

***FROM: Maria Edgeworth. The Parent's Assistant, or Stories for Children [A New Edition]. London: George Routledge and Sons, Ltd., 1895. 208-218.***

## **OLD POZ.**

*Lucy, daughter to the Justice.*

*Mrs. Bustle, landlady of the "Saracen's Head."*

*Justice Headstrong.*

*Old Man.*

*William, a Servant.*

### **SCENE I.**

*The House of Justice Headstrong—a hall—Lucy watering some myrtles—A servant behind the scenes is heard to say—*

I tell you my master is not up. You can't see him, so go about your business, I say.

*Lucy.* To whom are you speaking, William? Who's that?

*Will.* Only an old man, miss, with a complaint for my master.

*Lucy.* Oh, then, don't send him away—don't send him away.

*Will.* But master has not had his chocolate, ma'am. He won't ever see anybody before he drinks his chocolate, you know, ma'am.

*Lucy.* But let the old man, then, come in here. Perhaps he can wait a little while. Call him.

*(Exit Servant.)*

*(Lucy sings, and goes on watering her myrtles; the servant shows in the Old Man.)*

*Will.* You can't see my master this hour; but miss will let you stay here.

*Lucy (aside).* Poor old man! how he trembles as he walks. *(Aloud.)* Sit down, sit down. My father will see you soon; pray sit down.

*(He hesitates; she pushes a chair towards him.)*

*Lucy.* Pray sit down.

*(He sits down.)*

*Old Man.* You are very good, miss; very good. *(Lucy goes to her myrtles again.)*

*Lucy.* Ah! I'm afraid this poor myrtle is quite dead—quite dead.

*(The Old Man sighs, and she turns round.)*

*Lucy (aside).* I wonder what can make him sigh so! *(Aloud.)* My father won't make you wait long.

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*Old M.* Oh, ma'am, as long as he pleases. I'm in no haste—no haste. It's only a small matter.

*Lucy.* But does a small matter make you sigh so?

*Old M.* Ah, miss; because, though it is a small matter in itself, it is not a small matter to me *(sighing again)*; it was my all, and I've lost it.

*Lucy.* What do you mean? What have you lost?

*Old M.* Why, miss—but I won't trouble you about it.

*Lucy.* But it won't trouble me at all—I mean, I wish to hear it; so tell it me.

*Old M.* Why, miss, I slept last night at the inn here, in town—the “Saracen's Head”—

*Lucy (interrupts him).* Hark! there is my father coming downstairs; follow me. You may tell me your story as we go along.

*Old M.* I slept at the “Saracen's Head,” miss, and—

*(Exit, talking.)*

**SCENE II.**

*Justice Headstrong's Study.*

*(He appears in his nightgown and cap, with his gouty foot upon a stool—a table and chocolate beside him—Lucy is leaning on the arm of his chair.)*

*Just.* Well, well, my darling, presently; I'll see him presently.

*Lucy.* Whilst you are drinking your chocolate, papa?

*Just.* No, no, no—I never see anybody till I have done my chocolate, darling. (*He tastes his chocolate.*) There’s no sugar in this, child.

*Lucy.* Yes, indeed, papa.

*Just.* No, child—there’s *no* sugar, I tell you; that’s *poz*!

*Lucy.* Oh, but, papa, I assure you I put in two lumps myself.

*Just.* There’s *no* sugar, I say; why will you contradict me, child, for ever? There’s no sugar, I say.

(*Lucy leans over him playfully, and with his teaspoon pulls out two lumps of sugar.*)

*Lucy.* What’s this, papa?

*Just.* Pshaw! pshaw! pshaw!—it is not melted, child—it is the same as no sugar.—Oh, my foot, girl, my foot!—you kill me. Go, go, I’m busy. I’ve business to do. Go and send William to me; do you hear, love?

*Lucy.* And the old man, papa?

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*Just.* What old man? I tell you what, I’ve been plagued ever since I was awake, and before I was awake, about that old man. If he can’t wait, let him go about his business. Don’t you know, child, I never see anybody till I’ve drunk my chocolate; and I never will, if it were a duke—that’s *poz*! Why, it has but just struck twelve; if he can’t wait, he can go about his business, can’t he?

*Lucy.* Oh, sir, he can wait. It was not he who was impatient. (*She comes back playfully.*) It was only I, papa; don’t be angry.

*Just.* Well, well, well (*finishing his cup of chocolate, and pushing his dish away*); and at anyrate there was not sugar enough. Send William, send William, child; and I’ll finish my own business, and then—

(*Exit Lucy, dancing, “And then!—and then!”*)

Justice, *alone.*

*Just.* Oh, this foot of mine!—(*twinges*)—Oh, this foot! Ay, if Dr. Sparerib could cure one of the gout, then, indeed, I should think something of him; but, as to my leaving off my bottle of port, it’s nonsense; it’s all nonsense; I can’t do it; I can’t, and won’t, for all the Dr. Spareribs in Christendom; that’s *poz*!

*Enter William.*

*Just.* William—oh! ay! hey! what answer, pray, did you bring from the “Saracen’s Head”? Did you see Mrs. Bustle herself, as I bid you?

*Will.* Yes, sir, I saw the landlady herself; she said she would come up immediately, sir.

*Just.* Ah, that’s well—immediately?

*Will.* Yes, sir, and I hear her voice below now.

*Just.* Oh, show her up; show Mrs. Bustle in.

*Enter Mrs. Bustle, the landlady of the “Saracen’s Head.”*

*Land.* Good morrow to your worship! I’m glad to see your worship look so purely. I came up with all speed (*taking breath*). Our pie is in the oven; that was what you sent for me about, I take it.

*Just.* True; true; sit down, good Mrs. Bustle, pray—

*Land.* Oh, your worship’s always very good (*settling her apron*). I came up just as I was—only threw my shawl over me. I thought your worship would excuse—I’m quite, as it

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were, rejoiced to see your worship look so purely, and to find you up so hearty—

*Just.* Oh, I’m very hearty (*coughing*), always hearty, and thankful for it. I hope to see many Christmas doings yet, Mrs. Bustle. And so our pie is in the oven, I think you say?

*Land.* In the oven it is. I put it in with my own hands; and if we have but good luck in the baking, it will be as pretty a goose-pie—though I say it that should not say it—as pretty a goose-pie as ever your worship set your eyes upon.

*Just.* Will you take a glass of anything this morning, Mrs. Bustle?—I have some nice usquebaugh.

*Land.* Oh, no, your worship!—I thank your worship, though, as much as if I took it; but I just took my luncheon before I came up; or more proper, *my sandwich*, I should say, for the fashion’s sake, to be sure. A *luncheon* won’t go down with nobody nowadays (*laughs*). I expect hostler and boots will be calling for their sandwiches just now (*laughs again*). I’m sure I beg your worship’s pardon for mentioning a *luncheon*.

*Just.* Oh, Mrs. Bustle, the word’s a good word, for it means a good thing—ha! ha! ha! (*pulls out his watch*); but pray, is it luncheon time. Why, it’s past one, I declare; and I thought I was up in remarkably good time, too.

*Land.* Well, and to be sure so it was, remarkably good time for your worship; but folks in our way must be up betimes, you know. I’ve been up and about these seven hours!

*Just.* (*stretching*). Seven hours!

*Land.* Ay, indeed—eight, I might say, for I am an early little body; though I say it that should not say it—I *am* an early little body.

*Just.* An early little body, as you say, Mrs. Bustle; so I shall have my goose-pie for dinner, hey?

*Land.* For dinner, as sure as the clock strikes four—but I mustn't stay prating, for it may be spoiling if I'm away; so I must wish your worship a good morning. (*She curtsies.*)

*Just.* No ceremony—no ceremony; good Mrs. Bustle, your servant.

*Enter William, to take away the chocolate. The Landlady is putting on her shawl.*

*Just.* You may let that man know, William, that I have dispatched my *own* business, and am at leisure for his now (*taking a pinch of snuff*). Hum! pray, William (*Justice leans back gravely*), what sort of a looking fellow is he, pray?

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*Will.* Most like a sort of travelling man, in my opinion, sir—or something that way, I take it.

*(At these words the landlady turns round inquisitively, and delays, that she may listen, while she is putting on and pinning her shawl.)*

*Just.* Hum! a sort of a travelling man. Hum! lay my books out open at the title Vagrant; and, William, tell the cook that Mrs. Bustle promises me the goose-pie for dinner. Four o'clock, do you hear? And show the old man in now.

*(The Landlady looks eagerly towards the door, as it opens, and exclaims,)*

*Land.* My old gentleman, as I hope to breathe!

*Enter the Old Man.*

*(Lucy follows the Old Man on tiptoe—The Justice leans back and looks consequential—The Landlady sets her arms akimbo—The Old Man starts as he sees her.)*

*Just.* What stops you, friend? Come forward, if you please.

*Land.* (*advancing*). So, sir, is it you, sir? Ay, you little thought, I warrant ye, to meet me here with his worship; but there you reckoned without your host—Out of the frying-pan into the fire.

*Just.* What is all this? What is this?

*Land. (running on).* None of your flummery stuff will go down with his worship no more than with me, I give you warning; so you may go further and fare worse, and spare your breath to cool your porridge.

*Just. (waves his hand with dignity).* Mrs. Bustle, good Mrs. Bustle, remember where you are. Silence! silence! Come forward, sir, and let me hear what you have to say.

*(The Old Man comes forward.)*

*Just.* Who and what may you be, friend, and what is your business with me?

*Land.* Sir, if your worship will give me leave—

*(Justice makes a sign to her to be silent).*

*Old M.* Please, your worship, I am an old soldier.

*Land. (interrupting).* An old hypocrite, say.

*Just.* Mrs. Bustle, pray, I desire, let the man speak.

*Old M.* For these two years past—ever since, please your worship—I wasn't able to work any longer; for in my youth I did work as well as the best of them.

*Land. (eager to interrupt).* You work—you—

*Just.* Let him finish his story, I say.

*Lucy.* Ay, do, do, papa, speak for him. Pray, Mrs. Bustle—

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*Land. (turning suddenly round to Lucy).* Miss, a good morrow to you, ma'am. I humbly beg your apologies for not seeing you sooner, Miss Lucy.

*(Justice nods to the Old Man, who goes on.)*

*Old Man.* But please your worship, it pleased God to take away the use of my left arm; and since that I have never been able to work.

*Land.* Flummery! flummery!

*Just. (angrily).* Mrs. Bustle, I have desired silence, and I will have it, that's poz! You shall have your turn presently.

*Old M.* For these two years past (for why should I be ashamed to tell the truth?) I have lived upon charity, and I scraped together a guinea and a half and upwards, and I was travelling with it to my grandson, in the north, with him to end my days—but *(sighing)*—

*Just.* But what? Proceed, pray, to the point.

*Old M.* But last night I slept here in town, please your worship, at the “Saracen’s Head.”

*Land. (in a rage).* At the “Saracen’s Head”? Yes, forsooth! none such ever slept at the “Saracen’s Head” afore, or shall afterwards, as long as my name’s Bustle, and the “Saracen’s Head” is the “Saracen’s Head.”

*Just.* Again! again! Mrs. Landlady, this is downright—I have said you should speak presently. He *shall* speak first, since I’ve said it—that’s *poz!* Speak on, friend. You slept last night at the “Saracen’s Head.”

*Old M.* Yes, please your worship, and I accuse nobody; but at night I had my little money safe, and in the morning it was gone.

*Land.* Gone!—gone, indeed, in my house! and this is the way I’m to be treated! Is it so? I couldn’t but speak, your worship, to such an inhuman like, out o’ the way, scandalous charge, if King George and all the Royal Family were sitting in your worship’s chair, beside you, to silence me (*turning to the Old Man*). And this is your gratitude, forsooth! Didn’t you tell me that any hole in my house was good enough for you, wheedling hypocrite? And the thanks I receive is to call me and mine a pack of thieves.

*Old M.* Oh, no, no, no, *No*—a pack of thieves, by no means.

*Land.* Ay, I thought when *I* came to speak we should have you upon your marrow-bones in—

*Just. (imperiously).* Silence! Five times have I commanded silence, and five times in vain; and I won’t command anything five times in vain—*that’s poz!*

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*Land. (in a pet, aside).* Old Poz! (*aloud*). Then, your worship, I don’t see any business I have to be waiting here; the folks want me at home (returning and whispering). Shall I send the goose-pie up, your worship, if it’s ready?

*Just. (with magnanimity).* I care not for the goose-pie, Mrs. Bustle. Do not talk to me of goose-pies; this is no place to talk of pies.

*Land.* Oh, for that matter, your worship knows best, to be sure.

(*Exit Landlady, angry.*)

### SCENE III.

Justice Headstrong, Old Man *and* Lucy.

*Lucy.* Ah, now, I'm glad he can speak; now tell papa; and you need not be afraid to speak to him, for he is very good-natured. Don't contradict him, though, because he told *me* not.

*Just.* Oh, darling, *you* shall contradict me as often as you please—only not before I've drunk my chocolate, child—hey! Go on, my good friend; you see what it is to live in Old England, where, thank Heaven, the poorest of His Majesty's subjects may have justice, and speak his mind before the first in the land. Now speak on; and you hear she tells you that you need not be afraid of me. Speak on.

*Old M.* I thank your worship, I'm sure.

*Just.* Thank me! for what, sir? I won't be thanked for doing justice, sir; so—but explain this matter. You lost your money, hey, at the "Saracen's Head"? You had it safe last night, hey?—and you missed it this morning? Are you sure you had it safe at night?

*Old M.* Oh, please your worship, quite sure; for I took it out and looked at it just before I said my prayers.

*Just.* You did—did ye so?—hum! Pray, my good friend, where might you put your money when you went to bed?

*Old M.* Please, your worship, where I always put it—always—in my tobacco-box.

*Just.* Your tobacco-box! I never heard of such a thing—to make a *strong box* of a tobacco-box. Ha! ha! ha! hum!—and you say the box and all were gone in the morning?

*Old M.* No, please your worship, no; not the box—the box

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was never stirred from the place where I put it. They left me the box.

*Just.* Tut, tut, tut, man!—took the money and left the box? I'll never believe *that*! I'll never believe that anyone could be such a fool. Tut, tut! the thing's impossible! It's well you are not upon oath.

*Old M.* If I were, please your worship, I should say the same; for it is the truth.

*Just.* Don't tell me, don't tell me; I say the thing is impossible.

*Old M.* Please, your worship, here's the box.

*Just.* (*goes on without looking at it*). Nonsense! nonsense! it's no such thing; it's no such thing, I say—no man would take the money and leave the tobacco-box. I won't believe it. Nothing shall make me believe it ever—that's poz.

*Lucy* (*takes the box, and holds it up before her father's eyes*). You did not see the box, did you, papa!



*Just.* Yes, yes, yes, child—nonsense! it's all a lie from beginning to end. A man who tells one lie will tell a hundred. All a lie! all a lie!

*Old M.* If your worship would give me leave—

*Just.* Sir, it does not signify—it does not signify! I've said it, I've said it, and that's enough to convince me, and I'll tell you more; if my Lord Chief Justice of England told it to me, I would not believe it—that's poz!

*Lucy (still playing with the box).* But how comes the box here, I wonder?

*Just.* Pshaw! pshaw! pshaw! darling. Go to your dolls, darling, and don't be positive—go to your dolls, and don't talk of what you don't understand. What can you understand, I want to know, of the law?

*Lucy.* No, papa, I didn't mean about the law, but about the box; because, if the man had taken it, how could it be here, you know, papa?

*Just.* Hey, hey, what? Why, what I say is this, that I don't dispute that that box, that you hold in your hands, is a box; nay, for aught I know, it may be a tobacco-box—but it's clear to me that if they left the box they did not take the money; and how do you dare, sir, to come before Justice Headstrong with a lie in your mouth; recollect yourself—I'll give you time to recollect yourself.

(*A pause.*)

*Just.* Well, sir; and what do you say now about the box?

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*Old M.* Please, your worship, with submission, I *can* say nothing but what I said before.

*Just.* What, contradict me again, after I gave you time to recollect yourself! I've done with you; I have done. Contradict me as often as you please, but you cannot impose upon me; I defy you to impose upon me!

*Old M.* Impose!

*Just.* I know the law!—I know the law!—and I'll make you know it, too. One hour I'll give you to recollect yourself, and if you don't give up this idle story, I'll—I'll commit you as a vagrant—that's poz! Go, go, for the present. William, take him into the servants' hall, do you hear?—What, take the money and leave the box? I'll never do it—that's poz!

(*Lucy speaks to the Old Man as he is going off.*)

*Lucy.* Don't be frightened! don't be frightened!—I mean, if you tell the truth, never be frightened.

*Old M.* If I tell the truth—(turning up his eyes).

(*Old Man is still held back by the young lady.*)

*Lucy.* One moment—answer me one question—because of something that just came into my head. Was the box shut fast when you left it?

*Old M.* No, miss, no!—open—it was open; for I could not find the lid in the dark—my candle went out. If I tell the truth—oh!

(*Exit.*)

#### SCENE IV.

*Justice's Study—the Justice is writing.*

*Old M.* Well!—I shall have but few days' more misery in this world!

*Just. (looks up).* Why! why—why then, why will you be so positive to persist in a lie? Take the money and leave the box! Obstinate blockhead! Here, William (*showing the committal*), take this old gentleman to Holdfast, the constable, and give him this warrant.

*Enter Lucy, running, out of breath.*

*Lucy.* I've found it! I've found it! Here, old man; here's your money—here it is all—a guinea and a half, and a shilling and a sixpence, just as he said, papa.

*Enter Landlady.*

*Land.* Oh la! your worship, did you ever hear the like?

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*Just.* I've heard nothing yet that I can understand. First, have you secured the thief, I say?

*Lucy (makes signs to the landlady to be silent).* Yes, yes, yes!—we have him safe—we have him prisoner. Shall he come in, papa?

*Just.* Yes, child, by all means; and now I shall hear what possessed him to leave the box. I don't understand—there's something deep in all this; I don't understand it. Now I do desire, Mrs. Landlady, nobody may speak a single word whilst I am cross-examining the thief.

(*Landlady puts her finger upon her lips—Everybody looks eagerly towards the door.*)

*Re-enter Lucy, with a huge wicker cage in her hand, containing a magpie—The Justice drops the committal out of his hand.*

*Just.* Hey!—what, Mrs. Landlady—the old magpie? hey?

*Land.* Ay, your worship, my old magpie. Who'd have thought it? Miss was very clever; it was she caught the thief. Miss was very clever.

*Old M.* Very good! very good!

*Just.* Ay, darling, her father's own child! How was it, child? Caught the thief, *with the mainour*, hey? Tell us all; I will hear all—that's poz!

*Lucy.* Oh! then first I must tell you how I came to suspect Mr. Magpie. Do you remember, papa, that day last summer, when I went with you to the bowling-green, at the "Saracen's Head"?

*Land.* Oh, of all days in the year! but I ask pardon, miss.

*Lucy.* Well, that day I heard my uncle and another gentleman telling stories of magpies hiding money; and they laid a wager about this old magpie and they tried him—they put a shilling upon the table, and he ran away with it, and hid it; so I thought that he might do so again, you know, this time.

*Just.* Right, right. It's a pity, child, you are not upon the Bench; ha! ha! ha!

*Lucy.* And when I went to his old hiding place, there it was; but you see, papa, he did not take the box.

*Just.* No, no, no! because the thief was a magpie. No *man* would have taken the money and left the box. You see I was right; no *man* would have left the box, hey?

*Lucy.* Certainly not, I suppose; but I'm so very glad, old man, that you have obtained your money.

*Just.* Well then, child, here—take my purse, and add that to it. We were a little too hasty with the committal—hey?

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*Land.* Ay, and I fear I was, too; but when one is touched about the credit of one's house, one's apt to speak warmly.

*Old M.* Oh, I'm the happiest old man alive! You are all convinced that I told you no lies. Say no more—say no more. I am the happiest man! Miss, you have made me the happiest man alive! Bless you for it!

*Land.* Well now, I'll tell you what. I know what I think—you must keep that there magpie, and make a show of him, and I warrant he'll bring you many an honest penny; for it's a *true story*, and folks would like to hear it, I hopes—

*Just. (eagerly).* And, friend, do you hear? you'll dine here to-day, you'll dine here. We have some excellent ale. I will have you drink my health—that's poz!—hey? You'll drink my health, won't you—hey?

*Old M. (bows).* Oh! and the young lady's, if you please.

*Just.* Ay, ay, drink her health—she deserves it. Ay, drink my darling's health.

*Land.* And please your worship, it's the right time, I believe, to speak of the goose-pie now; and a charming pie it is, and it's on the table.

*Will.* And Mr. Smack, the curate, and Squire Solid, and the doctor, sir, are come, and dinner is upon the table.

*Just.* Then let us say no more; but do justice immediately to the goose-pie; and, darling, put me in mind to tell this story after dinner.

*(After they go out, the Justice stops.)*

“Tell this story”—I don't know whether it tells well for me; but I'll never be positive any more—*that's poz!*