumly)
ERMENGARDE

(continuing)
I don't see how anything will help me. I'll never be able to read them all...never...and even if I did, I wouldn't remember what's in them.

SARA
Then listen, Ermengarde. I'll read them...I'll read them and then tell you what's in them so that you will remember.

ERMENGARDE
Do you really think you could?

SARA
I know I could. There's nothing I'd rather do than read...and I always remember. Oh, Ermengarde...you don't know how lucky you are!

(picking up books)
Gulliver's Travels, The Three Musketeers, Ivanho...Oliver Twist...
What richness!

BECKY

(creeping nearer)
Could I...listen when you tell the stories, Sara?

SARA
Of course.

ERMENGARDE
And my papa sends me money every month, too, Sara. I'll give you some of it...for helping me.

SARA
I don't want your money, Ermengarde...I just want your books!

ERMENGARDE
Then keep them...and when you've finished these...
SARA

I'll tell them to you. Oh, Ermengarde, if you knew what an escape books are... When things have gone wrong during the day... I come up here and can forget being tired... or hungry or cold even... just by reading a story.

Song: **YOU CAN ALWAYS GET AWAY IN BOOKS** (Sara and Girls)

SARA

I sometimes think I cannot bear this life another hour.
I've been beaten, boxed and sent for miles through rain.
In this attic I'm a princess who's been locked up in a tower.
And all my cries for help have been in vain.

But... when Cook's in fury and Minchin a rage
With a look like a lioness pacing her cage --
When escape seems impossible, punishment sure
Much greater and harsher than I can endure --

There's a way to elude the demands and the looks --
You can always get away in books.
(as Sara's song continues, other pupils silently come in through door upstage
left pantomining "Be Quiet" with fingers
on lips to those who follow in until room is surrounded by pupils)
SARA

(continuing)
When you know you'll never master quite
The 12 times 9 times ten
When Pythagoras and Euclid seem obscure
When Latin nouns' declensions are a fuzzy blur again
And you can't recall which king, what date for sure --

Then follow Tom Sawyer, Huck on their raft
Become with Mad Hatter a little bit daft --
Sail on a whaler with Ishmael far,
Climb a tall mountain, alight on a star --

There's a way to escape from the chores and the looks --
You can always get away in books.

When Miss Minchin and Amelia are relentless in demands
When I've hardly time to button both my shoes,
When it's "Fetch me this and bring me that!" No buts or
ifs or ands...
When I'm tired of always minding p's and q's...

Then I open a cover and quite suddenly
I'm deep in a forest or out on a sea...
I'm a ruler of vassals, a waver of wands --
A slayer of dragons, a breaker of bonds...
SARA

(continuing)
You can quickly elude the commands and the looks --
You can always get away in books!
(as Sara sings last stanza, door is
suddenly flung open and Misses Minchin
and Amelia appear, joined by Lavinia)

LAVINIA

There, Miss Minchin. I told you they were all up here -- with the
Princess Sara.

(all girls react in fear and sudden
quiet...Becky gets down behind chair
down left...Sara alone faces them
fearlessly)

MISS MINCHIN

Shocking! Simply shocking! Absolutely wicked!

MISS AMELIA

(weakly)

Sister...it's not truly wicked...it's just a harmless lark.

MISS MINCHIN

Harmless lark indeed! A select seminary is not one where the pupils
are to cavort with the servants. Go down stairs at once, young ladies.
I have Lavinia to thank for alerting me to these sorry goings-ons.
Disgusting!

SARA

You're right, Miss Minchin. It is disgusting. My working hours are
governed by you...but surely I may have some time to call my own.
MISS MINCHIN

Such impertinence. I've a good mind to turn you out on the street.

SARA

It couldn't be much different from my life here.

(Miss Minchin goes to Sara and boxes her ears...Sara just stands there, not moving, a strange smile on her lips)

MISS MINCHIN

(furious at this bringing no response)

What are you staring at? What are you thinking?

SARA

I was thinking how you would feel if you found out that I were a real princess...and that you had treated me this way all this time. I was thinking how sorry you would be...not that you had been unkind...but that you had not been clever enough to recognize royalty...since you might have benefited by it.

(girls are grouped listening, fascinated at Sara's daring in speaking her mind)

LOTTIE

(giggles nervously)

(Miss Minchin glares at her)

MISS MINCHIN

I thought I told you girls to go downstairs. Go. At once!

(girls start to go)

One moment, Ermengarde. Aren't those the new books your papa sent you? Pick them up and take them back to your room. What would he think if he knew they were up in this dirty place? And as for you,
MISS MINCHIN

(continuing)

Miss, there will be no more of this partying. I shall give Cook orders that your supper for the next week will consist of only the barest rations.

SARA

I shan't find that very different. I often go without my supper now.

MISS MINCHIN

And neither Becky nor any of the pupils are to come up to your quarters again.

SARA

That's unfair, Miss Minchin to forbid my having friends. But then, you've never had any friends, I shouldn't wonder...so you can't understand those that do.

MISS MINCHIN

That will do, Sara. I've had quite enough of your impudence for one day. Good evening.

(exit)

(Sara stares after her...then slowly sits down on bed and picks up doll.

Becky who had been hiding behind chair all the time Miss Minchin was speaking comes around to Sara)

BECKY

Never you fret, Miss. I shan't pay no mind to what she's said. She never said it to me. And I'll keep on being your friend. The wicked sorceress shan't keep us apart. I don't care what she says.
Oh, Becky, you are a comfort. And we will be revenged one of these days. Suppose, Becky...suppose that Miss Minchin's spell on us were suddenly broken. Suppose this room became fine and splendid...with rich hangings on the walls...a lovely glowing fire in the fireplace... delicious little dishes of steaming viands...all our favorite things.

Song: **SUPPOSE, SUPPOSE, SUPPOSE** (Sara)

**SARA**

Suppose this room were full of charm  
Not magnificent but warm  
Suppose the walls were painted, pleasant  
Not for a king but a happy peasant.

Suppose this bed weren't a thin, cold slat  
But soft and fleecy -- as thick as that!  
Suppose there were cushions and silken spreads  
Of woven colors with golden threads.

Suppose the fire were glowing bright  
With lamps to ward off the dark of night.  
Suppose on the table appeared a feast  
Of nectar, ambrosia...beef pie at least.

Suppose there were armchairs and book-filled shelves  
With tales of warlocks and gnomes and elves.  
Suppose we were no longer scullery maids  
But in a dream world where nothing fades.
SARA

(continuing)

When clouds have parted to show the blue
Where every day is a wish come true
With lovely dresses and fine new hose
Oh just suppose it...suppose...suppose!

(Sara sits dreaming on bed for a moment, hugging knees to her chin. Finally with a sigh blows out candle near bed and lies down to sleep. Becky watches her a moment...then goes out softly and closes the door. There is a moment's pause. Then we see through the skylight the figure of Ram Dass. He quietly opens skylight...looks to be sure that Sara is sleeping...then turns and brings several large boxes into the room. Noiselessly he works a transformation in the room...picture on wall...hangings...a large Japanese fan tucked into niche in wall...cloth for table...covered dishes...arranges a fire in fireplace...a vase of greenery on mantle...lays out a lovely wool plaid dress with stockings, shoes, a pretty shawl. Puts a bright quilt gently over sleeping Sara and turns on a lamp by table...quietly steals out through skylight again. Sara stirs a little in her sleep.)

SARA

(sleepily)

Suppose...suppose...

(she slowly sits up in bed and looks
around amazed at changes...touching quilt)

SARA

Suppose there were cushions and silken spreads...
(picks up cushion from foot of bed)

Of woven colors and golden threads...
(slowly walks around room touching articles here and there...At last stops before hearth)

Where every day is a wish-come-true...
(she sits down by table...lifts cover from a dish and cautiously tastes contents)

SARA

(wonderingly)

I can't be dreaming. In a dream I wouldn't be able to taste the food. It would surely melt away.
(looking around once more)

I don't know who you are...magician...or genie...or fairy godmother...

but thank you. Thank you!

(she sits eating slowly and savoring her good fortune...Ram Dass is seen once more at skylight looking on in satisfied manner)

CURTAIN
ACT THREE

Scene One

Several Days Later...The Schoolroom Parlor...Girls are seated on chairs and couch, one girl on arm of chair...

Lavinia somewhat apart from the others.

LOTTIE

Did you notice what Sara was wearing this morning in class, Jessie?

JESSIE

Yes...she looked so much nicer in good clothes again. Her old ones were growing so shabby.

LAURA

And much too small for her since she's grown taller. I guess she hasn't had anything new since her father died. I wonder where her new dresses came from.

LAVINIA

(spitefully)

She probably stole them.

ERMENGARDE

Be quiet, Lavinia. Someone sent them to her as presents.

JESSIE

How nice!

LOTTIE

I wonder who.

LAURA

I'm glad. She certainly needed them.

LAVINIA

Who'd send her anything?
ERMENGARDE
She doesn't know. They were in a package addressed to "The Little Girl in the Attic".

Lottie
How did she know they were meant for her? They might have been for Becky.

Lavinia
Becky isn't a little girl... she's just a servant.

ERMENGARDE
That's just what Sara said... that they might have been for Becky, I mean. In fact she gave her some of the things.

Jessie
That's like her.

(Becky enters with feather duster and works silently)

Lavinia
She's trying to act like a princess again. Imagine being friends with a serving girl.

(Becky hears this but tries not to show it)

ERMENGARDE
Hush, Lavinia. You'll hurt her feelings.

Lavinia
Feelings! Don't be silly.

(sits down insolently with book, near where Becky is dusting)

(Sara enters at stair landing, holding monkey)
LAURA
Sara! What is it!

LOTTE
Oh, how cunning!

LAVINIA
Two of a kind.

ERMENGARDE
Oh, Sara... did it come back?

SARA
He climbed from his window into mine again... and this time he simply would not go back. There, Monkey, don't be frightened. They're not fierce giants, just girls. They won't hurt you.

BECKY
Lor', Miss... ain't you afraid he might bite you?

SARA
Of course not, Becky. He's been living with the Indian gentleman and the lascar for many years. He's quite tame. Watch him nibble this bit of cake.

(taking a small piece of cake from tea table plate)

LAURA
What are you going to do with him?

LOTTE
Couldn't we keep him?

SARA
I wish we could... he'd be such company when I'm up there in my attic. But I know his master must be anxious about him. I'll take him over
SARA
(continuing)
there directly.

JESSIE

Oh, must you?

MISS MINCHIN

(off)
Amelia, you are absolutely ridiculous. I do believe you have goose feathers and dandelion down in place of brains.

MISS AMELIA

But sister, I merely said, I thought you should allow Sara more privileges now that she’s dressing so much neater...after all she was your star pupil...

MISS MINCHIN

(entering)
Oh, she’s sharp enough...but absolutely no respect for...

(turning to Amelia, seeing girls there)
We’ll continue the discussion another time.

(girls scurry about to find a hiding place for the monkey...Becky gets under table which is covered with a cloth which hangs to floor...reaches out hands...Sara hands her the monkey)

MISS MINCHIN

Well...have you finished your errands already, Sara?

SARA

Yes, Miss Minchin.
LAVINIA
If she has nothing else to do, I need some more chocolates...and some fresh ribbons for my camisoles.

SARA
You might have told me when I left this morning, Lavinia...It's a long walk to the sweet shop.

MISS MINCHIN
I trust you are not complaining, Sara. You should be pleased when there are things to be fetched. Otherwise we should not require you here.

MISS AMELIA
But Sister, you know she's been helping with the younger pupils. She teaches them almost as well as I do.

MISS MINCHIN
Hush, Amelia. Sara does an adequate job...nothing more. And if this insolent attitude does not cease I fear she may teach the little girls some bad manners. I should...

(monkey suddenly reaches out and grabs Miss Minchin's skirt)

MISS MINCHIN
(shrieking)
What was that?

MISS AMELIA
What was what, Sister?

MISS MINCHIN
Something grabbed me. It...it felt like a tiny hand.
SARA

(realizing what it is and trying to figure
a way to retrieve monkey)

Why Miss Minchin...I didn't know you could suppose things, too.

(other girls are clustered about, trying
not to giggle)

MISS MINCHIN

I am not supposing! Oh! There it is again! Amelia...look under that
table!

MISS AMELIA

(frightened)
Oh, Sister...what if it should grab at me, too?

MISS MINCHIN

Amelia, do as I say!

MISS AMELIA

Oh...It's such a way to stoop down...I'll be quite out of breath!

MISS MINCHIN

Do you good, Amelia. If you did more stooping, you'd have a nice
straight form as I do. You're entirely too plump.

MISS AMELIA

(trying to bend down...monkey reaches
out hand)
Oh! Oh, mercy! There's a beast down there. It's furry.

MISS MINCHIN

Nonsense Amelia. You're imagining things. Get on with it.

LAVINIA

(maliciously)
IAVINIA

(continuing)

Why don't you ask Sara to find out what it is, Miss Minchin?

MISS MINCHIN

A splendid idea. Sara... look under the table and tell me what's under there.

SARA

Certainly, Miss Minchin.

(she bends down, motioning Becky to go out from under the table on far side which Becky does... other girls help to hide her as she gets out from under)

SARA

That's odd.

MISS MINCHIN

What, girl? Speak up!

SARA

There's nothing there at all.

(Becky is by now upstage right, partly concealed by Jessie, Lottie, Laura and Ermengarde)

MISS MINCHIN

I don't believe it!

SARA

(lifting table cloth to reveal area under table)

See?
MISS MINCHIN

Most mysterious. I certainly felt something.

(sighting Becky)

Becky, what are you doing in here.

BECKY

(trying to curtsy with hands behind back)

Just dusting, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN

At this time in the afternoon? Get back to the scullery!

BECKY

(quite relieved)

Yes, Miss Minchin.

(backs out of door up right)

SARA

Perhaps I'd best go with her...

LAVINIA

What about my chocolates?

MISS MINCHIN

Well, for once, Sara, you don't need reminding about your duties. The chocolates can wait until morning, Lavinia. Get along then, Sara. I'm sure Cook needs you to help before supper.

(all the girls except Lavinia look at each other in a spirit of conspiracy and smothered laughter as Miss Minchin and Amelia go off left and curtain falls)
ACT THREE

Scene Two

Study of Thomas Carrisford. It is a pleasant, warm, richly furnished room, with bookshelves, fireplace, gold-framed paintings on wall. Door up right. Carrisford is seated in armchair near fireplace, knees covered by robe. He is a handsome man of about 45, normally very active, now invalided and impatient with his ill health. He is kind, impetuous, rather a romantic, but whose sense of humor restores his balance.

At rise he is reading but seems unable to concentrate, distracted by something that is weighing on him.

At length he puts down his book impatiently.

(there is the sound of a door knocker, off...Carrisford listens intently)

PARKER

(off)

The home of Mr. Thomas Carrisford, I assume. My card. My arrival is not unanticipated.

RAM DASS

(off)

One moment, sir. I will inform Sahib Carrisford.

(enter, up right)

A Mr. Parker has arrived, Sahib.
RAM DASS

(continuing)

(gives card to Carrisford)

He reports that you expect him.

CARRISFORD

I do indeed, Ram Dass... about six days ago. He's been doing some investigating for me.

RAM DASS

Investigating, Sahib?

CARRISFORD

Yes, yes, Ram Dass. In regard to the whereabouts of Captain Crewe's daughter. He may have found out something.

RAM DASS

Ah, Sahib. You will wish to see him at once. I will conduct him this way.

(Ram Dass exits. Carrisford waits impatiently)

(off)

This way Mr. Parker. The Sahib awaits you.

PARKER

(off)

Assuredly, my man. You should have conducted me in immediately.

(Ram Dass ushers Parker into the room... Parker is a rather small, bumptious man, impressed with his own importance... never uses one word if six will do... he is dressed rather loudly... has risen from clerical work into being head
of his investigating firm and feels that
his dress must reflect his position...
a trace of Cockney accent can't quite be
disguised)

CARRISFORD

(half rises as Parker enters)

Good afternoon, Mr. Parker. Please be seated.

PARKER

Good day, Mr. Carrisford, good day, sir. And thank you, sir.

(sits)

CARRISFORD

You have news, I hope.

PARKER

News, yes, Mr. Carrisford...but I fear our task is still ahead of us --
still on the horizon...perhaps within sight...yet elusive...

(during this scene, Ram Dass exits, returns
with tea tray from which he serves unobtrus-
ively...then remains up stage, ready if needed)

CARRISFORD

(impatiently)

Get to the point, please, Mr. Parker. Was there any trace of the
child?

PARKER

(takes large envelope from coat pocket,
extracts paper from it which he
ceremoniously unfolds)

On this sheet, Mr. Carrisford, is a list of schools...Parisienne
Academies considered as institutions of learning wherein the late Captain Crewe may have situated his daughter before his lamentable demise. I have perused these schools...écoles, as we say on the continent...leaving as the saying goes no brick unscrutinized, no tile uninvestigated, no stone un...
PARKER

(continuing)
covered seventeen schools; Mr. Carrisford -- a matter of two and a
half week's work...diligent work, sir. The most exclusive schools...
goes without saying.

CARRISFORD

And...?

PARKER

There was no one resembling the Captain's daughter in the slightest...
and no child by the name of Sara Crewe.

CARRISFORD

Another hope gone. I doubt that I shall ever find her.

PARKER

Come, come, Mr. Carrisford -- we must not lose faith. We must set our
sites on further shores...more distant vistas. Perhaps a second search
in the suburbs of Paris...

CARRISFORD

(without hope)
Possibly...possibly. Oh, if I had only not been ill myself at the time
poor Ralph Crewe died, I'd have found out definitely in which boarding
school he had placed Sara. It's a mess, Parker. I feel so guilty
every time I think of the events of the past year.

PARKER

Oh, now, sir, blaming yourself is no good; you were ill yourself, as
you say...in the Valley of the Shadow, as it were...too sick to
realize what had happened, actually.
CARRISFORD

It's no excuse for my not having thought until a few weeks ago of the fact that Crewe had a child. And she may be in need.

PARKER

Nonsense, Mr. Carrisford. Surely whoever is in charge of the school where the girl is would continue to care for her properly. No woman... and certainly not the headmistress of a school...would turn an orphaned pupil into the street...

CARRISFORD

I hope you're right, Parker. If only I could feel sure she were not being mistreated...

PARKER

Come, come, sir. You mustn't let such thoughts prey upon you. We are not living in the Dark Ages...We're at the dawn of the Twentieth Century. Remember, these are modern times -- This is 1901, sir, nineteen hundred and four!

CARRISFORD

Still there are needy children. I see them every time I ride out in my carriage...huddled on street corners...or in doorways. Matter of fact, there's even a child working at the school next door but one, who looks hungry most of the time.

RAM DASS

(who has come upon an idea)

Sahib...

CARRISFORD

Ram Dass and I have been playing a sort of game...brightening up her bleak little room in the attic. Right, Ram Dass?
Correct, Sahib. I have encountered her occasionally on the street, Mr. Parker. Always she has looked cold...tired...hungry. But, Sahib Carrisford, I...

CARRISFORD

The roofs of the two houses slant toward each other so closely that it's been a simple matter for Ram Dass to step from our attic skylight through hers...We've been surprising her with small gifts when she has been out on errands.

RAM DASS

Sahib...

PARKER

Very thoughtful, Mr. Carrisford, but to return to Paris...metaphorically speaking...we will require additional funds, of course. However, no expense would be too great, as you yourself have said, no amount...

RAM DASS

Excuse, a moment, Mr. Parker...Excuse, Sahib...I have had a thought in regard to the missing child.

PARKER

(somewhat affronted)

My good man, we were speaking...

CARRISFORD

(amused by Parker's attitude, interested by Ram Dass)

Forgive the interruption, Parker. Ram Dass' ideas are generally worth listening to...and he does have one great virtue...
PARKER
Virtue, sir?

CARRISFORD
He only speaks when he has something to say. Yes, Ram Dass?

RAM DASS
My thought, Sahib, is to question whether you have inquired at the seminary adjacent to our home for Captain Crewe's young miss.

CARRISFORD
(slowly)
No...

PARKER
But you informed us, Mr. Carrisford, that you were certain she had been taken to school in Paris...

CARRISFORD
Yes...you see, Crewe's wife had been French...and I recall he had said he wanted Sara to keep up the language...the culture...

PARKER
Well, then?

CARRISFORD
But it is an idea. What irony if we had been neglecting the place next here and then should find her there!

(growing excited)
Ram Dass, fetch my hat and coat!

PARKER
No need for that, Mr. Carrisford...we will be pleased to continue the search in London...we will go over immediately.
CARRISFORD

No! This time I wish to make the inquiry myself!

RAM DASS

Excuse, Sahib. Ram Dass will request the ladies of the school to step this way. Better for Sahib to stay quiet. It is not healthful to go from a warm room into the cold air.

PARKER

After all, Mr. Carrisford, you're barely over your long siege with malaria. I shouldn't chance it.

CARRISFORD

(setting back, but impatient)

Very well.

(he hastily scribbles a note)

Ram Dass, give this to the ladies in charge of the school. Ask them if they could spare a few moments to discuss this with me. Tell them it is urgent.

RAM DASS

It shall be done, Sahib. I go at once.

(exit as curtain)
ACT THREE

Scene Three

Backdrop showing row of houses as in Act One,
Scene One. Enter Ram Dass from left. He goes
up steps to Miss Minchin's...knocks on door.
There is a pause and Amelia opens the door.

MISS AMELIA

(quavering)

Yes. What is it?

RAM DASS

Mem Sahib...my master has given me this to deliver. He wishes to meet
with you.

MISS AMELIA

(reading note)

Meet with me...oh...oh, my!

(calling)

Sister! Oh, Sister!

RAM DASS

I will leave. My master is awaiting you. Come, please, immediately.
My master has urgent need to discuss with you.

(bows, exits left)

MISS AMELIA

Wait, boy! Oh, dear. Whatever could he mean by that? Sister!

MISS MINCHIN

(comes into doorway)

Amelia, please cease that shouting. I can't imagine what you can be
MISS MINCHIN

(continuing)

thinking of. And why have you opened the door like a common servant?

Where was Becky? Or Sara?

MISS AMELIA

Oh, Sister, don't be angry. There's something dreadful going on...

that strange serving man...from the house next but one.

MISS MINCHIN

(snatching note)

(reading)

"It is important that I speak with you about a pupil who may be

attending your school...the child of a deceased Army Captain. An

investigator is with me, if you would be so kind as to join us here.

Thomas Carrisford." Hmmm.

MISS AMELIA

Oh, sister...what can it mean? Suppose they found out what you've
done with her...suppose...

MISS MINCHIN

Stop blubbering. You didn't tell the serving man anything, did you?

MISS AMELIA

Oh, no, sister. He just handed me the note and then disappeared.

He's so odd...so foreign looking. Oh, Sister, I'm frightened.

MISS MINCHIN

Listen Amelia...and mind you do exactly as I say.

MISS AMELIA

I always do, Sister.
MISS MINCHIN
If we don't go over there, he'll think it odd. We'll go over, but we'll tell him nothing.

MISS AMELIA
But if he asks about Sara...

MISS MINCHIN
The note said "About a pupil who may be attending..." He knows nothing, evidently...and he'll remain ignorant unless we admit to Sara's being here.

MISS AMELIA
But...

MISS MINCHIN
I don't like that about his having someone else there. Suppose for some reason he were checking into...not that we've done anything wrong...after all if we hadn't cared for her, who would have?

MISS AMELIA
It has really been charitable of you, Sister.

MISS MINCHIN
Exactly. But we will say nothing. You know nothing of any pupil...past or present...named Sara Crewe.

MISS AMELIA
Just as you say, Sister.

MISS MINCHIN
Fetch my hat and shawl.

(Amelia hesitates)

Quickly now. We'll go at once.

(Amelia disappears inside doorway...Miss
Minchin remains at door looking again at

note with a scheming expression)

(lights fade slowly to black)
ACT THREE

Scene Four
Curtain rises to reveal study once more. Parker and Carrisford as before. Ram Dass enters from up right.

CARRISFORD
(excitely)
What did they say, Ram Dass? Will they speak with us?

RAM DASS
Mem Sahib will attend quickly. I give her command.

CARRISFORD
(laughing)
I'm sure you did, Ram Dass. Your idea was a stroke of genius.

(Ram Dass bows modestly)

PARKER
Rather unusual, for a servant...

CARRISFORD
Ram Dass is more than a servant, Parker - he's a friend.

(there is a knock on outside door)

(off)

(Ram Dass quickly exits up right)

CARRISFORD
Oh, Parker...if only this leads us somewhere.

RAM DASS
(off)

Yes, Mem Sahib...come this way. Master in study.
(Ram Dass bows and shows Amelia and Miss Minchin in. Carrisford rises with difficulty and contained excitement)

CARRISFORD

The Misses Minchin, I believe?

MISS MINCHIN

That is correct.

CARRISFORD

Be seated, ladies. This is Mr. Parker.

PARKER

Most pleased, Mesdames, most pleased.

MISS MINCHIN

Would you be so kind as to inform my sister and myself as to why you have summoned us in this peremptory manner?

MISS AMELIA

(weakly)

We've been wondering...

MISS MINCHIN

Hush, Amelia. Let us have Mr. Carrisford's explanation.

CARRISFORD

I apologize, ladies, for requesting you to come to me...I've been ill and the exertion of walking even a few steps tires me.

PARKER

It's in regard to a girl who may have been enrolled at your school.

MISS MINCHIN

Seminary. Select Seminary.
PARKER

Quite so.

MISS AMELIA

(quavering)

Oh, we don't have anyone by that name.

MISS MINCHIN

(witheringly)

Amelia, wait until you are spoken to!

CARRISFORD

(puzzled)

But we haven't given you the name yet. It is Crewe...the father, since deceased, was Captain Ralph Crewe.

MISS MINCHIN

(ending interview)

Crewe? No, I'm sorry. We have no pupil by that name.

CARRISFORD

(persisting)

She'd be about 13 now...I believe Captain Crewe brought her to the school close to two years ago...dark haired...dark eyes...a sweet, intelligent face. We thought...hoped that you might have had her as a boarding student.

MISS MINCHIN

Well, there's no sense our staying any longer. Your information is obviously incorrect. Come Amelia.

(they rise...there is a knock on door,
off...Ram Dass exits)
SARA

(off)
There, Monkey, there is your friend the lascar again. Namaste, Ram Dass, ap kaisa hai!

RAM DASS
Oh, Mem Sahib... namaste, ai-ye!... wait one moment, I will inform my master...

(enters)
Sahib...the young girl...How comical...she has again returned our monkey.

CARRISFORD
That little devil escape again? Well, have her bring him in.

RAM DASS
Yes, Sahib.

(exit up right)

CARRISFORD
I brought the little fellow from India when I returned. Poor chap must be lonesome. He's gone across to the room in the garret several times now. I've been wanting to meet the young girl who lives there. She's been nice enough to return him.

(Amelia starts to speak... Miss Minchin hushes her)

CARRISFORD
(to Sara in doorway)

Come in, my dear.

SARA

Thank you, sir.
MISS MINCHIN

(astounded)

Sara! The idea of your coming into this gentleman's house.

CARRISFORD

There, there, Miss Minchin. I invited her.

SARA

Wo yaha hun.

RAM DASS

(as he takes monkey from Sara)

Tum utthar mat jao; idthar ao!

MISS AMELIA

What's she saying, sister? Is it French?

MISS MINCHIN

Well... I knew you were fair in French. I didn't know you spoke other foreign tongues. Now, this is quite enough of an intrusion. Come home with us at once. We're just leaving.

CARRISFORD

You speak Hindustani... What... how?

SARA

I often spoke it with my ayah... and to the lascars in our home.

CARRISFORD

You... have lived in India?

MISS MINCHIN

Sara, you are to go back immediately.

(takes her arm)
SARA

Excuse me, Miss Minchin. The Indian Gentleman has asked me something.

(shaking free of arm)

Yes. I lived there with my papa...until he brought me to London nearly two years ago.

MISS AMELIA

(at door with Miss Minchin)

Oh, Sister...he's going to find out who she is.

MISS MINCHIN

(silencing her)

Be still.

(to Carrisford)

Yes, Sara helps us out at the seminary...does errands...nothing difficult you understand...teaches the younger children.

CARRISFORD

(paying no attention to Miss Minchin)

And you were brought to work...at the school?

SARA

Oh no, sir. Though it's been so long I've nearly forgotten. I was a pupil. That is, at first.

CARRISFORD

What do you mean, at first?

SARA

When my papa brought me here, he had plenty of money...and he gave some to Miss Minchin so that I could live there and go to school. He was to come back for me in just a year...but...

(unable to go on)
Yes...and then what?

MISS MINCHIN
Sara, I'm sure Mr. Carrisford has wasted enough of his time. Amelia and I are waiting for you.

CARRISFORD

( curtly )
Please, Miss Minchin. I want to hear this. And then?

SARA

(bursting out with it )
And then...my papa lost his money...he had a friend he trusted who invested it for him...and the friend was...not honest. My papa lost everything...and the shock of it killed him.

CARRISFORD

Good Lord!

( quietly )
And your father's name, my dear?

SARA
Captain Crewe. Captain Ralph Crewe.

CARRISFORD

Ram Dass! Parker...we've found her! We've found her!

MISS MINCHIN

Well...goodday...We'll be going...Amelia...

CARRISFORD

Wait! Parker, don't let them leave!

PARKER

Just be seated, ladies. Mr. Carrisford wishes to interrogate you
PARKER

(continuing)
further.

MISS MINCHIN

This whole thing is dreadful...held here against our will. You shall
be reported, sir, to the authorities.

CARRISFORD

Ram Dass. Do you understand? Young Mem Sahib is the one we have been
searching for!

RAM DASS

Yes, Sahib. And Ram Dass is filled with gladness...

CARRISFORD

We've found her, Parker...found the child at last!

SARA

Found who?

MISS MINCHIN

Found whom.

CARRISFORD

Come closer, my dear girl...Sara. I'll try to explain. I am the
friend your father trusted.

SARA

And you...took his money...and lost it?

CARRISFORD

I invested it, Sara...and for a time it looked as if the investments
were unwise. And this was just before your father died. It was only
a few weeks later that one of the investments picked up. Shortly
afterwards I became ill...It was not until I began to recover...that
CARRISFORD

(continuing)
I remembered about Ralph Crewe's daughter...and then I had no way of
knowing how to reach her.

SARA
But you've found me now! Did Miss Minchin tell you?

CARRISFORD
Miss Minchin...for reasons known only to herself...and perhaps her
sister...lied to me.

MISS MINCHIN
It was not a lie. You asked if Sara were a pupil. She is not a pupil
any longer. She is a servant.

CARRISFORD
So I see...and a badly mistreated one. But those days are gone. She
is to live here now...and have her father's wealth returned to her at
last.

MISS MINCHIN
Wealth...you mean that Sara's father did not actually lose all of his
money? In that case, perhaps you will be good enough to reimburse my
sister and me for all that we've done for Sara during the past year
and a half...Food...

SARA

(innocently)
How much do you think a year's supply of cold boiled potatoes would
come to, Miss Minchin?

MISS MINCHIN
Clothing...
SARA
They were my own clothes...my plainest ones. You took the fine ones and sold them.

MISS MINCHIN
And of course lodging...

CARRISFORD
Yes...in a bleak attic... a most cheerless area if my lascar, Ram Dass, is correct.

MISS MINCHIN
And schooling...we allowed Sara to...to use the schoolroom in the evenings...to keep herself up with her studies.

CARRISFORD
And no thanks to you, Miss Minchin. Her quick mind is not due to you.
I think it is time you were leaving. Good afternoon.

MISS MINCHIN
Well! First we are not allowed to leave...Now we are being ordered out...and without my settlement. My just settlement. We'll see about that. I'll figure the costs and send you a bill in the morning.

CARRISFORD
(smiling)
And I shall be glad to look it over. In the meanwhile Parker, you might figure what Miss Sara's wages should have amounted to...for her work since her father died. I assure you, Miss Minchin, you'll receive the difference...to the penny.

PARKER
If on the other hand, Miss Minchin, it should be found that you were in debt to Sara...
MISS MINCHIN

In debt to...? What utter rubbish. Come, Amelia. We will not stay to be insulted...not a moment longer.

(starts to exit)

Sara. You might consider that you have had a good home with us...that you might wish to come back...as a parlor boarder again, of course.

SARA

(firmly)

I would never go back to you. Never. Goodbye, Miss Minchin.

MISS MINCHIN

Hmph! Come Amelia...

(exiting)

Actually Amelia, money or not we're well rid of her!

MISS AMELIA

Oh, now, Sister...

(exeunt)

SARA

I can't believe it! It's happened so fast. It's like the most wonderful story ever!

CARRISFORD

I'll make it up to you, Sara. I promise. From now on, your wish will be my command.

SARA

(slowly)

Do you mean that? Do you truly? Because...there's another prisoner there...at Miss Minchin's.
PARKER

Prisoner?

SARA

We always pretended that we were captives...Becky, the scullery maid and I...and that Miss Minchin was the jailer. We pretended that we were disguised princesses...and that one day we would escape together.

CARRISFORD

Ram Dass...the first command of the Princess Sara is to help her captured friend, the Lady Rebecca. When you go to the house next door to fetch her things...

RAM DASS

(bowing gravely)

I understand Sahib. It shall be done.

Song: FINALE (Tune of "You Can Always Get Away in Books")

CARRISFORD

The Princess Sara's wishes are from henceforth my commands

And we'll start by freeing Becky from her cell.

Ram Dass and I await each bid -- you've just to clap your hands

We're completely, absolutely in your spell.

SARA AND CARRISFORD

So -- we'll plan the escape of young Becky your/my friend;

Her bondage, your/my bondage has come to an end ---
(Miss Minchin's voice is heard off)

MISS MINCHIN

An outrage -- positively an outrage!

SARA AND CARRISFORD

Miss Minchin's malevolence no more will touch --
Her voice may still reach us but can't hurt us much!
(enter Ram Dass escorting a bewildered
Becky)

RAM DASS

Miss Becky, Mem Sahib -- Ram Dass extra quick!

SARA AND CARRISFORD

Ram Dass, you're a wizard, and that's your best trick!

GIRLS

(embracing joyfully)
We both have escaped their demands and their looks --
This is just the way it ends in books!

SARA AND BECKY

Tho Miss Minchin and Amelia were relentless in demands,
And we'd hardly time to button both our shoes --
(Minchin and Amelia come in on their words)
With their "Fetch me this!" and "Bring me that! --
No but's or if's or and's !"
Now we're finished minding them -- or p's or q's!
We're living a book and we're finding that we
Are the princesses rescued, the ransomed set free --
The spell has been broken -- the wicked will pay
No more need we listen, no longer obey.
(Carrisford and Ram Dass join in)

We'll never again hear their shouts, see their looks --
This is just the way it ends in books!

(Now we hear the strains of "Miss Minchin's Is a Most Select Seminary" and Miss Minchin leads the school girls out, Miss Amelia brings up the rear, all singing this song again in a sort of counterpoint to the finale...which may be repeated as Sara, Becky, Ram Dass and Carrisford, and even Parker go out through audience center aisle)