

# FALLEN WOMEN

A Musical Play

Written by Tony Matthews

Music by Jeremy Soane

## **Fallen Women**

*List of characters*

### **Principal Parts**

Mary Ford, penitent  
 Ruth Player, prostitute, later penitent  
 Mrs Lucinda Tubwell, Landlady/ brothel-keeper  
 Mariquita Tennant, Founder of House of Mercy  
 Corporal Tom Brewer, Ruth's pimp  
 Moleskin Jack, Navvy gangmaster  
 Will (Blackbird) Summers, Navvy

### **Supporting Parts**

Soldier drinker  
 Woman drinker  
 Other drinkers  
 Evangelist Preacher  
 Mary Ford's father  
 Mary Ford's stepmother  
 Brothel girls  
 Rector of Clewer  
 Charlotte (later Mary Magdalen): penitent at House of Mercy  
 Liza: penitent at H of M  
 Rosie: penitent at H of M  
 Neighbour 1 to H of M  
 Neighbour 2 to H of M

Private George Moulton  
 Hedgehog, Navvy  
 Navvies 1,2 and 3  
 Brickie

Judge  
 Defence Counsel  
 Prosecution Counsel  
 Usher

## Act 1

### Scene 1

*Windsor 1851*

*A beer house crowded with soldiers, navvies and locals carousing loudly. The young women present are mainly prostitutes, drinking with the men. One of the girls, named Ruth, is persuaded to get up on a table to sing.*

**Ruth sings:**

Now I'm a girl who likes a drink  
Beer, gin, or stout – I'll drink anyfink.  
We'll drink together  
Till we're drunk through and through.  
So 'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

**Chorus:** So 'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

**Ruth:** I've 'ad lots of lovers in my little life  
But I've never said yes  
When they've said 'Be my wife'  
I've always preferred to be fancy free  
So 'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

**Chorus:** So 'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

**Ruth:** Girls, listen to what I'm a-singing  
Whorin' 'aint a bad way of making a living,  
You get well looked after and always get paid  
Better than being a poor serving maid  
So 'ave one on me, don't be afraid  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

**Chorus:** We'll drink together  
Till we're drunk through and through.  
So 'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.  
'ave one on me  
And I'll 'ave one on you.

*Enter an evangelical preacher. He stands on box and tries to hold forth while being jeered and heckled by those present.*

- Preacher:** Brothers and sisters – let us be honest to God. Which of you has not committed fornication in the past week? Eh? Gentlemen (*jeers from drinkers*) what forms of seduction and depravity have you wrought on innocent women to cause their fall?
- Soldier:** Why don't you ask these 'ladies' how they go about seducing us innocent men?
- Preacher:** You young women – do you not tire of behaving like the whores of Babylon?
- Woman:** Oy, 'oo are you calling 'ores of Babylon? That ain't very nice.
- Preacher:** Madam (*jeers from drinkers*), there is nothing 'nice' about sinning. You must repent and save your soul.
- Woman:** Save my soul? Kiss my arse!
- Preacher:** I appeal to you. Jesus forgave the fallen woman taken in adultery. God will forgive you if you confess your sins.
- Woman:** That won't put food in our bellies and clothes on our backs, will it?
- Soldier:** You don't need clothes on your backs, darlin'.
- Woman:** You just need us on our backs, mate.
- Preacher:** Fallen women – you must repent. May God have mercy on your souls.
- Woman:** Repent – that don't pay the rent! Oh come on Ruthie, and you fallen women – let's have another song.
- All:**
- Oh yes we're fallen women  
And we make a living  
Selling the one thing that every man craves
- Oh yes we're fallen women  
We're a social evil  
Sold our souls to Satan  
It's better than starvin' all the way to our graves
- Ruth:**
- My life's a pile of trouble  
Empty as a bubble  
I ain't got much wot I can call my own  
Just the rags I stand up in  
And a box to keep my crust in  
So 'ow d'you s'pose a poor girl's goin' to live?
- All:**
- So 'ow d'you s'pose a poor girl's goin' to live?

Oh yes we're fallen women  
But we make a living  
Selling the one thing that every man craves

Oh yes we're fallen women  
We're a social evil  
Sold our souls to Satan  
Better than starving all the way to the grave.

*Music and laughter. Lights down on drinking scene, up on front of stage*

## Scene 2

*Countryside, daytime with birdsong. Enter Mary Ford, 18, carrying baggage. She knocks on door of cottage. Her father, roughly dressed and the worse for drink, opens door. He steps back and looks at her, unwelcoming.*

**Father:** You. Didn't expect you back.

**Mary:** Father. How are you?

**Father:** Well enough. You come a long way?

**Mary:** Walked here from Aunt May's.

**Father:** You might have wrote.

**Wife:** *(From inside)* 'Oo's that?

**Father:** It's Mary. Better come in.

**Wife:** Thought we'd seen the last of you. Your aunt kicked you out?

**Mary:** What do you care?

**Wife:** Well there ain't no room 'ere. Mind where you're puttin' those muddy shoes.

**Father:** Shut yer mouth, Go make some tea.

*Wife exits sulkily.*

**Mary:** I see she's expecting. That's quick.

**Father:** Watch your tongue, girl.

**Mary:** I came to put some flowers on mother's grave.

**Father:** O-ah. You come back to stay?

**Mary:** Not likely – not while she's here.

**Father:** What you a-goin' to do then?

**Mary:** Go to London, maybe.

**Father:** What – you a-goin' into service there?

**Mary:** Me a servant? No thank you. I want to go to a home for penitents.

- Father:** Penitents? 'Oo are they?
- Wife** (*Re-entering*) Fallen women, prostitutes, whores – that's what they are.
- Father:** What?
- Mary:** Listen. They can help you get back on the straight and narrow.
- Wife:** Huh! Get you back on your back you mean.
- Father:** My daughter – a whore?
- Mary:** No, I swear on my mother I am not what you think. All I want is a respectable place to live.
- Father:** What, living with a bunch of whores? You ought to be 'orsewhipped.
- Mary:** That would be better than all those evil things you used to do to me.
- Father:** I told you never to speak of that.
- Mary:** Because of what you did, I'm a fallen woman. (*Starts crying.*)
- Wife:** What's she mean?
- Mary:** Ask 'im to tell you what he got up to when he came home drunk.
- Father:** Get out of my 'ouse! (*Pushes her out and throws her bags after her.*)
- Wife:** Good riddance. This is a respectable 'ousehold.
- Father:** And don't ever come back. (*Slams door on her.*)
- Mary;** Don't worry. I won't.

*Mary gathers her bags and sets off on journey.*

*Music, as lights dim to moonlight.*

*Mary re-enters and wearily sits down by signpost. She wraps her shawl round her against the cold.*

When I was a little child  
 The world seemed a beautiful place  
 I played in the fields and roamed in the wild  
 And there was always delight on my face.

But when I was older

after my mother passed away  
 the world became colder  
 and my life became sad and grey.

I was defiled  
 I was stained  
 an innocent child  
 I was shamed and blamed.

Now I want to be clean  
 To be born again  
 I want to forget  
 my life of shame.

*Mary settles down to sleep.*

*Enter Will Summers, a young navvy. He whistles a tune.*

**Will:** Hello. *(No response.)* I said hello.

*Mary wakes up and draws back afraid.*

**Will:** Don't be afraid. You'll catch your death if you fall asleep in this frost.

*Mary gets up.*

**Will:** Which way you goin'?

**Mary:** Windsor, Sir.

**Will:** Windsor – there's a lot of people there waiting to lead young girls astray. Don't call me sir. I'm Will – Will Summers. My mates call me Blackbird.

**Mary:** Blackbird. Why are you called that?

**Will:** 'Cos I like to sing. Come on, I'll show you the way. I'm on my way to work. Got a job on the railway down there. You got a place to stay?

**Mary:** Er not yet, no

**Will:** I know a place. But you'll have to watch yourself there.

**Mary:** Why's that?

**Will:** You'll see. Come on. I'm getting cold. *(Exeunt)*



### Scene 3

*Mrs Tubwell's 'lodging house'/brothel in Windsor.*

*Enter Mrs Lucinda Tubwell, with a big wicker basket full of sheets, some ragged. She's an ex-actress of a certain age who has kept a theatrical manner and peppers her speeches with half-remembered Shakespearean quotations.*

**Mrs T:** Laundry time! Laundry time! Never let it be said the Tubwell establishment was short of clean sheets – ragged yes, but never dirty. Come and get your nice clean sheets my pretties – you Doll Tearsheets. You hollow pampered jades of Asia. You harlots, trollops, strumpets, bawds and cotqueans...

*(Girls assemble round her. She sings...)*

My name's Lucinda Tubwell  
I used to tread the boards  
But now I run a lodging house  
I manage lot of bawds.

**Girls:** She calls us all her pretties  
And gives us bed and board  
She buys us all fine dresses  
We never could afford

**Mrs T:** I used to be an actress  
Knew Shakespeare to a tee  
Performed in theatres everywhere  
You've surely heard of me.

**Girls:** She spouts a lot of Shakespeare  
As she meets the needs of gents  
We are at their service  
And we earn lots of pence.

**Mrs T:** My customers are high class  
Priests, officers, bankers  
I don't allow no navvies  
Or army other rankers.

**Girls:** We like to 'ave young men  
Though they're stuck up  
Wouldn't mind the rich old men  
If only they would buck up.

**Mrs T:** My girls are very clean  
They ain't got no disease  
I see they wash each day  
To keep them free from fleas

**Girls**                    We get a day off every month  
                               We daren't run away  
                               And if we break her rules  
                               She takes away our pay.

**Mrs T:**                Now then, my pretties, is everyone 'ere. Where's Ruth? Drunk as usual, I 'spose. Not all the perfumes in Arabia could wipe away 'er sins. Go seek 'er out. But soft, who comes 'ere?

*Enter Mary*

**Mrs T:**                Yes?

**Mary:**                Mrs Tubwell?

**Mrs T:**                Who are you?

**Mary:**                Mary Ford, Ma'am.

**Mrs T:**                What do you know of Mrs Tubwell?

**Mary:**                I was told she was the landlady, Ma'am.

**Mrs T:**                What else were you told?

**Mary:**                Why, nothing else, Ma'am.

**Mrs T:**                Did they say nothing of Lucinda Tubwell's former career on the stage?

**Mary:**                Well, come to think of it, Ma'am, they did say something.

**Mrs T:**                Ah. Well I am Mrs Tubwell. 'Tis me. 'Tis I.

**Mary:**                I am looking for lodgings, Ma'am.

**Mrs T:**                Lodgings? Are you aware of the nature of this establishment?

*Enter Ruth*

**Ruth:**                It's a bawdy 'ouse, that's what it is. A brothel, an 'ouse of ill fame.

**Mrs T:**                Take no notice of her, my dear. This is a worthy establishment catering for gentlemen of taste. Now let me look at you. Let your 'air down. Mm, not bad. 'Ow old are you?

**Mary:**                Eighteen, Ma'am.

**Ruth:**                Hey, leave off. Can't you see she's just a maid?

**Mrs T:** Button your lip, Ruth Player, you drunken slut. Now Mary Ford, you can 'ave a room 'ere if you abide by my rules. Ruth, show 'er to the top room. Ruth will tell you the rules, but be careful – she's a bad influence.

*(To all the girls)* Now my pretties, behold; Phoebe is rising in the east... Off with you and change your sheets. Remember they 'ave to last a whole month. Mary Ford, 'ere's a sheet for you.

*(Exit all except Mary & Ruth)*

**Ruth:** You got any idea what you're letting yourself in for if you come 'ere?

**Mary:** I'm not that simple. But I ain't got no choice. A poor girl's got to live.

**Ruth:** That what I always say. So welcome to the world of fallen women. Been on the game long?

**Mary:** No, never. And I ain't a fallen woman – not that sort, anyway.

**Ruth:** You soon will be. Old Tubbers'll see to that.

**Mary:** How many – er – customers do you have to see?

**Ruth:** Depends. Sometimes gets very busy. I've 'ad as many as a dozen in a night.

**Mary:** A dozen. What are they like?

**Ruth:** Oh we get all sorts 'ere. Gentry – and the more common lot, 'spite of what Tubbers says about 'er standards. One of our regulars is an undertaker.

**Mary:** What? An undertaker?

**Ruth:** Yeah. Makes me laugh – 'e always says e's looking for life after death. *(Laughs.)* We even 'ad a vicar in 'ere once – 'e made one of the girls kneel down and pray wiv 'im before he took 'is pleasure.

**Mary:** *(Laughing)* I wonder what he prayed for. Forgiveness in advance I suppose

**Ruth:** He probably said grace: 'For what we are about to receive...' There that's better. Good to 'ave a laugh, ain't it.

**Mary:** How long you been here?

**Ruth:** Too long – about a year. Where you from?

**Mary:** Newbury. You?

**Ruth:** Reading. I was in service. The Master of the house ruined me. I 'ad to get out. So I cleared off to London. I was just sixteen.

**Mary:** London – you was very young to do that, wasn't you?

**Ruth:** Went to a lodging house in Kent Street. Full of thieves and bad girls. 'Ere, 'old on. You don't really want to 'ear my story, do you? It's not what you'd call respectable.

**Mary:** You wait till you hear mine. Go on.

**Ruth:** I tell you, even this place don't seem too bad beside that lodging house in London. *(Sings)*

Aged 16 I ran away to London,  
Stayed in a filthy lodging place;  
There was a lot of wicked carrying on:  
A dozen boys and girls in one bed,  
All mixed together, no space.

I pawned all my stuff,  
I went on the street;  
I was sick of the life I was leading;  
Got a month in jail for stealing –  
I did it to get into prison –  
Better than going back to my old life.

Got another six months for offending,  
Couldn't keep that up,  
So last year I came to Windsor;  
Fell in with a soldier boy,  
Said he'd look after me,  
Brought me to Mrs T's place.

**Ruth:** Nothing to be proud of, is it? 'Ere, you want a drink?

**Mary:** Got any tea?

**Ruth:** You got to 'ave a proper drink to live 'ere. My medicine this is. Very good for fallen women.

**Mary:** Fallen women. Well I am come to a nice hobble now, ain't I?

**Ruth:** A nice 'obble all right. Both of us. I was like you when I came 'ere.

**Mary:** *(Begins to cry)* There's no hope for such as me.

**Ruth:** Oh don't say that. Now look what you done – you made me cry too.

*Enter Corporal Tom Brewer*

- Tom:** Ah Ruthie, Tubbers said you was here. 'Ello, what's this? What you blubbing for?
- Ruth:** Never you mind.
- Tom:** Who's your pretty friend?
- Ruth:** This, Tom, is Mary. She's new here, and you'd better keep your 'ands off her.
- Tom:** Cheeky – as if I'd do such a thing. (*To Mary*) Corporal Tom Brewer, Queen's Dragoons, at your service.
- Ruth:** He's the soldier boyfriend I was tellin' you about. One of my regulars, ain't you?
- Tom:** Only if you keep me in beer and give me a bit of fun. (*Eyes up Mary.*) Mind you, I like a bit of fresh now and then.
- Ruth:** Don't go and frighten the poor girl. Stay in your room, Mary. See you in 'alf an hour.
- Tom:** Half an hour – is that all I'm getting on my day off?
- Ruth:** You think I'm goin' to loll about with you all night? I got to work.
- Tom:** Sometimes, Ruthie, I wonder if you really love me.
- Ruth:** Love? Some pimp you are if you want love as well. Come on then – get on parade!

*Ruth and Tom exit. Mary watches them go, shaking her head and wringing her hands. Then she gathers her bags and goes off.*

## Scene 4

*A beershop in Windsor*

*Cpl Tom Brewer and Private George Moulton, uniformed, are drinking together. They are both quite drunk.*

**Tom:** Time for a bit of drill, mate. Let's see how drunk you are.

**Geo:** You're a bastard, Corporal. Cost you another beer.

*George gets up and drunkenly tries to obey Tom's commands.*

**Tom:**

*Music*

*Tom breaks into song:*

A soldier's life's a poor one  
When there ain't no bleedin' war on  
Tonight we'll go a-whorin'  
Right through to the mornin'

**Chorus:** By the left, quick march  
Left right, left right.  
Halt. About turn.  
Present arms!

**Tom:** Same when there's a war on  
Why die a virgin moron?  
When I come home on leave  
I want to get some chevrons on my sleeve

**Chorus:** By the left, quick march etc

**Tom:** Me, I like a serving wench  
When I've a dry old thirst to quench  
But when my lust is fit to bust  
Give me an 'arlot from dawn to dusk.

**Chorus:** By the left, quick march etc.

**Tom:** I'm trained to charge and then attack  
To run through deadly fire and flack  
So give me a fiery woman to bed  
And I'll make her earn her daily bread.

**Chorus:** By the left, quick march etc

*Enter a gang of navvies, roughly dressed, led by Moleskin Jack, a large florid-faced Irishman, wearing a moleskin waistcoat. Will Summers is one of them, celebrating his Birthday.*

**Tom:** 'Ello, what 'ave we 'ere?

**Geo:** Railway navvies – scum of the earth. Look at 'em – what a sight!

**Tom:** Don't cause any trouble – there's more of them than us.

**Jack:** Excuse me, sor. Moleskin Jack at your service.

**Tom:** Moleskin 'oo?

**Jack:** Moleskin Jack's my name, sor. Beggin' your pardon for making so bold, but where does a hard-workin' navy go to get a little entertainment.

**Tom:** What sort of entertainment?

**Jack:** Well sor, as our royal Queen's soldier you know what it's like to be starved of female company. We have that in common, don't we. It's a hard life building the Queen's railway and a man misses his comforts. So when I say entertainment I was meaning the ladies of the night.

**Geo:** Ladies of the night – there ain't no ladies round 'ere mate.

**Tom:** Why should we tell you anyway?

**Jack:** I'll speak plainly one man to another, sor. Young Will here – it's his twenty first birthday, and he's as virgin a lad as the day he was born. So we'd like to give him a nice willing lady as a present.

**Geo:** 'Oo do you think we are – your bastard pimps?

**Tom:** There's loads of tarts in Windsor. Take your pick, so long as you keep your 'ands off ours.

**Jack:** And how do we tell which are the Army's?

**Tom:** Simple. Officers' tarts wear gold topped stockings. NCOs' tarts have stripes. And other ranks' tarts don't 'ave any.

**Jack:** Any what?

**Tom:** Anything underneath.

**Jack:** I like your humour, sor. Allow me to fill your pots with ale.

**Tom:** O ta Paddy. Look, there's a place round the corner called Mrs Tubwell's lodging house. Ask for Mrs T. She runs a comely enough company of bawds. Try your luck with her.

**Jack:** Much obliged, sor. Come on boys.

**Will:** Moleskin, why don't we just stop here and have another drink?

**Jack:** Now Will, you're twenty one today. We want to make a man of you.

*Sings:*

We want to make a man out of you  
To do the things that grown men do  
Tubwell's girls are fine and merry  
They'll help you lose your virgin cherry.

Young man, you're not a boy today  
Throw your childish toys away  
Now that you are 21  
Find a girl and have some fun.

A proper navvy digs all day  
Then finds a maid for night-time play  
Tonight we're goin' on the razzle  
So now's the time to dip your tassle.

Don't be timid, don't be shy  
Go ahead and multiply  
Go and sow your wild oats  
In fields of lacy petticoats.

*Navvy chorus sings second verse.*

**Will :** I can't do this!

**Jack:** Don't let us down Will. Grab 'im boys, let's drag him to a place of earthly bliss.

*Exit Navvies.*

**Tom:** Come on George, let's get a few of the lads together and show these navvies a bit of discipline while their trousers are down.

*Exit.*



## Scene 5

*A church pulpit*

*Enter Rector. He addresses the audience.*

**Rector:** My friends, I wish to speak to you today on a subject of no little delicacy.

I refer to the great social evil of our time – fallen women. Jesus was compassionate in his treatment in his treatment of such women. But the church has erred by doing nothing to help these Mary Magdalens of today.

The church has work to do. I appeal first to the stronger sex. Gentlemen, you who may have stained your youth with this very sin must now make acts of restitution. You may not be able to aid the person with whom you sinned, but you can aid her class.

Next I appeal to the pity of you ladies of the higher ranks. Be thankful that you have not had to face the temptations to which needy or ill-nurtured women of the lower ranks often fall. Have compassion for the fallen of your sex. Come, who will go out and rescue her sisters from damnation? Let us throw out the lifeline!

*Enter a small group of singers dressed in Victorian black.*

**Singers:** Throw out the lifeline, throw out the lifeline  
Someone is sinking away  
Throw out the lifeline, throw out the lifeline  
She must be rescued today

She must be rescued from shame and from sin  
She deserves mercy like Mary Magdalen  
Her soul must be saved and her virtue restored  
So she can return to our heavenly lord.

**Chorus:** Throw out the lifeline etc

You men whose youth was so wanton and gay  
You took advantage, led poor girls astray  
Set prudery aside and don't be so staid  
'Tis time to repent and come to their aid

**Chorus:** Throw out the lifeline etc

You who are ladies of much higher rank  
You're free of temptation, so for this give thanks  
Have pity on those of your sex who have fallen

And throw out the lifeline to poor Mary Magdalen

**Chorus:** Throw out the lifeline etc.

*Rector re-enters with Mariquita Tennant, middle-aged Spanish lady, wearing a black mantilla.*

**Rector:** Thank you. Now I have some good news. Let me introduce you to someone who is planning to help rescue Windsor's fallen women. This is Mrs Tennant, Mrs Mariquita Tennnant. She recently moved to Windsor following the death of her husband, the Reverend John Tennant who worked to improve the lot of poor and homeless people in Florence. Mrs Tennant wishes to follow in his footsteps by turning her home, The Limes, into a House of Mercy in this parish of Clewer. The church is supporting her and she will begin work next week by admitting the first women penitents. Mrs Tennant, welcome.

## Scene 6

*Mrs Tubwell's lodging house*

*Mrs T. is reading aloud from 'Macbeth'.*

**Mrs T:** 'Come to my woman's breasts. And take my milk for gall you murdering ministers. Come thick night and pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell. That my keen knife see not the wound it makes...'

*Enter Moleskin Jack and Navvies with unwilling Will Summers.*

**Jack:** (*Quoting*) 'Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark. To cry Hold, Hold!'

**Mrs T:** And who might you be?

**Jack:** Your servants and customers Ma'am. 'Twas a fine Lady Macbeth you was makin' there.

**Mrs T:** We're closed!

**Jack:** Now Ma'am, wait....

**Mrs T:** We don't want your sort 'ere.

**Jack:** We have money.

**Mrs T:** That's as maybe. I don't want any trouble.

**Jack:** But we ain't lookin' for trouble Ma'am. We're lookin' for pleasure. 'A foutra for the world and worldlings base! I speak of Africa and golden joys.'

**Mrs T:** Was you ever an actor?

**Jack:** I was a strollin' player in my time Ma'am. Falstaff was my speciality. 'I have more flesh than other men and therefore more frailty.'

**Mrs T:** 'Ah rogue, 'I'faith I love thee. Thou art as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon and ten times better than the Nine Worthies.'

**Jack:** Well said, Doll Tearsheet! So you have strutted the boards yourself.

**Mrs T:** Indeed I have, Sir. And it gives me great joy to meet a kindred spirit.

**Jack:** I'm flattered Ma'am. But first let us look to the baser fleshly needs of these my friends.

**Mrs T** This is a high class establishment, Sir, and I would not normally accept the custom of the manual classes. But as you are a fellow thespian I will make an exception just this once.

**Jack:** Spoken like the leading lady you are.

**Mrs T:** (CLAPS HER HANDS). Come my pretties. Ruth, Harriet, Charlotte, Eliza, come 'ere. A drink for our hard-working guests. (THE GIRLS HELP THEM TO DRINKS)

**Ruth:** (TO MRS T) Eugh! A bunch of stinkin' navvies. 'Oo do you think we are?

**Mrs T.** Don't you go putting on airs, Ruth Player. I wish to do this gentleman and his friends a favour.

**Jack:** Congratulations Ma'am – a very pulchritudinous body of young ladies. So, boys let's drink to Mrs Tubwell and company. (*they raise their glasses and drink*) Now a song, a song. Come on Blackbird. Ma'am, this is Will 'Blackbird' Summers, the finest young navy voice in the whole of England.

**Will:** Here's a song that tells what it's like to be a navy working on the railway.

O I've navvied up in Scotland, I've navvied in the south  
 Without a drink to cheer me or a crust to cross me mouth  
 I fed when I was workin' and starved when out on tramp  
 And the stone has been me pillow and the moon above me lamp  
 And whene'er I've filled me billy and whene'r I've drained me can  
 I've done it like a navy, a bold navy man.

**Chorus:**

A bold navy man  
 An old navy man  
 And I've done me graft  
 And stuck it like a bold navy man

**Will:**

I do not care for ladies grand who are of high degree  
 A winsome wench and willin', she is just the one for me,  
 Drink and love are classed as sins – as mortal sins by some.  
 I'll drink and drink whene'er I can, the drought is sure to come –  
 And I will love till lusty life runs out its mortal span  
 The end of which is in the ditch for many a navy man

**Chorus:**

The bold navy man  
 The old navy man  
 Safe in the ditch with heels cocked up –  
 So dies the navy man

**Will:** Can I go now?

**Jack:** You need a winsome wench first. *(He whispers in Mrs T's ear)*

**Mrs T:** Ah, a Birthday present. Ruth 'ere would give him many happy returns I'm sure.  
*(Jack whispers in her ear again)* Well now, that ain't so easy. But wait. I do have someone fresh and new. Pretty little thing. Wait 'ere and I will send her to you. Now gentlemen I prithee take your ease. *(Exit)*

**Jack:** 'Ave a look at this lass, Will, and you can decide whether you want her or not. No one's forcin' you. Let's meet again in an hour's time. Enjoy yourself, lad. *(Exit)*

*Will is about to leave when Mary enters.*

**Will:** Why, 'tis the girl I escorted to Windsor. Mary, ain't it?

**Mary:** Yes. You saved me from the frost. I could have died.

**Will:** Lucky I found you in time.

**Mary:** You're Will, the one they call Blackbird. I heard you singing just now. You have a good voice.

**Will:** Thankee. You ain't...er... one of her girls are you?

**Mary:** She's my landlady.

**Will:** But you're not a...

**Mary:** No, I'm not.

**Will:** I told you to watch yourself here.

**Mary:** I've nowhere else to go.

*Noises off, shouting and fighting.*

**Will:** What's that?

**Mary:** *(Looking off)* Soldiers. Making trouble by the looks of them.

*Enter Cpl Tom Brewer and George Moul.*

**Tom:** Why look who it is. Birthday boy. Grab 'im George *(To Mary)* So this is your little maid, the new girl.

**Will:** Keep your hands off her.

**Tom:** And you keep your dirty navvy 'ands off her too. The women 'ere are Army property, and we've come to teach you a bit of Army discipline.

**Mary:** Don't hurt him.

**Tom:** We won't hurt him if you treat me like you're paid to. You come and be nice to me and we'll leave birthday boy alone.

**Will:** Don't go with him Mary. Leave her be you blackguards.

**George:** 'Old yer tongue. She's only a tart like the rest of 'em.

*Enter Ruth.*

**Ruth:** Now Tom, I thought you wanted me tonight. You ain't a- goin' to spurn me for this little thing are yer?

**Tom:** Out of the way, Ruthie. I fancies this one. *(Grabs Mary's arm)*

**Ruth:** But she don't know anything. Tom. She don't know any tricks like I do.

**Tom:** Don't worry, I'll teach 'er some.

**Ruth:** You'll be sorry, Tom Brewer.

**Tom:** What do you mean??

**Ruth:** I mean – come 'ere *(Whispers in his ear)*

**Tom:** *(Releasing Mary)* You mean she's got the...? Oh well, er, I...

**Ruth:** Come on Tom, I can't wait any longer.

**Tom:** Let 'im go George. Let's go see how the others are getting on. *(Exit)*

**Will:** Mary, are you all right?

**Mary:** Ruth saved me.

**Will:** We must get away now. Come with me.

**Mary:** But I can't.

**Will:** Why not?

**Mary:** I can't just run off with you.

**Will:** But you can't stay here.

**Mary:** Come and see me again soon.

*Enter Moleskin Jack, rubbing his knuckles*

**Jack:** Will, we've got the army on the run. Come and help us give chase. *(Exit)*

**Will:** Coming Moleskin. Mary, I will come back soon. You are so...I want to...

**Mary:** Well as it's your birthday *(She gives him a brief kiss)*. Mind you don't go taking advantage.

*Exit*

## Scene 7

*Mill Lane, Windsor. Enter Mariquita Tennant with three young women who are carrying their baggage to the house of mercy (The Limes). They are watched by two neighbours nearby.*

**1<sup>st</sup> Neigh:** There goes that foreign widow.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Neigh:** Spanish, ain't she?

**1<sup>st</sup> Neigh:** Yes. But they say she speaks some English – must 'ave done 'cos she was married to an English vicar.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Neigh:** Those must be the first girls she's taking in.

**1<sup>st</sup> Neigh:** One of them's a bad lot – been selling herself on the streets.

**2<sup>nd</sup> Neigh:** A fallen woman. Here in Mill Lane.

**1<sup>st</sup> Neigh:** We don't want her sort round here. This is a respectable neighbourhood.

*Music. Neighbours sing:* We don't want her sort round here  
Exposing her front and wagging her rear  
A strumpet who's wicked as she  
Should be locked up and never set free

Because we're so respectable  
Our lives are quite impeccable.  
Picking up men and swilling their beer  
We don't want her sort round here

We don't want our husbands to meet  
Women like this in our street  
Every day they'll be tempted to sin  
And that's where the rot'll set in

Because we're so respectable (*repeat 2<sup>nd</sup> verse*)

We'll ask our MP for new laws  
To keep whores away from our doors  
And we don't want a house of ill fame  
Disgracing the name of Mill Lane

We don't want her sort round here  
Picking up men and swilling their beer  
Oh we don't want her sort round here.



## Scene 8

*Interior House of Mercy. One of the three new entrants, Charlotte, is sitting on her bed trying to learn a piece of scripture (Psalm 141) by heart.*

**Char:** 'Lord, I cry unto thee. Make haste unto me. Give ear unto my voice when I cry to thee'. Er... What's next? 'Incline not my heart... Incline not my heart...' Oh I'll never learn this. But I must, I must. Lady made me promise. 'Incline not my heart to any evil thing, to practise wicked works with men that work iniquity...and let me not eat of their dainties...er...  
Oh (*Screams and stamps her foot*). Sod this for a lark. I can't do it. Won't do it. (*Throws Bible across the floor*).

*Enter Lisa and Rosie who sing:*

**Liza:** Welcome to the House of Mercy  
Where we sew and do the laundry  
Lady gives us bed and board  
In the presence of the Lord.

**Rosie:** Rescued from our sinful ways  
This is where we spend our days  
Learning to be penitent  
Humble and obedient.

**Chorus:** Learning to be penitent  
Humble and obedient  
Respectful and reliable  
Submissive and employable

**Liza:** We rise each day at break of dawn  
Say our prayers, try not to yawn L  
Learn holy words and sing some hymns  
Praise the Lord, confess our sins

**Chorus:** Learning to be penitent etc

**Rosie:** Lady rules with rod of iron  
She's the mother we rely on  
She calls us Magdalens by name  
We promise we won't fall again.

**Chorus:** Learning to be penitent etc

*Enter Mariquita*

**Mar:** Charlotte, I wish to speak to you. Lisa and Rosie go to your duties. *(They exit.)*  
Charlotte, you know what this is about.

**Char:** No, Ma'am.

**Mar:** The cook says you stole our meat.

**Char:** What meat, Ma'am?

**Mar:** The meat on the blue dish in the kitchen.

**Char:** What, that little bit of leftover?

**Mar:** That was for our supper this evening. You cannot help yourself to food when you like. I am very poor, Charlotte. I cannot afford to let you do this.

**Char:** Beg pardon Ma'am, but I was hungry. That bullock's head we had last night was 'orrible – made me sick.

**Mar:** You must eat what we give. Now, for your punishment you will eat cabbage leaves for three days. No meat and no salt.

**Char:** *(Angry)* Oh I 'ates cabbage, specially with no salt.

**Mar:** Silence. You have very bad temper. Have you learned the psalm I give you?

**Char:** Nearly Ma'am.

**Mar:** I will hear you say it after supper. Now, one more thing. You start a new life here, so I think you will have a new name – Mary – Mary Magdalen.

**Char:** What name is that? My name is Charlotte George.

**Mar:** Here is the Bible. Read the page I mark, and you will understand. *(Exit.)*

**Char:** Mary Magdalen. Well I 'spose it's better than Charlotte. They used to call me Charlotte the harlot. *(Exit)*

**Scene 9***A Windsor street**Enter Mary Ford and Ruth Player.*

**Ruth:** Peascod Street – I used to walk here at night for customers.

**Mary:** Ruthie, mind if I ask you something?

**Ruth:** Ask away, my gal.

**Mary:** Don't you ever feel – you know, ashamed of what you're doing?

**Ruth:** No. Why should I? It pays the rent.

**Mary:** But it is sinful, Ruthie.

**Ruth:** 'Ark at you. You sound like a preacher.

**Mary:** Well, it is a sin, ain't it?

**Ruth:** Oh I don't think about the sin of it. It ain't such a bad way to earn your living. Better than being a serving maid. And... you know...

**Mary:** I know – a poor girl's got to live.

**Ruth:** Remember that song we were taught at school: *(Sings a round.)*

'Let us love our occupations *(Mary joins in round.)*  
 Bless the squire and his relations  
 Live upon our daily rations  
 And always know our proper stations.'

'Always love our occupations' Not much chance of that. Anyway, Miss 'olier than thou, you ain't done too badly from my sinful ways, 'ave you?'

**Mary:** Ruthie, you know I shall always be grateful for the way you've protected me. But I can't go on taking charity from you.

**Ruth:** We're friends, Mary. I can make enough to keep both of us.

**Mary:** I must find another place.

**Ruth:** But you ain't got no money.

**Mary:** I want to go to one of those strict places I was telling you about. Place that takes you in, feeds you and puts you on the straight and narrow.

- Ruth:** Law, my dear. Sounds like a workhouse or a prison. Why do you want to do a thing like that?
- Mary:** Well, you got yourself put in prison when you was in London, remember. I just want to... I don't know... I just want to save myself.
- Ruth:** But you've never done what I do – you know, never sold yourself.
- Mary:** That is true. Thanks to you
- Ruth:** So you ain't a fallen woman, are you?
- Mary:** No. I've been... er... stained though.
- Ruth:** Sit down 'ere with me. (*They sit on a box.*) Stained, you say. 'Ow?
- Mary:** It was when I was a child. I never told anyone this before, Ruthie. It's so... so... unspeakable.
- Ruth:** Was it your...?
- Mary:** My father, yes. He made me swear never to tell anyone. He was a heavy drinker, specially after mother died. Used to come home drunk. And he, you know...
- Ruth:** Took advantage?
- Mary:** Yes. (*Weeps*) If it hadn't been for my Auntie May, I'd 'ave done meself in.
- Ruth:** (*Putting arm round her.*) Oh poor Mary. But it weren't your fault.
- Mary:** I still feel guilty.
- Ruth:** Guilty of what. Bein' a woman?
- Mary:** I just want to feel clean... and respectable.
- Ruth:** I know what you mean. Maybe I'll come with you to this place.
- Mary:** You will. Oh Ruthie, will you really?
- Ruth:** Yeah, you and me must stick together. Besides, 'oo wants to spend their life in a bawdy 'ouse? Look, I 'eard tell of this lady who was starting a home for girls like us. They call it an 'ouse of mercy.
- Mary:** Do you know where it is?

**Ruth:** Somewhere in Mill Lane, I think. If you're sure you want to go to this lady and 'er 'Ouse of Mercy, that's where we'll go. But before we do, lets get a pot or two of ale down the beer 'ouse. Could be the last chance we 'ave.

**Mary:** You go on. I just want to see a friend for a moment.

**Ruth:** Oho my girl. Would this be young Will, your singing navy? Don't be too long  
(*Exit.*)



**Chorus:** Oh the permanent way, the permanent way  
We're risking our lives on the royal railway.

**Jack:** Working in gangs all round the clock  
Sleeping in ditches with pillows of rock  
Digging graves every day for our poor old mates  
Who've all lost their lives on the permanent way

**Chorus:** Oh the permanent way, the permanent way  
Digging graves for our mates on the royal railway.

*Enter Will.*

**Jack:** Ah, here's Blackbird. Young lady to see you.

**Will:** Mary, you are very bold to come here. Give us a minute, please Moleskin.

**Moleskin:** Right lads – back to work. *(Exit Navvies.)*

**Will:** Now, what's this about?

**Mary:** I came to tell you I'm a-moving to a new place.

**Will:** You're leaving Tubwell's house then?

**Mary:** Yes. I'm going to a respectable place called The Limes. Ruth is coming too.

**Will:** Can't be very respectable if she's a'goin' there.

**Mary:** I'll thank you not to speak of my friend like that. You saw for yourself how she's been lookin' after me.

**Will:** What's this Limes place, then?

**Mary:** It's a House of Mercy for fallen women – to help them get a new life.

**Will:** Fallen women. Is that what you are – a fallen woman?

**Mary:** No... not in the way you think.

**Will:** What do you mean?

**Mary:** I do not think that you would understand.

**Will:** So you think I'm stupid.

**Mary:** No, Will. Its' just that there are some things...

**Will:** Well I s'pose we all got our secrets. So you goin' to lock yourself away in this place? When will I see you again?

**Mary:** Oh Will, I didn't think you would. But can you wait till I've had some time in this new place?

**Will:** How long will that be?

**Mary:** I don't know.

**Will:** But I may be movin' away myself soon.

**Mary:** Here's my new address. We can write to one another.

**Will:** My writin's not up to much. But alright, I'll try.

**Mary:** Will, what if I become a different person – you won't like me any more.

**Will:** I hope you won't change that much. I do more than like you now Mary. More than I can say... *(They embrace – music.)*  
*(Will sings):*

When I found you on the road that day  
Lonely and lost, covered in frost  
I thought that you had passed away.  
But now, thank God, you're here today.

I do like you Mary  
More than I can say  
This feeling that I have inside  
I really can't explain it  
I wish that I could find the words  
To speak it and to name it.

**Mary:** You came so gently into my life  
When I thought that I would die  
You saved me from the icy cold  
And raised my spirits high.

I do like you now Will  
More than I can say  
This feeling that I have inside  
I really can't explain it  
I wish that I could find the words  
To speak it and to name it



**Mary and Will**

**together:** I do more than like you now  
More than I can say  
We can make a life together  
We can find a way.

**Jack:** *(Offstage.)* Will, get yourself over here. Quickly now.

**Will:** I will dream of you Mary. Goodbye. *(Exit.)*

**Mary:** *(Watches him go.)* Goodbye Will. *(Exit.)*

**Scene 11**

*Mrs Tubwell's lodging house.*

*Mrs T. is entertaining Moleskin Jack*

**Mrs T:** Well now Moleskin Jack, let me fill your glass.

**Jack:** Thank 'ee Ma'am. In my taste for drink and women I take after Falstaff. I played him once in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

**Mrs T:** Well fancy that. I did one of the wives once – Mistress Page. Remember the scene in the Park when Falstaff comes on wearing a buck deer's head?

**Jack:** How could I forget? (*Quotes*) 'The Windsor bell hath struck twelve – the minute draws on. Now the hot-blooded gods assist me. O powerful love, that in some respects makes a beast a man, in some other a man a beast .

**Mrs T:** And I come on and say 'Sir John? Art thou there my deer. My male deer?

**Jack:** 'My doe with the black scut. Let the sky rain potatoes, let it thunder to the tune of *Greensleeves*. Let there come a tempest of provocation. I will shelter me here' And we embrace (*They embrace.*)

**Mrs T:** Ah, those were the days. 'Tis all melodrama these days. No call for the likes of me.

**Jack:** Well you must be making a pretty penny here.

**Mrs T:** Not with all the expenses – the upkeep of the girls, their dresses, the laundry bills. They all eat like horses you know. Then there's doctors' bills, bribes for the police. Not to mention the rent.

**Jack:** Rent? I thought you was the proprietor.

**Mrs T:** No, not me. You'll never guess who is.

**Jack:** The Queen?

**Mrs T:** No. The Church!

**Jack:** Well, bust me braces. That's immoral.

**Mrs T:** Don't tell anybody will you? You'll get me into trouble.

**Jack:** Oops! You got company. Farewell my merry widow of Windsor. (EXIT)

*Enter Mariquita Tennant.*

- Mariquita:** You are the landlady of this place?
- Mrs T:** Yes, I am.
- Mariquita:** I am Senora Tennant.
- MrsT:** Oh yes. I am Mrs Lucinda Tubwell.
- Mariquita:** Here is where I find Mary Ford and Ruth Player?
- Mrs T:** Perhaps. What d’you want with them?
- Mariquita:** I come to take them away.
- Mrs T:** Oh yes. And what gives you the right?
- Mariquita:** They come to live at my house.
- Mrs T:** You are not from these parts, are you?
- Mariquita:** My house is near here.
- Mrs T:** What sort of house is that?
- Mariquita:** Is a big house.
- Mrs T:** No, I mean what is the house used for?
- Mariquita:** No understand.
- Mrs T:** Are you in the same line of business as me?
- Mariquita:** No understand.
- Mrs T:** Give me strength. Are you trying to steal my girls?
- Mariquita:** No. I help them.
- Mrs T:** They said nothing to me about leaving.
- Mariquita:** They say they come with me. I make them good.
- Mrs T:** You get your own girls – don’t you dare take mine.
- Mariquita:** They not your girls.
- Mrs T:** Who feeds and shelters them? Me.

**Mariquita:** I no argue. They come.

*Enter Mary and Ruth ready to move out with bags etc. Rosie, Charlotte and Lisa are present.*

**Ruth:** Goodbye, girls.

**Mrs T:** And where, pray, are you two a-goin'?

**Mary:** We are leaving for a better home – with this lady.

**Mrs T:** A better 'ome?

**Ruth:** You 'eard. A better place than this old dump.

**Mariquita:** I wait for you outside. *(Exit.)*

**Mary:** Thank 'ee kindly for taking me in Ma'am. Here is what I owe you.

**Mrs T:** What impudence is this! You gave me no notice. You cannot just leave with this foreigner. You are setting a bad example for the others.

**Ruth:** We don't owe you nuffink. You can't stop us.

**Mrs T.:** I forbid it! There's a whole list of clients booked for you Ruth Player. As for you Miss Mary Ford, you ain't earned a penny since you came 'ere.

**Mary:** I thank God 'tis so.

**Ruth:** Come on Mary. It's no good talkin' to her.

**Mrs T.:** Oh no you don't. *(Gets hold of Mary and drags her screaming to the window.)* One more step and I'll throw your little friend out of the window.

**Ruth:** *(Moving to stand between Mary and window.)* Let 'er go, you old bag or I'll give you a knock you won't forget. Come on girls, give us an 'and. *(The other girls struggle to release Mary.)*

*Enter Tom Brewer.*

**Tom:** 'Ello, 'Ello. I thought this was a happy place.

**Mrs T:** Not now Tom. Come back later.

**Tom:** Where's my little Ruthie off to then?

**Ruth:** Somewhere you can't get your dirty 'ands on us.

**Tom:** Oh what a shame. I was feeling like a bit of fun.

**Ruth:** Come, Mary – quickly.

**Tom:** *(Barring their way.)* What's the hurry? What price one last little romp for old time's sake?

**Ruth:** I've done with all that.

**Tom:** This wouldn't 'ave anything to do with that foreign-looking lady waiting outside, would it? Don't tell me you've reformed.

**Ruth:** I said I've done with all that.

**Tom:** I bet. You dirty little whore. You can't live without it.

*Ruth slaps his face. They struggle. The other girls set on Tom and hold him down.*

**Ruth:** *(To Mary.)* Let's go now, for pity's sake.

**Tom:** I'll find you wherever you are. I'll find you. Just you wait.

**Ruth:** Goodbye girls. And thanks. Come on Mary. *(Exit.)*

**Mrs T.** Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend! And you, you harpies, how do you explain this revolting behaviour?

**Charlotte:** We're revolting 'cos we're revolting, ain't we girls?

**Tom:** Get off me you sluts.

**Charlotte:** 'Ere, look girls, a fallen man. Makes a change to have a man on 'is back don't it! 'Ow much do you charge, Tom? Get 'is trousers off, girls.

*They debag Tom, screaming with laughter. He gets up and chases after them as they play catch with his pants.*

O soldier, soldier, won't you marry me  
 With your musket pipe and drum?  
 O no sweet maid he cannot marry thee  
 'Cos he ain't no pants to put on.  
 So up she went to her grandfather's chest  
 And she got 'im some pants of the very very best  
 And the soldier put them on *(Handing Tom his trousers back.)*

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT 2

### Scene 1

*Mill Lane, Windsor. Enter Mariquita and a group of penitent girls, all holding Bibles, on their way to church. Mary and Ruth are among them. They are watched by the two neighbours.*

**Mariquita:** Stop here. Who is making that laughing? Remember, you are in the presence of the Lord. Ruth, your bonnet is crooked. *(She straightens it.)* Now, everyone, hold your Bibles in front of you and look down at them. Show that you are penitent. We go into church now, two by two. No talking. Come. *(She leads them on.)*

**Neighbour 1:** There they go – off to church for morning service.

**Neighbour 2:** Looks like a Sunday School outing.

**Neighbour 1:** Mrs Tennant makes 'em all wear the same.

**Neighbour 2:** She's very strict with 'em.

**Neighbour 1:** Has to be with that sort.

**Neighbour 2:** Those girls are too far gone in sin to be rescued.

**Neighbour 1:** I know. They'll soon be making eyes at our menfolk.

**Neighbour 2:** We must complain to the Rector.

**Neighbour 1:** Won't do any good. He's in it I with 'er.

**Neighbour 2:** We signed a petition to Parliament.

**Neighbour 1:** Won't do any good either. They say Mrs Tennant is hand-in-glove with Mr Gladstone.

**Neighbour 2:** With the Prime Minister! What's he got to do with fallen women?

**Neighbour 1:** They say he prowls the London streets at night and tries to rescue them.

**Neighbour 2:** Mr Gladstone. I don't believe it.

**Neighbour 1:** They say he writes letters to Mrs T.

**Neighbour 2:** Well, there's fame for Mill Lane

**Neighbour 1:** Ill fame, more like. You mark my words, no good will come of it.

## Scene 2

*Enter Mariquita pulling Charlotte with her. Other girls follow them in.*

**Mariquita:** Mary Magdalen (*formerly Charlotte*), you have been very bad in church. You pulled your dress off, you let your hair down, you screamed and laughed. You pulled faces at the congregation and made the Rector angry. And all in the presence of the Lord.

**Mary Mag:** I ain't your bloody Mary Magdalen, so you can bloody well...

**Mariquita:** Stop it at once. (*Mariquita shakes MM and tries to stop her swearing.*) Stop it!

**Mary Mag:** You ain't a-goin' to shave my bloody hair off either.

**Mariquita:** Stop those bad words. You know the rule that all penitents must have their hair cut off.

**Mary Mag:** I'd rather die. I ain't as bad as them whores.

*Mariquita slaps her face.*

**Mariquita:** Go to your bed! You will be locked in your room and will see nobody, but I will ask the Rector to talk to you. You will have bread and water for three days. (*Exit MM sobbing.*) (*To the other girls*): Now, you see what happens if you do not obey the rules. I cannot save you from sin if you disobey. You must all know the rules by now. Tell me some of them.

**Mary Ford:** We must not lose our temper.

**Mariquita:** Good. Ruth?

**Ruth:** We must not speak of past sins.

**Mariquita:** Yes, because they corrupt your soul and damn you to eternal punishment. Rosie?

**Rosie:** We must not look out of the window at the soldiers. (GIGGLES)

**Mariquita:** It is not funny, Rosie. Now, I told you all to learn different parts of the Bible according to the day. Mary, what is Sunday?

**Mary:** Day of Joy.

**Mariquita:** Ruth. Monday.

**Ruth:** Awful day of Judgement.

**Mariquita:** Good. Tuesday, Liza

**Liza:** Er. Day of Baptism.

**Mariquita:** And Saturday?

**Rosie:** Day of Death.

*Girls sing*

Sunday, Sunday, day of Joy  
When in church, don't look at boys

Monday, Monday, Judgement Day  
It's so awful we must pray.

Tuesday, Tuesday, Baptism  
Let us say the catechism

Wednesday, Wednesday, Holy day  
When we're not allowed to play.

Thursday, Thursday, day of mercy  
When we have to smile and curtsy

Friday, Friday, day of Light  
Lady says what's wrong and right.

Saturday, Saturday, day of Death  
Confess your sins with every breath.

**Mariquita:** Muy bien. Very good. Mary, this week at six in the morning you will milk the cow. I will show you how.

**Mary:** No need Ma'am. I used to milk cows back home.

**Mariquita:** Good. Remember you will be milking in the presence of the Lord. Now it is time for bed. Mary, go to Mary Magdalen's room to see if she is asleep. Here is the key. Lock the door. Now we say goodnight

*The girls file past Mariquita, each kneeling in front of her in turn as she murmurs a blessing and each bidding her goodnight. They exit, leaving Mariqita kneeling and saying a prayer.*



### Scene 3

*Enter Town Crier loudly beating drum.*

**Town Crier:** Hear Ye! Hear Ye! Windsor Grand Annual Royal Revel in honour of Her Majesty's Accession to the Throne. The Bachelors of Windsor intend to hold their annual Revel, which will consist of a variety of Old English sports and pastimes in the Bachelor's Acre, for which handsome prizes will be given. The evening's entertainment begins at half past eight o'clock, and will consist of a Tyrolean Dance, the unrivalled exhibition of those talented foreigners, The Fayette Family, who will perform most astonishing feats on Deux Cordes Elastiques. To conclude with a brilliant Display of Fireworks. A military band will be in attendance throughout.

*Curtain up on Mary, Ruth, Mary Magdalen, Rosie, Lisa and Charlotte doing laundry work at The Limes.*

**Ruth:** Did you hear that? It's the Revel tonight.  
*She sings:*

Cor what a bloomin' lark  
There's a Revel in the park  
Let's all go and have some fun  
Everybody's got to come.

**Mary:** Lady won't let us go  
She'll dig her heels in and say no  
You know it's against the rules  
We must not be bloomin' fools

**Rosie:** Let's all go to the Revel  
We won't fall foul of the Devil  
We're good girls who stay together  
No matter what the weather.

**Liza:** We've got nothing to wear to the fair  
We've got no ribbons to wear in our hair  
Our smocks are dull and grey  
Boys will just jeer and shove us away.

**Ruth:** It won't be like you suppose  
We'll all be wearing a rose  
I've picked some from Lady's garden  
And tomorrow I'll ask for her pardon

**All:** So let's all go to the revel  
Rules, they can go to the Devil

It's time we had some fun  
Everyone has got to come.

**Mary:** Well, I don't know. It's not right to sneak off behind Lady's back.

**Ruth:** Oh come on Mary. We promised we'd stick by one another. You don't want your Ruthie to die of the doldrums do you?

**Mary:** Suppose I'll have to come with you just to keep an eye on you, won't I?

**Ruth:** That's my girl. Listen everyone. We'll nip over the wall. I know where there's some rope. Meet on the landing after Compline. No one'll see us in the dark.

**Mary Mag:** What about devotions?

**Ruth:** We can do those when we come back. Here, take a rose each.

**Mary Mag:** Coo what a lark!  
*Exit all.*

#### Scene 4

*Brass band music and crowd noise.*  
*Enter the penitent girls with no bonnets, and with roses in their hair.*

**Liza:** Cor, look at all the people.

**Ruth:** Come on. Look, they're dancing

**Mary Mag:** Smell those hot pies. Mmm.

**Mary:** Don't get lost. Stick together.

**Ruth:** I'm a-goin' to dance. Who's comin'?

**All (ex Mary):** We are! *(Exit)*

**Mary:** I'll wait here for you.

*Enter Will Summers.*

**Will:** Hello Mary.

**Mary:** Will... I...

- Will:** I didn't expect to see you here.
- Mary:** I didn't want to come – I'm keeping an eye on the others.
- Will:** You're blushing. Does your Lady know you're here?
- Mary:** Well, er...
- Will:** Wandering from the paths of righteousness, eh?
- Mary:** If you're going to make fun of me.
- Will:** You look so pretty with that rose in your hair. *Sings:*

This feeling I have so deep inside  
 I really can't explain it  
 I'll try to find the words  
 To name it and explain it.

Your smile is sweet as Mayday's dawn.  
 It makes the world seem newly born.  
 You are a poem, all else is prose.  
 You look so pretty with that rose.

Day by day and hour by hour  
 I feel it flower, I feel the power  
 My love for you just grows and grows  
 You look so pretty with that rose.

Soon on that rose the petals will fall  
 But those on your cheeks will never pall  
 In your eyes your beauty shows  
 You look so pretty with that rose.

I will never ever let you go  
 And we will find a better life.  
 Mary, Mary, be my wife  
 You look so pretty with that rose

*Repeat second verse.*

- Mary:** Oh Will, I need time to give my answer. I mustn't be seen with you. We're not allowed to speak to men.
- Will:** Oh my. Did you get my letter?

**Mary:** Lady won't let me have it.

**Will:** She would make a good prison governor. Is there somewhere we can leave letters for one another?

**Mary:** Yes. In St Andrew's church. I help to clean the church on Wednesdays. Leave it in the font the night before, under the cover. Now go ,Will, please. I must meet the girls

**Will:** Don't I even get a kiss?

**Mary:** Yes – but later. Please go now.

**Will:** Very well. But I'll be keeping an eye on you – from a distance. *(exit)*

*Enter Town Crier.*

**Town Crier:** And now for the first time at the Windsor Revel, ladies and gentlemen, we present those talented local thespians, Mr Jack Moleskin and Mrs Lucinda Tubwell acting the scene from Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra where the dying Antony is reunited with his beloved Cleopatra.

*Enter Moleskin Jack and Mrs Tubwell dressed as Antony and Cleopatra.*

**Antony:** I am dying, Egypt. Give me some wine, and let me speak a little.

**Cleo:** No, let me speak, and let me rail so high, that the false huswife Fortune break her wheel, provoked by my offence.

**Antony:** Feed your thoughts not with my miserable end, but with my former fortunes wherein I lived, the greatest prince o' the world, the noblest, a Roman valiantly vanquished. Now my spirit is going. I can no more.

**Cleo:** Noblest of men, woo't die? Hast thou no care of me? Shall I abide in this dull world, which in thy absence is no better than a sty? O see, my women, *(Antony dies.)* The crown of the earth doth melt. My Lord! Oh withered is the garland of the war. The soldier's pole is fallen; young girls are level now with men, the odds is gone, and there is nothing left remarkable beneath the visiting moon *(Faints)*.

*Applause. The pair bow to the audience.*

*Enter the five girls.*

**Ruth:** Did you see that? Fancy old Tubbers going back to the stage!

**Mary:** She always was an actress at heart, though, wasn't she?

**Liza:** They say she's getting married to that Moleskin chap.

**Mary:** Come on, we must get back or else we're in trouble. (ALL BUT RUTH EXIT)

**Ruth:** I'll catch you up. I got to go to the women's tent.

*Enter Cpl Tom Brewer and Pte George Moul.*

**Tom:** 'Ello, why look 'oo it is – the Mary Magdalen of Mill Lane. Fancy meeting you 'ere!

**Ruth:** Tom Brewer – I got no time for you. *(She makes to leave.)*

**Tom:** Wait. Just a moment, I prithee. You owe me money Ruthie.

**Ruth:** No I don't.

**Tom:** Three sovereigns for protecting you while you was on the street.

**Ruth:** I don't owe you a brass farthing.

**Tom:** Grab 'er George. I ain't letting you go till we've settled.

**Ruth:** Let me go!

**Tom:** *(Goes up to her and kisses her.)* You can pay me back in kind if you like.

**Ruth:** Get off!

**Tom:** Come on Ruthie, behind the tent, just like the old days, eh? Bring 'er over 'ere George. *(They exit.)*

*Enter Mary.*

**Mary:** Ruthie, where are you? *(She hears a loud scream.)* Ruthie!

*Enter Ruth, dishevelled and trembling with a knife in her hand.*

*Enter Moul.*

**Moul:** You done 'im in, you bitch.

**Ruth:** 'E was going to rape me.

**Mary:** Come on Ruthie. Let's run for it. *(They exit.)*

**Scene 5**

*The Limes, Mill Lane.*

*Mariquita is questioning Mary, Rosie and Liza.*

**Mariquita:** What have you done? What have you done? Why have you turned your back on the Lord? Ruth is in prison, charged with murder, and all the work we have done here is wasted. I do not understand. Why, Mary? Why?

**Mary:** We wanted to go to the Revel, Lady.

**Mariquita:** Why you not ask me first?

**Mary:** We thought you would say no, Lady.

**Mariquita:** You broke the rules.

**Mary:** Beg pardon, Lady, we had not been out for such a long time.

**Mariquita:** That is no reason for such shameful conduct.

**Rosie:** Beg pardon, Lady. It weren't Ruthie's fault. That Tom Brewer was a bad lot.

**Mariquita:** How you know it was not her fault?

**Mary:** She told me Tom Brewer attacked her, Lady. She 'ad to defend herself.

**Mariquita:** Thou shalt not kill.

**Liza:** We're her friends, Lady. We 'ave to 'elp her. She's all alone.

**Rosie:** She'll be treated like a common prostitute. No one will believe 'er.

**Mary:** She needs your help, Lady. She needs you to stand up in court to say she was a reformed person.

**Mariquita:** How can I help someone who has turned her back on God?

**Mary:** Please Lady, Ruth was being true to her new life. She did what she did 'cos that man was trying to force her back to her old life.

**Mariquita:** Well, I do not know. I will pray for guidance. Meanwhile you will all be punished. You will stay in your rooms for three days and live on bread and water. You will learn the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount and recite them to me. Now go and remember you are in the presence of the Lord. *(Exit all.)*

**Scene 6**

*A Windsor beerhouse*

*George Moulton is drinking by himself.*

*Enter Mariquita.*

**Mariquita:** Mr Moulton?

**Moulton:** Yes.

**Mariquita:** I am Mrs Tennant. I am proprietor of the Clewer House of Mercy where Ruth Player was in my charge.

**Moulton:** Oh aye. What d'ye want from me? This ain't no place for a lady.

**Mariquita:** You were a friend of Corporal Tom Brewer, I believe.

**Moulton:** I was.

**Mariquita:** You were with him on the night he died?

**Moulton:** Yes. Look, why are you askin' me all these questions? The police have already been round and I'll be in court next week to give evidence.

**Mariquita:** It is for my own peace of mind and because Ruth is still my responsibility.

**Moulton:** She murdered Tom.

**Mariquita:** That is for the judge to decide. I must ask you one more question, then I will go.

**Moulton:** Well?

**Mariquita:** Did Corporal Brewer force himself on Ruth?

**Moulton:** What, after she'd been his girl for all those years?

**Mariquita:** That is not an answer to my question.

**Moulton:** You took 'er away from 'im. But she'll always be a whore.

**Mariquita:** I ask you once more. Did Corporal Brewer force himself on Ruth?

**Moulton:** I didn't see everything that 'appened.

**Mariquita:** What did you see?

**Moult:** Well Tom grabbed 'er. She put up a bit of a struggle. They fell down. She 'ad a knife and stuck it in 'im. That was it.

**Mariquita:** Did you hear screams?

**Moult:** Yeah, I s'pose I did.

**Mariquita:** Is that what you told the police?

**Moult:** More or less.

**Mariquita:** Thank you Mr Moult. Goodbye (*exit*)



**Scene 7**

*A courtroom. Judge and counsel for prosecution and defence are present. Ruth is in the witness stand.*

**Prosecution:** Your name is Ruth Player?

**Ruth:** Yes.

**Pros:** How long were you living at Mrs Tubwell's lodging house?

**Ruth:** About three years.

**Pros:** And how did you earn your living there?

**Ruth:** I was a servant.

**Pros:** A servant?

**Ruth:** Yes, I served drinks to our visitors.

**Pros:** I put it to you that during this time you were a common prostitute.

**Ruth:** You can put it like that if you want.

**Pros:** What was your relationship with Corporal Brewer?

**Ruth:** He liked to visit me a lot. He said he would protect me if I gave 'im some of me earnings.

**Pros:** And did you?

**Ruth:** Yes.

**Pros:** And you never resisted his advances during this time?

**Ruth:** A poor girl's got to live.

**Pros:** On the night of the Revel in Bachelor's Acre you met Corporal Brewer?

**Ruth:** By chance, yes. We 'adn't seen one another since I went to Clewer House of Mercy. I wanted to cut meself off from all that, and Lady – Mrs Tennant – forbids us even to speak about our past.

**Pros:** That's as may be. Were you glad to see Brewer?

**Ruth:** Glad? Not bloomin' likely. 'E said I owed 'im money. I wanted to run off, but 'e got 'is mate George Moulton to 'old me.

**Pros:** What happened then?

**Ruth:** I said I 'adn't got any money. 'E said I should pay 'im in kind. So 'e grabbed me and dragged me behind the tent. I struggled to get away and screamed. 'E knocked me down and fell on me, tearin' at my clothes. I 'ad to defend meself, so I pulled out a knife. I meant to wound 'im in the arm, but in the struggle I struck 'is chest.

**Pros:** *(to audience.)* Ladies and gentlemen of the jury. I put it to you that this story has no more value than the defendant's virtue. Not only does she have a previous record of theft and threatening behaviour for which she was jailed in London, she is also a common street whore, trying to lie her way out of responsibility for killing a non-commissioned officer of Her Majesty's forces. Her motive was to escape paying her debts. The fact that she was carrying a knife and was prepared to use it shows what kind of woman she is. *(Sits.)*

*Defence Counsel rises.*

**Def:** On June 14<sup>th</sup> 1849 you left Mrs Tubwell's lodgings and entered the Clewer House of Mercy as a penitent?

**Ruth:** That's right, sir.

**Def:** Why did you decide to do that?

**Ruth:** Mainly because my friend Mary Ford was going. But I also reckoned that I'd 'ad enough of the life I was leading and wanted to reform myself.

**Def:** And are you a reformed character?

**Ruth:** I am a penitent fallen woman. I will never go back to my old sinful life.

**Def:** On the night of the revel, did Tom Brewer know you had reformed?

**Ruth:** No. 'E thought 'e still 'ad power over me, and that I would still give in to 'im willingly.

**Def:** But you put up a fight?

**Ruth:** I knew I would 'ave no self respect if I didn't resist.

**Def:** Thank you. That is all. M'Lord I would now like to call Mrs Mariquita Tennant as a defence witness.

*Ruth leaves the stand and returns to the Dock. Mariquita is sworn in.*

- Def:** You are Mrs Mariquita Tennant, the proprietor of the Clewer House of Mercy at The Limes, Mill Lane?
- Mariquita:** I am.
- Def:** What is your opinion of the defendant's character and progress since she entered your charge?
- Mariquita:** She can be – how you say – headstrong at times. But she is a hard worker, she is a true penitent and I believe she has taken the Christian beliefs and virtues close to heart during the year she has been with me.
- Def:** You heard the Prosecution call the defendant a common prostitute and attempt to discredit her evidence that she unintentionally killed Corporal Brewer in self defence. What is your view?
- Mariquita:** I believe Ruth was being forced against her will to yield to this man; that she was defending her new life in the Presence of the Lord, and that she did not intentionally kill Corporal Brewer.
- Judge:** Thank you Mrs Tennant. We shall now adjourn until tomorrow morning.  
*(Exit all.)*

**Scene 8***Mill Lane.**Mariquita passes by as two neighbours look on.***Neighbour 1:** There she goes. Wonder what she's thinking now?**Neighbour 2:** What, with one of her girls on a murder charge? Must be sorry she ever started her so-called House of Mercy.**Neigh 1:** Told you no good will come of it. This was a respectable neighbourhood till she started bringing her fallen women here.**Neigh 2:** She's got a nerve, though, ain't she, speaking up in court like that.**Neigh 1:** Won't do much good though, will it? Plain as day: that Ruth Player's guilty of murdering that man even though he was a rogue.**Neigh 2:** The defence says she was defending her virtue.**Neigh 1:** She don't 'ave any virtue to defend though, does she? She's a common prostitute.**Neigh 2:** You mean she's guilty of being a pro... I can't bring myself to say the word... so she's guilty of murder?**Neigh 1:** There's too many street women like 'er in Windsor, hanging around the barracks, drinking in beer shops, going with men. No wonder the Rector says the town is steeped in sin. It's time one of them was made an example.**Neigh 2:** What, by hangin' her?**Neigh 1:** Yes, if that's what the judge decides.**Neigh 2:** Well, I don't know. I do know if I was being attacked by a man I'd defend meself even if it meant doin' 'im in**Neigh 1:** But you are not a prostitute, are you.**Neigh 2:** But would I still be hanged?**Neigh 1:** Ah, now there's a question. We'll have to ask our husbands. They're the judges and jury on such matters.**Neigh 2:** We wouldn't dare, though, would we?**Neigh 1:** What, ask our men? No, I don't suppose we would.

## Scene 9

*St. Andrews Church, Clewer*

*Mary is sweeping the floor. Will enters quietly. She doesn't see him. She remembers the font, lifts the cover and finds a letter within. She reads it and is visibly moved.*

**Will:** You found my letter, then.

**Mary:** Yes.

**Will:** So what is your answer?

**Mary:** Oh Will, I... I... O, Lady.

*Enter Mariquita, who kneels down to pray while Will and Mary look at one another. Mariquita rises and sits staring ahead.*

**Mary:** Are you all right, Lady?

**Mariquita:** I pray for Ruth.

**Mary:** Poor Ruth.

**Mariquita:** We must pray God will have mercy. *(She sees Will trying to leave.)* Who is this?

**Mary:** Er he is a...

**Will:** Will Summers, Ma'am, a friend – but more so. I am seeking Mary's hand in marriage.

**Mary:** Oh, Will, stop...

**Mariquita:** And have you given your consent?

**Mary:** Not yet, Lady. I...

**Mariquita:** Well it is against the rules, but I will leave you together. I am in favour of marriage. I have been married twice. You are a good girl, Mary, and I trust you. Remember you are in the presence of the Lord. *(Exit.)*

**Will:** *(Mimics)* I am in favour of marriage! What say you?

*They join hands and sing:*

**Will:** I'm in favour of marriage  
Like a brewer favours a brew  
I'm in favour of marriage  
How say you?

**Mary:** I'm in favour of marriage  
Like one's in favour of two  
I'm in favour of marriage  
How say you?

**Will:** I'm in favour of marriage  
Like a bottom favours a pew  
I'm in favour of marriage  
How say you?

**Mary:** I'm in favour of marriage  
Like the sky's in favour of blue  
I'm in favour of marriage  
How say you?

**M&W in turn:**

**W:** Like a window needs a view

**M:** Like a foot needs a shoe

**W:** Like a Q needs a U

**M:** Like the grass needs a dew

**W:** Like a ghost needs to boo

**M:** Like a sneeze needs atchoo

**W:** Like a ship needs a crew

**M:** Like a lover needs to woo

**Will:** I'm in favour of marriage  
And I'm in favour of you  
I'm in favour of marriage  
Oh give me your answer do.

**Mary:** I'm in favour of marriage  
And I will tell you true  
I'm in favour of marriage  
And I will marry you.

**SCENE 10**

*The courtroom. Ruth in dock. Judge enters.*

**Usher:** The court will rise.

**Judge:** Ruth Player, this court finds you guilty of murder. Is there anything you want to say?

**Ruth:** What's a poor girl to say? I am not guilty of murder. I believe the court has found me guilty just because I was a fallen woman.

**Judge:** I will pass sentence tomorrow. Take her down.

*Exit Ruth et al. Music. Lights dim. Fade up on Ruth in cell.  
Enter Mariquita.*

**Mariquita:** Ruth?

**Ruth:** Lady.

**Mariquita:** How are you?

**Ruth:** As well as can be expected, thank you, Lady.

**Mariquita:** This is no place for a young woman.

**Ruth:** I'm used to that, Lady. Never 'ad a place of my own. First the workhouse, then the bawdy house, and now the jailhouse.

**Mariquita:** You had the House of Mercy of course.

**Ruth:** I wasn't a very good penitent.

**Mariquita:** You were. The girls send their love.

**Ruth:** That's kind.

**Mariquita:** Mary is leaving to marry a young man called Will.

**Ruth:** I know Will. He is a good man. Please tell Mary I am glad for her.

**Mariquita:** Yes. We are all praying for you Ruth. We know you are innocent.

**Ruth:** I am praying too. I am afraid, Lady. I don't want to die.

**Mariquita:** The Lord will comfort you. *(Pause)* Do you remember the story of the fallen woman in the Bible?

**Ruth:** Yes I do. That's where Jesus says to the mob 'Let those who are without sin cast the first stone' and no one does.

**Mariquita:** *(Takes a Bible from her bag.)* Yes. Here, I have marked the passage. Read it in the presence of the Lord. Goodbye Ruth. God bless you.  
*Mariquita takes Ruth's hand, hesitates, and then they embrace, weeping. Exit Mariquita*  
**Finale:** *Ruth is joined by the penitent girls, including Mary Marianne (Mary Magdalen) sings folksong*

**(Let No Man Steal Thy Thyme)**

**Marianne:**

Come all you fair and tender maids  
 That flourish in your prime  
 Beware, beware keep your garden fair  
 Let no man steal thy thyme.  
 Let no man steal they thyme.

For when your thyme is past and gone  
 He'll care no more for you  
 And every place where your thyme was waste  
 Will all spread o'er with rue  
 Will all spread o'er with rue.

*Chorus (All the penitent girls)*

For woman is a branchy tree  
 And man's a clinging vine  
 And from your branches carelessly  
 He'll take what he can find  
 He'll take what he can find.

The gardener's son was standing by  
 Three flowers he gave to me  
 The pink, the blue, and the violet too  
 And the red, rosy tree  
 The red, red rosy tree.  
 But I forsook the red rose bush  
 And gained the willow tree  
 So all the world might plainly see  
 How my love slighted me  
 How my love slighted me.

*Chorus (whole cast)*

For woman is a branchy tree  
 And man's a clinging vine



And from your branches carelessly  
He'll take what he can find  
He'll take what he can find.

END