

JUST LIKE THE COUNTRY
BY JOYCE HOLLIDAY

FOR AGE EXCHANGE THEATRE

THE ACTION TAKES PLACE, FIRST IN THE CENTRE, AND THEN IN THE OUTSKIRTS, OF LONDON, IN THE MID-NINETEEN TWENTIES.

THE SET IS DESIGNED FOR TOURING AND SHOULD BE VERY SIMPLE. IT GIVES THREE DIFFERENT DOUBLE SETS. THE FIRST DOUBLE SET SHOWS, ON ONE SIDE, A SLUM BEDROOM, AND, ON THE OTHER, A PUB INTERIOR. THE SECOND SHOWS TWO VERY SIMILAR COUNCIL HOUSE INTERIORS. THE THIRD SHOWS TWO COUNCIL HOUSE EXTERIORS WITH VERY DIFFERENT GARDENS.

THE STAGE FURNITURE IS KEPT TO THE MINIMUM AND CONSISTS OF A SMALL TABLE, ONE UPRIGHT CHAIR, AN ORANGE BOX AND TWO DECKCHAIRS.

THE PLAY IS WRITTEN SPECIFICALLY FOR A SMALL TOURING COMPANY OF TWO MEN AND TWO WOMEN, EACH TAKING SEVERAL PARTS.

VIOLET, who doubles as Betty

FLO, who doubles as Phyllis, Mother, and Edna

LEN, who doubles as the Housing Manager, the Builder, and Charlie

GEORGE, who doubles as Alf, the Organ Grinder, the Doctor, Mr.

Phillips, and Jimmy.

THE FIRST DOUBLE SET SHOWS, ON ONE SIDE, A SLUM BEDROOM WITH TWO B TOGETHER. THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW, A VIEW OF BRICK WALLS AND ROO IS A REMOVABLE PICTURE HANGING ON A NAIL. THE OTHER SCREEN SHOWS A DINGY BUT PACKED WITH LIVELY PEOPLE.

THE ACTORS ENTER FROM THE PUB SIDE, CARRYING GLASSES, ETC. THEY GRE AND THE AUDIENCE INDISCRIMINATELY, MOVING ABOUT A LOT, SPEAKING TIME, USING AND REPEATING THE SAME LINES AS EACH OTHER. GENERA EXCITEMENT.

ALL CAST: Hello!

Hello there!

Hello, love!

Watcha, mate!

Fancy seeing you!

How are you?

How're you keeping?
I'm alright. How are you?
Lovely day, ain't it?

What's yours then? What you having? What'11 it be? Pint o' mild please.
Pint o' best for me. Gin and orange. Mother's ruin! Make it a double. Port and
lemon. I'll have a stout.

Cheers then!
Thanks mate.
Cheers!
Bottoms up!
Down the hatch!
Your very good health!
Ta ever so.
Here's to all of us!

VIOLET: Come on, Len. Give us a song.

ALF: Yeah, let's have a song.
LEN: All right. What you want?
PHYLLIS: "Ours is a nice house."
LEN: Right. Here we go then.

LEN SINGS. THE OTHERS JOIN IN WHEREVER POSSIBLE. HOUSE SONG:

Of all the houses in the world
There isn't one like ours is We never pay the rent and yet The landlord never
grouses.

WHEREVER THERE IS AN OBVIOUS JOKE, THEY ALL COLLAPSE IN
PEALS OF LAUGHTER, AND SHOUT THINGS LIKE "SOME
HOPE.")

We've got no windows in the house, Its healthy - lets the air in It also lets the
foul air out When father he starts swearing.

Ours is a nice house ours is!
What a nice little house ours is.
The roofs on the top
Of this pretty little shack
The front's at the front
And the back's at the back.
Ours is a nice house ours is!
We've got no rats or mouses.
It's cheap, cheap, cheap,
Sweet, sweet, sweet.
Ours is a nice house, ours is!

Of all the gardens in the world There isn't one like ours is. Salmon tins are
growing there. And other pretty flow'rsies. Broken bottles, hob-nail boots,
You bet and put your bobs on -Some people grow their ears of corn,
We grow thick ears with knobs on.

Ours is a nice house ours is!
What a nice little house ours is.
The roofs on the top
Of this pretty little shack
The front's at the front
And the back's at the back.
Ours is a nice house ours is!
We've got no rats or mice. It's cheap, cheap, cheap, Sweet, sweet,
sweet. Ours is a nice house, ours is!

VIOLET: Anyone can get up and give a turn.

ALF: Sunday morning, it's best in the
Rising Sun, 'cos of all the turns.

PHYLLIS: And Petticoat Lane's not far from here and

you can go down and get hot bread.

LEN: We like pickled herrings and things like that.

VIOLET: Winkles and shrimps.

ALF: You can go down early, get something to eat, and come back and
have a good time in the Rising Sun.

VIOLET: Sundays we always have a drink with my mother, my
husband and I do. My uncle comes in with his wife. My sister comes in with
my brother-in-law.

LEN: He always comes in and has a drink with me.
Sometimes my sister and my other brother-in-law come in. We always
finish off quite a crowd.

PHYLLIS: Monday night's for women.

ALF: Course the men come over as well. But they stop at
one end.

PHYLLIS: The women are at this end. Each week one of us
brings a parcel in. What you brought in this week, Vi'?

VIOLET: I'm not telling you. It's a secret. Mystery prize,
innit? You buy your raffle ticket and then if you win, you'll find out what it
is.

PHYLLIS: Here you are then. Put the tickets in a hat.

VIOLET TAKES OFF HER HAT, HOLDS IT UPSIDE DOWN AND
SHAKES IT. SHE DRAWS OUT A TICKET.

VIOLET: Number eight!

PHYLLIS: That's me! I've won! I've won!

VIOLET: Here you are then. The lucky winner!

VIOLET PASSES OVER THE PARCEL WITH A GREAT
FLOURISH.

PHYLLIS: What is it? I can't wait.

SHE UNWRAPS THE PARCEL AND IS VERY DISAPPOINTED.

PHYLLIS: Oh, it's a kettle holder. Isn't that nice! You make it yourself?
Oh, well, it's lovely. I've been wanting a new kettle holder.

VIOLET: Don't forget it's your turn to bring a parcel next
week now you've won.

PHYLLIS: No, I won't.

VIOLET: The proceeds that's over from the raffle, if it's
anybody's birthday, we make a big bread pudding and ice it for a
birthday cake, and we have sandwiches and pickles.

PHYLLIS: We have a really good time.

ALF: Friday night's nearly always club night.

LEN: That's when mostly people meet one another.

ALF: You pay your club, like, your yearly club.

LEN: You meet your friends and you have a good talk.

ALF: And there's always the music going. Anybody can
get up and sing.

LEN: It's a do-as-you-please.

ALF: Come on! Knees up!

PHYLLIS: Come on Violet!

THEY ALL LINK ARMS AND DANCE.

KNEES UP SONG:

Knees up, Mother Brown, Knees up, Mother Brown, Under the table you
must go, Eee-i, ee-i, ee-i, oh! It's your Mother's birthday, Give her half-a-crown.
Knees up, knees up, Don't get the breeze up, Knees up, Mother Brown.
THEY ALL SEPERATE, LAUGHING.

VIOLET: See, there's always something going on, always
some entertainment.

LEN: Charabanc outings from the pub - that sort of
thing.

VIOLET: Even when we was little, people used to come round with
barrel organs. The barrel organ man used to say:

ALF (AS ORGAN GRINDER): All you kids sit on the curb.

VIOLET AND PHYLLIS SIT ON THE CURB.

PHYLLIS: My mum used to say, "You can sit and watch, but don't
follow."

VIOLET: Well, we used to sit on the curb and watch, and
then we'd follow them to the next road and sit on the curb and watch
there.

PHYLLIS: We'd sit on the curb all night, watching.

VIOLET: I was born here and I've lived here all my life.
Gran came here shortly after she was first married. She was the first
one. My mother was born here and then me.

PHYLLIS: Yes, I was born here. My mother's lived here

forty-five years. So we've really been brought up together.

VIOLET: And when you've known people for a long while,
they know everything about you.

PHYLLIS (WITH MEANING): Yes.

VIOLET: Same as you know everything about them.

PHYLLIS: Oh, yes. Well...

PHYLLIS LAUGHS, GIVES VIOLET FRIENDLY NUDGE AND GOES.

VIOLET:

There's a big market right opposite where we live, and I know all the market people. They're very good. I always go to the same people. They always serve me well. They know near enough, what I want.

LEN: You can't walk round the corner
here without, well, doesn't matter who comes along, you have to look at them, cos you know them. You have to nod and say hello to almost everybody.

VIOLET: They're very friendly the people
round here. Now, say you was ill, you knock on the wall, the next-door woman just automatically comes indoors, gives you a hand.

LEN: And of course your mother, she
always takes over when you're in the family way, don't she?

MOTHER COMES IN.

MOTHER: Yes, I always take over, look after her for a
month or so until she's on her feet again. And I take over if they got illness. If there's one of the children I can take over, I look after it until the other ones are all right. It's like home from home for them. They don't miss their parents at all. They're quite happy with me. Yes, I do a lot for them, one way and another.

VIOLET: Well, I come up and do your shopping for you.

LEN: Yeah, and I come up and get your coal in.

MOTHER: And on Thursday when you're broke, you come round
and borrow a few bob.

VIOLET: Only if the children want anything.

MOTHER: Or if you fancy going out. Come on, I'll look
after the kids for the night while you go out and do what you want to do.

LEN AND VIOLET HESITATE.

MOTHER: Come on, I don't mind. I enjoy having them. It
gives me something to do.

VIOLET: We could go dancing at the Palais.

LEN: We could go to the Empire.

VIOLET: Go to no end of places. I love London.

LEN: Same here. I don't want nothing better than to
stay here all my life.

BACK IN MY OWN BACKYARD:

The bird with feathers of blue is waiting for you Back in your own back yard
You'll see your castle in Spain Through your window pane
Back in your own back yard

CHORUS:

Oh! You can go to the East, go to the West,
But some day you'll come
Weary at heart, back where you started from
You'll find your happiness lies
Right under your eyes
Back in your own back yard

The bird with feathers of blue is waiting for you Back in your own back yard
You'll see your castle in Spain Through your window pane
Back in your own back yard.

VIOLET: Course we are a bit overcrowded, seven of us in two rooms.

LEN: No worse than anybody else.

VIOLET: No, but all the same, I don't like all them kids having to sleep in the one bed, boys and girls together, specially now they're getting a bit older. We could do with a bit more space.

LEN: Naah, they'll be grown up and left home before you know where you are.

VIOLET: And I'm worried about our Stan with his chest and his heart. He's been dreadful since they all had scarlet fever. I've had to have the doctor in.

A DOCTOR COMES IN AS THOUGH HE'S JUST FINISHED AND EXAMINATION.

DOCTOR: Mrs. Wilmot, that boy of yours shouldn't be living in these conditions.

VIOLET: I know that, but what can I do about it?

DOCTOR: I'm going to give you a letter to take to the Council, saying you must be given a Council house as a matter of urgency.

THE DOCTOR WRITES A LETTER.

VIOLET: Oh, I don't know about that. See, I've always been used to living where I am. I don't want to move out on one of them new estates miles from any where.

DOCTOR: Mrs. Wilmot, how many children have you lost already?

VIOLET: I haven't lost none! Well, apart from the babies. Everybody round here loses babies, poor little things. Wasn't my fault. They were just born too weak and skinny. I couldn't help it. Broke my heart.

DOCTOR: I'm aware of that, but this one isn't a baby and this time you can help it. I'm telling you I will not be responsible for that child's life if you refuse to follow my advice. Here's the letter. Now you take that to the Council tomorrow.

THE DOCTOR LEAVES.

LEN: I'm not leaving here and that's flat.

VIOLET: But Len, you heard what the Doctor said about our Stanley... He needs the fresh air. He needs a garden to play in.

LEN: He's got the yard. I don't see no difference.

VIOLET: The yard! There isn't room to swing a cat in that yard. It's just a rubbish dump between the back door and the privy! And it never gets any sun.

LEN: Naah. It's lovely is that yard. No, it's no good, Violet. I'm a Londoner born and bred. I've always lived here. I'm happy here. I couldn't live anywhere else but London. And what about my work down the docks? You haven't thought about that, have you? There's no work out on these estates. No, I love London. I shall live here and die here.

LEN GOES VERY DETERMINED. THAT'S THE LAST WORD AS FAR AS HE'S CONCERNED. VIOLET LOOKS AT THE LETTER IN HER HAND.

VIOLET: Oh, you will, will you? We'll see about that.
There's other people to be considered besides you.
VIOLET GOES OFF, ALSO VERY DETERMINED.

COCKNEY SONG: If you saw my little backyard, What a pretty spot!
you'd cry. It's a picture on a sunny summer day. With the turnip tops and cabbages That people doesn't buy It makes it on a Sunday look all gay.
The neighbours think I grow 'em And you'd fancy you're in Kent Or at Epsom, if you gaze into the mews. It's a wonder as the landlord Doesn't want to raise the rent Because we've got such nobby distant views. Oh, it really is a very pretty garden, And Chingford to the Eastward could be seen,
With a ladder and some glasses, You could see to Hackney Marshes, If it wasn't for the houses in between.

Oh, it really is a very pretty garden.
And Hendon to the Westward could be seen,
And by clinging to the chimbley'
You could see across to Wembley,
If it wasn't for the houses in between.

FLO AND GEORGE COME ON FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STAGE. GEORGE SITS ON A BENTWOOD CHAIR, HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS IN DESPAIR. FLO COMES IN CARRYING A HEAVY BUCKET. SHE PUTS IT DOWN, AND PULLS OUT A SMALL RICKETY TABLE. SHE HEAVES THE BUCKET ON TO THE TABLE AND PROCEEDS TO DO HER WASHING IN THE BUCKET. SHE TALKS THROUGHOUT THIS OPERATION.

FLO: My husband was in the army, 1914. He was shot in the lung, but he recovered from it, except for the fact that he couldn't lift his arm very well.

GEORGE TRIES TO STRETCH AND CAN'T LIFT HIS LEFT ARM PROPERLY.

FLO: It affected him in a certain way, 'though it never actually stopped him from working. We got married just after the war, as soon as he came home, but we couldn't find anywhere decent to live. This room was all we could get. We've been here eight years now. You all right, George?

GEORGE: No, I'm not. I'm fed up. I hate to see you lugging that heavy bucket upstairs, washing in a bucket on the table. Then lugging the bucket all the way downstairs again to empty it.

FLO: You see, there's no running water at all. You have to bring every drop of water up from the yard.

GEORGE: I hate it every time you want a drink, having to go downstairs to fill up a jug with water. I hate having to share that toilet in the yard with goodness knows how many other people. There's not even proper lights here, not even gas lights, just oil lamps.

FLO: You see, he went through the war, got badly injured, and there was supposed to be homes fit for heroes, and there aren't any.

GEORGE: It's the bugs that get me down most. The way they crawl all over you at night. When it's hot, they come out and dance round you. And that's another thing. Me and you and the kids, all sleeping in one room. It's not healthy!

FLO: Well, what can we do, love? We've got our name down on the Council list. All we can do is wait.

GEORGE: How many years is that now?

FLO: It's bound to come up sometime.

GEORGE: No, it'll never come up. They keep on pushing these other families in front of us. I don't know what it is you have to do to get to the top of that list.

FLO: I keep looking for somewhere better. But they don't want to know when they find out you've got kids. You can't rent anywhere.

GEORGE: I'm going round to that Council Housing Department and ask them just what's going on with that list.

FLO: It won't do no good.

GEORGE: We'll see about that.

FLO LIFTS UP HER HEAVY BUCKET AND TAKES IT OFF. GEORGE
CROSSES THE STAGE TO THE HOUSING MANAGER WHO HAS A
SHEAF OF PAPERS TO REFER TO.

MANAGER: Now, Mr. Denning, you say you've had your name on
the list for over eight years?

GEORGE: That's right, over eight years since I first came
out of the army. I thought they were supposed to be building hundreds of
new houses for us.

MANAGER: Hundreds, you say? You've no conception of the
scale of it, have you? It's not hundreds of houses, it's thousands of
houses. You could say hundreds of thousands. There's four thousand
planned on the Watling Estate, four thousand at Mottingham, not to
mention St. Helier and Roehampton, Downham, Castelnau, Bellingham
and Becontree. Dagenham alone is going to have twenty thousand houses
when it's finished. It'll be the biggest estate in the world, bigger than alot of
towns. It's not a little tin pot operation, this isn't. It's massive!

GEORGE: Alright then, if it's as massive as that, why
haven't I got a house yet? I was badly wounded. I thought I was going to
get priority for that.

MANAGER: Ah yes, I see we've got a note of your service
record. And you're married, with a child on the way.

GEORGE: That's eight years ago, mate. I've got two kids
now, both going to school.

MANAGER: Ah, sex?

GEORGE: Not much chance of that, all sleeping in the same
room.

MANAGER: I meant what sex are your children, boys or girls?
It affects what kind of house you're entitled to.

GEORGE: Oh, one boy, one girl.

MANAGER: Well, that should entitle you to a three bedroom
house. If they were the same sex, you'd only get two bedrooms. Then
you've a choice between the parlour type and the non-parlour type.
Obviously, the parlour type has a higher rent because it has the extra
room.

GEORGE: How much higher?

MANAGER: Could be as much as three shillings a week more.

GEORGE: That's alot to pay out regular...

MANAGER: Non-parlour type then? (GEORGE NODS). Any
tuberculosis in the family?

GEORGE: No, thank God.

MANAGER: Shame. That could have speeded things up. How
disabled are you? Are you able to work?

GEORGE: Yes, course I'm able to work. I earn good money at
times.

MANAGER: When you say "At times", do you have a regular

job?

GEORGE: Well, it's regular on and off. I work for a builder.

MANAGER: Ah, that explains the delay then, if you're in seasonal work and likely to be laid off in bad weather. You see, we have to be sure of getting our rents. We give priority to those in regular work.

GEORGE: I am in regular work, most of the time.

MANAGER: Those with a regular pay packet. Now if you were a policeman, or a postman, or a train driver, or even a bus conductor... I'm afraid they go to the top of our list. That's your problem in a nutshell.

THE MANAGER GOES.

GEORGE: Then I shall just have to change my job, shan't I?

GEORGE GOES OFF, VERY DETERMINED. FLO COMES BACK ON STAGE WITH A KETTLE.

FLO: Come on, Betty. Come and have your breakfast.

BETTY ENTERS AS A GIRL OF ABOUT SEVEN.

BETTY: Where's Daddy?

FLO: He's gone off to Hammersmith again, down to the depot. He's going to go down every morning, first thing, and hope that somebody doesn't turn up for work. Then they might give him a journey, as they call it. If he's not come back by this time, then he must have a journey.

BETTY: And he kept going down and sometimes he'd get a journey and sometimes he wouldn't. And I can remember him coming back one day.

GEORGE COMES BACK, VERY EXCITED.

GEORGE: I've got some good news for you.

FLO: What? What is it?

GEORGE: I've got a regular job as a conductor!

FLO BURSTS INTO FLOODS OF TEARS. BETTY RUNS ACROSS AND THUMPS GEORGE.

BETTY: You made my mummy cry.

GEORGE: Yeah, but hold on, hold on. You see, there's going to be a regular pay packet from now on.

FLO: And that means we can get a council house, a new house.

BETTY: Then why are you crying?

FLO: Tears of joy, my love, tears of joy.

GEORGE COMES ACROSS TO HUG FLO, AND BETTY JOINS IN.

FOUR LEAF CLOVER:

Farewell ev'ry old familiar face,
It's time to stray, it's time to stray,

Only wait till I communicate
Here's just what I'll say

CHORUS:

I'm looking over a four leaf clover that I
overlooked before
One leaf is sunshine, the second is rain,
Third is the roses that grow in the lane
No use explaining the one remaining is somebody I
adore

I'm looking over a four leaf clover that I
overlooked before

REPEAT CHORUS

GEORGE: We've got to go and view the property first. Make
sure it's acceptable.

FLO: Oh, it will be. No question. It's got to be better
than this. It's a long way to drag the kids.

GEORGE: Look, it doesn't need both of us. Why don't I go
on my bike?

FLO AND BETTY WITHDRAW.

GEORGE: Well, I was glad I went on my bike because it was
a mile, oh nearly a mile and a half, from the station, and when I got there,
the whole place was one mass of mud - clay, mud. They were digging it all
up. And the first house I came to was the house that we were going to
have. It wasn't built. Not finished anyway. I went inside to have a look.

BUILDER COMES ON WITH A HAMMER.

GEORGE: They were just doing the floor boards.

BUILDER: Who are you? What are you doing here?

GEORGE: I come to look at this house. This is my house.

BUILDER: Not yet it isn't. Outside.

GEORGE: I'm only having a look. We're supposed to be
moving in next week. This is never going to be ready in time.

BUILDER: Oh yes it is, or our boss will want to know why.

GEORGE: But you're only just laying the floors...

BUILDER: Look mate, it's all production line here-different teams, see.
First team digs the trenches for the foundations, there'll be about thirty men
on that. They put in the sewers and the piping. Then in come the next
team - the brickies-they're fast. You can watch a house going up in
front of you. Then the tilers to put the roof on, and then it's us - the
carpenters and plasterers. There's hundreds of men working on this
estate. The houses are going up like nobody's business.

GEORGE: Yeah, but even so...

BUILDER: And you're not supposed to be here. You're holding
us up. So clear off.

GEORGE: So I come out and come back home.

FLO AND BETTY COME RUNNING OUT TO MEET GEORGE.

FLO: What's it like?
BETTY: What's it like, Daddy?
GEORGE: Well, it's.. er.. open, lots of fresh air.
Everything clean and open and fresh air.
FLO: But what's the house like?
GEORGE: It's all right. It's going to be what we wanted.
Hey, Betty, you'll have to go upstairs to bed.
FLO: But has it got a bathroom?
BETTY STARTS RUNNING ON THE SPOT.
GEORGE: Yes, of course it's got a bathroom... I think.
FLO: You must have seen whether it had a bathroom.
GEORGE (TO BETTY): Hey, what you think you're doing?
BETTY: I'm practicing running up and down the stairs.

GEORGE AND FLO LAUGH, GEORGE WITH SOME RELIEF AT HAVING GOT OUT OF AN AWKWARD SITUATION.

GEORGE: You'll be able to look out of your bedroom window and see grass and trees.

GEORGE PUTS HIS ARM ROUND FLO. THEY ARE VERY HAPPY.

BETTY: Grass and trees? I wonder if I'll like it?

ROOM WITH A VIEW:

A room with a view and you and no one to worry us
No one to hurry us thru'
this dream we've found

We'll gaze at the sky and try to guess what its
all about
Then we will figure out why the world is round

We'll be as happy and contented as birds upon a
tree
High above the mountains and sea

We'll bill and we'll coo-oo-oo and sorrow will
never come
Oh will it ever come true?
Our room with a view.

THE HOUSING MANAGER RETURNS. GEORGE AND FLO GO ACROSS.

GEORGE: I'd better go and pick up the keys.
MANAGER: You have to pay for the key. Key money.
GEORGE: Oh, right. How much?
MANAGER: Five shillings.
FLO: Five shillings!
MANAGER: It's returnable if you move out and return the keys.
GEORGE: Oh, no chance of that.

GEORGE PAYS OVER THE MONEY.

GEORGE (COUNTING): One, two... here - five shillings.

MANAGER: Thank you, and here's your receipt.

GEORGE (READING): "Received from Mr. Denning, the sum of five shillings value of the keys of the premises."

MANAGER: And here's a copy of the Conditions of Tenancy.
You should read them carefully and commit them to memory.

GEORGE (READING): "The tenant shall not sublet the premises there of." No fear of that. We want to be on our own not use the premises as a shop..."

MANAGER: Take them away. Read them later. And I hope
you'll be very happy in your new home.

FLO: Thank you.

THE MANAGER SHAKES HANDS WITH GEORGE AND THEN GOES BACK HOME.

GEORGE (TO FLO): Here we are. The conditions of tenancy, the keys. We'll have to fix up a removal van. rent,

FLO: What! With the amount of furniture we've got!
We've only got two beds and a little table and two chairs.

FLO STACKS THE CHAIR ON THE TABLE, THEN PUTS THE KETTLE INSIDE THE BUCKET AND PUTS THAT ON THE TABLE TOO. SHE BRINGS OUT AN ORANGE BOX ALREADY PACKED WITH SOME CROCKS. SHE TAKES THE PICTURE OFF THE WALL AND WEDGES THAT IN.

GEORGE: I see what you mean. All the same, I can't fit a bed on my bike, love. We'll just hire a little van, eh?

BETTY SQUEEZES ON TO THE TABLE. FLO STANDS AGAINST IT HOLDING ON.

BETTY: We went in the van with the furniture. Dad rode off on his bike.

GEORGE: I'll be there as soon as you are.

GEORGE GOES OFF, WAVING GOODBYE.

"I'M LOOKING OVER A FOUR LEAF CLOVER":

I'm looking over a four leaf clover
That I overlooked before
One leaf is sunshine, the second is rain,
Third is the roses that grow in the lane
No use explaining the one remaining
Is somebody I adore
I'm looking over a four leaf clover
That I overlooked before

THE PUB SIDE OF THE SCREEN MOVES ROUND TO SHOW THE INSIDE OF A COUNCIL HOUSE. CREAM WALLS, GREEN WOODWORK, BARE BUT CLEAN. THROUGH THE WINDOW IS A VIEW OF GRASS AND TREES.

FLO: It seemed miles. Took about an hour.

BETTY: We didn't know where we was when we got there.

FLO: Is this it? It's all mud! The roads aren't made up! There's no pavements, no fences, no paths up to the houses! They're still building the houses!

BETTY: The van couldn't get up to the house. We had to carry the furniture from round the corner.

FLO GIVES BETTY THE BUCKET AND CARRIES THE CHAIR ACROSS TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAGE. SHE THEN GOES BACK FOR THE TABLE. BETTY BRINGS THE BOX. THEY SET THEM DOWN. THE LIGHTS START TO FADE.

FLO: Where have we come to? It's the end of the world.
FLO SINKS DOWN ON THE CHAIR IN DESPAIR. BETTY HUDDLES CLOSE TO HER.

BETTY: Mum, it's going dark.

FLO: I don't think we packed any candles.

BETTY: Mum, I'm frightened.

FLO: Just a minute, I'll have a look.

FLO STARTS TO SEARCH THROUGH THE BOX. GEORGE COMES IN ALL BREEZY.

GEORGE: Hello. You beat me to it then. What you doing
Here in the dark?

FLO: I can't find any candles.

GEORGE: Candles 1 What you want candles for? We've done
with candles. Just wait while I find the mains switch.

GEORGE GOES OFF BRIEFLY AND THEN RETURNS.

GEORGE: Here, Betty, come here and press this switch.

BETTY GOES TO HIM AND HE GUIDES HER HAND. THERE'S A CLICK AND THEN ALL THE LIGHTS COME ON.

BETTY: Mum, it's magic!

BETTY JUMPS UP AND DOWN IN EXCITEMENT AND PRESSES THE SWITCH OFF AND THEN ON AGAIN.

GEORGE: We got electricity here. This isn't your Victorian
slum. This is a modern house! Here, hold on, you'll fuse them if you
carry on like that.

BETTY: What's through there, dad?

GEORGE: That's the stairs, love.
BETTY: Who lives up there, dad?
GEORGE: Nobody lives up there. You go and look.

BETTY RUSHES OFF.

GEORGE: What's wrong, love? You look unhappy.
FLO: Out there - it's all mud. It's just a sea of mud.
GEORGE: Well, they're still working on it. They'll soon
get that fixed. They'll soon have the roads made up.

FLO: But it's like a wilderness.

GEORGE: That's what you've got to expect. We're pioneers
out here, love. This is all new territory.

BETTY RUSHES BACK ON.

BETTY: Dad, where are all the other people?

GEORGE: There aren't any other people. This is all ours.

BETTY: Dad, I want to go to the toilet. Is there anybody
else in the toilet?

GEORGE: Course there's nobody else in the toilet. Don't I
keep telling you, this is all ours. This is just between us.

BETTY: And can I go when I like?

GEORGE: Yes, whenever you like. And you can have a bath
whenever you like as well.

BETTY RUSHES OFF AGAIN.

FLO: And there's this awful smell.

GEORGE: Oh, that'll be the new plaster.

FLO: You mean it's still wet?

GEORGE: Well, it's all new. It's bound to be a bit damp.
It'll dry out. Give it time. The main point is, it's clean. No more bugs!

FLO: And now we've got the beds upstairs, our bits of
furniture look lost in this big room.

GEORGE: We'll save up and buy some more furniture. We'll
get it nice. Main thing is, we're here. We've been married God knows how many
years and this is our first actual house. We've got a home at last.

FLO BURSTS INTO TEARS.

GEORGE: Come on. Cheer up. Unpack some of this stuff and
make us a cup of tea. You got a kitchen full of
cupboards out there.

FLO: Is that right? There's cupboards?

FLO PICKS UP THE BOX AND TAKES IT OFF. GEORGE GRABS THE PICTURE AS SHE PASSES.

GEORGE: And while you're doing that. I'll put this picture up. Make it feel more like home, that will.

GEORGE KNOCKS A NAIL IN THE WALL AND HANGS UP THE PICTURE. BETTY COMES RUSHING IN AGAIN.

BETTY: I was up the stairs, down the stairs. I just loved it. I loved running up and down the stairs. Dad, there's three rooms upstairs and a bathroom. Is it really all for us?

GEORGE: Don't I keep telling you?

BETTY: And then downstairs, there's the big room, and there's a kitchen, and then there's a funny little room.

GEORGE: That's the pantry. It's a walk-in pantry. It's where you keep the food.

BETTY: Pa-antry... pa-antry. It sounded ever so posh.

FLO REAPPEARS WITH THE TEAPOT.

BETTY: Mum, it's ever so big. It's like a castl.

GEORGE: Better than that. It's like Buckingham Palace to me.

DREAM SONG: Far from the City rush time,
Far from it's plots and schemes, We'll share in the evening
hushtime Our house of dreams.

Many for gold are striving, Toiling at breakneck speed.
Kisses will keep us thriving WhaT more shall we need?

A house on a hilltop, some far away hilltop, A haven of rest, from weariness,
dreariness. We shan't be looked down on, No neighbours to frown on, No
trippers from town on Sundays and Easter Mondays.
A nest for two, for me and for you,
And maybe a third.
So wonderful, it's Heaven transferred.
We'll never roam,
We'll bill and we'll coo there,
And dreams will come true there,
In our little hill-top home.

FLO STARTS PUTTING UP SOME CURTAINS TO THE WINDOW.

FLO: George, there's an old coal lorry drawn up outside. We didn't order any coal, did we?

GEORGE: No, but we shall need some. Is he delivering?

FLO: There's some people coming off the back of the lorry from under the tarpaulin! They look like drowned rats. And they're bringing furniture off as well. Fancy moving on a coal lorry! You'd think they could have done better than that.

GEORGE: Shall I put the kettle on? Make them a cuppa?

FLO: No, I don't like the look of them. They look scruffy to me. You don't know where they've come from.

GEORGE: Well, I expect it'll be London, some part of London.

FLO: There's a little girl wearing a really dirty frock and she's got the dirtiest nose you ever saw. And there's a boy about our Betty's age. I'm not going to let her play with him. I was hoping we'd get some decent neighbours, not somebody off the back of a coal lorry.

GEORGE: That's not to say they're not all right.

FLO: It gives you a pretty good idea though. Huh! She's waving at me. Cheek! And I've never even seen her before!

FLO DRAWS THE CURTAINS AND STUMPS OFF. GEORGE SIGHS AND FOLLOWS HER.

LEN COMES ON STAGE FROM THE OTHER SIDE. THE SLUM ROOM SCREEN SWIVELS ROUND TO SHOW AN IDENTICAL COUNCIL HOUSE INTERIOR, EXCEPT, OF COURSE, THAT IT HAS NO CURTAINS AND NO PICTURE, SO LOOKS DECIDEDLY BARER. LEN BRINGS ON AN ORANGE BOX AND SETS IT

DOWN, THEN SITS ON IT. VIOLET FOLLOWS HIM ON.

VIOLET: They don't seem too friendly round here.

LEN: Course they're not. They're all stuck up round here.

VIOLET: We're as good as they are.

LEN: Naah, we don't fit in here. It's different down here. You'll see. You won't like it down here.

VIOLET: I've not come to like it, I've come for the sake of our Stanley. I've come for all the kids.

LEN: You went behind my back to get this house, so don't hink I'm going to do anything to help. I don't want to be out here, burying myself out in the country. Properly out in the wilds, this is. Real country, this is. Rain and mud, and just listen.

VIOLET: What? I can't hear nothing.

LEN: Exactly. You can't hear nothing. It's quiet as the grave. I'm used to a bit of noise.

VIOLET: It's nice, the quiet.

LEN: No, it's not. It's disturbing. In the buildings there was always some noise going on, rows, fights, bit of life. I can't stand this. I'm off.

VIOLET: Where you going?

LEN: I'm off to the Rising Sun for a drink with the lads.

VIOLET: But we've only just got here.

LEN: And I've had enough already.

LEN GOES.

VIOLET: I don't care. He's not the one what's shut up in two rooms with five kids running round screaming all day. And now he's gone, I shan't do any more unpacking. I shall go and sit on the toilet and shut the door and have a bit of privacy. That'll be Paradise for me that will.

VIOLET GOES. FLO AND GEORGE COME ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STAG. GEORGE FLOPS INTO THE CHAIR AND READS THE PAPER. FLO DOES SOMETHING TO THE NEW CURTAINS.

FLO: I went shopping today.

GEORGE (VAGUELY): Oh, that'd be nice.

FLO: Nice! What do you mean, nice?

GEORGE (STARTLED): Well, walking through the fields and all that.

FLO: It took me over half an hour just to get to the shops, and then half an hour to come back again carrying two heavy bags, pulling my arms out. And then it started to pour down with rain. I was soaked to the skin by the time I got home. Is that what you call nice?

GEORGE: Well, it won't rain every day.

FLO: And then I had to balance on those ridiculous planks the builders have put across, and I slipped and went right up to my ankles in the mud.

GEORGE: Shows you what it'd be like if they hadn't put the planks there.

FLO: And in the shops it was awful. They didn't want to know me down there. They didn't want my business. There was a woman in front of me, all dressed up she was, one of them baskets on her arm, looked down her nose at my carrier bag, moved away from me as though I was contagious, she did.

GEORGE: You're imagining it.

FLO: No I'm not. And this woman in front of me bought some apples, lovely red shiny apples they were, and when I asked for some apples they gave me some horrible bruised green ones. I stuck up for my rights though. I said, "My money's as good as her money. I'm not going to be served with an inferior product." You should have seen the look they gave me.

GEORGE: You're exaggerating it. It's just that they don't know you. You're a stranger to them, that's all.

FLO: Well, you just read that then.

FLO PASSES GEORGE A NEWSPAPER.

GEORGE: What is it?

FLO: It's the local paper. It's a letter in the local paper, and it's not the only one either.

GEORGE (READS): "Sir, isn't it about time that we woke up and t ourselves from being trampled to death? The raw, red that housing octopus, the London County Council pushing their way through green meadows, devouring e their path. The value of residential property in the already gone down. House owners find they are hav but no-one wants a house in the district now with the slum dwellers on the doorstep..." Slum-dwellers! Think they are! We weren't slum dwellers from choice

FLO: Now do you believe me? Oh, George, I've had enough. I want to go back where we were before.

GEORGE: Oh, come on, hold on a bit...

FLO: It's all right for you, you're not here on your own all day with nobody to talk to, and when you do go out, they don't want to know you. You don't have to walk two miles to get to a shop in the pouring rain.

GEORGE: I have to travel a lot further than two miles to get to work on my bike, and that's no fun in the cold and the rain. You should see the cyclists when a lorry comes along, all crowding in behind it to get a bit of protection from the wind. But you don't hear me complaining. Have you thought how long it takes me to get to work and back?

FLO: It only takes you as long as it does cos you stop off and visit all your relatives on the way.

GEORGE: I have to break the journey. It's a long journey. Besides, it's a good thing to keep in touch.

FLO: Then by the time you do get home, you're too tired for anything. All you do is sleep.

GEORGE: Try to sleep! I don't get much proper sleep these days with that bloody cockerel they've got next door.

FLO: You never do anything to help get the house straight. You never do anything in the garden.

GEORGE: Look, make up your mind, woman! First you're moaning cos you don't want to live here, and then you're moaning cos I'm not doing the garden!

FLO BURSTS INTO TEARS AND RUNS OUT OF THE ROOM. GEORGE SIGHS AND FOLLOWS.

GEORGE: There's something else in this paper, you know. It s new disease on this estate. It's called NERVES. I r what she's got.

LEN ENTERS FROM THE OTHER SIDE, FOLLOWED BY VIOLET.

VIOLET: It's costing us a fortune in fares. You go up to London in the morning to work. You come home for your tea and then back up to London again and then back home again to sleep.

LEN: You want me to sleep somewhere else?

VIOLET: Just let me catch you, that's all. Then on
Saturday you go up again for the football...

LEN: That's my interest in life is football.

VIOLET: I thought when we got the fowls, it'd give you an
interest down here.

LEN: Fowls is hardly the same as football. Anyway, what
I'm trying to say is, there wasn't any work today down the docks, so I come home
early.

VIOLET: No work again! Another short week!

LEN: It ain't my fault if there's no work, but the
point is, when I got home, where were you?

VIOLET: I was here when you came home.

LEN: You was here when I came home the second time, but
not the first time.

VIOLET: Well, I'd been out shopping, hadn't I, bought some
food.

LEN: But the point is, where had you been shopping?

VIOLET: All right, so I went up to London and went
shopping with my sister. . . I wanted to see my mother. I miss not seeing her
every day.

LEN: You're as bad as I am.

VIOLET: I suppose anybody that moves, they don't really
like moving. When you've lived in a place all your life, you leave your roots behind. It's
a wrench.

LEN: It's a wrench all right, a terrible wrench.

VIOLET: It isn't what I expected, being here. I didn't
expect the loneliness. Anyway, where did you go, while I was out?

LEN: Went down to the local. Thought I'd give it a try.
Wasn't half a walk. When I got in there, well, the atmosphere - they just looked at me
as if I didn't ought to be in there. Very nice sort of a pub as a building, but I can't
imagine I'd ever feel at home in there.

APRIL SHOWERS

Life is not a highway strewn with flowers
Still it holds a goodly share of bliss
When the sun gives way to April showers
Here's the point that you should never
miss

CHORUS:
Though April showers may come your way
They bring the flowers that bloom in May
So if its raining have no regrets
Because it isn't raining rain you know (its

raining violets)
And when you see clouds up on the hills
You soon will see clouds of daffodils
So keep on looking for a bluebird
And listening for his song
Whenever April showers come along

REPEAT CHORUS

I have learned to smile when skies are gloomy Smile although my heart's about
to break When I know that trouble's coming to me Here's the happy attitude
I take

CHORUS

REPEAT CHORUS

THERE IS A LOUD KNOCKING AT THE DOOR OF THE WILMOT'S.

PHILLIPS: Rent!

VIOLET: Oh, my Gawd. It's the rent man! Keep quiet.
Pretend we're not in.

VIOLET AND LEN PRESS THEMSELVES AGAINST THE WALLS.

PHILLIPS: It's no good, Mrs. Wilmot. I know you're there.

LEN: I'm off.

VIOLET: Where to?

LEN: I'm going to shut them cockerels up in the shed.

LEN OFF. VIOLET LETS MR. PHILLIPS IN.

VIOLET: Sorry, I was just upstairs.

PHILLIPS: That's alright then. I presume that means you've
got the rent this week?

VIOLET: Mr. Phillips... It's like this, you see. My
husband's not been taken on again this week... It's not his fault. He goes in to work
and it's a long way from here, but then they just don't want the men, and he has to
come home again.

PHILLIPS: Well, I'm afraid in that case, I shall have to
give you two weeks' notice to quit.

VIOLET: Oh, but come on, we're only three weeks behind...
if you don't count this week.

PHILLIPS: I'm sorry, Mrs. Wilmot, but rules are rules and
they have to be stuck to. You'll have a fortnight, either to find the money or be put out.

VIOLET: Put out?

PHILLIPS: The council workmen will be instructed to put your

furniture out in the street and secure the house.

VIOLET: You can't do that. The doctor gave me a note...

PHILLIPS: Oh, and incidentally, we've been informed that you
have some cockerels in your garden.

VIOLET: Cockerels? Who says we've got cockerels?

PHILLIPS: I'm not at liberty to disclose the names of the
informants. There have been several complaints.
Now, how many have you got?

VIOLET: How many what?

PHILLIPS: Cockerels. We know you've got them. How many?

VIOLET: I've only got two. Two's nothing.

PHILLIPS: You're allowed up to a maximum of six hens, but no
cocks at all. They make a noise. They disturb other residents.

VIOLET: Only first thing in the morning. They're quiet
most of the time. I mean it gets on my nerves, but I can't go out and clunk them one,
can I?

PHILLIPS: You'll have to get rid of them.

VIOLET: I am going to get rid of them. . . when the time
comes. I'm not keeping them as a pet, you know. I'm going to get rid of them at
Christmas. They're our Christmas dinner, they are.

PHILLIPS: You'll get rid of them within the fortnight.
Otherwise, if we don't have to put you out for non-payment of rent, we'll put
you out for disregard of the rules. Good evening, Mrs. Wilmot.

MR. PHILLIPS GOES.

VIOLET: Whoever told you, should mind their own business
and look after their own affairs. That's what they're like on this estate. They like to
shop you if they can, and I've an idea who it was.

VIOLET GOES. FLO COMES ON FROM THE OTHER SIDE, WITH HER
RENT BOOK AND READING THE CONDITIONS OF TENANCY.

FLO: I wonder if I dare say anything about those
cockerels. It's just not fair waking people up first thing in the morning when they've
been on a late shift. I'm sure it's not allowed. Now where is it? (READING) "The
tenant shall not sublet the premises... not use as a shop... expose materials for
sale... drive nails into the walls..." Drive nails into the walls! That picture George put
up! Oh, Lord!

MR. PHILLIPS KNOCKS. FLO TRIES TO TAKE THE PICTURE DOWN BUT
FAILS. MR. PHILLIPS KNOCKS AGAIN. FLO POSITIONS HERSELF ON
TIPTOE IN FRONT OF THE

PICTURE.

FLO (CALLING): Come in Mr. Phillips.

MR PHILLIPS COMES IN.

MR.PHILLIPS: Good evening, Mrs. Denning. Just called for the
rent.

FLO: It's on the table.

MR. PHILLIPS: Oh, right. Thank you. Nice to deal with people who
pay promptly.

MR. PHILLIPS WRITES IN THE RENT BOOK, SOMEWHAT PUZZLED.

PHILLIPS: Everything all right?

FLO: Yes, fine.

PHILLIPS: Well, good evening then. I'll see myself out.

FLO: Yes, do. Good evening.

MR. PHILLIPS GOES. FLO COLLAPSES.

FLO: Oh, Lord. I hope he didn't see.

MR. PHILLIPS RETURNS SUDDENLY. FLO SQUEALS AND GOESBACK
TO HER POSITION IN FRONT OF THE PICTURE.

PHILLIPS: Incidentally, I don't like saying anything to an
otherwise excellent tenant, but, there is one thing...

FLO: Oh Lord, you've noticed have you?

PHILLIPS: I could hardly help noticing, Mrs. Denning.

FLO: My husband's been very busy since we came here.

PHILLIPS: I do understand, and it's early days yet, but if
you could just make a start on tidying your front garden...

FLO: Oh, yes. The front garden! I'll tell my husband.
He's been meaning to do it. He's been very busy.

PHILLIPS: I can see that. Good evening.

MR. PHILLIPS GOES. FLO COLLAPSES AGAIN. BETTY AND CHARLIE
ENTER WITH SKIPPING ROPES.

SKIP SONG: House to let
Apply within
As I go out
My neighbour comes in

House to let Apply within A
woman put out For drinking gin

House to let
Apply within
A woman put out
For showing her thing.

FLO: Betty! Betty! Come in here at once.

BETTY (TO CHARLIE): Mothers!

CHARLIE LEAVES. BETTY GOES ACROSS TO FLO.

BETTY: What is it, mum?

FLO: Come inside. I will not have you playing with those dreadful children next door. I don't want you making friends of them. They're common.

BETTY: It's alright. They're going in a fortnight.

FLO: Going? Going where?

BETTY: They don't know. They haven't got anywhere to go. But they're being put out.

FLO: Put out?

BETTY: They can't pay the rent and the Council's going to come and put all their furniture out on the street.

FLO: I knew that's what they were like. Probably spend all their money on beer and gambling and fancy clothes.

BETTY: They don't spend it on clothes because Amu hasn't got any shoes.

FLO: No shoes? Oh, the poor little thing! All the same, they shouldn't have come here if they couldn't pay the rent. Our rent's a lot more than it was before, but we knew that when we came. We took it into account. We wanted to come here and we were prepared to make sacrifices. They should have done the same.

BETTY: They didn't want to come here. The Doctor made them come because of Stanley. He was going to die if they stayed where they were. Now they've got to go back and he'll probably die.

FLO: Oh, no. That's terrible.

BETTY: Their mum sits and cries a lot just like you do.

Why do mothers cry such a lot?

GEORGE COMES IN.

GEORGE: Hello love.

BETTY: Hello, dad. I like it here. I'm glad we came here.

I don't want to go back to London.

GEORGE: Neither do I, love.

BETTY: Can I go now, mum?

BETTY RUNS OFF.

GEORGE: Off you go. What you been saying to her?

FLO: Nothing. But the man's just been for the rent, and we're not allowed to knock nails in the wall, only he didn't see that cos I stood in front of it, but he says you've got to make a start on the front garden, or else.

FLO BURSTS INTO TEARS AGAIN.

GEORGE: Cone on, don't start that again.

FLO: But they're ever so strict, George.

GEORGE: Come on, love. I suppose I'm not much of a gardener, Flo. After I've been at work all day, this bad arm's had enough, without staring digging. It's a different sort of garden that I'd have.

THE DENNING'S SCREEN IS TURNED ROUND TO ITS FINAL POSITION, SHOWING THE OUTSIDE OF THE HOUSE WITH SOME RATHER VESTIGIAL GARDEN IN FRONT OF IT.

GARDEN SONG: Most of my life I've been feeble and weak
I've had every complaint that is known. In fact at one time, it was quite near a squeak.
The Doctors all said I lacked tone. So I took up gardening with ardor and zeal, I
work at it morning 'til night. The names of the flowers remind me so much Of the
illness I had to fight.

I wish you could see my garden just now -
The malarias are out in full bloom,
The double pneumonia's a perfect treat
And the dear little dropsies are simply sweet.
I sowed some chilblains out in a bed
Surrounded by anthrax so rare,
With trailing phlebitis all over the arch.
Their beauty makes everyone stare.

You'd like to know some things I have done
To make my little garden unique:
I've pots of convulsions all dotted about.
Pernicious anemias have not come out
So I thought t'would be nice to have a large bed
Of standard lumbago in rows.
But the wind came along and blew them all down -
One gets used to these terrible blows.

Has it ever occurred to anyone here
Just to cross a carbuncle with mumps?
I'm sure you would get a most wonderful growth
Of flame coloured blossoms in clumps.
My wife, she urges me to grow household supplies
Such as bunions and colic and croup,
But that sort of thing doesn't interest me much,
So I just grow some spasms for soup.

FLO GOES HALF WAY ACROSS THE STAGE AND CALLS TO VI.

FLO: Mrs. Wilmot!

VI (SUSPICIOUS): Ye..es.

FLO: Er. . I hope you won't take this the wrong way,
but, er.. I've got some shoes here that our Betty's grown out of. She can't get

her feet in them any more. And they're hardly worn. It seems a shame to throw them away. I don't know if they'd do for your Amy at all...

VI: That's very kind of you, I'm sure, but I couldn't accept charity. Thank you very much all the same.

FLO: Oh, well. I didn't mean... Er, look, I've got some dresses and jumpers of our Betty's as well, that she's grown out of. Why don't I put them all in a bag and... you can give me half-a-crown for them or something?

VI: I'm sure it's very well meant, Mrs. Denning, but I haven't got half-a-crown. Your husband's in a good job with a good wage and it's different for you.

FLO: He's in a good job and it's regular money, but I wouldn't say it was good money. We've got to be as careful as anybody. We can't afford to go in for luxuries.

VI: I thought everybody was well off but us.

FLO: Oh, no. We're not well off. We only just manage to live. I mean, some people have afters after their dinner and that, but we don't. There's a lot of things we've had to cut down on. For a start, my husband used to like to go and have a drink, but he finds he can't afford it now. There's many a time when I could turn round and say, "Well, we need the rent money this week." But no, the way I see it, the rent has to be first. Even if it's jam and toast for a couple of days.

VI: The trouble is, my Len has to pay his fares into London every morning to go down the docks looking for work. And then, if he doesn't get called, it's money down the drain. We haven't a ha'penny left in the house. I just wish I could earn something, but there's no jobs out here.

FLO: I was in the shop in the old village the other day and they were advertising for pea pickers, so much an hour.

VI: Pea pickers? Well, I've never done it, but there's always a first time. Perhaps I could take the boy on the bus and go pea picking. Save getting into debt.

VI GOES. FLO LOOKS SADLY AT THE SHOES STILL IN HER HAND AND SLOWLY GOES IN THE OTHER DIRECTION.
GEORGE COMES ON WITH A SPADE, PASSING FLO.

GEORGE: Don't look so down in the dumps, love. I'm going to have a go at this garden.

GEORGE MAKES A FEEBLE ATTEMPT TO DIG. LEN COMES ON AND WATCHES. THE WILMOT'S SCREEN TURNS ROUND TO SHOW THE OUTSIDE OF THEIR COUNCIL HOUSE WITH A GARDEN FULL OF FLOWERS.

LEN: Having trouble, mate?

GEORGE: I've got a bad arm - wounded in the war - and this garden's all clay. Can't get through it. How come yours isn't clay when mine is?

LEN: Oh, mine was clay, but I shifted it.

GEORGE: How come? I should have thought if it was clay on top, it'd be clay all down.

LEN: No. It was when they were taking the foundations of these houses up. They didn't take the clay away. They just dumped it on top of the garden. If you dig down, about a foot, you got soil underneath. Here, why don't I give you a hand? I've got nothing else to do.

LEN COMES ACROSS AND TAKES GEORGE'S SPADE.

GEORGE: Tell you what, mate. You dig this clay off for me and I could slip you a few bob. I earned some overtime this week and I haven't told the missus. You'd not have to say anything.

LEN: Thanks mate. I won't say no, cos we're a bit pressed for money just now. They're not taking so many on at the Docks lately. I wish there was some work a bit nearer home.

GEORGE: Well, I bet there's quite a few people like me as would be willing to pay a few bob to get their gardens made tidy. It's a lot of work really, getting a garden ship-shape. And there's some other new houses going up, over that direction-pass 'em when I'm cycling in to work - private houses, teachers and that. They won't want to soil their hands and get blisters.

LEN: I wouldn't mind a spot of gardening. I've always enjoyed that sort of thing.

GEORGE: It's worth a try.

LEN AND GEORGE GO. VI COMES ON.

VIOLET: Mrs. Denning! Have you got a minute?

FLO COME ON.

VIOLET: I had a go at that pea picking. Couple of bags we picked. They didn't want no more. But I earned about five shillings. And Len's earned a bit of money, digging people's gardens. I reckon we'll be able to pay the rent after all. So we'll be staying.

FLO: That's good news then. I'm pleased for you.

VIOLET: Have you still got them shoes and things?

FLO: Yes, course I've got 'em.

VIOLET: I can't actually pay you for them in money, but would you accept this? It's one of our cockerels. I got Len to kill 'em both. Might as well have 'em now, eh? No point waiting 'til Christmas. And we've got something to celebrate now we're staying.

APRIL SHOWERS: Though April showers may come your way
They bring the flowers that bloom in May
So if its raining have no regrets
Because it isn't raining rain you know (its
raining violets)
And when you see clouds up on the hills
You soon will see clouds of daffodils
So keep on looking for a bluebird
And listening for his song
Whenever April showers come along

LEN: I got a lot of work as a gardener. I was healthy, see, and I could dig. My old dad gave me a fork and a spade, and then there was

a rake - I bought my own rake - you could get 'em second hand - and an old wheelbarrow.

SUBUBB SONG: I feel like a fighting man
And I'm fit and fat and fine Since I've lived in a little
Garden Subbub up the line.

Though to call it a sooburb
Is the fashionable way,
I call it a subbub
Cause it's easier to say.

LEN: I'd look down a garden and they'd ask for an estimate. Then I had to stick to that estimate and get the job done on time. And when I'd done that job and got my money, they'd probably say, "Oh, my neighbour down the road'd like theirs done." I learnt as I went along. And I got a book and studied it and asked questions and I ended up a landscape gardener.

SONG: If Town life's too fast for you
And Country life's too slow, Don't make a bungle of your life
But buy a bungalow.

In our little garden subbub,
Far away from the noise and hubbub,
When you're tired of the pubbub, tired of the
clubbub,
Take a little house in the garden subbub.

There you can grow stewed rubbub,
Bath in an old rain tubbub,
So leave all the hubbub and the pubbub and the
clubbub,
And grow your own grubbub in the subbub.

GEORGE, LEN AND FLO GO, LEAVING FLO ALONE.

FLO: I was pleased they stayed cos you could actually see their Stanley getting better. He stopped looking like he was going to die and started looking like any other kid. Every house had its supply of children and they all had a wonderful childhood, coming to a new estate with the country on our doorstep. We had the most wonderful summers and they'd go off down the fields. You wouldn't see them for hours.

BETTY COMES ON.

BETTY: Mum, could you give us some potatoes?

FLO: Potatoes?

BETTY: We're going to light a fire and cook 'em.

FLO: Well... Go on then. How many do you want?

FLO GOES OFF, FOLLOWED BY BETTY. JIMMY COMES ON WITH A JAM JAR ON A BIT OF STRING. HE MEETS STANLEY.

JIMMY: You coming with us, Stanley? We're going down the stream, fishing. We're going to get some tiddlers - only half inch long - tiddlers. And tadpoles and newts.

BETTY COMES BACK ON WITH THE POTATOES.

BETTY: I got the potatoes! We're going to light a fire
and cook 'em. You coming with us, Stanley? I got enough for you.

STANLEY: Yeah. You see, it was all country round there, all
fields. There was cows grazing and horses. And we played on all these fields.

BETTY: And there was this lovely little stream running
through, down the bottom. It wasn't deep enough to swim, but we paddled of
course.

JIMMY: We used to dam it up with mud and bricks - we'd
always got our shoes and socks off.

BETTY (CALLING): Come on, Edna. Edna and me were tomboys and we use with the lads.

EDNA COMES ON.

EDNA: Anything they did we could do.

STANLEY: When they cut the hay, we had a wonderful time,
throwing it around. I don't know what the farmer used to think when he got there
the next day.

EDNA: But before they cut the hay, there'd be the
clover, there'd be poppies, there'd be buttercups...

BETTY: And daisies, and the blue scabious and the vetch.

EDNA: Cow parsley and the hawthorn blossom - it gave
that lovely smell.

BETTY: We bought some home once and my mother said,
"Don't bring it in! It's bad luck!"

JIMMY: In September, when the leaves came down, you ran
through them up to your ankles.

STANLEY: We found an old orchard. There must have been a
house there at one time because we found the remains of a doorstep and some
walls.

JIMMY: And an old coin. I think it was Roman!

EDNA: We used to climb up the trees and get the apples
and sit up there for hours, munching apples.

JIMMY: Some of the trees had nicknames. One was called
"the elephant" because there was a branch that used to come down that looked
very much like an elephant's trunk and we used to swing on it.

BETTY: It was a heavenly place. It was a paradise there
for us kids.

THE SUN HAS GOT HIS HAT ON:

The sun has got his hat on,
Hip-hip-hip hooray!
The sun has got his hat on and He • s coming out
today.

JIMMY AND EDNA RUN OFF.

BETTY: After a bit, there was a new school built for us on the estate. They said it was one of the most modern buildings in London. I didn't like school before, but I liked this. It was light and airy and wonderful.

STANLEY: There was a big playground for us to play in, as well as some gardens.

BETTY: And my mum was a lot happier once they built some shops on the estate.

STANLEY: Then gradually the bus service started up and my mum didn't feel so cut off from the rest of the family.

BETTY: And our mums stopped crying all the time and made friends with each other.

FLO AND GEORGE COME OUT INTO THEIR GARDEN, BRINGING DECKCHAIRS. BETTY AND STANLEY RUN OFF.

FLO: It's really nice to be out in the fresh air like this. Everyone says the air's like wine.

GEORGE: Yes, you know, when I come out of London at night in the winter, I look up - there's no stars. Yet out here, the skies full of 'em. Shows you the difference in the air.

FLO: I always used to wish we could afford a holiday, but I don't want one now we've got the garden. I'm quite happy sitting out here in the deckchairs.

GEORGE: It's a good job you don't want a holiday, cos we certainly can't afford one now you've gone and bought that new table and chairs.

FLO: And the sideboard, don't forget the sideboard!

GEORGE: Real posh, we are now, with a sideboard! Don't know what you'll think of next.

LEN COMES RUSHING ON, FOLLOWED BY VIOLET.

LEN: Here, I've got a bone to pick with you!

GEORGE: Who, me?

LEN: No, your missus.

FLO: What have I done?

LEN: Going shopping with my wife, buying things on the never-never.

FLO: Don't you like your three-piece suite then? I was telling George about it - brown rexine, with velour cushions. Ever so comfortable

VIOLET: He'd rather have an orange box and sit on it, he would. He'll spend any amount of money in the garden, but not in the home.

LEN: How're we going to pay for it, that's what I want to know? Where's the extra money coming from?

VIOLET: If you're too mean to share your winnings, it'll have to come out of the housekeeping, so much a week. But you can yell and rave and scream as much as you like, it's not going back.

GEORGE: That's told you, mate. You'll have to make the best of it. When these women get together...

LEN: I had plans for that money.

VIOLET: I know - a new wheelbarrow, a new spade. But it's time we had a bit of money to spend on comfort.

GEORGE: What's all this money then?

VIOLET: Well, it's not been announced yet, but he's won first prize in the gardening competition.

FLO: Oh, Len, that's marvelous!

GEORGE: Congratulations, mate. Here, Flo, haven't we got something to celebrate with?

FLO: There's a drop of sherry left from last Christmas.
FLO GOES OFF TO FETCH THE SHERRY.

LEN: Yeah, I done well this year, front and back. Flowers in the front and veg. in the back.

GEORGE: I didn't know you'd gone in for it.

LEN: You don't exactly go in for it. They come round. They come round and narrow it down to, like, the last half dozen or so. And then they come round a second time.

VIOLET: He won first prize, he did. Ten pounds! And then he says we can't afford a three-piece suite!

LEN: Don't start that again.

GEORGE: What you got in this year?

LEN: Potatoes, leeks, beans, peas, celery, cabbages, bit of lettuce and radishes - just the usual. Oh, and I had a go at some outdoor tomatoes.

GEORGE: Beats me how you do it. I'll never be much for gardening. I just concentrate on keeping the lawn tidy - somewhere to sit.

LEN: Your missus does very well on the front garden though.

FLO COMES ON WITH A TRAY AND FOUR HALF-FILLED SHERRY

GLASSES.

FLO: Just a couple of packets from Woolworths. I like to see a few flowers.

LEN: You'll have to come along to the gardening club...

VIOLET: Him and his gardening club!

FLO: Here, have a glass of sherry.

FLO PASSES THE GLASSES ROUND.

VIOLET: Oh, this is a treat. I can't remember when we last had a drink. And sherry as well! Don't you think we've developed into a better class of people?

LEN: We're buying stuff in bulk, fertilizer and plants and things, so you can get 'em cheaper. And then we all take cuttings and exchange a bit of this for a bit of that. It's all done on a cooperative basis.

FLO: I must say, it's lovely walking up this road these days cos all the gardens look so nice. It's a real picture.

GEORGE: Here's to Len then. Course you wouldn't have got started on this gardening lark if it hadn't been for me. I reckon I'm owed part of that prize money.

LEN: I'll buy you a pint when they get that new pub opened.

FLO: You happy you came here now, Vi?

VIOLET: We wouldn't go back to where we was before. Not since we got used to it we wouldn't.

GEORGE: Course not. It's lovely out here, and what chance would we have had otherwise to have a home of our own? What chance would an ordinary working class chap have, apart from a council house, to live in his own home and bring up a family?

FLO: I enjoy every minute of living here, really.

HOUSE ON A HILLTOP:

Far from the City rush time, Far from its plots and schemes,
We'll share in the evening hush time Our house of dreams.

Many for gold are striving, Toiling at breakneck speed.
Kisses will keep us thriving What more shall we need?

A house on a hilltop, some far away hilltop,
A haven of rest, from weariness, dreariness.

We shan't be looked down on, No neighbours to frown on, No trippers from town on Sundays and Easter Mondays.

A nest for two, for me and for you,
And maybe a third.
So wonderful, it's Heaven transferred.
We'll never roam,
We'll bill and we'll coo there,
And dreams will come true there,
In our little hill-top home.

