

Nell faces the Workhouse, By Mia. R 9S

“No,” said Nell’s mother.

“No, no, no, no, no” a weak whisper that built into a helpless scream. Because it had finally arrived. The time the family had been dreading. It loomed over Nell like a perpetual shadow finally to infest their lives: an unwanted disease.

Nell glared, lost, into the sky of fading grey wisps and sheets of heavy rain. ‘Drip, drip, drip’ like her mother’s tears.

She had neither the effort nor the will to face what was coming as it seemed too abominable to be true.

Bernie and Dot were sat dolefully on the hefty double bed, Bill was trying helplessly to calm their hysterical mother and young Johnny was wailing and wailing battling the imprisonment of his highchair. To Nell, it was all a haze. She found herself wondering if her father knew about all this, surely he could do something? Yet as soon as she thought it, she knew there was nothing that could be done, it was already too late.

Not that she was in any way surprised. This was Poplar. With its streets overflowing in trash and crime to be found around every corner, who could expect anything more?

Although everyone had been trying their hardest to make ends meet, food was excessively limited and there was no work to be found in the whole of their town.

“Nell?” whimpered Bernie “What are we going to do?”

She turned wistfully to the grief-stricken face of her younger brother. What *were* they going to do?

She could already picture the months of endless misery, mourning, misgiving ahead of them and the reflection sent an unpleasant chill down her spine.

It *wasn’t* going to be okay...This was the place hundreds of working-class families dreaded facing everyday. It was the workhouse. The *workhouse*. A place that thrived on the agony and torment of human beings. A place that showed no mercy, no matter how old or young you were. A place that Nell and her family would *not* survive.

PLEASE LANDLORD DON’T BE OFFENDED, by Yabesra. G 9S

Five days since she had eaten. Well, anything other than half a loaf of bread and some vile, green beverage that was supposed to resemble water. *Most* of the men had left for the war a week ago, so there was no one in Amy’s household to pay the rent; the ones that hadn’t were physically unable to. Normally, her father would; however, he was called to war; they gave him five days but after that, it would be classed as desertion. Deserters died.

Amy had also been fired from her job in the Jam factory, along with a girl named Nell, who was about her age and was now searching for any signs of jobs. Her mother had also lost her job 2 days later.

Everyone was worrying about the rent now; my mother was so worried that yesterday, she had placed a calico banner which read:

'PLEASE LANDLORD DON'T BE OFFENDED, DON'T COME FOR THE RENT TIL THE WAR IS ENDED'

Her house wasn't much, and it was much less in a household of six. She lived in a shady, shabby house near the end of her street. There were only three rooms: the kitchen, the bedroom and a miniature bathroom that only actually contained a toilet. The house was so small even air couldn't move freely; windows had to constantly be opened despite the cold that winter brought.

The kitchen consisted of a desk, a stove and a little cupboard, which was like an elephant compared to the cupcake-sized beans; she had never actually eaten a cupcake before but had seen some in a market window about a year ago and had always wondered how it would taste. The bathroom, however, was another story completely. The floor was alive, crawling with insects that had made their homes in the thin, hollow walls, the paint was peeling off the filth-infested walls, unmasking its true brutal, brown colour; the toilet itself a gruesome, grey because Amy's mother simply couldn't afford to waste water on cleaning when it was needed to provide *healthy* drinking water as healthy as it gets when you're one of Britain's poorest.

Finally, there was the bedroom; two iron cast beds stood like soldiers in the empty, cold and desolate room. Rats scurried across the floor and occasionally nibbled some of the blankets; the blankets were coated in holes. In a word, the house was filthy.