

IKE RICH PLAYERS, GOOSE HIGH SCHOOL, GOOSE BAY

present

"Smith"

Adapted from the book of the same title by Leon Garfield. "Risk all for the chase!" says Lord Tom, and young Smith, a 12-year-old street waif, who fairly worships the boisterous highwayman, would agree. But when two men in brown spend the rest of the play in hot pursuit of the illiterate lad and a "dockiment" he has pick-pocketed, "Smith" has second thoughts...

Cast

Man 1	Keith Hillier
Man 2	Melvin Eddison
Jack	Claire McLean
Victim / Landlord	Stephanie Moore
Bridget	Tia Ryan
Fanny	Iona Strachan
Smith	Sacha Woodward
Jones	Jay Schevers
Debtor	Erin Udby
Priest	Glenn Learning
Lord Tom	Ian Bailey
Billings	Jarrold Gunter
Gentleman 1	Jason Vaughn
Passers-by	Kathy Quinn
.....	Sherry McCarthy
Street People (Goose High Choir):	

Janice Bailey	Carla Oldford
Dana Blackwood	Iona Strachan
Misty Brown	Kerri Holwell
Amy Hays	Natalie Spurrell
Morag Hart	Tanya Holwell
Lisa Hughes	Debbie George
Wendy Bradley	Paula Mesher
Wanda Lee Mesher	Pam White
Carrie Michelin	Stephanie Moore
Amy Moore	Karla Peddle
Marjorie Gear	Tony-Faye White
Adrienne Edmunds	Tina Pilgrim
Robin Bowers	Flora Dyson

Student Director	Sarah Sullivan
Teacher Sponsors	Dorrie Brown
.....	Mike O'Donnell

Ike Rich Players, Goose High School (Cont'd)

Music

"You've Got To Pick A Pocket Or Two", by Lionel Bart from Oliver.

"White Man Sleeps", (recorded by Kronos Quartet) by Kevin Volans

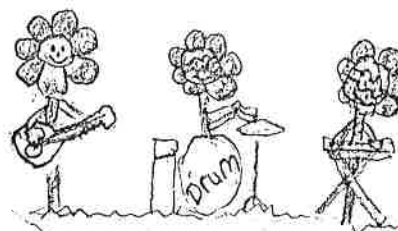
Sound

Mary Ellen Giles

Lights

Richie Crawford

18th Labrador Art's Festival '93



Franciska Mitsuk, Gr. 5
Amos Comenius Memorial School
Hopedale



Rosanna Baggs, gr. 4
Peacock Elementary School
Happy Valley

SMITH

city street.

SONG: You've Got to Pick a Pocket or Two (all cast)

[As song ends, SMITH picks pocket of VICTIM. FOOTSTEPS alert SMITH who runs amongst STREETPEOPLE who begin to leave. SMITH ducks into doorway; MEN IN BROWN approach]

VICTIM.. Good day, t'ye, gentlemen.

MAN 1. And good day to you [glances up to upper window].

[MEN IN BROWN stab VICTIM and search him]

MAN 2. God rot the old fool -- 'e ain't got it!

[SOUND of LAME MAN'S FOOTSTEPS.]

JACK/LAME MAN (approaches MEN IN BROWN who are kneeling over VICTIM). Well....?

MAN 1. Nothing, nothing, Your Honour.

JACK. Liars! Fools! Look again!

[MEN IN BROWN search again; they groan in disappointment]

MAN 1. Told you so -- nothing.

JACK. Again, again! It must be there.

MAN 2. Well it ain't, yer 'onour, and it we stays much longer, we'll be on our way to join 'im....on the end of a rope. Come -- let's be off.

JACK. Again! Search once more.

MAN 1. With respect, do it yerself, sir.

JACK. No.

MAN 2. Then we're off. Quick! Quick! There's someone coming...

[Scurry off. BILLINGS slowly moves across stage, looking down at VICTIM, careful to keep face to rear stage. SMITH, still huddling in doorway, takes out document and examines it. BILLINGS sees SMITH, who looks up just in time to see BILLINGS' back as he moves away. SMITH, wary, folds document and scrambles off].

LIGHT on platform, stage RIGHT.

[LANDLORD enters RIGHT, on platform, polishing tankard with a

cloth. In dark at stage LEFT, FANNY and BRIDGET enter, carrying and placing stools. They freeze. SMITH engrossed in document, passes LANDLORD, a bundle of clothes under his arm].

LANDLORD. Not nubbed, yet? I spoke to you, Smith.

SMITH. Did you now? I thought it was a belch from one of yer regulars. [He ducks a swipe at him from LANDLORD, who connects nevertheless] Ow-w!

LANDLORD. [laughs] Got 'im that time!

[SMITH stumbles down stairs. LIGHTS UP stage left.]

BRIDGET. You asked for it. You brought it on yourself.

FANNY. Poor little Smut. One day he'll come down them stairs stone dead.

SMITH. I'm not complaining. Saw an ol' gent done in, today.

BRIDGET. Indeed? And what's that to do with abusing the landlord?

SMITH. Me mind was on other things.

BRIDGET. 'Tis no excuse. We brung you up to be genteel.

SMITH. Genteel? [He throws down the bundle of criminals' clothes]. And you, there, sewing & selling rogues' clothes?

BRIDGET. Yes, genteel. Fanny and me feels the disgrace. 'S'no pleasant task, alterin' dead swindlers' clothes, but the law must take its course. 'Tis an ill wind that, in this case, pays our bills.

FANNY. Put a dab of vinegar on your little lug, Smut. 'Twill take out the sting.

SMITH. Look what I got this time. Just before 'e was done in -- not a quarter of a minute.

FANNY. What is it?

SMITH. [matter of factly] 'Twas what 'e was killed for.

[FANNY and BRIDGET move to lean over SMITH and the document]

BRIDGET. [turning the document] I'm sure it must go this way... It's a deed to a property, for that queer thing [pokes at it with her needle] that looks so like a horse and cart is the word "property". Indeed it is. I'd know it anywhere.

SMITH. [skeptically] Then why was 'e done in for it? And why was they so frantic when they couldn't find it? Poor old fool.

BRIDGET. [returns to sewing; darkly] Reasons. Reasons.

FANNY. I think it's a confession or accusation for that's the sort of thing a murder's done for -- excepting money -- (pointing, knowingly) and that ain't money. Now, though I don't quarrel with Brid's "property", for I believe her to be right, "whereas", most distinct; and that piece, like a nest o' maggots, (points with her needle) I KNOW to be "felonious"...Oh, yes indeed, Smut, dear: you've got a confession that would be very valuable, if we could only find out what's been done, for if they was willin' and able to kill for it -- well, they'll be equal willin' to PAY for it! Clever Smut!

[SMITH is still skeptical]

FANNY. So we must get it read out to us.

BRIDGET. And, who, Miss, would you ask?

SMITH. Lord Tom can read.

FANNY. (blushing) Lord Tom? The very scholar!

BRIDGET. That high Toby is so much in his cups, his mouth's grown like a spout! Mark my words, Miss, I'd as soon trust him with anything worth money, as I would the greasy landlord, who's never sold a customer to the gallows for less than a guinea -----

SMITH. --- Spoken most genteel, Miss---

BRIDGET. ----NOT that I think that paper's worth money at all, for it's neither more nor less than a deed to a property.

[Argue, ad lib: FANNY: romantic maintains it's a confession that could be used for blackmail; BRIDGET: insists it's a property; SMITH goes over and picks up one of the garments being worked on, fingers it thoughtfully, shudders as he considers its previous owner.]

[SMITH walks toward door, absently.]

FANNY. Where are you going, Smut?

SMITH. Newgate. Got business.

FANNY. Why would you go to the prison? And what are you going to do with our dockiment, there?
Smut?

SMITH. With MY document? ... Don't know, yet...

BRIDGET. Wouldn't it be safer here?

SMITH. Why?

BRIDGET. Well, dear, if them that wanted it did an old man in for it, they won't think twice about doin' in a lad.

SMITH. Don't know I got it -- never saw me. There's only you and Miss Fanny what knows.

BRIDGET. Oh, yes, that's true, but you never can tell, Smut. Someone might have seen you.

SMITH [pauses, recalling; recovers matter-of-factly] No. No one saw me.

FANNY. [brightening] Are we going to show it to Lord Tom?

SMITH. Don't know...maybe.

BRIDGET. [changing the subject] If ye're going to Newgate, squeeze some money out of that Mr. Jones or there'll not be another stitch done 'til there's something on account. 'Angmen is 'orrible customers! So degrading.

FANNY. For the last time, dear. Leave the dockiment be'ind. 'Twill be safe as 'ouses...Oh, Smut, I 'ave an 'orrible feelin' you was seen and are in danger.

SMITH [pauses; looks past them; snaps his fingers decidedly] I 'ave a plan. [walks out, tucking document in jacket] Be still, ol' fella [talking to the document] -- you and me's got business! You and me's goin' up in the world, just as soon as I gets you to talk.

BRIDGET. Now, Smith.

FANNY. ---Smut---

[SMITH leaves. LIGHTS down. In darkness, JONES, DEBTOR, and PRIEST take places in doorways. SMITH comes to CENTRE, and is lit.]

JONES [walks out to meet SMITH at CENTRE; hands him some money] 'ere's yer three shillings, lad...

SMITH. Thank you, Jones.

JONES. ...MR. Jones, to you, boy. An 'angman is a worthy title, and I'll not be 'avin' you speak to me like some low-class...and now, if you don't mind yer P's and Q's, you just may become one of my cus-to-mers in a transaction at the end of a yardage of hemp! Now, be off with you!

SMITH. P's and Q's? (brightening) Them's letters, ain't they?

JONES. Aye.

SMITH. And then show us a P, Mr. Jones, and then show us a Q, and

I'll try to mind them.

[JONES mutters and swings at him, missing.]

SMITH. [to himself] Bleedin' scholars. Want to keep everything to themselves. [he stumbles and reels a bit, stepping back towards doorway at stage LEFT = "Debtors' Office". Halfway there, he brightens and stops:

SMITH. [to himself] Hel-lo! Wait a minute! The Debtors. I always do errands for them, twopence a mile when it's dry; fourpence when it rains. Maybe one of 'em 'ould do somethin' for me.....[he begins to move towards the Debtors' doorway]...very educated gentlemen, the Debtors. You have to be educated to get into debt. Scholars all...[he approaches and takes the arm of Debtor, who, though in leg-irons, remains poised and dignified. SMITH pulls DEBTOR towards CENTRE>]

SMITH. [humbly; pleading] Learn us to read, Mister!

DEBTOR. [looks down; smiles wanly; sighs] Not in ten thousand years, my boy! [SMITH tries to interject, but DEBTOR cuts him off] Be happy that you can't. For what will you get by it? You'll read hurtful letters that might have passed you by. You'll read warrants and summonses where you might have pleaded ignorance. You'll read of bills overdue and creditors' anger, where you might have ignored it all for another month! Don't learn to read, Smith. Don't. [DEBTOR drifts back to doorway, smiling, back straight, head high].

SMITH. [slumps down, dejectedly, to sit cross-legged; a few ladies pass by and look at him, well-meaning, but do not stop; he is almost crying with frustration; sniffs decidedly] I WILL learn to read! Me and the document are going up in the world, 'spose the Devil himself stand against us!.....Surely this town has more scholars than those in Newgate Jail! The streets must be full of 'em -- I've only to ask --- [he begins to search around and approaches passers-by]

SMITH [approaches THREE PASSERS-BY; ad lib] Mister! Mister! Learn me to read!

[PASSERS-BY ignore him; ad lib; SMITH spins and staggers, bewildered, and finds himself once more, dejected, at CENTRE]

SMITH [cross-legged on the floor; brightens] The Church! ---

[MUSIC: "Gregorian Chant" LIGHTS down; PRIEST, carrying candles moves slowly towards SMITH].

SMITH [continuing; musing to himself] The 'oly Fathers spend their 'ole lives readin' an' studyin'...

[PRIEST stops and stands looking down at SMITH, who looks up

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broadly, around the entire "church", letting his eyes fall on various imagined items (eg., shrines, stations, stained-glass windows); in awe.]

PRIEST. What do you want my child?

SMITH. Oh, it's beautiful. Just like me sister's stories of Heaven.

PRIEST [smiles kindly] What are you looking my child?

SMITH. [inspired] Guidance, Your Reverence.

PRIEST. Are you lost?

SMITH. Oh, no Your Worship. I know where I am.

[PRIEST tightens lips; eyes Smith suspiciously]

SMITH [quickly] Learn me to read, Your 'oliness. That's what I come for. [places his hands on his heart] Learn me to read so's I can read the 'oly Scripture.

PRIEST. [moves slowly around him aware of his filth; suspicious] If you come and stand by the door during Service, you'll hear me reading from the Holy Scripture, child. Won't that be a comfort and help?

SMITH. Oh, yes Your Grace. And I'm 'umbly obliged. But, what of when I'm 'ome in all dirt an' disorder? Who'll read to me then? And me two poor sisters - a-pantin', a-groanin', a-supplicatin' for salvation? Who'll read to them? Oh, no Your Reverence, I got to learn to read so's I can comfort meself in the dark of night... and light a little lamp in me sisters' souls with perusings aloud from the Good Book.

PRIEST. [bursting out] You're a little liar!

SMITH. And you're a fat bag of rotting flour! I 'ope the weevils gets you!

[as SMITH runs off, LEFT, knocking over GENTLEMAN 1 in the street, PRIEST returns slowly to his doorway. BILLINGS enters and helps GENTLEMAN 1 up, careful to keep face away from audience]

BILLINGS. Who is that little urchin?

GENTLEMAN 1. [spluttering; brushing himself off] They call him Smith, I believe.

BILLINGS. And where does he come from?

GENTLEMAN 1. Somewhere near the Ditch. I fancy it's the Red Lion Tavern.....

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[BILLINGS moves back towards DEBTORS' doorway; GENTLEMAN 1 continues across exiting stage RIGHT.]

LIGHTS DOWN.

[Under the tavern, BRIDGET and FANNY are sewing; SMITH lies belly-on-the-floor, studying the document. All three have backs to the stairs.]

LORD TOM. Stand and deliver! (points pistol).

[all three startle; SMITH scrambles quickly, hiding document]

FANNY. (delighted) Lord Tom!

BRIDGET. (disgruntled) Is that any way to enter someone's 'ome, burstin' in like Robin 'ood, noisin' like a Banty in a barnyard? -
- Not that there's summat 'ere to steal, God knows!

SMITH. [recovering and brightening] Pleased to see you, Lord Tom [he offers his hand]. They told me you was nubbed -- but I never believed 'em.

TOM. Ah! (puts his pistol away). It 'appens to all of us, sooner or later, Smut. With some, it's sooner; but with Lord Tom, let's hope it'll be vastly the later!

FANNY. (warmly) And so say all of us!

SMITH. Trade been good these past ten days, Lord Tom?

TOM. Been on the Finchly Common, Smut, me young friend, wild and free on the snaffling lay!

BRIDGET. (disgusted) Don't use them coarse expressions -- if you mean pilfering from unarmed travellers, then say so. Or-are you ashamed?

SMITH. [grinning] Many coaches, Lord Tom? And was there danger?

TOM. Find smart equipages, Little Smut. Windows fair sparkling with ~~with~~ and brilliance. Like travelling stars, I tell you, gleaming in the foggy nights. It's a life, my boy. Stand and deliver. Stern with the gentry; courteous with the ladies. 'Madam, your necklace, if you please. Sir, your purse, or I'll blow your head off!'

SMITH. [smiling wistfully] And did you, Lord Tom? Did you blow any heads off this time?

LORD TOM. Only a pair of coachmen's, Smut! And then unwillingly -

for they went for their weapons.

SMITH. How many coaches did you take?

LORD TOM. Six, my friend! Six gay glitterers-

BRIDGET. Then where's your profits you apply money to necklaces and purses, sir?

LORD TOM. Spent, Miss Bridget - as you well know. That's the way of our lives. Risk all for the chase - then spend the profit in high contempt. The chase and danger's all! [Smith is nodding vigorously] There was a diamond brooch I parted with for an evening's ale in Highgate, ma'am. And, by God, but it was a good exchange! Eat, drink and be merry, as they say - for tomorrow we'll all be nubbed!

BRIDGET. [snapping] A pity it wasn't yesterday!

LORD TOM. [momentarily angry, but goes on once again] But what's this I hear? For the news I hear is that YOU'VE come upon a rare treasure, me lad! Already me rival in accomplishment? Well' indeed - I'm proud of you! A document, I hear tell. And curiously valuable - from all accounts,

FANNY. [stopping her sewing] I told Lord Tom. And we're in opinion that-

BRIDGET. 'Tis nothing of value.[her face quite flushed] A property deed, most likely. Of no use to anyone at all!

FANNY. And I say it's a confession, Brid! Reely, Lord Tom, dear I'm convinced! Indeed, the more I think on it, it had such - such a GUILTY look!

LORD TOM. Well then, let's put an end to conjecture and see it. Here, Smut, old comrade-in-arms, let's see the document. Lord Tom'll read it for you.

[SMITH, uneasy, looks at his sisters, and squirms; doesn't answer]

TOM. [extends his hand, coaxing] Well, Smut, friend...where's the treasure?

SMITH. I -- I ain't got it, Lord Tom....I -- I left it with a friend.

BRIDGET. Not that creeping old debtor, Mr. Palmer. How I hate debtors! They're worse 'n thieves.

FANNY. Then who's got it, Smut, dear? Who's got our valuable dockiment?

SMITH. The parson at St. Andrew's.

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BRIDGET. [coldly] And who is 'e when e's at 'ome? You filthy little liar!

SMITH. A friend of mine!

BRIDGET. You made 'im up.

SMITH. No, Miss Bridget. True as I live an' breathe! Big fat man all in white -- friend of mine. Cross my heart and 'ope to be nubbed.

BRIDGET. And where did ye meet 'im?

SMITH. In church ----

BRIDGE. Now, I KNOW you're lying, for you was never in a church in all your born days! Liar and blasphemer! Oh, how I hate a liar. Nothing is more degrading. You come here--you young person-- and I'll wash your mouth out with vinegar for you. Don't think you'll escape this time! [she advances on him with a jar of vinegar; SMITH dodges behind LORD TOM]

TOM. Never come 'tween family [laughs and steps aside, causing SMITH to fall; BRIDGET pursues; SMITH ducks behind FANNY]

FANNY. Poor Smut! [FANNY joins TOM on steps; BRIDGET continues to chase SMITH, who dodges around the furniture; he ad libs his innocence]

BRIDGET. I'll teach you to lie to me!

SMITH. Let me through!

TOM. Not til you give up the document. Not til you give up the treasure.

FANNY. Oh, do as Lord Tom says, dear Smut, before Brid mashes you stone dead, for she's that vexed...

BRIDGET [gaining on him...the chase continues] Nothing will save you this time, you degrading little liar, you!

[BRIDGET lunges because she trips over a stool, and seizes SMITH by the hair. TOM laughs]

FANNY. Poor Smut!

LANDLORD [enters]. Smith! Smith! Forgot to tell you something. [BRIDGET releases SMITH, and wipes her fingers]

SMITH. What?

LANDLORD. You had callers -- two.

SMITH. Who, me?

LANDLORD. Yes, indeed. Had you off to a T. Dirty. Weasel-ish. Villainous-looking remnant. Eyes like chips of coal. Teeth like the same. About 12 years old. " 'at's 'im, I says, directly."

"Good," says they. "And where is 'e?"

"Nubbed, most likely," -says I.

"Oho -- " says they. "We'll be back then, to inspect the remains."

Then they was off. -- No message -- just that.

SMITH. W-What was they like?

LANDLORD. One big; the other small. Both in brown. And though I says it myself -- and I ought to know -- as unsavoury and throat-slittish a pair as I ever clapped eyes on -- ha-ha! [leaves]

SMITH. [afraid] It's -- it's them. They've come to slit me throat.

TOM. Don't you worry, me lad. There's no high Toby, thief, or rascal who'd dare come here when he knows Lord Tom's on your side. By God, Smut, if they so much as sets foot on them stairs, I'll blow blue daylight through the both of them. You've a man to protect you now, and I can't say fairer than that.

SMITH [mutters] You don't know 'em. They're not your sort, Lord Tom.

FANNY. Why, Smut! You'll be safe with Lord Tom, there, dear. You just give him our dockiment, and all will be well.

SMITH. You don't understand. They'll do for me anyways. They're that sort.

BRIDGET. Then what will you do, child?

SMITH. I don't know...but I can't stay here. Not at night. I'll go off somewhere. Maybe to ---

TOM. [smiling] To the parson's at St. Andrew's?

SMITH. Maybe....

BRIDGET. Don't lie, now, child, for it may be the last time, and you'd go to hell.

SMITH [looks round the room longingly; pitiful] I've got to go! For God's sake...let me past.

TOM. [shrugs; steps aside] I'd protect you, Smut -- honest, I would!

FANNY. The dockiment, Smut. Won't you leave it, dear. It'll do

you no good.

SMITH. [fiercely] No! Never. Never, never, never! [pauses; shocked by his determination] Besides, it's ----with the parson at St. Andrew's.

FANNY. [sighs] Oh, Smut. Brid's right -- and you're a liar. For you've got it inside your coat. I can see it, dear.

SMITH. [determined; rushes for the stairs] Outta my way!
[exits]

CHASE SCENE.

MUSIC:

[choreographed sequence with MEN-IN-BROWN chasing SMITH through dark alleys, doorways, etc. STAGE-HANDS RAISE "RED LION" SIGN in the commotion. As chase ends, MEN-IN-BROWN lean against each other CENTRE, and speak. SMITH is hiding nearby]

MAN 1. [panting] Fer God's sake, I can't go another step -- me heart'll burst, I swear it!

MAN 2. [gasping for breath; wheezing] All right, we'll go back some'ow to the Red Lion...we'll wait there. God rot the crafty little perisher! [they limp off]

[SMITH, after considerable pause, sneaks out from his hiding spot; one last PASSER-BY passes him, SMITH lifts a handkerchief and a coin from him undetected; PASSER-BY continues off. SMITH pulls document from his pocket; fingers it and wraps it in the handkerchief....]

MUSIC (changes):

LIGHTS: spotlights swing across darkened stage, throwing large shadows.

[SMITH feels all alone with his document; wanders sometimes aimlessly, sometimes frenetically as his fears grow. Ponders even searching for MEN-IN-BROWN, to return the hateful thing since it seems to have left him homeless and uncertain; his last move is to run wildly, crashing into MANSFIELD who is tapping his way across stage from RIGHT; his glasses fall to the ground.]

SMITH. Watch out! Watch out! Oh! Oh! Ah-h! [knocks MANSFIELD down]

MANSFIELD. [startled; angry] Ah-h!

SMITH. [struggles to his feet; MANSFIELD grabs his ankle; SMITH screams:] LET GO!

MANSFIELD. Damn you, no! Not until you help me first. [SMITH searches his face, notices his eyes] Help me up. Help me, I say. For pity's sake, sir, can't you see? I'm blind.

SMITH. [gasping] A blind man! Oh God! A mole in the 'ole!

[Pause. SMITH studies. MANSFIELD is wary]

SMITH. If you lets go me ankle, I'll 'elp you up. Can you see me? [MANSFIELD. shakes head. SMITH makes a hideous face] What am I doing now?

MANSFIELD. I don't know. I don't know. I swear, I'm blind. Look at my eyes. Any light in 'em? Look for my smoked spectacles -- they're somewhere about. Look for---

SMITH. What am I doing NOW? [pulls another face]

[MANSFIELD. loosens SMITH's ankle; searches pavement for glasses]

SMITH. [hauling document out, waving it in front of M's face] What've I got in me 'and?

MANSFIELD. [sighs] My life, my boy. My life's in your hand.

SMITH. [scowls; puts away document] Here you are, Mr. Mole-in-the 'ole. 'ere's me 'and, then. Up with you. Up on yer pins, and 'ere's yer 'at an' stick, 'an black spectacles....though why you wears 'm foxes me. [M. gets up] My, but you're a real giant of a gent! Did you know that?

MANSFIELD. Thank you, boy. Now, tell me if I'm in the street or alley, and I'll give you a guinea for your pains.

SMITH. You're on the corner.

MANSFIELD. Facing which way?

SMITH. The Lord knows. I've been sick meself.

MANSFIELD. Fever?

SMITH. No, fright. I've been runnin' fer two-and-a-half hours. Smith [offers his hand, and with the other, guides M's hand to it]. Smith. 'unted, 'ounded' omeless and part gin-sodden. Smith. Twelve years old. That's me. Very small, but wiry, as they say. Dark-'aired, and lately residing at the Red Lion Tavern off Saffron 'ill. Smith.

MANSFIELD. [smiles] Mansfield. Blind as a wall for these past twelve years. Well-to-do, but not much enjoying it. Mansfield. Residing at Number 7, Vine Street, under the care of a daughter. Mansfield. Believe it or not, a magistrate.

SMITH [gasps] God! 'oo'd 'ave thought I'd ever be shakin' 'ands wit' a bleedin' Justice?!

MANSFIELD. [fumbles in coat for coin; holds it up] And now, just point me towards the church that should stand at one end of the street, and the guinea's yours, Smith, with my deepest thanks.

SMITH. [takes guinea] Seems a lot for a little.

MANSFIELD. Good night, Smith.

SMITH. Same to you, Mr. Mansfield, J.P.

MANSFIELD. [begins to tap his way; bumps into mimed post or two] Sorry, good sir. Couldn't see you. So sorry. [SMITH smiles; ready to take off; feels pity; scowls, struggling with his own indecision; decides to go help M.] ...That you, Smith?

SMITH. Unnh.

MANSFIELD. Didn't expect you...

SMITH. Goin' the same way, meself.

MANSFIELD. To Vine Street?

SMITH. Thereabouts.

MANSFIELD. Glad to hear it, Smith.

SMITH. Unnh. Oh well. 'ere's me..you ol' blind justice, you! [he begins to lead MANSFIELD down steps at STAGE RIGHT. They continue down RIGHT AISLE]... Just tell me where to turn, and where to cross, and I'll see you 'ome safe and sound. After all, I ain't done much for that guinea. [offers a hand; M. finds it and sighs; they start to walk].... Were it a sickness?

MANSFIELD. My blindness, d'you mean? No, lost my sight when a house burned down. Lost my wife, as well. A costly fire, that.

SMITH. Oh.

MANSFIELD. Takè the next turning on the left, Smith. [they cross at back of theatre]

SMITH. What's it like, being blind?

MANSFIELD. Dark, Smith. Very dark.What's it like having eyes?

SMITH. The moon's gone in again, so we're two of a kind, Mr. Mansfield, you and me.

MANSFIELD. If you can see a new-built church with a round tower, cross in front of it, and walk with it to your right, Smith.

[SMITH mimes sighting the building; they turn to come down LEFT AISLE] Vine Street is the next one that crosses this one. My house is to the right. I'll be safe enough now.

SMITH. [stays with him] No trouble. I'm going the same way. To the door, Mr. Mansfield.

MANSFIELD. If you've nought better to do, will you come in and take a bite of late supper with me, Smith?

SMITH. Don't mind if I do, Mr. Mansfield.

MANSFIELD. Any family, Smith? Likely to worry?

SMITH. Not much.

MANSFIELD. Then it's settled?

SMITH. Just as you say, Mr. Mansfield.

MANSFIELD. Anything else I can do for you, Smith?

SMITH. [sighs; looks up at his eyes] No, thank you, Mr. Mansfield. You've done all you can. [they stop at steps, STAGE LEFT; MISS MANSFIELD enters to stand at top of steps; LIGHT on her]

MISS. Papa! I was so worried! [she comes down and starts to help her father up steps; SMITH pulls back on M's arm] You've been gone so long, sir, I thought you was----[pauses; eyes SMITH with his filth]----lost...

MANSFIELD. Daughter. Here's Smith -- as good-hearted a child as the town can boast of.

MISS. [disbelieving; her voice belies her true assessment] Pleased to make your acquaintance, Smith. [she eyes him] Any friend of my father's is more than welcome.

MANSFIELD. Daughter. My young friend is taking supper with us, [suddenly; impulsively]...and then -- he'll stay the night.

MISS. [shoots daggers] Any friends of ours, sir....[she walks around him, suspiciously, and goes to fetch a chair for each of them.]

MANSFIELD. [walking slowly with SMITH to CENTRE] A saint.

SMITH. [coolly; not convinced; eyes MISS as she places chair for her father] Oh? [looks after her] Oh.

MANSFIELD. [slightly offended; as he sits] You don't meet with a saint every day, Smith.

SMITH. No, you don't.....[MISS brings a chair for SMITH and then

goes to loft and readies the cot; SMITH is still unconvinced]

MANSFIELD. So, Smith...what brought you out into the street at this hour, anyway?

SMITH. I live there...now..

MANSFIELD. But I thought you just told me that you reside at the Red Lion Tavern.

SMITH. Well, I do -- or I did. Me two sisters, Bridget and Fanny live there -- they alters dead criminals' clothes for resale; that's 'ow they makes a livin', if you can call it that. And I supplements the income with me work in the streets--

MANSFIELD. What work, Smith?

SMITH. I...I ease the burden of the man in the street...

MANSFIELD. What do you mean, "ease the burden"? Like you helped me -- is that what you're talking about?

SMITH. Well,... in a manner of speakin' you might say it is. -- And I runs errands for Debtors who are bidin' time at Newgate Jail.

MANSFIELD. A bit of a rough life, isn't it, Smith?

SMITH. I s'pose it is fer them's not used to it. You gotta be quick-- there's lots to stay clear of -- smallpox, consumption, brain fever, jail fever -- even the 'angman's rope 'as spared me so far for fear of catchin'something.

MANSFIELD. Why would the hangman be looking for you?

SMITH. [thinking fast] Oh,..... some folks sees some of us as just vagrants and no-goods, but we 'aves our own life, -- culture, you might say -- ..we're just.....misunderstood, sometimes. People should be more careful wit' their valuables,. It's a matter of motives, you know.

[MANSFIELD looks at him curiously]

SMITH. [continues, deflecting him] ...I been in Newgate, you know. Not IN, for time, like, but in to do errands....There'll be new tenants there, soon, I 'low...

MANSFIELD. Friends of yours?

SMITH. [quickly] No! No...but there was a murder today in Curtis Court..

MANSFIELD. Indeed, I heard of it. The man was known and wealthy.

SMITH. Poor old so-and-so.

MANSFIELD. Did you see him, then?

SMITH. NO! No...I only heard about it. Poor old so-and-so.

MANSFIELD. A Mr. Hartford of Pricklers' Hill. I knew him, Smith. A good but sad old gentleman. I'd like to have his murderer before me.

SMITH. (somerly) And so would I, Mr. Mansfield. [attempting to hide his interest] Why was he done in?

MANSFIELD. Oh, I don't know, Smith. I don't know. It's a vile and dark business. [his face darkens] It troubles me.

SMITH. What troubles you, Mr. Mansfield?

MANSFIELD. My blindness, because I shall never clap eyes on that murderer, because to the day I die, I'll never know what such a monster looks like. Do you understand me, Smith? Do you understand that, to me, devils and angels are all one?...Do you understand me, Smith?

SMITH. (uncomfortable; squirming; nods -- then realizes that M. can't see him) Oh, oh yes, indeed!

MISS [enters;] I do believe it's growing a little late to be sitting here in idle chatter -- not so much for you, Papa, but for your young friend. Truly he looks tired, sir. His bed is ready and he ought to be in it. [she rolls her eyes, as if to say 'The sheets will have to be burned afterward!'] She takes her father's arm and begins to lead him off LEFT, calling over her shoulder] The room is straight ahead, there, Smith, just up the stairs... Come, Papa. [they leave]

[SMITH makes his way to the loft, pokes at the bed, sits on it, lays on it, then in it. Grins, turns over and sleeps. LIGHTS DOWN.....]

[MISS enters after a pause, carrying a walking stick, and cautiously walks around SMITH unsure that he is still alive; pokes him]

MISS. Smith! Wake up directly!

[SMITH startles awake; rolls away; falls out of bed and curses]

MISS. [she screams] The language!

MANSFIELD. [entering, tapping from LEFT] What's wrong?

MISS. Nothing, Papa. Your young friend fell out of bed. Ha, ha. No harm done.

[SMITH dives back under the covers. MISS continues to poke at him]

MISS. Come out! No one's going to harm you.

MANSFIELD. [calls out from bottom of steps] Are you here, Daughter?

MISS. [goes to the top of steps and calls down] Yes, Papa! But don't try coming up by yourself. Wait. I'll help you. [she helps him up to the loft]

MANSFIELD. Morning, Smith! Sleep well?

SMITH. [muffled, under covers] Mornin' Mr. Mansfield.

[MISS continues to poke and use threatening looks to coax SMITH out]

MANSFIELD. What? Back in bed? The voice betrays you. Give me your hand. [MISS is pleading, silently with SMITH, to come out]

SMITH. [gloomily comes out] 'ere's me 'and, then, you old blind justice, you.

MANSFIELD. And will you go back to your cellar, Smith?

[SMITH shrugs]

MISS. [exasperated] Smith, Mr. Mansfield means: will you stay here and work for your board and keep, of course. Mr. Mansfield is really concerned about you. He thinks you deserve better of the world than what you've got, and he would give it to you. My father is quite a saint, you know...

[SMITH is still puzzled; she continues]

...Then it's settled. Mr. Mansfield will employ you in the stables, Smith, and I, [a God-help-me look] will attend your improvement. For a beginning, Smith, I shall teach you to read.

[SMITH stares; gapes; pokes finger in ear, disbelieving. Beams]

MISS. [to her father] I think he's pleased, Papa. [mutters] I suppose he's fond of horses. [they leave]

[TWO FOOTMEN enter from LEFT, and set washtub filled with suds. They return, and place white screen in front of it. Then they proceed to the loft, to fetch SMITH for his bath].

SMITH. [pulls document out and waves it in front of himself] Won't be long now, old fellow. Very soon you and me will be better acquainted, and then, we'll go up in the world. [folds it, wraps it in handkerchief. Hears FOOTSTEPS; pushes it under covers. FOOTMEN enter, grim-faced]

FOOT 1. Up with you.

FOOT 2. And then down with you.

SMITH. Wh-what do you mean? [they grin]

FOOT 1. Miss's instructions. She says afore you commence on scrubbing the yard, that selfsame necessary thing must be done to you, so down to the scullery, young Smith.

FOOT 2. To the scullery, Smith. [SMITH is alarmed; FOOTMEN each take one side of SMITH and carry him down steps and deposit him behind screen.]

FOOT 1. Take off them wretched rags, Smith.

SMITH. Rags? What rags?

FOOT 2. Your clothes, Smith. Take off your clothes.

SMITH. [he slowly starts to remove his clothes; they stare at him] Ain't you never seen a person take off 'is clothes before? [they chuckle; he turns away and continues. After one layer, they move to take him. He waves them away to complete another layer. This repeats.] 'Ave the goodness to wait 'til I'm DONE, gen'lemen -- 'ave the goodness!

[FOOTMEN step to one side of the screen, and discuss the proceedings...as SMITH continues to disrobe]

FOOT 1. Indeed! There's a lot o''em, ain't they?

FOOT 2. I don't believe 'e's ever thrown a single item away!

FOOT 1. [picking up cast-away items] Worn to nothing but ghosts of button-holes and gossamer threads.

FOOT 2. [draping filmy item; mocking poetry] Shirts -- nothing but wisps of mournful lace!

FOOT 1. Britches like greasy strips - like over-cured slices of ham.

[FOOTMEN swing around to watch behind screen. SMITH is in profile, picking hard at what seems to be the last item stuck to his chest.]

SMITH [sheepishly; looks at them] I- I think I'm done, now. That last was just an imprint left on me skin! READY.

FOOT 1 [as he scrubs and the other ladies] Get the livestock, now. Scoop 'em out! [SMITH surfaces periodically to scream]

BATH SONG. [during song, MISS strips SMITH's bed]

[When finished, FOOTMEN wrap him in a blanket, and bring him around in front of screen. They go back and gather up his clothes, and carry them off, leaving SMITH alone in CENTRE.]

SMITH. [helpless; after them] Me clothes! Me belongings! Where are ye goin' wit' them? I can't go about like this.

FOOT 2. We're bringin' 'em to be burned. Yer new ones is bein' readied. Go up and wait in yer room.

[SMITH wanders slowly up steps. As he enters the room, he discovers that his bed has been stripped. He searches frantically for his document. He sits down, depressed. MEG brings his new clothes. He doesn't notice. MEG brings his supper. He doesn't eat. MEG comes to stand in his doorway]

MEG. [musing] Maybe he's taken a chill.... But he ain't flushed or feverish -- he looks more froze than inly heated. [tenderly] Are you ill, Smith? What's wrong with you? [pleading] Answer me!

SMITH. Nothing, Miss. Nothing.

MEG. [idea strikes] You're homesick, ain't you? You was brought up in an ale-cellar, wasn't you? S'pose I go fetch you an ale -- would that cheer you up? [no response].... [she continues, desperate] Nothing but kindness is meant -- all's fer yer own good. They'll feed and clothe you and treat you like a yewmanbeen. You'll want for naught, 'ere. [practically in tears] They HAD to wash you, mate -- you was that black. You should 'ave seen the sheets.

SMITH. [brightening] The sheets? Did you see them?

MEG. Why, bless you! Yes! And they was that 'orrible, Miss wanted them burned.

SMITH [worried] And...and...did you?

MEG. Lord, no! Burn good sheets! I biled them.

SMITH. [stares at her] Was...w-was there any- ...anything else with the sheets?

MEG. [recalling; closes eyes] There was a handkerchief. But 'twas gone so far, I burned it.

SMITH. Burned it!! [shriek; then groan]

MEG. I 'ad to, little one. 'Twas in a shameful state. Smelled dear like, well -- I don't know what it smelled like, for I've naught to compare it with. Powerful clinging. I only 'ope it'll wear off the master's paper.

SMITH. [desperate] PAPER? Wh-what paper? [shivers; gets up and moves towards MEG]

MEG. [backing away] Why, one of the master's documents that had somehow got itself muddled up in that dreadful handkerchief. Sometimes he drops his papers in the queerest places....what with 'is disability.

SMITH. What was in it?

MEG. Poor child, I don't know! 'Twas a lawyer's document of sorts and no one must read THEM, save the mistress or the master's clerk, and then, only when the master asks.

SMITH. Then 'ow do you know it was a lawyer's document?

MEG. 'Twas marked for the attorneys Billings and Leonard, for whom we 'ave dealings. [confidentially] Mr. Billings is sweet on Miss Mansfield.

SMITH. Did you give it to Mr. Billings or Mr. Leonard?

MEG. Lord no! That's for the master to do. It was addressed for Mr. Leonard.

SMITH. So you gave it to Mr. Mansfield?

MEG. Questions, questions. Was you a cat, you'd be stone dead. No, I never gave it to 'im. I put it in the study with 'is other papers, but I put it at the bottom, so the smell might wear off before he comes to it. Now that's what makes a good servant -- consideration for the master's feelings....There's a good lad. I'll go get yer ale -- just 'omesick weren't you? Knew it all the time.. Trust Meg. [she leaves] Homesick. And it took a motherly soul like Meg to see it. [crosses stage] A touch o' 'eart -- that's all this big busy town 'as need of. Take that boy, fer justice. [exits LEFT]

[LIGHTS down on LEFT, stay on SMITH briefly, while FOOTMAN bring study table to CENTRE, laden with papers. SMITH sneaks down to study; rifles through papers; cannot make sense out of any of them.

MISS enters from LEFT and discovers SMITH.]

MISS. SMITH!

SMITH. Oh my God! I'm done for!

MISS. [whispering] Smith, is this how you repay Mr. Mansfield? By robbing him? Stealing from a blind man? Is this the kindness of heart that so moved him? Nothing but the cunning skill of a rogue...[stares at him, chewing her lip]

SMITH. [cutting in] I ain't cruel -- really I ain't.

MISS. [exasperated] Oh! What could someone expect from a child like you? Father should have known, but he's so foolishly sentimental! Anyone else would have left you in the street, but no! You show him the least kindness, so that makes you an exception? As if someone like you could change in one evening! Stupid idea! [paces]

SMITH. [watching her; miserable] Don't throw me out. I meant no 'arm.

MISS. Why do I have to deal with this? Father expects me to have the patience of a saint -- well, I don't. I'm no saint. [sighs] Smith, I - I'm disappointed, it's true, but you're fortunate that Mr. Mansfield is more understanding than his daughter. SHE, I promise you, would have clapped you straight into Newgate. Mr. Mansfield's the saint, Smith. He wouldn't expect you to be a saint all at once.....[sigh].....You can stay, Smith.

[MUSIC.-----

LIGHTS DOWN. SMITH quickly exits and throws on shirt. MISS, in the dark, straightens papers in study. SMITH returns and joins MISS; together they sit and MISS teaches SMITH to read.

MUSIC FADES SLIGHTLY TO ALLOW LINES. SPOT on STUDY:

SMITH. [struggling] M-my n-ame i-is.....Sm--smi--th...Smith.

MISS. Well done! [pause] What's the matter? You don't seem pleased.

SMITH. I'm happy enough, but I've been spending all this time trying to learn what you and me already know! 'Course my name's Smith!

MUSIC UP. LIGHTS FADE. [MEG enters carrying & placing stools DOWNSTAGE RIGHT. SMITH runs over and sits at her feet, miming writing:

MEG. That's it. Four straight sticks joined -- "M" . Good fer you, you little cellar-rat!

SMITH. [satisfied; holding slate up] Mm-an-s-ff-field. Mansfield! What a lot o' letters fer one little name.

[MEG laughs].

LIGHTS DOWN. MUSIC UP. SMITH crosses to MANSFIELD and kneels at his feet. LIGHTS UP. SMITH reads aloud. MANSFIELD beams.

MUSIC DOWN:

SMITH. [deliberately] Tom...Tom...the pi-...per's son
S-s-st-ole...a...p-pig...an'...a-ww...

a-way....'e ('at's an easy one, " 'e'!))...
 'e...r-run!I guess 'e did run --
 Lord Tom "would, if "e ever stole a pig!

[MANSFIELD's expression changes from "beaming" to confusion]

LIGHTS DOWN. MUSIC UP. SMITH crosses to loft. Bounces up on bed, cross-legged, and writes laboriously on his slate.

LIGHTS DOWN. SMITH crosses back to study where MISS is reading to himself. MUSIC DOWN:

SMITH. [waving slate] 'ere we are, Miss! I wrote you a poem. I did! an' I wants to read it to you.

MISS. [startled but pleased] Smith!

SMITH. Listen, Miss! [gets down on one knee]...

A look of disgrace has changed her face
 True saintliness has taken its place;
 For though I couldn't read a bit
 Understanding's lamp's been lit
 Words and letters, no longer a curse
 As you can see by my little verse! [he beams]

[BILLINGS moves down aisle LEFT, MEG walks to door and peers out, on tiptoe as conversation continues;]

MISS. [touched; takes his head in her hands] Oh, Smith! [kisses his forehead lightly; laughs] Well, I guess all the wisdom in the world is yours for the taking...

MEG. [running to study, from door] Oh, excuse me Miss -- Mr. Billings has arrived.

[Billings starts up steps, heads towards study]

MISS. Thank you, Meg.

SMITH. Come a-cooin'! So I'll be 'off an' 'ide meself, now! Best o' luck, Miss, I'm sure you'll be very 'appy! [runs off, past BILLINGS in doorway; pats him on the back] Best o' 'appiness in yer cooin', Mr. Billings! [runs out, down aisle LEFT]

[BILLINGS stares after SMITH; perplexed]

MISS. Is something wrong, Mr. Billings?

BILLINGS. [slowly] I- I think I know that youngster. Call your father. I think he might like to hear about this as well....

LIGHTS down. SPOT on SMITH. FOOTMAN brings another chair; MANSFIELD moves into study.

SMITH. [bumping into URCHIN]

URCHIN. Hey there, Ain't I seed you before.

SMITH. Maybe [pauses cautiously] D'you know the Red Lion Tavern in Saffron Hill?

URCHIN. [grins] I know it all right

SMITH. And you know the two ladies what reside in it's nether regions.

URCHIN. The darlin's in the cellar? Miss Bridget and' Miss Fanny? Everyone knows them!

SMITH. The very same. I'd be obleeged if you'd carry my message. [URCHIN hesitates] ...tell 'em ...a...a certain person's...umh... well and prospering. Tell 'em 'e's on 'is way up in the world...AND...will communicate further when a suitable occasion has arose.

URCHIN. [impressed] I'll tell 'em! [continues to watch SMITH, admiringly...]

SMITH. Don't forget now -- a certain person's on 'is way up in the world! [turns; putting on airs; whistles as he strolls back to house; enters jauntily]

[BILLINGS is pacing in study. MANSFIELD and MISS are serious. SMITH 's expression changes from confidence to confusion]

BILLINGS. It IS him! THIS is the boy I saw in the court. This boy stabbed Hartford. He is the murderer! My poor friends, how monstrously have you been deceived!

MISS. [dismayed] No. No! You must be mistook, sir. It's not so. Not this boy. [she goes to her father's chair, places her hand on his shoulder for comfort; he waves it away]

BILLINGS. It is the boy I saw from my window in Curtis Court. I saw him struggle. I saw him stab. I saw him escape. There is no doubt -- I wish to God there was. Forgive me.

SMITH. [heating up] You're mad! You're mad! I never laid a finger on the old man. I never touched the old man. I --- [goes to BILLING speaking right into his face] You was wrong, Mr. Billing! For God's sake, tell 'em, for you're killin' me!

BILLINGS. [shaking head] Not wrong, Smith. I saw. I know.

SMITH. Then damn you!! [flees to MANSFIELD and MISS; pleads] Miss! You knows me! I never done it! Swear on the scriptures! Swear! Swear! You believe me, Miss! Please!

MISS. [unsure, sympathetic] Oh, Smith!

SMITH. Then damn you, too; you Bedlam-mad saint! [weeps, helplessly; turns to MANSFIELD] Mr. Mansfield! You believe me -- I know it! I can see it in your....your....[embarrassed about the eyes] ---You know me, and I know you! You know I never done 'im in. [MANSFIELD says nothing] Mr. Mansfield, you must believe me. It wasn't me -- it was them two men in brown, and ---

MANSFIELD. Two men in brown?

SMITH. Yes, yes! And---

MANSFIELD. You saw them kill him?

SMITH. I -- I --

MANSFIELD. Yet, you told me once you'd never seen Mr. Hartford. [SMITH is worried; resigned; MANSFIELD sighs] So, it was you who killed him. Which hand did you use, Smith? Was it the one you gave me that night we met? Was it that same, small helping hand. Tell me, Smith, don't be ashamed, for didn't I say to you that devils and angels are all one to me?

SMITH. [mutters despairingly] Voices in the night. We're all voices in the night to you, you poor old blind fool.

MANSFIELD. You'll be committed to prison to await your trial.

SMITH. Trial? What do you want to try me for? Might as well do me in now! What's one voice less in your noisy night, Mr. Magistrate Mansfield. You'll never see me face when I'm nubbed. Nothing will haunt you. You've done right, you have! All I 'ope is, fer yer sake an' mine, that if you goes to 'eaven, then I goes to 'ell, fer I wouldn't want you to clap even dead eyes on me!

MANSFIELD. Smith ----

SMITH. I never done it, Mr. Mansfield.

MANSFIELD. You'll be tried ----

SMITH. ---and nubbed!

MANSFIELD. God have mercy on your soul!

SMITH. Not if 'e's a blind old gent like you!

MANSFIELD. Smith.

LIGHTS DOWN SLOWLY. BILLINGS and FOOTMEN take SMITH, screaming and scratching, down aisle LEFT. MEG enters from RIGHT and stands looking longingly, sympathetically, after him.

MUSIC (filler) In DARK, MEG and MISS remove chairs; STAGEHANDS remove stairs and stools at RIGHT; and set a number of black boxes for jail interior.

In BLACK, FILCH lays on floor CENTRE, and leans up on one elbow, against a black box. SMITH is standing centre, bewildered.

LIGHTS up on SMITH.

FILCH. Aren't you little Smith? Little Smith what used to run errands for Mr. Jones? Didn't you take the stiff's vestments fer to be altered and sold?...That's you, it is. Grubby little Smith. Thievin' Smith. Smith o' the doorways and corners. Smith of the stinkin' Red Lion. [thrusts his face into Smith's]. Didn't notice you without all yer filth! But washin' ain't exack-ly been profitable, eh, for yer dirt, Smith, hid a multitude of sins. And now them sins is exposed to the view.... So here you are, me lad, jailed, jugged and bottled, as we cellar-dwellers say.So, they finally nabbed you wit' yer 'and in a pocket, did they?

SMITH. Nothing so slight. My charge is murder.

FILCH. Murder, is it? That's bad, Smith....Poor Miss Fanny and Miss Bridget. When they comes to alter them clothes [gestures at Smith's things], why, they'll wash them wit' their tears....It ain't so bad, little sparrow, you gets used to it, though we never sees the sun, we never gets doused by the rain, neither. And it's a comfort to know, you're in the worst place in the world....So you've naught more to fret and slave about to keep yerself from fallin' lower---FOR YOU 'AVE ARRIVED!

BILLINGS. [enters from RIGHT] As you see, I've not forgot you.[motions him away a bit from Filch]

SMITH. I've not forgot you, Mr. Lying Billing; Mr. Murdering Billing; not til Mr. Jones turns me off up the road will I forget you. And if there's such a thing as ghosts, Mr. Conniving Billing, there'll be a screaming, shrieking ghost a-waiting for you every night of your life, when you goes to bed!

BILLINGS. Hand it over, you villanous little snake. [SMITH looks at him with violent hatred]. For God's sake, boy, there's not much time. Give it to me---the naper you stole from the old man. Let me have it and you can go.

SMITH. I ain't got it.

BILLINGS. And I know you have.

SMITH. Search me...or, are you afraid of being bit, for I am a villanous little snake. I am!

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BILLINGS. [looks sharply at SMITH; then softens] All right, lad, I believe you. What was in it?

SMITH. Don't know.

BILLINGS. Then where is it?

SMITH. Don't know.

BILLINGS. Don't your life mean a fig to you?

SMITH. Don't know.

BILLINGS. You're foolish, young man. I promise I'll help you, but you must tell me. It's your only chance. [no response] All right, all right. Keep silent now if you must. I understand. But believe me, young Smith. I'm your truest friend, and you'll soon see it. Not today, nor even tonight, but tomorrow, maybe. I'll visit you, boy, and we'll talk again. Lay our cards on the table, eh? And then, who knows?....Don't look so despairing, boy. I'm not a bad lot, you know. I live in a world, so to speak, and can't help being of it. ...I'm no worse than anyone else...You'll come to see that. Life's a race for rats... and it's devil take the hindmost, the foremost, AND the one in the middle...I'll have you know, I saved your life....Look, the two men in brown already knew you were in Vine Street.

SMITH. Ain't they yer friends, then?

BILLINGS. Listen, friend, I lay my cards on the table. Open and above board. I'll not lie to you, for I like you. Yes, me and the two men in brown had once had dealings.

SMITH. And did they 'ave to kill the old man? Were it necessary?

BILLINGS. Ask Mr. Black, my friend.

SMITH. [scared] W-was 'e the other one? The one I heard? The one with the limp?

BILLINGS. More than a limp, Smith -- a club foot. I don't think I'd want to meet with Mr. Black on a dark night. Right, my lad, I'll lay my cards on the table. That document's worth money -- a vast deal of money -- enough for you and me and the chimney-sweep down the road (I mean our friend, Mr. Black), for I tell you my friend, I see no way of keeping him out of it. We're the little running rats and he's the gobbling devil.....Listen, Smith -- I can get you out of here. You bring me that document, and I'll arrange your escape. [he leaves abruptly; SMITH is tormented with indecision].

FILCH. You ain't got it, 'ave you?

SMITH. Got what?

FILCH. [looking pleased]. So you'll 'ave to stay.

SMITH. Mind your own business.

FILCH. Ain't got none to mind.

SMITH. If I stays, they'll nub me!

[BRIDGET and FANNY enter from RIGHT; they ad lib searching for SMITH in the huge jail]

FANNY. There he is! Oh, Smith!

SMITH. 'ow did you find me 'ere?

BRIDGET. Bad news travels quickly. It took us three weeks to find out that you were "going up in the world"; it took us the same amount of hours to learn you 'ave come down.

FANNY. And a common jailer 'ad to tell us about it. Oh, the degradation!

BRIDGET. Fine clothes and a clean face are but the trappin's of shame when the child 'at 'as 'em is so degradingly jugged. Ooh!

SMITH. I never done it. You know I never done it.

BRIDGET. You're 'ere, ain't you? That speaks volumes. You done somethin'.

SMITH. I was wrongly accused -- victimized.

FANNY. Innocence is no excuse in the eyes of the law, Smut, dear. That much, your sisters know! [glances at FILCH and shudders]

BRIDGET. [to Fanny] It's disgusting what they've done to 'im. It's 'is clothes that'll be comin' down our steps wit' no boy inside of 'em, Fanny. And 'ave you thought, sister, what it would cost to 'ave possession for to bury 'im proper and decent? Or, would you 'ave 'im took off to Surgeon's Hall to be bottled up for all the world to jeer at?

FANNY. [shakes head; murmurs] Oh, Smut, dear. If only you'd given up the dockiment when Lord Tom asked. There'd be no Surgeon's Hall or Mr. Jones, nor even them two fierce men in brown.

SMITH. They come back, then?

FANNY. Yes, they come back, again and again. They haunted the Red Lion for days and days. Terrible pair with eyes like burning coals.....Though the taller of them might 'ave been more tolerable if he'd been on the snaffling law instead of the throat-slitting

budge.

BRIDGET. Listen to the way you're talking -- you're no better than the Lord Tom 'imself.

FANNY. But, Bridget, if it wasn't fer 'im, them villains in brown might still be there. He took 'em on one side, Smut, and spoked to them so fierce that they 'aven't been back since that moment.

LORD TOM. [enters from RIGHT] Well, Smut me lad, at last! It seems you've forestalled me -- not lost, but gone before. But we'll see, me fine lad, while there's life, there's 'ope, as we say on the lay. Maybe Mr. Jones won't 'ave you, yet awhile. Maybe Lord Tom can 'elp.

SMITH. [mournful smile] How, Lord Tom?

TOM. The document, young fellow. Do you still 'ave it?

SMITH. N-not with me, Lord Tom.

TOM. [doubtful; brightening] But, do you know where it lies, Smith?

SMITH. That I do, Lord Tom.

TOM. And, given certain circumstances, such as you might know best, could you lay your 'ands on the aforementioned property?

SMITH. That I could, Lord Tom.

TOM. And would you, me boy?

SMITH. That I would, Lord Tom - With all me 'eart.

TOM. Then we'll see, me bright young heart, dark though these matters may be. While Lord Tom's about, there's yet a ray of light. [makes to put an arm around each of FANNY and BRIDGET; BRIDGET ducks away, reaches for SMITH.]

BRIDGET. We'll be back, you fellanous child. Just remember, though you be not so good as you ought, you ain't forgot, dear. Fan an' me 'll be back.