

# THE SCAR GATHERER

## Extract from *The Shimmer on the Glass*

*This extract is from chapters 9 & 10, when Joe goes with Lucy to try and get work at Tregaris House:*

A mansion stood at the top of the lawn. It was probably Georgian, Joe guessed, because it looked like an enormous version of the big houses in Bristol. Lucy led the way round to a door at one end of the building and knocked.

A woman opened it. Her hair was scraped back in a tight knot and she wore a long black dress. "You're late, Miss Lucas!" she snapped.

Lucy lowered her head. "Sorry, Miss Vincent."

"You'd better come in. I sent Mabel to find extra mending for you since you weren't punctual." The housekeeper turned on Joe. "And you are?"

Joe bowed. "Joseph Hopkins, Miss Vincent. I'm staying with Lucy's family."

"Very nice, I'm sure," the housekeeper said sarcastically.

"We wondered whether there might be any work for Joe on the estate?" Lucy put in.

Miss Vincent looked Joe up and down. Her mouth was twisted as though she had a bad smell under her nose. Joe was relieved that she couldn't see his creased shirt beneath his smock.

"Show me your hands!"

Joe held them out.

"Clean at least." She sniffed. "But soft! These aren't the hands of a boy used to hard work!"

Joe winced. He'd known it would be difficult to blend in here, but he hadn't expected to get caught out this soon. "I'll do anything," he said. "I just need to earn a few pounds."

The woman spluttered. "You'll be lucky to earn a few pence!"

Joe looked anxiously at Lucy. She was frowning at him.

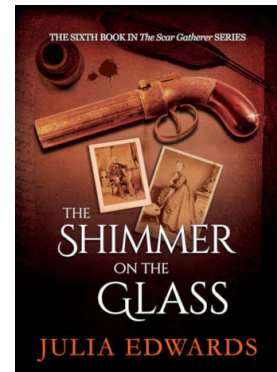
At that moment, there was a commotion in the hallway behind Miss Vincent. The housekeeper looked over her shoulder, then turned back, her lips pursed. "Miss Lucas, come in and wait for your work. Master Hopkins, stay there." She closed the door in Joe's face.

Joe took a step back. There was nothing to indicate that the woman would ever open the door again.

The minutes crawled by. Joe shifted to stand beside the door with his back to the wall like a sentry. Whenever anyone came into view around the corner of the house, he stood up straight, trying to look polite and employable. Gardeners came and went, and other labourers. The outbuildings seemed to be buzzing with activity, and from the occasional whinnies he heard, there must be stables too, not far away.

He was just wondering about leaving his post and going to see if there was work to be had mucking out the horses, when the door opened again.

Miss Vincent looked him up and down once more, as though she expected him to have



# THE SCAR GATHERER



got scruffier while he'd been waiting. "It seems," she said acidly, "that you may be in luck. Leave your boots there and follow me."

Joe tiptoed across the flagstone hall in his socks. There was no sign of Lucy. Was she still waiting somewhere, or had she left through a different door? What was he going to be asked to do?

As he followed the housekeeper, he wondered whether he should try to agree in advance on how much he was going to be paid. He didn't think he dared. It was clear from Miss Vincent's reaction to his earlier remark that he didn't know enough about Victorian money. He'd remembered they used pounds, shillings and pence, but he didn't know how many shillings were in a pound, nor pence in a shilling, nor even which coin was which. The most confusing thing was that a pound seemed to be worth far more here than it was at home. No, he would just have to take whatever work he was offered and hope to be paid fairly for it.

Miss Vincent stalked ahead along a passage and up a flight of stone stairs. At the top, a door opened into a grand entrance hall whose floor had been polished till it shone. A young man in a frock coat stood in the middle of a heap of boxes of all shapes and sizes, turning his top hat in his hands.

An older man was glowering at him. This must be the butler, Joe guessed. He was flanked by two uniformed footmen, one of whom was making a great show of brushing dust off his white gloves.

The housekeeper nodded to Joe to step forward. Joe did so, acutely conscious of his double layer of darned socks. He was the only person not wearing shoes, and his clothes were a good deal shabbier than anyone else's.

The butler swung round, his glare striking Joe like a physical blow. "Who is this?" he barked.

Joe stayed silent, since the question wasn't addressed to him.

"Master Hopkins," Miss Vincent shot back. "He came up from the village this morning looking for work."

"Out of the question!" The butler's glare grew even fiercer. "He can't possibly go into the library dressed like that! We do have standards above stairs." He emphasised the last two words.

The housekeeper narrowed her eyes. "In that case, perhaps you'd prefer to spare one of your footmen instead."

"Impossible!" thundered the butler.

"I'm so sorry," interrupted the young man marooned among the boxes. "I hadn't meant to put you in such a difficult position. The boy –" He looked doubtfully at Joe. "My concern is that the equipment must be handled with the utmost care." He gestured to the paraphernalia around him. "This is, after all, the very latest equipment for making photographic likenesses."

Joe looked at the collection of cases and crates. However could all this be needed just to take a few pictures?

*For more information, please go to [www.juliaedwardsbooks.com](http://www.juliaedwardsbooks.com).*