

## CHRISTMAS AT WAR

Setting: A Rest Centre for Londoners who have been bombed out.

Time: Christmas Day 1940 evening.

Characters: An Air Raid Warden aged 48 named Fred  
A cook at the rest centre aged 36 named Lil  
A Red Cross nurse aged 19 named Doreen

INTRO MUSIC AND SONG. BLACKOUT STROLL MERGING INTO COVENTRY CAROL  
BEHIND FOLLOWING:

Fred: Christmas 1940. It had been a bad year. There'd been Dunkirk and then the real fear of invasion, the Battle of Britain, when our young lads fought so bravely up there in the skies, and then the Blitz. 30,000 dead and three million homes destroyed between September and Christmas 1940.

MUSIC ENDS

Doreen: I was just a young girl when war broke out, but by Christmas 1940 I'd grown up all right. I'd been through it. We all had. Every day we've faced danger, right on our own doorstep.

Lil: It's hardly possible to imagine what it was like. Night after night the bombs came pouring down almost without stop from September onwards.

Fred: By December, half of all the houses in our area were damaged. Lots of them beyond repair.

Doreen: The London County Council has taken over council schools likr this one as rest centres. The idea is to have places where the people who've been bombed out can go to immediately, until they can go back to their own homes or until another house can be found for them.

Fred: I'm the one that helps dig 'em out and gets 'em round here to the rest centre.

Doreen: I deal with any casualties as they come in.

Lil: I help to prepare the meals, clean up and do the odd jobs, help look after the children that are in during the day. I've been up to my ears all day, cos we've done a Christmas dinner for almost a hundred people.

Doreen: Well we knew the people here in the rest centre weren't going to have much of a Christmas. They've all been bombed out of their houses.

Fred: (GETTING GEAR ON) — Better get back down the A.R.P. post then.

Doreen: You're not going to have to dash off straight away, are you Fred?

Fred: I'm supposed to be on duty.

Lil: Hitler'll be too busy cooking his turkey to let fly tonight.

Fred: You got inside information?

Lil: Yes... Fumf speaking. Hang on and I'll get you a cuppa before you go.

Fred: All right. Seems pretty quiet so far.

Doreen: Hope we don't get one tonight. The centre's full up already. Lots of injuries, mostly not too serious, but I'm just about out of bandages.

Lil: Last few days we've had a lot of people carried in just in blankets. Absolutely black from the dust. Lost their clothes.

Fred: Day before yesterday I rescued one man, completely unmarked, but absolutely starkers. Freak effect of blast, see. I had to put me tin helmet over his wedding tackle.

Lil: Let's see what's on the wireless. (SHE TUNES WIRELESS)

MUSIC HOUSEWIVES CHOICE

Lil: (AS MRS. MONALOT) It's being so cheerful as keeps me going!!

Woman: Mrs. Smith doesn't mention medals when she writes to her soldier husband. She has no medals to mention. Housewives don't get visible decorations for bravery. But Second Lieutenant Smith, wears his wife's colours proudly. He knows the job she is doing. Not all the details of it, of course. He doesn't remember that her domestic help has gone long since and that the daily helps who oblige grow less obliging every day. He hasn't heard much about her Civil Defence duties, her knitting, her regular salvage hunts and the mathematics war-time housekeeping entails.

Man: Mathematics?

Woman: Second Lieutenant Smith would smile if he could see his wife busy with pencil and paper working out the points, figuring out her fuel target, adding up her last winter's coal bills ... Brave Mrs. Smith who "always hated figures." She really does deserve a medal for that. GOOD HOUSEKEEPING humbly offers Mrs.

Smith its compliments and would like to give her all the medals there are.

END HOUSEWIVES CHOICE

Fred: How are those old boys from the Catholic Society Home? They were pretty shaken up when I got them out of there. Right mess it is. They won't be going back there for a while.

Lil: I've had to train them not to always make their beds and stop them packing everything up at night.

Doreen: Why were they doing that?

Lil: They said they'd been forced to in the convent.

Doreen: Poor old things. They're so glad to be here, all those old men.

Lil: They loved their Christmas dinner. Said it was the best they'd had for years. There's one of them, the head boy we call him, stood up at the dinner and he said:

Headboy: We're glad we was bombed out and sent here. We've never been so happy and free in our lives.

Lil: And would you believe, he calls me in from the kitchen.

Headboy: Send for the cook. (COUGHS) On behalf of me and my friends from the 'ome, we want to congratulate you on that lovely meal.

Lil: Thank you very much.

Headboy: On behalf of me and my friends from the 'ome we would like you to accept this small token of our esteem. (GIVES BROOCH)

Lil: I think he'd made it himself. Thank you very much.

Headboy: I done the little man in our uniform, so you'll remember us when we've gorn.

Lil: It's lovely. And I won't forget you.

Doreen: They won't want to go back, you know.

Lil: I think we'll all be sad to send them back to that place.

Doreen: You should've seen the little show the children got up this afternoon. They did a nativity play for the old people and they loved it.

CAROL...WE THREE KINGS

Doreen: They chose little Frank to be Joseph. You know him, Mrs. Jones's boy. Always got a runny nose. Anything thing free going...he nicks it. Well it's all going very well till they come to the bit where the three wise men offer the gifts.

Kid: I bring you gold... frankinsence...

Doreen: And little Frank's started crying. Well, the whole play stopped so I went up and said to him 'What are you crying for?' And he says:

Frank: They keep making fun of me.

Doreen: What do you mean?

Frank: They keep saying Frank's got no sense.

Doreen: I explained it to him, and gave him a cuddle. (SIGNALS FRANK AND GIRL TO CARRY ON)

Kid: And you've got your myrrh. (FRED CRIES)

Doreen: And he sarts crying again. So I says, What is it now? and he says:

Frank: They say I've got myrrh. I might have nits, but I haven't got myrrh. (CRIES)

REPRISE CAROL

Lil: It's going to be a funny Christmas for the kids in here. Not like being at home. There's a little boy and girl come in couple of days ago, only about five or six years old, they'd been bombed out. Well, their mother was off looking for a place for them, and they're driving everyone mad (BOY MAKES SIREN NOISE) playing this game of air raid warning.

Girl: I want to be the siren this time.

Boy: Orl right. You close your eyes and I'll hide.

Girl: Siren wail. (BOY HIDES)

Lil: So he'd go and hide, until she gives the all clear

Girl: All clear. (HE DOESN'T COME OUT) Oi! Listen, I'm doing it! (MORE SIREN, LOUDER ALL CLEAR) All clear! (SHE'S LOOKING ROUND FOR HIM) Where are you?

Boy: (MUFFLED) I'm under the rubble. You'll have to dig me out.

Girl: 'Elp, 'elp, over-ere. Do not worry. 'Elp is on its way. We are coming to get you.

Boy: Quick quick, it's cavin' in.

Girl: (DIGS HIM OUT) You'll be all right. We'll soon 'ave you out.

Boy: Come on.

Girl and boy: (LAUGHING AS SHE YANKS HIM OUT)

Boy: My turn now. (SIREN NOISE)

~~Lil: This woman calls out to me:~~

Woman: Can't you stop 'em. They're driving us barmy.

Lil: So I says to 'er, I don't know much but I think it's something they've got to work through.

Woman: But they've been playing it all afternoon.

Lil: And they had, it's true. (END SIREN) But then it was over. And some way, you know, they'd sorted out their feelings.

Woman: It's rough on the kids in London at the moment. I think they're better off out of all this really.

SONG: GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE

Fred: (TO AUDIENCE) Half a million children had left London in September 1939, but by the first Christmas of the war, nearly half of them had come back. When the Blitz started, you could hear the mothers saying:

Lil: If we're going to get bombed, we'll all get bombed together.

Fred: So there are a lot of children running round in the rubble this Christmas.

END SONG

Lil: One of my girls desperately wanted to come back to London for Christmas, because so many of her friends have, but I'm not letting her. It's too dangerous. Anyway Harry wouldn't hear of it. It's bad enough for him stuck out in the middle of the Atlantic without having to worry about the kids. I hope he's all right.

Doreen: He'll be all right. A bit cold out there I should think,

but I'm sure he'll be all right.

MUSIC BEHIND: SO NICE TO COME HOME TO

Harry: Dear Lil I don't know when you're going to get this, but I'll be thinking about you over Christmas. I know how you feel about it, but whatever you do, promise me you won't bring the kids back to London for the time being. We'll talk about it when I next get home on leave. Though God knows when that'll be. Happy Christmas. All my love Harry.

SONG: YOU'LL BE SO NICE TO COME HOME TO

Lil: I'm not so worried about Deirdre, my youngest. She's settled well. Wrote to me last week about a panto she's in down in the country.

Deirdre: Dear Mum, I am a butterfly in our village pantomime. I've got wings with flowers on, cut out of old curtains and I've got a bathing costume underneath. We have been collecting feathers and leaves and berries to decorate all the hats with. The princess is wearing an old ball gown belonging to Lady Gore-Smythe's mother. She keeps falling over it and we all get the giggles. The vicar is the giant and he's got painted wellington boots. The scenery is wonderful. It's a picture of Tower Bridge, and they've put some branches up because it's supposed to be in a wood. We are going to have a lamb or a pony in it, whichever one we can catch. Everyone is in it and it's going to be really good. I wish you could see me in it. Lots of love, Deirdre.

SONG...GOODNIGHT CHILDREN EVERYWHERE REPRISE

Lil: I'm more worried about Margaret. That's my older girl. She's staying with a family down in Somerset, and she's just not settled down. I had such an upsetting letter last week. Do you know she tried to run away. Luckily she didn't get very far.

Margaret: I miss my mum and I want to go back to London. I'd do just anything to be with Mum and Dad. But they won't have me home. They say it's too dangerous. My friend down here's called Sally.

Sally: I want to go home too.

Margaret: Why don't we?

Sally: What?

Margaret: Go home.

Sally: We can't.

Margaret: We can.

Sally: How?

Margaret: We'll have to walk.

Sally: It's a long way. (PAUSE FOR THOUGHT) Hey, we could go on my bike.

Margaret: Yeah. SShhhh!! Keep mum like Mum! (TO AUDIENCE) Late one night with snow thick on the ground, I crept out of the house and met Sally at the appointed place.

Sally: We took turns to pedal the bike whilst the other one sat on the saddle. We couldn't make it up the hill out of the village and we had to push.

Margaret: We rode for nearly six miles, to Chippenham, when we were stopped by a policeman.

Bobby: 'Ello, 'ello 'ello. What 'ave we got 'ere?

Margaret: We're just havin' a ride.

Bobby: What gone midnight?

Sally: Oh, is it that late?

Bobby: And in thick snow. Where are you off to?

Margaret and Sally: (PAUSE) London.

Bobby: London? Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. I think you'd better come with me.

Margaret: He talked to us very kindly and returned us to the village in a police car. I was smacked for this and not allowed out to play for a whole week. I wasn't allowed to go to the village hall to see the Christmas film show.

Lil: I'd love to have her back here with me.

Fred: She's better off out of this lot. At least she's safe.

Lil: I do miss her though.

Fred: 'Ere I tell you what, she'll be having better grub down there than what we are.

Lil: I'm not so sure about that. She doesn't seem to like it.

Fred: Why not? She'll be having chicken, beef, all sorts down

there.

Margaret: I am not allowed to sit with the grownups in the dining room. I have to sit at a special table by the window.

Mrs. Evans: (WITH MARGARET TRAILING WORDS BEHIND) For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful.

Margaret: The Evanses were missionaries when they were out in India, and they cook 'orrible food from there. When they do meat, it's all floating in this revolting sauce. I says to Mrs. Evans, What is it? And she says,

Mrs. Evans: It's curry, actually.

Margaret: Well, while Mrs. Evans wasn't looking, I gently eased up the big bay window by my little table, and tipped the lot out on the ground outside. And 'course she looks across, turns around and she says:

Mrs. Evans: Oh you've finished it.

Margaret: So I says, "Yes Mrs Evans". So she says:

Mrs. Evans: Oh jolly good. Do have some more.

Margaret: So she rings the bell and the maid come in and brought some more. Well I daren't stick it outside the window this time so of course I had to eat it. It tasted revolting!

CAROL: HERE WE COME A' WASSAILING AND UNDERSCORING

Last night the whole family stood round the piano and sang old fashioned tunes and carols, you know. While they sang, I was standing there crying my eyes out. The family still seem like strangers to me, and I don't think they realised how sad I was. It's so different from Christmas at Gran's house.

CAROL SWITCHES TO LET'S ALL GO DOWN THE STRAND UNDERSCORING:

Lil: It used to be balloons, hats and fancy masks from Noble's store in Deptford Broadway. The house'd always be full of relations. We'd give the kids a good time and fill them up to the brim with Christmas food. Come evening we'd pack 'em all off to sleep in the big feather bed. They'd drift off to sleep with the sound of music and laughter in their ears. (MUSIC ENDS) It won't be the same for her down in Somerset. No wonder she tried to run away.

CAROL REPRISE

Margaret: When I woke up on Christmas morning I looked across at



Stella, that's Mrs Evans's neice who has come to stay here. She was surrounded by all her presents. I was afraid to look at the bottom of my bed and sure enough, there was nothing there. Stella says to me:

Stella: Looks like your mummy and daddy haven't remembered to send you anything. I've got lots and lots, so I might let you look at mine.

Margaret: (WATCHING STELLA) Stella played with all her toys and games. She had been given a beautiful sewing set with different coloured cottons, and some shiny beads of different shapes and colours. (TO STELLA) I asked my mum to buy me a sewing set and some beads.

Stella: I suppose she's just forgotten.

Margaret: She laid them all out on the bed and the wrapping paper fell on the floor. (SHE PICKS IT UP AND READS LABEL) Happy Christmas to Margaret. With love from Mum and Dad.

Stella: I'm so sorry. I must have made a mistake. I thought it said for Stella.

Margaret: They didn't forget me.

Stella: (HANDING THEM OVER GRUDGINGLY) That's all you've got though.

Margaret: I didn't care. It was the most wonderful gift in all the world and all I wanted.

REPRISE CAROL

Fred: Better get going then.

Lil: 'Ere Fred, how did Flo take to you being on duty Christmas Day?

Fred: She's gone to stay with her sister. We're finally going to have our Christmas dinner tomorrow, Boxing Day. Woman down the road got us a turkey.

Lil: Where from?

Fred: Well she's not saying where she got it from, but when she give it to me she said, 'Keep it under your hat'. Well, ask no questions. So we'll have that, and Flo's made a Christmas pud...

Commentary: (Doreen) (LIL DOES ACTIONS) Turn on your wireless at 8.15 every morning and listen to the Kitchen Front for useful tips and recipes.

Christmas begins in the kitchen and it isn't too soon to begin planning the best use of the kitchen rations now. All of our recipes are tested by practical cooks in the Ministry of Food kitchens. Here is a recipe for a Christmas pudding without eggs.

Mix together one cup of flour, one cup of breadcrumbs, one cup of sugar, half a cup of suet, one cup of mixed dried fruit and, if you like, one cup of mixed sweet spice.

Add one cup of grated potato, (DISBELIEF FROM LIL) one cup of raw grated carrot, (MORE DISBELIEF) and finally one level teaspoonful of bicarbonate of soda dissolved in two tablespoons of hot milk. (UGH FROM LIL)

Mix all together (no further moisture is necessary) turn into a well greased pudding basin. Boil or steam for four hours.

A Christmas sparkle is easy to give to sprigs of holly or evergreen for use on puddings. Dip your greenery in a strong solution of Epsom salts. When dry it will be beautifully frosted.

Fred: So we'll have that when we're having our little get together Boxing Day. We've invited old Mrs. Porter from next door, cos she's on her own.

Lil: A lot of people are, aren't they? It won't be the same without the family around. There used to be twenty or thirty of us Christmas Day.

Doreen: My sister's managed to have her boy home for Christmas.

Lil: Ah, that's nice for her.

Doreen: You should've seen me last night. I popped round her house. There was just my sister, Joan, and her little boy Peter, who's three. Well, there's no men there so I had to act as Father Christmas. I dressed up in Joan's red dressing gown and we'd made a hood. Then I put glue round my face and put chunks of cotton wool all round and a moustache. (SHE DOES SOME OF THIS!) And we even had a sack to put the presents in. Anyway, dressed up as Father Christmas, I crept out the back way and knocked on the front door. Joan came to the door and she said:

Joan: Oooh, Peter, I wonder who that can be? Oh look! It's Father Christmas. Do come in.

Doreen: So in I walked talking all low like this (IMITATES MAN'S VOICE) and there was Peter. (TO KIDS) And a very merry Christmas to you my boy. (SHAKES HANDS) Have you been a good boy?

Peter: Yes Father Christmas.

Doreen: It all went well and I gave him his presents. And I even left one present for myself to make it look authentic. Then all of a sudden Peter pointed up at my face and he said:

Peter: Oh look Mum, Father Christmas has got a mark on his nose just like Auntie Doreen.

Doreen: Well, he started poking my face and I thought he'd pull the cotton wool off, so I thought I'd better make a hasty exit. I said, "Well, I've got to go now and visit some other children and then I've got to get back to Greenland". He said:

Peter: Bye Bye Father Christmas. (WAVING)

Doreen: Then I had to go out the front door and in through the back again, upstairs to Joan's room, where I disrobed and got back into my nurse's uniform. Then I came in the front door again, and Peter said:

Peter: Ooh, Auntie Doreen, you missed Father Christmas.

Doreen: Oh dear, have I? What a shame! Do you know he never guessed I was Father Christmas!

Fred: 'Ere Doreen, talk about presents, very nice that hot water bottle cover you made for me. Very pretty.

Doreen: That's all right Fred. Thought you could keep yourself warm at the ARP post. Have you used it yet?

Fred: Well, thing is Doreen, (PULLING IT OUT OF POCKET) I couldn't work out how to put the bottle in. (SHOWS IT)

Doreen: (TAKING IT) Oh my Gord! What have I done? I've knitted all the way round. 'Ere, I'll take it back and unpick it for you. Hope I haven't done the same thing on the one I made for Johnny. (TO AUDIENCE) That's my young man. He's a corporal and they're stuck on Salisbury Plain all over Christmas. He'll need a hot water bottle to keep him warm down there. Wish he was here now.

SONG: THERE'S A BOY COMING HOME ON LEAVE

Lil: 'Ere Doreen, do you want to take my present back, an' all. (PRODUCES SHIPPAMS JAR) That face cream you give us.

Doreen: Why? Don't you like it?

Lil: Well actually love, it's done nothing for my complexion.

Doreen: You've tried it, 'ave you?

Lil: Tried it? It's all over me pillow. I can't get it off. Where d'you get it from?

Doreen: I made it myself. I got this old recipe. It was take half a pound of lard, right, mix it with some, what was it?-glycerine. (TO AUDIENCE) I'd been round the kitchen collecting Shippams fish paste jars. I did wash 'em out. I made up all these lovely little pots, put the cream in 'em, and give 'em to all my friends. Well you can't get face cream or anything these days.

Lil: Lard and glycerine? I think it's gone off love. It smells putrid.

Doreen: I'm sorry. I did try. (THEY LAUGH) Any way, I liked your lipstick. (GETTING IT OUT) Tangee.

COMMENTARY: (Lil): Nature Decreed that lips should be luscious! Lips are the potent weapon in love's delicious armoury. Lips should spell beauty. Spell beauty, remember, not spoil beauty. The secret of natural inviting lip-loveliness lies in TANGEE, the perfect lipstick that changes on your lips to the colour that's best for you. Tangee Lipstick for YOUR individual colour.

SONG: KEEP YOUNG & BEAUTIFUL IF YOU WANT TO BE LOVED

COMMENTARY: (Doreen): This Christmas, don't forget the beauty question. Book a hairdressing appointment now. Arrange for a super manicure and a wizard facial. And let these be your Christmas presents to yourself. No matter how good your Christmas fare, no matter how successful the presents, if your hair is wispy, your complexion doubtful and you feel like sitting on your hands, you and your Christmas party will lose sparkle and swing.

REPRISE SONG

Fred: I'm still hoping our Iris will be home for Boxing Day.

Lil: Ah that'll be nice. She's in the WAAFs isn't she?

Fred: Yeah, she's stationed down at Biggin Hill. She'll have been on the switchboard all day today.

Lil: What have you given her for Christmas?

Fred: We haven't yet. The missus always gives her knickers and stuff like that, cos they don't give them clothing coupons like civvies have. They're supposed to wear WAAF knickers, blackouts they call 'em, and she won't wear those. But we daren't post her any because of what happened last time.

Iris: It was my 21st birthday and this parcel arrived for me. I

was frightened to open parcels in front of men, cos I never knew what I was going to find in them. I was busy on the board, so when this present arrived for me from the orderly room, one of the boys, very obligingly, opened it for me!

RAF Man: Wolf whistle. Get a load of that!

Iris: It had a pair of roll-ons in there from my mum, and he put them on.

RAF Man: (DOES SO AND WIGGLES AND HOPS ROUND ROOM, SINGING:) Keep young and beautiful if you want to be loved!!

Iris: In comes this officer:

Officer: ~~Corporal Bates. You're needed in the Ops Room.~~ (PAUSE WHILE SCENE SINKS IN AND RAF MAN SALUTES) What do you think you're doing?

RAAF Man: I was just err....

Officer: You're on a charge..Get up to the Ops room.

Iris: I said to the officer: It's me 21st. He was only helping me to celebrate. I got him off the charge and he brought me a quarter of bottle of Scotch.

END MUSIC

Fred: My boy's in the R.A.F. as well. He's an air crew cadet, stationed down at Brighton. Cor, the whole of the beach down there is mined and the sea front's a mass of barbed wire. In case of invasion, see. He made me laugh last time he came home on leave. The airforce have requisitioned the Grand Hotel and the Metropole. Our Bob was on guard duty. He was standing there with a Lee Enfield rifle in his hand guarding the Grand Hotel. Well the guard commander came round.

Guard Commander: Everything all right?

Fred: And Bob says, 'Ere, Searge, you know I've got no bullets or anything? No rounds of ammo. Say somebody did try to break in? Can't I 'ave some? The Seargent s̄ays:

Guard Commander: My God no. If we gave you bullets, you might shoot somebody.

Fred: Poor Bob, he's going to be ruddy freezing standing out there all day.

Doreen: No chance of him getting home over Christmas, I don't

suppose?

Fred: No. He's on duty. Mind you, there's this place called Sherry's just round the corner from the Grand, so his mates'll see 'im all right. Bring 'im round a few pints of black and tan, stout and mild, you know, to swig on the quiet.

Doreen: No ammunition? Sounds like the Home Guard. They've only got about ten bullets between them.

SONG. COULD YOU PLEASE OBLIGE US WITH A BREN GUN

Fred: (AS ROB WILTON) The day war broke out my missus looked at me and said "What good are you?". I said, "How do you mean what good am I?" "Well," she said, "You're too old for the army, you couldn't get into the navy and they wouldn't have you in the air force, so what good are you?"

I said, "I'll have to think." She said "I don't see how that's going to help you, you've never done it before. So what good are you?" I said "Don't keep saying what good am I?" She said "You'll have to go back to work." Ohhh she's got a cruel tongue. Anyhow I haven't had to go back to work. I'm a lamp lighter. I've joined the Home Guards. I got me uniform. Well I get the trousers next year. I slipped upstairs and put it on. I came down into the kitchen and the missus looked at me and said "What are you supposed to be?" I said "Supposed to be?" I said, "I'm one of the Homeguards." The missus said "Well what do you do in the Homeguards?" I said "I've got to stop Hitler's army landing." She said "What you?" I said, "No, there's Harry Bates, Charlie Evens and", I said, "there's seven or eight of us altogether." I said, "We're in a group. We are all guarding a little hut behind the 'Dog and Pullet'. We have all joined for the duration, that's unless it finishes before then, we don't know you see." But my missus, she gets on my nerves, she asks such daft questions. She said, "What are you supposed to be guarding?" I said, "We're guarding the British Isles." I said, "We're guarding all the millions of men, women and children. Millions of them. And you." She said, "Ohh then you are on our side?" I said, "Well of course I'm on our..." "Well" she said "I think we would be a darned sight better off if you was on the other side." She said "Do you know this Hitler, have you ever..." "Do I know..." I said, "Now don't talk rubbish Rita. Do I know Hitler? How would I... I'm not even in the paint business." She doesn't understand. You can't reason with her. Only the other morning .....ohh good gracious me, look at the time. I should've been on guard two hours ago. I've left the whole of the coast exposed. You will have to forgive me. I really have to go.

SONG - DAISY DAISY

GERT AND DAISY:

D: Hello Gert  
 G: Hello Daise  
 D: Orlright?  
 G: Yer.  
 D: How's your Bert?  
 G: Oh 'ee's still in bed  
 D: Is he ill?  
 G: Nah! 'E just don't like the cold weather.  
 D: Oh - never was too strong was 'e.  
 G: No, 'e always enjoyed bad 'ealth  
 D: What you got for 'is tea Gert?  
 G: Nice bit of 'addock  
 D: That's splashin' out a bit, ain't yer?  
 G: Well, not really, chatted up Mr. Sparks round the smoke  
 'ole. Promised I'd scrub 'im dahn Saturday night.  
 D: Oh, I never did!  
 G: Oh, you must've done Daise, else you wouldn't 'ave got them  
 bits of scrag end orf the ration.  
 D: Ta taa Gert.  
 G: Ta taa Daise.

SONG: I'M IN LOVE WITH MARY FROM THE DAIRY

Max Miller: What do you want the white book or the blue book? I was round the Elephant five weeks ago, and there was a raid. I don't like raids, honestly no when that warning goes my tummy goes right over honest. No I can't help it, I can't help it you see, goes right over and I run in anybody's house. Never made a bloomer yet, I'm not kidding. And this particular night they were dropping them all over the place, dropping them all over the place they were, and there was a fella running down the street in his shirt. That's all he had on a little tiny shirt, hardly covered his how's yer father, running down the street. I said "Where are you going?" he said "Home". 'Ere...

ITMA THEME TUNE

Mrs. Mop: Can I do you now sir?

Handley: Here she is Mrs. Mop, the private's enterprise.

Mrs. Mop: I love 'em sir, whether they're swatties or old sweats.

Handley: I know you do, you old camp follower. If you're not swinging the leg, you're presenting arms.

Mrs. Mop: I'm an old canteener sir.

Handley: Yes, I've seen you blowing up the sausages with the bellows. Well, how are you getting on with your sergeant major, Mrs. M?

Mrs. Mop: Oh he's as saucy as ever, sir.

Handley: Oh?

Mrs. Mop: Why only yesterday, he wanted to see me works ticket.

Handley: I see. Then he expected you to pass out, eh?

Mrs. Mop: I repelled his invasion exercises.

Handley: What did you do? Take off your gas mask?

Mrs. M: I've got another follower now sir. He's a gunner.

~~Handley: Oh is he? I bet you make 'im come out of 'is shell.~~

Mrs. M: Oh yes sir, he says I'm a wicked little barrage.

Handley: And then I suppose he sets fire to your tippet and does a pincer movement behind the smoke screen.

Mrs. M: T.T.F.N.

Handley: K.I.T.M.

Mrs.M: Eh?

Handley: Kit inspection tomorrow morning.

SONG GOODNIGHT...GOT YOUR TORCHLIGHT

Doreen: Is that little dog still following you round Fred?

Fred: Oh you mean Sandy? Edie McHardie's little dog...He's probably waiting for me outside. I'm thinking of making him an ARP messenger. He just follows me around everywhere. He's amazing that mut. His ears are that good, he can hear the siren going off miles away in Kent. Long before we get it. And then he's straight off down the shelter.

Doreen: Sounds like a very clever dog.

Fred: He certainly is. They take him to the pictures you know.

Doreen: Eh? The pictures?

Fred: Yeah, they took him to see 'Gone With The Wind' last week.

Doreen: Did he like it?

Fred: No. He howled the place down. And it's funny that, because



he loved the book.

Doreen: Get out of it, Fred.

Lil: He did have a good time the other night. I was round at Mrs. McHardy's shop. It was a bad night. We were in the cellar, sheltering. And we had a bomb. It wasn't right outside, but it was enough to send all the bottles of beer and spirits flying off the shelves up above in the shop. So as soon as we could, everyone was up there trying to clear the mess up. And when we come back down the cellar, there was Sandy. I said 'Look at the dog'. And it suddenly dawned, Sandy'd been drinking. The dog was drunk, absolutely drunk. (DRUNKEN DOG ROUTINE) He'd had been licking all this stuff what had come down the walls from upstairs. And he was drunk as anything, poor thing. (TO DRUNK DOG) Know what you need Sandy? Hair of the dog! (DOG JUMPS AT IT!)

Fred: Someone come in the ARP post this morning and she says:

Woman: I'm sure we've got an unexploded bomb just round the corner.

Fred: I went out with her and there was this wall about 6 foot high.

Woman: Put your ear to the wall, and 'ave a listen.

Fred: So I puts me ear to the wall, and sure enough I could hear this ticking sound coming from the other side. I was pretty frightened so I ran back to the ARP post, went in and they were all there, talking, laughing, smoking. So I says: "Oi, you lot Get your gear on..I think we've got a UXB down the road." So they gets their tin hats, gas masks and so on, and they come back with me and had a listen. I says: "We've got something here boys!" So I gives Charlie a leg up and he climbs over the wall. We're all holding our breath, and the woman, she's still there, when Charlie pops his head over the top.

Woman: What is it? Is it a bomb?

Fred: And Charlie says: Not exactly. What it is, this ticking sound, is water from an overflow pipe dripping into an old tin bath.

Woman: (EMBARRASSED) Oh dear!

Fred: (AS CHARLIE) That, madam, is your unexploded bomb!

Woman: Sorry!

Lil: Well, you were right to take it seriously. Everyone's a bit

jumpy at the moment. You know I've got me dad staying with me over Christmas. The other night, you know we'd had that bad one and we'd been in the shelter all night. Went back into the kitchen in the morning to put the kettle on, and of course I'd turned the gas off at the main like you're supposed to. So I shouts to Dad: 'Turn the gas on Dad'. And he says:

Dad: Eh?

Lil: 'E's a bit deaf, see. So I shouts: 'The gas'. (ENTER DAD GRAPPLING WITH GASMASK) Next minute, blow me, in 'e comes prepared for the worst, gasmask an' all.

Dad: (PANICKING) Quick, get your gasmask on.

~~Doreen: Nice for your Dad being with you for Christmas. My family's scattered far and wide this year. There'll be no-one at home tonight. Mum and Dad have gone to see me brother in Wales. Joan's looking after little Peter, and my other sister, Dorothy, she's in the Land Army. She's a milker with another girl. They're on a small farm down in Dorset, and they've been asked to work over Christmas, so the farmer and his wife can spend Christmas Day with relatives.~~

Dorothy: They've never had the opportunity to leave the farm before you see. We girls are the first live-in helpers they've ever had. We decided to work over Christmas together, instead of one girl being left alone while the other went home. We hung holly and ivy in our room, and in the cowshed as well.

CAROL HERE (HARK THE HERALD) AND UNDERSCORING

Dorothy: We got up early on Christmas morning to find a light scattering of snow on the ground, and absolute silence everywhere. We entered the warm shed where the cows were tied up in their stalls. As we milked, we sang Christmas carols! The cows were used to us singing as we worked and most of them seem to like music anyway. It also boosted our morale, because it was a bit scary knowing there were no other human beings within sight or sound of us for quite a long way.

Later, while Joyce had a rest on her bed, I went for a walk across the fields, hands deep in my coat pockets, and hearing only the crunch of the snow beneath my wellies. I couldn't help thinking about my family and the happy times we used to have, and how I miss them all, so when I found some shelter behind a tree, I leaned against it to shed a few tears.

END CAROL

Fred: So what are you going to do tonight when you've finished here?

Doreen: I think I might pop along to my club.

Fred: Your club? Sounds very posh.

Doreen: Oh it's not like that. We've got together a little club in an empty house. Someone's produced a gramophone, and we've pooled our records. I drop in whenever I get the chance. Popped in last night. We dance foxtrots, waltzes, and the 'Army Hop'.

Lil: The what?

Doreen: The army hop. Some of our members are soldiers who man the Anti-Aircraft Battery on the common. They have to be ready for action at any minute, so they have to dance in their Army boots.

Soldier: Fancy a twirl. Wind her up then.

MUSIC BEHIND

Doreen: Watch your feet! It is a miracle that we aren't crippled. Half of them have got two left feet.

SIREN

Soldier: There she goes, Wailing Winnie. I'll see you later.

Doreen: And they're off. We shoot down to the basement where we've made an air-raid shelter.

Soldier: There'd been raids for 76 nights and only one night off because of bad weather.

Doreen: I'm fed up, living like a bloomin' mole.

ALL CLEAR

Last night, we decided to throw discretion to the winds and hold a bit of a party in our little club. There's a pub nearby where everyone meets, anyone on leave from active service goes there.

MUSIC/SONG STARTS HERE (ROLL OUT THE BARREL) AND CONTINUES UNDER

We stayed until the beer run out (about 9 o'clock) when we all run to the next pub whose beer allowance gave drinking time from 9 o'clock to 10. We somehow managed to buy a barrel - don't ask me how! - but I remember rolling it back to our club downhill all the way. We mixed this with some red wine making blood colour beer - it looked revolting, but it was VERY potent.

ROLL OUT THE BARREL

We all danced, laughed, and made as much noise as we could. Then everyone went their separate ways. (LOTS OF GOODBYES HERE AS MUSIC ENDS) To what? Who knows?

Fred: Nobody knows. You don't know from one day to the next what's going to happen to you. You have to live for the moment.

Lil: You're all right as long as your number don't come up, and if it does, there's nothing you can do about it.

Doreen: We've tried to make a bit of a Christmas for the people at the Rest Centre. And we haven't had a raid for two whole days.

Fred: Can't bank on it lasting. I really must back down the A.R.P post. (PUTS GEAR ON) Happy Christmas Lil, happy Christmas Doreen.

Doreen and Lil: Happy Christmas Fred.

Fred: We were all right that night. In fact, they let us off until the 29th December. But then it started all over again.

SONG: BLACKOUT STROLL.

ENCORE: ROLL OUT THE BARRELL.