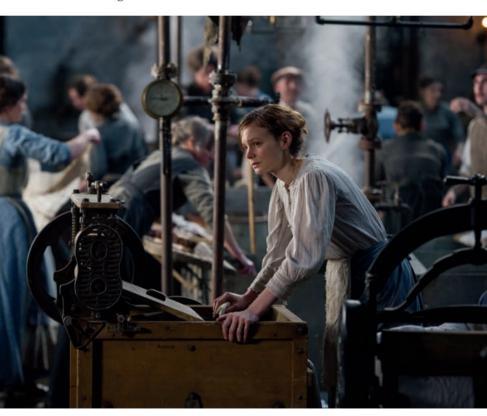# MAUD

The bell rang in the Glass House Laundry. Lines of women cleaned out big washing bowls and put down hot irons. Men turned off the machines. Maud dried her red hands, grateful that another day was over. She imagined the smiling face of her little boy, George, waiting for her when she got home.

But her day wasn't quite over.

'Take this up to the West End for me, Maud,' said Mr Taylor, throwing her a packet of laundry. Norman Taylor was the owner of the Glass House Laundry. 'They want those clean shirts by six o'clock.'

It was the men's job to take the clean laundry around London, but someone had forgotten this packet. Mr Taylor knew that Maud always did what he asked. Maud picked up the shirts and ran to catch a bus. Before long, the bright lights of the West End department stores came into view.

Maud got off the bus in Regent Street. It was busy with shoppers and office workers. Maud passed a rich lady in an expensive coat and an older woman carrying a baby, covered with a scarf. She noticed a woman reading a newspaper beside a news stand.

Then one of the shop windows caught Maud's attention. It showed a picture of a family on the beach. Maud had never seen the sea. She thought about going there with George and playing on the warm sand.

The woman with the baby passed her again, and looked quickly at the woman reading the newspaper. The big clock outside the department store moved towards six o'clock. Maud was about to leave when she heard voices shout out behind her.

'Votes for women! Votes for women!'

Suddenly, the shop window broke into a thousand pieces. Glass flew everywhere. The woman with the baby, the rich lady and the woman with the newspaper were all throwing stones. They shouted slogans and waved flags of purple, green and white, as screams filled the air.

Some people ran while others stood shocked, unable to move. Maud wanted to get away from the trouble, but she tripped and dropped her laundry. The packet opened and

the clean, white shirts fell onto the dirty street. Maud cut her hand on a piece of broken glass as she picked them up.

Maud saw a bus moving slowly along the crowded road. She got on and looked back at the women. Among the faces was a woman who worked at the laundry. Her name was Violet Miller and she'd started work three weeks before. Violet noticed Maud too and smiled.

'Votes for women!' she shouted, throwing another stone at a department store window. Maud looked away quickly.

When she got home, Sonny was sitting by the fire, reading the newspaper. It was quiet and warm. Their son was in bed.

'Are you all right?' Sonny asked. 'You're late.'

'I had to take a parcel up to the West End for Taylor,' Maud said.

Sonny noticed the blood on her hand.

'You're hurt,' he said. 'What happened?'

'It's nothing,' said Maud. 'There was some trouble on Regent Street. It was those women – the suffragettes. They broke all the shop windows.'

'Trouble makers,' said Sonny. 'They're getting worse.'

'I know,' said Maud. 'It was terrible.'

She didn't say anything about Violet to Sonny.

'I'll take that packet for you in the morning,' Sonny said. 'Are you coming to bed?'

'I'm just going to wash the shirts again,' Maud said.

She put some water over the fire to heat and placed the dirty shirts into a big bowl. One more job before she could sleep.

★★★

Early the next morning, Maud opened her eyes to another day. Her life was hard and she was always tired. She

played with George while she dressed him, and then made breakfast for everyone. After leaving George with her neighbour Mrs Garston, she passed a boy selling newspapers.

'Suffragettes attack London shops: Mrs Pankhurst disappears!' he shouted.

'They're mad,' thought Maud, as she hurried to work.