

MY FIRST JOB

AGE EXCHANGE THEATRE

FEBRUARY 1984

①  
Opening Song

When we left school at 14 years  
A job we had to acquire  
I wanted to be a docker  
I wanted to put out fires  
I wanted to be a teacher  
I wanted to be a nurse  
So we all bolted down to the Labour Exchange

I started off as a trade lad  
Cor blimey I wasn't half scared  
Sweeping and fetching and carrying  
Up and down the stairs  
It wasn't the greatest job in the world  
But still it paid me/him a wage  
You've got no choice at fourteen years of age.

I started off in a factory  
I didn't know what to do  
'Lucy do this! Fetch that, go there!  
Got me self in a stew  
It wasn't the greatest job....

I started off at a baker's  
Helped to deliver the bread  
I drove a horse and cart and  
Helped to deliver the bread.

I started off as a housemaid  
Very posh boarding school  
I worked from dawn to dusk  
And tried not to break any rules.

SCENE 1

2

BERT I was just fourteen when my brother Alf found me, me first job.  
He got me an interview with coach building firm - Deptford.

ALF Are you ready? Come on, hair combed, shoes cleaned, do yer button up,  
and remember I does the talking, mind yer manners and always call  
him Sir.  
(Outside the office)

BERT Cor... I'm a bit nervous....  
(Alf knocks)

HEAD Come in  
(Alf removes Bert's cap, Head carries on working then looks up)

HEAD Well who have we here?

ALF Young Bert Sir, he's very good at drawing and painting, and the  
headmaster gives him good reports Sir.

HEAD Yes... Yes; now listen we've a vacancy in the paint shop son you'll  
be employed as a trade lad, that's not an apprenticeship, but still,  
that's all right, is'nt it? The job's yours and you start on ten  
shillings a week. (Alf nods to Bert to reply)

BERT Oh thank you Sir

HEAD Start tomorrow and don't be late.

ALF I'll make sure he's there Sir (Alf and Bert exit)

ALF That wasn't so bad was it. I think I handled him rather well. Now  
let's get you fitted out proper with a boiler suit.

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I started off in a factory  
I didn't know what to do  
'Lucy do this! Fetch that, go there!  
Got me self in a stew  
It wasn't the greatest job .....

SCENE 2

LUCY

We had to take any job we could get. Me first job, I worked at Deans at the Elephant.... The rag people. They used to make rag dolls and books. My job was general dogsbody. (Dons overall) Didn't know what I was letting myself in for. (Whirring machines, mimed sewing and cutting by girls)

Phyllis - Lucy, just go and do this.....

Mabel - Lucy just go there..... (She runs around at beck and call.)

Lucy - I'd be waiting on them you know.

Mabel - I said jasmine.

Lucy - If I got the wrong thing, I used to be well in the cut.

Mabel - Call this lilac?

Lucy - All unusual colours, you know. By the time I got there I forgot what colour I was supposed to be looking for. (Grabs one and looks at it) I remember lettuce was a yellowy colour. Ever seen a yellow lettuce?

Mabel - Lucy, you're to go on to pressing.

Lucy - Pressing the dolls' frocks. (She mimes this) This was all for 5/- a week and Saturdays till one o'clock.

Phyllis - Will you just go and fetch .....

Mabel - Where's that box I asked for .....

(Pantomime of Lucy leaving iron on stand and then burning clothes....

M and P horrified and furious frozen positions. Lucy runs home)

Lucy - My mum, she said

Mum - You wanna tell them .....

Lucy - I was getting all headaches you see.....

Mum - Tell em you haven't got a dozen pair of 'ands.

Chorus of calls LUCY

Lucy - (Shouting at Supervisor suddenly) I want a rise. (Everyone freezes, then statuesque supervisor reaches for cards)

Supervisor - Here's your cards Miss.

Lucy - (wryly) You got your cards. You never even got an envelope for them, did you?

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④

I started off at a baker's  
 Helped to deliver the bread  
 I drove a horse and cart and  
 Helped to deliver the bread.

SCENE 3

HARRY I used to go down the Co-op to try and get a job helping the baker out,  
I got the job with the roundsman.

DICK HAWKINS You'll be going with me all round Belvedere, over to the gypsy camp.

HARRY We used to be up to the ankles in mud. Alsations flying at you left,  
right and centre.

DICK Friday. It's Flour Day.

CUSTOMER 1 I'll have self raising, please.

CUSTOMER 2 I'll have plain.

HARRY One day we was going along when the wheel got caught in the tramline.  
Over went the cart!

DICK The horse is going. Jump on her head, Harry! keep her down.

HARRY Go on gal. Stay down, gal there's a good gal.

DICK Thank God she's alright.

HARRY Another time I was getting the bread ready in a basket, and like an  
idiot I let go of it and the horse bolted.

DICK Whoah! Whoah!

HARRY Whoah! Whoah!

DICK Oh my God, the ditch!

HARRY That didn't half cost me.

DICK Here's your cards.

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8

I started off as a housemaid  
Very posh boarding school  
I worked from dawn to dusk  
And tried not to break any rules

SCENE 4

KATE My mother had seen an advertisement in the Kentish paper.....

MOTHER (Reading paper) Housemaid at a young ladies boarding school. Fifteen years of age ..... (looks at Kate who is not enthusiastic) You'll have to up your age a year, that's all.....

KATE I wasn't very happy about it. Neither was my Grandmother.

MUM Things are difficult for us just now. It's another mouth to feed.

KATE (Going over to Mum who is upset at gran's reaction) It's alright Mum, I want to go. (Turns away, a bit tearful) I didn't want to, you know (Mum straightens Kate up) Mum came with me for the interview. (they ring big bell pull and wait nervously) This was the only occasion I entered by the front door. (Door opened by awe inspiring military style housekeeper) The housekeeper interviewed us. (Pantomime of interview between haughty H - K and ingratiating Mum, with occasional glances at Kate) Actual the conversation was mainly between my mother and her. (H - K nods at Kate indicating she'd got the job.) I had to provide my own uniform. (Mum hands her box and leaves, while Kate dons bits and bobs of uniform).

H=K (to new maid Kate) Salary 8/- a week, paid monthly in arrears, laundry free, up to a certain figure. One day off a month, and one evening a week, if it falls in with staffing arrangements. (Kate bobs)

KATE One day started at 6.0 We had to light the fires and polish and dust.

MARY (fellow servant) We have to dust, wipe down the white paint work daily and (raising eyebrows to Kate) sweep and polish the floors.

KATE This was no easy task. We used Ronuk and turps (rolls sleeves up and kneels) lots of elbow grease. No electric cleaners and polishers.

MARY Now we do our own bedroom.

KATE The girl I shared with (indicating Mary who wipes her nose on her sleeve wasn't very clean in her habits.

MARY Now we change into our afternoon uniforms. (They do so) and you can have a wash in you like. Know what, when I first come 'ere I'd never seen a flush toilet. The dragon, you know, 'er she come in after me and I got ticked off for not pulling the chain. Next time I went in, I pulled it and all the water welled. Well, I was horror stricken..... she'd never said that'd happened and I ran out screaming. Thought the whole house was going to flood.

KATE Once, I was on my hands and knees brushing away.....(finds coin) Mary I've found a coin here. A shilling.

MARY I know what that's all about, she done that to me an' all.

KATE Done what?

MARY When I first come 'ere, she put a coin underneath the clock. She's testing you out.

SCENE 4 CONTINUED

KATE (Indigantly) That's it! I've had enough of her tricks  
and trials. It's degrading I'm handing my notice in  
(Packs box and exits).

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(6)

I started off as a trade lad  
Cor blimey, I wasn't half scared  
Sweeping and fetching and carrying  
Up and down the stairs  
It wasn't the greatest job in the world  
But still it paid me a wage  
You've got no choice at fourteen years of age

SCENE 5

BERT I arrived at the paintshop next morning with me brawn sandwiches under me arm.

TED You're the new boy arn't you, come with me son. Cup of tea lad (Bert nods) better bring your own cup tomorrow, this one ain't much cop.

BERT It tasted like me dad's strong tea which was called 'Gunfire' . I had to sweep the floor each morning, sawdust and water and then sometimes I had to get more paint from the shop when the lads needed it. (Bert sweeps)

GEORGE Well done lad you're doing alright. Now go and give Ted a hand he'll show you how to paint a wheel. SD Bert copies Ted.

TED Don't get any paint on the tyre, watch out - oooh, wipe that bit off with a turps cloth son. Take your time we're not on piece work. That's it we'll have you a master craftsman yet.

BERT Dinner time the men used to have sandwiches and read the paper. (George, Ted and Bert sit down, Ted reads Herald, Alf the Worker).

ALF Make room for the new boy.

TED Getting into the swing of things are you?

BERT (Nodding I was glad to be in trade, and get ten bob a week.

ALF At least you're getting the rate, there's a lot of places with mean bosses, paying under the rate, doing the workers.

TED Watch him lad don't let him convert you he's a Communist.

BERT I didn't know what a Communist was but he was a nice bloke, I was still there at sixteen, improving in me trade, when I was told the Head wanted to see me.

HEAD We're going to have to let you go.

BERT What do you mean?

HEAD I mean I'm giving you your cards.

BERT What have I done?

HEAD Nothing lad, you're just too old. National Insurance costs us money and we can get another fourteen old and not have to pay it.

BERT So I was out on my ear then Ted said.

BERT'S MATE Why don't you go down Woolwich Arsenal you'll earn good wages there.

BERT So up I went, into their employment place.

CLERK Sorry we can't help you. You're just too old for boys money and just too young to have men's money.

BERT So I was right up the creek.

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①

Next I was a grocer's boy  
Lifting and carrying goods  
Trying to keep my boss happy  
Sorting and selling the goods



SCENE 6

HARRY

HARRY I saw a job advertised.

SAM Harry Samuels, Greengrocer, Blackheath.

HARRY There were about 30 boys queuing there for the job, going in and out.

SAM Here I want you you've got clean shoes.

HARRY They were an old pair, but I'd polished them. I was always washing my hair and trying to keep clean.

SAM You look a lively sort of lad, come on, I want you to go down to the cellar and put a 100 cwt of potatoes on your back and bring them up these steps.

HARRY Steps? More like a ladder!

SAMUELS You've got the job. You'll get 7/6d a week, work from 7.30 in the morning till 7 at night, and until 9 on Saturdays.

HARRY The old man was about 75 and the lady was 73.

LADY Dust the counter, sweep the floor and help Mr.Samuels serve.

HARRY The old lady used to bring his breakfast down.

LADY A big bowl of porridge and a slice of bread and butter.

HARRY He used to get his handkerchief out.

SAMUEL Er.....just dust over there, will you?

HARRY I knew he was doing something. I used to watch him. It took some time to work out what he was doing, but he was taking him teeth out!

SAMUEL Well, it's not my fault, I need 'em to eat!

HARRY Anyway, I left that job, I god fed up wiv it.

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⑧

Then I worked in a sweetshop

It really wasn't so bad

Eating the sweets and the chocolate

And meeting lots of lads!

SCENE 7

LUCY

LUCY I was fourteen when I got a job in a sweetshop in Deptford Broadway.  
Only the two of us worked there, the manageress and me. She was very nice

MANAGERESS You just serve the sweets. (Lucy can't see over counter)

LUCY I had to stand on a box to reach the till cos I was so little.

MANAGERESS You can sell those sweet crumbs (which she sweeps together into one section) in halfpennyworths.

LUCY I used to tell my brother 'Come in when Miss Shepherd's going for dinner and I'll give you a lot. (enact this with great secrecy) I was a little rogue.

MANAGERESS (coming back) When you sell chocolate, you mustn't eat any. It's too expensive. But you can eat any of those sweets along there.

LUCY Those were the cheap ones you see. I used to be there at nine and work sometimes till ten at night, when the Empire Music Hall came out.  
(Enter cheerful chappies with barbershop number or Underneath the Arches stuff)

We used to sell drinks on a fountain, raspberry, strawberry, hot in winter cold in summer.

MANAGERESS Lucy you keep leaving out the farthings. I'm sorry dear you'll have to go.  
(With account book)

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⑨

Next I was a van boy  
Me and a chap called Ted  
Drove around in a horse and cart  
Sometimes I felt half dead

SCENE 8

BERT Had a bit of luck, well I thought so at first, found work as a van boy for Lovibonds the brewers, we used to serve all round Silvertown me and Ted delivering by horse and cart.

TED Wo....ah slow down, we're in a real pea souper here, oi Bert jump down and lead on.  
(Bert decends from wagon and takes the horse by the halter)

BERT Many a time I walked from Barking to the Woolwich Ferries with a light showing the carman the kerb. With it being so foggy you couldn't see your hand in front of your face.

FERRY MAN Sorry a'bart this, ferry's finished, too dangerous we're not moving till the fog's cleared.

BERT Being as it was already late, we started out for the Blackwall Tunnel, as fast as we could.

COPPER Hold on there lad, tunnel's blocked.

BERT & TED Not again  
Oh Go'rd

BERT That mean't a trip right round Tower Bridge

TED And in this weather

BERT To get home to Greenwich. We arrived back in the early morning, absolute;y knackered.

GUVNOR You're late. You've been out all night, hurry up, get that horse in the stable, I want you back here by eight sharp.

BERT We'd only have time to go home and have a wash and then it would be back to work.

TED If you weren't there somebody else would get your job.

BERT All that for ten bob a week.

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(10)

Another low paid dead end job  
Cleaning ovens and trays  
I tried to keep my temper  
At times it gets very frayed.

SCENE 9

HARRY

HARRY It was always in the back of my mind that I would go into the Docks like my Dad. But when?

MUM When you're 18 you'll have to wait.

HARRY There were still a lot of jobs you could get as a youngster, but they were low paid dead end jobs. So I proceeded to sample a few - my next job was at McVitie and Price, the Bakers.

FOREMAN Come on son, get on with it. Clean those ovens. Grease those baking trays.

HARRY I used to be constantly watched by this Foreman.

FOREMAN Call this clean! Do it again.

HARRY He was never satisfied. I was itching to leave.

FOREMAN You, boy. Yes you come here .... I said 'Come here!' I'm talking to you, laddie are you deaf or something?

HARRY Aaaaaaah .....bugger off!

(Throws tray, Chase)

FOREMAN I'll box your ears for you, you cheeky young devil!!!

HARRY Instant dismissal. Out once again into the labour market.

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(10)

I tried my hand as a waitress  
A café down by the sea  
Toast and eggs for breakfast,  
Tips at lunches and teas!!

SCENE 10

LUCY We'd moved to Southend. My mum wanted to try her hand at running a boarding house. I worked in a small cafe on the sea front specialised in meals.

LUCY (donning apron) Lunches (enter men and Lucy shows them menu)  
Mark and George (read alternate bits of menu) Roast beef ... or lamb  
2 veg. Yorkshire pudding.... (Lucy is writing it down) .....sweet.....  
cup of tea...

LUCY (Adding it up) One shilling and tuppence. (Men fish in pockets for this )  
My wages were 8/- weekly. (Men leave, giving her money which she rapidly counts, setting some aside with pleasure) and tips. (Puts tip in pocket)  
I enjoyed it. Then there was the cycle run. The cafe had a cycle park and East enders arrived from London about 6 in the morning.  
(Reeling it off) Cockles, boiled egg salad, bread and butter, cake cup of tea. (They nod enthusiastically) Seven pence. (Lucy gives bill, and they pay, repeating tips pantomime)

HILL & BOB (Enter remove cycle clips, smooth hair, pat clothes) Breakfast first .....then a real day by the sea.

LUCY Set teas etc. for cyclists.

BOB Then back to the cafe for tea and a singsong. (Which follows incl.bango!)

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(12)

Then I went to a bank to  
Become a messenger boy  
Delivering messages all round town,  
A job I quite enjoyed.....

BERT I was taken on in a bank as a messenger. I was all done up in a top hat and a frock coat at 16 years old. I used to run all the bank errands to town.

And I'd dilly, dally round the markets you know, Covent Garden, Smithfield Billingsgate (song) (I'm happy when I'm hiking)

then invent excuses why I was late.

MANAGER You took your time didn't you?

BERT Sorry sir! I left me topper behind and had to go back and fetch it  
Sorry sir.

Anyway one of my extra jobs was to clean the Bank Manager's car. And I learnt to back it out and I used to take it round a couple of streets there without him knowing. Then one day.....

BANK M. Bert, it would be handy if you could drive this car for me. I'll take you out and give you a lesson.

BERT Thank you sir (out to audience) So I had to pretend I didn't know where anything was. But.....

BANK M. Very good Bert, we'll have you driving in no time. You take to it naturally, almost as though you've been learning for months.

BERT Thank you sir. I must be a quick learner! Cor! That was a bit close for comfort.

So I learnt to drive but I didn't last much longer.

(Reprise of song)

Once a month I had to deliver accounts to different clients. For all the ones that were far away I used to pocket the mileage money, tear up the accounts and watch the dockers from London Bridge. (possibly inter act with Steve's docker and lighterman scene) But it soon caught up with me.

BANK M. Bert! What happened to last month's accounts, the customers in Pimlico and Earl's Court???????

BERT Er, well sir. I must have lost them when I bent down to pick up me topper when it blew off me head.....

I got me cards and a box on the ears at the same time, and went back on the labour.

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13

Next I was a mother's help  
3 Screaming children to tend  
Washing and dusting and polishing  
It drove me round the bend

SCENE 12

KATE The Labour Exchange sent me for a job as a mother's help. (She done baby prop .....dangling babies round neck) There were the three children and all the housework to do. The lady of the house had never had any help before. (Lady enters and proudly points out new acquisition of Kate and drinks tea with neighbour over following sequence).

KATE I had to cope with the complete family wash, including bed linen. (Mimes the following) You had a copper and you had to put everthing in the copper and boil it and bring everything up.

LADY Haven't you finished it yet?

~~KATE~~ Oh dear it was terrible.

KATE Then I had to do the Kitchen. I had all the flues to do and I had to black lead the stove and it had steel on the top of it, and you had to do that with emery cloth till it came up bright.

LADY Have you done the flues?

KATE Yes of course I have

LADY Done and stove?

KATE Yes

LADY You haven't done the stove. (inspecting it closely)

KATE Yes I have. I've done the trivets too.

LADY I don't consider that done.

KATE And she threw a bucket of water over it (freeze)

LADY I'm going out. I want you to look after the children (EXIT laughing with gay companion)

KATE I thought she'd be back in a minute. She was gone for ages. (She sits there nursing children who cry). The house got all dark. How am I going to find the light and the meters and everything? (Much howling)

KATE (after 'dark' acting) (lady re-enters) I've been waiting for you. I didn't know what to do.

LADY I was detained. You may go to bed. And be up at 6 tomorrow morning.

KATE I've had enough. I'm off.

LADY Who's going to look after the children?

KATE You'll have to get somebody else to do it.

LADY But you haven't given proper notice. I'll report you to the courts.

KATE You can do what you like. You left me nearly all night on my own with no lights (to audience) She never did report me.

SCENE 13

(14)

LUCY Out of season there was no work in Southend. We moved back to London all looking for work.  
My dad dyed his hair black, trying to look younger. (Enter dad as Kleeneze salesman knocking on doors)

DAD Hawked brushes around in a suitcase door to door.

LUCY It hurt me to see him. He was such a proud man. Mum fell ill with worry, and I went up the labour. (Queues with others who ignore her)  
It was a very unfriendly place.

CLERK Here's a card.

LUCY If you were under 18, they gave you a green card.

CLERK Report back here with it after.

LUCY They weren't helpful. It was a cold place. You took the card to the job, they sent for you, and then you had to go back and show them the comments on it.

CLERK If you don't get the job, we want to know why.

LUCY Once or twice, I tore up my card after the interview (Does so and watches it blow away).

CLERK Where's your card?

LUCY (Wide eyed) Oh, didn't they send it back? It must've gone astray. (to aud)  
I wasn't going to show her that.

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(15)

Next I was a page boy  
At a posh hotel  
I served the drinks, I worked the lifts  
And I did very well!!!



SCENE 14

SD Enter Bert, a lad with hair.

HARRY Then I went to see the Manager at the Regal Marble Arch for a job as page boy.

MANAGER You can have the job if you get your hair cut (Bert sits enter barber, with cloth and scissors (razor) he starts to hack away, Bert is resigned to his fate).

BARBER That'll be ninepence.

SD Bert hands over cash (old coins) reluctantly.

HARRY That was all the money I had, so I didn't eat that day but it was worth it to get the job.

CUSTOMER Page, get me three whiskeys two double brandies and a vodka

CUSTOMER Page get me.....three port and lemons

CUSTOMER Page get me.....and dont forget the olive.

HARRY Sometimes I couldn't find the beggars and somebody else would say.....

CUSTOMER I'll have those boy (drops cash on tray)

HARRY So I used to go home loaded with tips!

I did alright I can tell you, one day when I was working the lifts (young couple enter lifts)

Which floor Sir?

MAN Tea rooms please.

HARRY Just then this big fat woman comes along, and it was only a lift for three. 'Sorry madam we're full up.

MADAM It says it's for three and I'm only the third.

HARRY Well I daren't say 'you're big enough for two' so I let her on.....and off we goes.

Sure enough it breaks down.

SD(Lift comes to a halt, Harry pushes emergency button)

HARRY Don't worry ladies and gents, they'll soon winch us up. So I just pulled out me little flap seat and sat down and had a read of me Rover.

SD (Fat woman impatient, looks sheepish, young couple smirk and canoodle).

SCENE 14 continued

HARRY Here we are Ladies and Gents, hope you enjoyed the ride (fat lady exits looking snooty, others grin, young man slips Harry half a crown)

HARRY Thanks Guv! Well he must have enjoyed the ride.

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(16)

Then I worked in an office  
Upin the city so grand  
The art of answering telephones  
I never could understand.

LUCY They sent me to this job I was interviewed by the Secretary, a very smart lady.

SECRETARY Are you familiar with the use of the telephone?

LUCY I was so excited and pleased to do it (She's left alone by Secretary)  
Hello, Hello I'd say. (she calls excitedly into phone)

MALE CALLER Hello, who is it?

LUCY Oh, it's Miss Harris

CALLER Who? Miss who?

LUCY One morning I got there and the phone rang. Someone calling from Buenos Aires. I nearly had a fit. (Simulated crackles and Espanol noises) I couldn't understand him. (More of same) I got the code book out. It was nearly as big as me (spotlight directory) still I couldn't get what he was saying. I was so shaky. (Secretary sweeps in, registers scene and takes over in Espanol, looking witheringly at Lucy) I think I must have lost them pounds. I never even typed them any letters. I only lasted three months. (Secretary regretfully hands her cards, shaking head.)  
I went home crying.  
(wiping eyes) I was ever so ashamed.

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(17)

Then I worked in a factory  
Making radiograms  
I picked it up as I went along  
Even though I had no exams  
At last I've got a steady job  
No more moving around  
I'm a foreman and now I've settled down.

SCENE 16

BERT

BERT Then I landed a really good job making Radiograms at Burndepts down the Lower Road over Woolwich way. I hadn't got no qualifications but I'd studied it a bit myself - I knew all about Listen and PYE three valve radios.

INSPECTOR You'll be working on the nine valve Super Heterodyne sets alright?

BERT 'Yeah fine' Cor bloody hell! I nearly fell through the floor. Nine valves.

There was all these long benches, there'd be about sixteen girls all putting bits on each radio - and every fifth place there'd be a man inspecting them. I was to be one of them.

INSPECTOR Right, look at this diagram - the bits in black are what you're interested in - you make sure they've been put in the right place. Right off you go lad.

BERT The girls was on piece work, but we weren't. So if you took too long inspecting them, the radios piled up and the girls beyond you hadn't got any.

GIRL Come on! Shake a leg back there!

(Bert stirs himself)

BERT Anyway, I soon settled in, and after I was there a while. I was moved up on to the testing rig where we checked all the complete radios.

(the bench becomes the testing rig)

TESTER Mornin' Bert.

BERT Mornin'

One morning when I got in, I noticed that there were two hole benches empty 'Where's all them lot then? They can't all be late'

TESTER 1 Hadn't you heard? They've all been laid off.

BERT What, all of them?

TESTER 2 Yeah well it's February now, the Christmas rush is long over, they've all been given their cards.

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18

I ended up with a family  
Lots of fun and noise  
Started going to dances  
And meeting soldier boys  
No more moving around  
I got married and now I've settled down.

SCENE 17

KATE

KATE

I ended up in a nice house in Brockley with a family. I had to look after the children. (Enter children, boistrous and cheerful, with Kate friendly but in charge) Mind you (she calls over noise) I came from a big family so I knew what to do. We used to do all sorts of things. Get up to all tricks with the kids. I enjoyed it. (Much panto of games) The woman was wonderful. She really made me feel one of the family. I was paid 5/- a week.

MISTRESS

How much of your wages do you give to your mother Kate?

KATE

Four shillings ma'am. Not that she asks for it, mind you.

MISTRESS

I'll start you off with a bank book. A shilling a week to put away.

KATE

So she put my wages up a shilling. She used to allow me out to go to dances at the Town Hall. (Dons going out cape, removing pinny) I had a friend we used to go together she wasn't in service. (They link arms and go out together) She wasn't limited in her time like me. (Kate takes off cloak, waves to friend and shakes her head) (Picks up sewing) There was always sewing to do and all that for the nursery. (She muses over sewing) We met some very nice people at the dances, all young you know.....I met a soldier..... (He wanders in singing K.K.Katey, etc. and dances with her in the kitchen) He started to come in, into the kitchen. (They dance and sing together, then see housekeeper and freeze, while she takes in scene. He slopes off Kate hangs head).

HOUSEKEEPER

Kate, you'll have to tell that young man he's not allowed in here. The mistress wouldn't like it.

KATE

He used to write every day. Different coloured envelope every day. (A series of coloured letters are delivered) Finally, one day he asked me to marry him (Soldier on knee proposing, when woman enters)

MISTRESS

You'll never marry will you?

KATE

I will (raising soldier and standing arm in arm)

MISTRESS

No you won't. You won't leave us. (genuinely upset).

KATE

But I did! (Walks off arm in arm with soldier to wedding march, waving goodbye to woman who wipes tear and waves).

\*\*\*\*\*

(19)

I ended up as a docker  
Something I wanted to do  
Shifting and unloading  
Not in the dole queue  
At last I've got a steady job  
No more moving around  
I'm a Docker  
And now I've settled down

SCENE 18

HARRY Come the day I was 18. Dad .....get us on the docks.

DAD Alright, I'll take it up to the Union, and get you your card.

HARRY You had to have a Union card before you could get a job.

DAD Right, Scruttons and Maltby's, are opening their books; they're taking on men for the busy season. You can register as a docker.

HARRY We got up at 5.00 and went to Fenchurch Street, and we waited around with all the other men for the foreman to come. He'd call out the names of all those who were wanted that day. (This was known as the "Freecall")

DAD Of course, I'd had a little word with him in the pub the night before. Some poor bugger would have to drop out of the gang to make way for my lad. Probably the oldest.

DOCKER 1 I hope he picks me. I've got a family to feed.

DAD Aven't we all mate?

FOREMAN Jones, Bailey, Walker, McCarthy, Smith, Halloran, Daley, Wallace, Harvey, Wellington, O'Malley, Jackson.

DOCKER 1 'Ere, what about me?

FOREMAN Sorry Bob. Try again tomorrow.

HARRY There was 12 of us in our gang. 2 to work the winches, 4 in the barge, and 6 of us on shore. We had to unload huge crates all day, and cos we were on piece work you really had to work bloody hard. At first I found it hard going, but I soon got used to it. In the end I got to like it. I was proud of being a docker, and I stayed there the rest of my working life.

\*\*\*\*\*

20  
 I ended up in a factory  
 Just like I began  
 Stitching up the collars  
 With very nimble hands  
 At last I've got a steady job  
 No more moving around  
 I'M a seamstress, and now I've settled down!

SCENE 19

LUCY

LUCY I'd had enough of that, hopping from job to job. It was time to learn a trade. My Mum heard of a stitcher's job at the Ever Clean Collar Factory.

MUM Every little bit's a trade Lucy. Every little thing that's done to the collar's a trade. You're much better off there girl.

LUCY It was a nice firm to work for. We all got on ever so well, singing in the afternoons and all that. We all done our bit, (all four women sit and sew, iron etc. They start a song as they work. The lines are spoken, one by one, over the top of the singing).

VYE. I got the plain material and run that round. 'Called the runner'

RUBY I turned it out and pushed the points out, hand turner.

MABEL I turned the running, and then I pressed it.

LUCY I was the stitcher, I done a bit of stitching. Then they introduced a new system, where we had this conveyor belt.

FOREMAN You'll be working in grosses so you'll have to keep up.

Faster song begins, and they are more animated.

(the line comes back across the stage to original positions)

MANAGER That's enough girls! (Silence) I want you at your places, working at 2.0 o'clock sharp.

(Taking overalls off, hats on)

LUCY I used to love me lunchhours, I used to go to the big shops and look at the hats. We had a craze of going up to Lyon's me and the other girls. We even got up to Regents Park and went skating. We went swimming. Ooch I loved it, even though I was all in a rush. (She races to her workbench overall on again).

Sewing Machine song.

FINAL SONG