

# **MEMORY LANE**

**By**

**PAM SCHWEITZER and**

**CLARE SUMMERSKILL**

# MEMORY LANE

## SONG: DOWN HARMONY LANE

*Let's wander where the birds are singing  
Out yonder where the ivy's clinging sweetheart down Harmony Lane.  
Let's wander now the moon is rising,  
Where ev'ry heart is harmonising, sweetheart down Harmony Lane.  
Where love is just like a song,  
We'll drift along  
Without a care we'll sing a sweet refrain together  
And when we're getting old and grey, dear,  
We'll wander in the same old way, dear,  
Sweetheart, down Harmony Lane.*

## SCENE ONE

- Doris: We've been having a trip down Memory Lane, Olive and me, seeing how much we can remember about where we grew up.
- Olive: We lived in the same street, see?
- Doris: Now this is going back a while. I was born in 1915
- Olive: And I'm a bit younger than Doris. I was born in 1919.
- Doris: Of course it was different in those days. There were no cars for a start. So it was safe for all the children to play in the street.
- Olive: At one point there were forty-nine children just in our little turning.
- Doris: You'd have great big families in these tiny houses, lots of children, so you'd all be playing outside. We were like a tribe. And if someone came along who wasn't from our street, we'd know.
- Olive: And if a new family moved in next door you soon got to know their business.
- Doris: And they soon got to know yours. Cos everyone knew everyone.
- Olive: It was quite a little community. You didn't want to go out of the street, it was so special.
- Doris: And half of us were related. Like the Biggintons.

Bernard: I lived at number 6 with my mother and father. Next door was my grandmother and grandfather at number 5 and at number seven my aunt and uncle, so we had three terraced houses. All family as it were.

Olive: It was a sun trap, our street, always warm. And all the babies were out in their prams. The mums'd put them under the shade of the trees. And my mother used to tell me that along the end of the road where the orchard was, that was all watercress beds when she was young.

Bernard: The houses were first built for people who were working for the railway. The station was just the other side of the fence.

Olive: There used to be the old horse hackney cabs down by the side of the station, bowler hats the cabbies used to wear then.

Bernard: Opposite Olive's house there was a brick shed where they kept the horses. All you could hear of an evening was the horses banging and crashing their hooves because of the rats running around.

Olive: Huge big rats they were, more like cats, and they used to run down the street at night.

Doris: They were only little houses but they were often divided into two, with a gas stove on the landing for the upstairs family. And you all had to share the outside toilet.

Olive: There was no bathroom and we had no running hot water.

Bernard: No proper gardens, just a little yard out the back.

Doris: Of course you had the front room, the parlour, but you only used that on special occasions.

Olive: When my mother first came to the street she had the bottom rooms and it was quite some time before she was able to have the whole house.

Doris: And it wasn't unusual, if one lot of people moved out, for the house to be sealed and even the letter box sealed and sulphur candles burned inside to purify the walls and get rid of the bugs.

Bernard: No-one was well off, but when it came down to it, no family went without. What one did for one, one did for the other.

Doris: Everyone looked after everyone. It was a very close-knit street.

## HARMONY LANE – REPRISE

*Where love is just like a song,  
We'll drift along  
Without a care we'll sing a sweet refrain together  
And when we're getting old and grey, dear,  
We'll wander in the same old way, dear, sweetheart,  
Down Harmony, Harmony Lane,  
Down Harmony Lane.*

- Olive: Mrs Smith at number 20 she was the local midwife and she'd do the laying out too. She was quite a tubby motherly person. You could always call on her to do everything.
- Doris: One day, when I was about fourteen there was this awful explosion next door and Mrs Smith came staggering out the back and we saw her over the little fence with her hair all singed .
- Mrs. Smith: I turned the gas oven on and I forgot to light it for a few minutes. Then I went there with a match, and of course the whole thing exploded.
- Bernard: We were horrible kids and we were laughing like mad.
- Doris: And if you wanted any sewing done, you went to Mrs Greenfield at number four.
- Mrs. Greenfield: I'd do curtains and dresses and the boys' trousers. I worked at the Reliance Laundry all day then I'd come home and sew.
- Doris: You'd see her sitting there in the window, machining.
- Mrs. Greenfield: And for the Jubilee of King George V, I made paper costumes for all the children in the street out of striped crepe paper, red white and blue and for the girls I made little puffed sleeves.
- Bernard: And Mr Greenfield, he worked at Smithfields.
- Mr. Greenfield: I got the three o'clock in the morning train to get to the market. I used to bring meat home with me and I'd cut it up into joints in the garden shed and I'd it on cheaply to the neighbours. *(to neighbours)* Lovely bit of mutton today.

Olive: And if you're talking about food, then I think only of Doris's mum. Nan Bliss I used to call her. She always made sure I had something to eat. She could make a meal out of nothing. She was a wonderful cook. I think she fed half the children in the street.

Doris: We used to go over to the orchards at the end of our road and fill our knickers up with apples.

Olive: We'd give them to Nan Bliss and she'd come out with tray after tray of toffee apples with the sticks in, done professionally.

Bernard: There was a lady lived in the house next to the orchard. She was tiny and dressed in black and we thought she was a witch.

Olive: And we always ran past Mr Franklin's house, number 23. He didn't want children playing outside there. He was an absolute misery, he was. He had an invalid wife, all in black, sitting at the window in a wheelchair.

Olive: And in the evening the lamplighter used to come round, he lived at number twenty-six. He'd come out of this house at dusk with a long pole and he'd light all the gas lights down our street.

#### **SONG: JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT**

*Just a song at twilight, when the lights are low,  
And the flick'ring shadows softly come and go,  
Tho' the heart be weary, sad the day and long,  
Still to us at twilight comes Love's old song,  
Comes Love's old sweet song.*

#### **SCENE TWO**

#### **SONG: IT'S A LONG WAY TO TIPPERRARY**

*It's a long way to Tipperary,  
It's a long way to go,  
It's a long way to Tipperary,  
To the sweetest girl I know.  
Goodbye Piccadilly,  
Farewell Leicester Square,  
It's a long, long way to Tipperary  
But my heart's right there.*

Doris: My earliest memory is the street party we had at the end of the first world war. (*Cheers and singing*) I was only three, but I remember all the children were in their Sunday best and I was wearing a pretty little pink dress that my Gran had crocheted and pink bows in my hair. I was standing there on the bench and I suddenly toppled over and grazed my knees and cried! And someone gave me a little bun with icing on top to cheer me up.

### **Short burst of A LONG WAY TO TIPPERARY**

Bernard: My dad fought in the First World War.

Doris: And so did two of my uncles along with Pat Greenfield's dad from number 4.

Olive: And Mrs White, who lived next door to the Reeds, she lost four brothers.

Doris: Everybody had got somebody who'd lost somebody. My dad worked in the Arsenal

Olive: And my uncle was working there with him.

Olive's Uncle Bob: We were filling shells. There were five of us there, all close friends.

Doris's Dad: They used to call us Canaries...

Olive's Uncle: Because we were completely yellow.

Doris's Dad: And they didn't give us no masks to do this and that stuff ate your lungs away.

Olive's Uncle: Gradually you developed this cough.

Doris: And do you know what? All five of those men died within six months of each other. Eight years after the war ended. My father first.

Olive: Then my uncle and then the other three.

### **UNDERScore: ROSES OF PICCARDY**

Olive: I remember going down Lewisham and seeing men sitting on the pavements begging. Some of them had no legs. They'd been dreadfully wounded. Nobody wanted to know about them. Disgusting really when you think about it.

Doris: I was just ten when my father died. My mother got a widows pension but it wasn't much so she had to go out to work as a cleaner. One of her jobs was in a school so she had to get up really early. She'd get the porridge ready the night before. And then when I got up I'd have a bowl and it'd still be nice and hot, so I never ever went hungry. And then off I'd go to school. I remember one day I was walking back over the common and these two children from my class came up, quite nasty, you know, and they said:

Kid 1 (boy): So where do you live then?

Doris: Well we were just passing this huge big white house where my mum had one of her cleaning jobs, so I pointed to it and said: "In there".

Kid 2 (girl): No you don't!

Doris: Yes I do!

Kid 1 : Let's see you go up the steps and knock at the door then.

Doris: Well I knew that Mrs Japp and her husband who lived in the house were away, but I knew my mum was in there, so I went up the steps to the front entrance. I rang the bell and the butler answered the door, all done up.

Butler: Yes?

Doris: I'm Ada Bliss's girl.

Butler: What do you think you're doing walking up here?

Doris: *(Whispering)* I've just told those children that I live here.

Butler: Ohhh, I see. Well, you'd better come in then.

Doris: So in I went, and it was lovely. I'd never been inside a house like that before. Anyway, he took me downstairs to the kitchen where my mum was working and she said: "What are you doing here?" And when I told her, she laughed. Then she gave me something to eat, and then I walked back to school and after that I was treated with great reverence by those two kids who really did think I lived in that house.

When Mrs Japp came back, she suggested that I might go and wash some steps on a Saturday for a lady she knew in Eliot Vale. I was only ten at the time but I went along there and one of them met me at the door.

Lady: Here's your pail of water.

Doris: Stone cold it was.

Lady: Now wash and scrub all those steps down.

Doris: Yes Ma'am.

Lady: Then you rinse them off, then empty the water down the road.

Doris: Yes Ma'am.

Lady: Then when you've finished, walk up the side so you don't make a mark on the steps.

Doris: No Ma'am, I mean yes Ma'am. For years after that, whenever I passed that house, my great ambition was always to take a bucket of dirty water and just throw it on those steps.

Lady: Bring me back the pail and I'll give you a penny.

*She does so*

Lady: Don't spend it all at once.

Doris: Whatever money I made, I gave to mother.

### **SCENE 3**

*One two three a lairey  
My ball's down the Airy  
Don't forget to give it to Mary  
Not to Charlie Chaplin*

Bernard: We all played together in the street. We used to put a blanket from the railings down to the ground to make a tent and we'd crawl underneath.

Olive: There was hopscotch, you'd draw with a chalk.

Doris: And we'd have spinning tops.

Bernard: We'd play ball games, like Donkey....You threw the ball up against the wall. Mr Murley had the best wall. It'd go bonk bonk bonk against his wall.

All: DONKEY!!!

Mr Murley: Oi! Stop that bloomin' racket!

Bernard: Miserable old so and so.

Mr Murley: I heard that. I'll tell your Dad.

Olive: Bernard, he was the cheeky one.

Bernard: One thing I used to do was that after the milkman would call, I used to creep along and remove the milk bottles from the front door steps and line them up in the middle of the road and leave them and run and hide. Then I'd watch them trying to sort out whose milk was who's.

Neighbour 1: 'Ere that's mine.

Neighbour 2: How many did you order?

Bernard: I was always getting into fights and there'd be a reception committee waiting at my house when I got home from school. The parents would be there complaining to my mother.

Mrs Kitts: Look what your Bernard's done to our Frank. *(She holds up hair)*

Bernard: Frank Kitts's mother from number 12, used to come round to our house with a handful of hair. He was ginger and his hair came out. After they'd gone, Mother would say:

Mother: I'm getting sick and tired of this.

Bernard: And she had a cane a very flexible cane and there was a kitchen table in the middle of the room and I'd be darting around this way, and she'd be chasing me round there.....

*(they do this with music)*

Mother: You little .....

Bernard: But I could always run faster!

Olive: One winter, when it was thick snow and ice, Bernard got this great tin bath that used to hang on the wall.

Bernard: There's a hill at the end of our street and because it was icy we thought "This'll be fun".

Olive: So we both got in and instead of going straight down, it started spinning.

Bernard: And it crashed right into the kerb and shot us out on the pavement.

Olive: And we didn't do that again. It was such a cold winter, that my father's shirts used to get frozen stiff on the line and we used to go and get them and dance with them.

Doris: Once, when it was really icy the horse that was pulling the milk cart started sliding down the hill.

*This is acted out*

Bernard: The driver was tugging away and trying to hold it back. *(As driver)* Get out of the way little girl. Look out.

Doris: It was really frightening to see. After that my mother had a horror that one of the horses would slide down and fall on one of us playing out there, and there'd be a serious accident. So she moved along the road away from the hill to number 24.

Olive: And that's how Doris came to live next door to us.

#### **SCENE 4**

Doris: You're Olive aren't you?

Olive: Yes that's right.

Doris: What are you doing out here on the step?

Olive: Mum's still at work and we don't have a key to get in.

Doris: Why on earth not?

Olive: She doesn't like us making a mess indoors.

Doris: So what do you do for your tea then?

Olive: Nothing much. Mum doesn't really like cooking...

Doris: My Mum's just made a huge bread pudding.

Olive: We never have anything like that!

Doris: Why don't you come into our house? You're all skin and bones. I'll feed you up and then we can go out and play.

*(To audience)* I'd always thought Olive was quite well off. She was always so well dressed with black patent shoes and two dresses a day for school, one before lunch and a newly ironed one after, but I didn't know she had nothing on the table to eat. So I was quite shocked when she told me what her home life was really like.

*Underscore* **IF YOU WERE THE ONLY GIRL IN THE WORLD**

Doris: Her mother's first job had been as a nanny. She lived in with the family in a lovely house near Hyde Park. She never learned to cook, because all she had to do was look after the child. She'd push the pram round the park every morning. Olive's dad was in the Royal Artillery and they used to exercise the horses in Hyde Park every day and that's how they met.

**SONG: IF YOU WERE THE ONLY GIRL IN THE WORLD**

*If you were the only girl in the world,  
And I were the only boy,  
Nothing else would matter in the world today,  
We could go on loving in the same old way.  
A Garden of Eden, just made for two,  
With nothing to mar our joy;  
I would say such wonderful things to you,  
There would be such wonderful things to do,  
If you were the only girl in the world,  
And I were the only boy.*

*Actors pose for wedding photograph at end*

I've seen a photograph of their wedding with him in this wonderful uniform, all gold braid and her clothes were all the London clothes. They both looked beautiful!

**Brief reprise**

Doris: *(Cont)*.. He was an absolute charmer. He sold insurance and he used to sweet talk all the ladies. He had a brass plate outside the door, quite big, with "Royal London" on it and they were the only family in the street with a car.

I suppose when they moved to our street Olive's Mum was just trying to do what she'd learned as a nanny. She kept the house spotless. She even used to dust the railings outside!

Bernard: When the milkman came round with the horse and cart Olive's mum was really on to the horse manure that was dropped in the street because she wanted it for her garden. If it was dropped outside her house that was fine. If it was dropped outside anyone else's house, she would watch to see if anyone came out to dig it up and if not she would be out with her shovel and quickly put it into this bucket and away she'd go. There used to be enormous quarrels with the neighbours, 'cos she'd taken what was considered theirs. And you should have seen the size of her roses.

Doris: She loved flowers, she did. And every Friday night Olive's dad would stop off and buy her a great big bunch.

*He presents Olive's mum with flowers*

Olive: On a Saturday afternoon, Olive's Dad would drive Olive and me to the Prince of Wales cinema in Lewisham.

*Cinema music underneath*

And we saw films like "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" and "The Old Dark House" and then when we came out it was fish and chips and that was absolutely the bees knees.

Bernard: I'd go to the Boys Brigade on a Saturday. It was a big company, about a hundred boys. I used to play the bugle and we marched up and down and won all sorts of prizes for being the best bugle band at that time. We played football in the Boys Brigade. A farmer used to lend us his field but it was usually full of cow pats and you used to come home covered in that!

Doris: And every weekend the Walls ice cream man would come round on his bike, with the box on the front.

Ice-cream man: Stop me and buy one!

Olive: And my Dad would buy us one for a treat.

Doris: In the summer, the fair would come to the common. It seemed to be there for ages. There were boat swings, coconut shies, the carousel, and my favourite was the ghost train.

*Fair music underneath*

Olive: You'd be afraid to go on but it was a thrill, and as you went round all the cobwebs would touch your face and you'd scream and a door would open and a skeleton would come out from nowhere.

Bernard: When I was about eight, I went to the fair with my cousin who was much older than me and he said,

Cousin: If you pretend to be lost, the police that are up there, they'll take you into an enclosure for lost children and they'll give you sweets.

Bernard: So he left me and I went into this enclosure and they gave me sweets and cakes as well. I was there for ages. Eventually, my cousin came and claimed me:

Cousin: That's him. That's Bernard. I'll take care of him now officer.

- Bernard: They even gave me the fare to get back home as well.
- Olive: Saturday evenings, Mum and Dad would play cards. That'd be a quiet Saturday evening.
- Bernard: It wasn't like that in our house. We used to have friends and family round and we'd have a sing-song. Everyone did a turn. My Grandad would sing "When your hair has turned to silver".

**SONG MEDLEY:  
WHEN YOUR HAIR HAS TURNED TO SILVER**

*When your hair has turn'd to silver,  
I will love you just the same;  
I will only call you sweetheart  
That will always be your name,  
Through a garden fill'd with roses  
Down the sunset trail we'll stray,  
When your hair has turned to silver  
I will love you as today.*

**ANNIE ROONEY**

*She's my sweetheart I'm her beau,  
She's my Annie I'm her Joe,  
Soon we'll marry never to part,  
Little Annie Rooney is my sweetheart!  
Little Annie Rooney is my sweetheart!*

- Olive: And every Sunday we went to church. You had these Sunday clothes which you didn't wear in the week. My mother would not let any of us miss church.
- Doris: And on one Sunday every year, in the summer, Mrs Unstead from number 7 would organise a coach trip for the whole street and Laurie Javes from number 22, he'd do all the driving.
- Olive: Very smart he was with a Robert Taylor thin mascara moustache.
- Laurie: I'd saved up and bought my own coach and set up my own little firm. "Javes Coaches".
- Bernard: And when he met the ladies in the street he always greeted them:
- Laurie: "Hello me old love, hello me old darling!"
- Olive: We'd take baskets of food and drink with us down to the seaside. And everyone would come along.

## SONG: WHO'S BEEN POLISHING THE SUN?

*Who's been polishing the sun  
Brightening the sky today?  
They must have known just how I like it,  
Ev'rything's coming my way.  
Who's been teaching all the birds  
How to sing a roundelay?  
Brightening the sky today?  
They must have known just how I like it,  
Ev'rything's coming my way.  
Yesterday ev'rything look'd anyhow,  
Then I met someone and look at it now,  
Who's been polishing the sun  
Rubbing out the clouds of grey,  
They must have known just how I like it,  
Ev'rything's coming my way.  
Ev'rything's coming my way.*

- Bernard: Sunday, the fish man would come round calling out
- Fishman: Winkles, Shrimps....
- Bernard: And we'd have that for our tea with bread and butter.
- Doris: And Monday morning we were back at school.

## SCENE FIVE

### *Hymn*

- Olive: We were all in the baby class together. It was Bernard's fault that Doreen Hall from number 2 had to go to hospital. We all had a tray of beads and Doreen said:
- Doreen: "What do we do with these?"
- Bernard: "You put them up your nose"
- Doreen: So I did, and I got one stuck up there.
- Olive: In the afternoons we used to have to go to sleep on upturned tables with a little pillow and a red blanket over us.
- Bernard: I never went to sleep cos it was so uncomfortable.

Doris: Opposite the school was a sweetshop, Mr. Pofleys. Lovely man he was and we used to go in there. A sherbet dab with a liquorice stick please.

Olive: And I want some farthing blackjacks.

Bernard: And I want a gob stopper. They change colour so you have to keep taking them out of your mouth to see what colour they've gone.

Mr. Pofly: Right you are young man.

Bernard: One day we were walking home from school and we saw all these sheep. The farmer was driving them towards the butchers where there was a slaughter house at the back. Suddenly they all stopped dead and the man was shouting at them. And I suppose this one at the front thought, "No I'm not going in there" So he started off in another direction and all the sheep, well they follow, don't they. And they all made a dash into this little tiny shop, a gents' outfitters shop, and there was this poor man in there, stuck behind his counter. He was petrified and everyone was trying to herd the sheep out. All the children were laughing. We thought it was great fun. And after that, he never left his door open again!

### **SONG: BAA BAA BAA**

*We're poor little lambs who have lost their way,  
Baa, Baa, Baa!  
We're little black sheep who have gone astray,  
Baa, Baa, Baa!  
Gentlemen songsters off on a spree,  
Doomed from here to eternity,  
Lord have mercy on such as we,  
Baa, Baa, Baa!*

Olive: Next door to the outfitters was the barber's shop. Mr Hacker he was called! I'm not joking, Hacker, that really was his name. My mother used to make me go there because she insisted that men cut hair much better than women.

Mr Hacker: Come on Olive, you're next.

Olive: And I would sit there until it was my turn and feel quite embarrassed because I was the only girl there. In the end they got to know me and I was quite accepted.

Mr. Hacker: There you are love. All done.

Olive: And the funny thing was that when I left school, I went straight into hairdressing myself! I was fourteen on the 24<sup>th</sup> July and on the first of August I started as an apprentice at a salon in Lewisham. We used to work so hard and such long hours for just seven and sixpence a week. I used to cry when I got home because I was so tired. My mother said, "You've got to stick it. You've got to learn a trade."

Doris: I stayed on at school till I was quite a lot older because my mum said, "I don't want you working as hard as me. I want something better for you." Most people left while they were still children really. I remember Victor Mitchenall from number 27: One minute he was in short trousers and singing in the school play:

Victor: *(in high voice)* Oh for the wings for the wings of a dove:

Doris: And the next he was working in the print.

Victor: I was taken on as an apprentice in the printing trade at a periodical house near Waterloo. I remember the first day clearly because my mother made me wear all my school things.

Victor's Mum: Now you put on your raincoat and your school cap cos it's raining and I don't want you getting wet.

Victor: Oh Mum. Not my school clothes.

Victor's Mum: Well until you bring home your first pay packet we can't afford anything else. Now go on, off you go.

Victor: And when I got there, the man on the gate, because I was so small and wearing these school things, he said:

Man on gate: You clear off, we don't want any school kids coming in here.

Olive: A lot of the people when they left school went straight to work in the local shops. Or the big department stores, like Hinds. That's where my friend Doreen from number 2, got her first job. It was a beautiful store, very high class.

Doreen: I was in haberdashery and I started out as number six assistant. It wasn't Christian names, it was all

Mr. James: "Miss Hall". Now remember, you are not allowed to talk to the customers for the first three months because you're not trained.

Doreen: They trained you to say:

Mr. James: "Can I help you madam".

Doreen: "Can I help you madam".

Mr. James: Good. If they want buttons you bring the button trays out and then you say: "Would you like to see some....."

Doreen: Buttons Madam?

Mr James: Good, and while they are looking at them you go on to the next customer.

Doreen: You didn't stand around like they do today. This one lady came in, she was worth millions and she said:

Customer: I want a large safety pin to do up my fur coat.

Doreen: And another lady used to come in, must have been a hundred years old and we used to have to shout down her ear trumpet: "Can I help you madam?" And when you made the bill out you had to get Miss Mellor to sign. "Please sign." And then the money would go in this pulley thing and you'd get the change back.

Mr. James: All right ladies, it's six o'clock. There's nobody coming. You can all put the wrappers on your counters now.

## **SCENE SIX**

Doreen: On a Saturday I'd finish work at six then I'd dash home and change and go out dancing with my best friend, Marjorie Sparks from number 10.

### **DANCE: DON'T BLAME ME**

Marjorie: We went to the dances that they used to have at the Parish Hall on the corner of our street.

Doreen: You all had your dance dresses.

Marjorie: The first time I ever went, Jean Grisbrook who lived above the shoe shop, she loaned me a very pea green dress. Beautiful it was.

Doreen: There were usually far more girls than men

Marjorie: And the boys that were there just used to cluster round the door.

Doreen: So mostly I danced with Marjorie. She was a wonderful fox-trotter!

### *THEY DANCE*

Doreen: And quite honestly when you did get a fellow to dance with, well half of them had two left feet.

### SCENE SEVEN

Olive: There was no dancing for me. All through my apprenticeship at the hairdressers they worked us nine in the morning til eight in the evening and nine on Saturdays. That wasn't unusual then. It'd be the same for every girl.

Bill: I first saw Olive at the bus stop with her blond hair and a little brown beret on top. I was working in Samuels the Greengrocers. I was seventeen years old.

Olive: And I was fourteen.

Bill: I wanted to be introduced to her. Now Molly Unstead worked with me in the greengrocers and she said:

Molly: Oh yes, that's Olive Snapes. Lives in our street, she does.

Bill: Oh I think she's a smasher! Could you introduce us?

Molly: So the next evening I said to Olive: "Come on, we're going for a walk."

Olive: Oh no. I'm too tired for that. I've been on my feet all day!

Molly: There's someone special wants to meet you.

Olive: So she walked me down to this pub, The British Oak.

Molly: Come on, in you go!

Olive: Oh no I'm not allowed in there. My mum would kill me if she found out.

Molly: So I had to go in there by myself. Bill was over in the corner playing darts with his family and I went right up to him: Olive's waiting outside.

*BILL goes outside to meet OLIVE*

Olive: And he came out and he never went back in!

## SONG: YES SIR, THAT'S MY BABY

*Yes, sir, that's my baby,  
No, sir, don't mean maybe,  
Yes, sir, that's my baby now (my baby, that's my baby)  
Yes, ma'am, we've decided,  
No ma'am, we won't hide it,  
Yes, Ma'am, you're invited now  
By the way, by the way when we reach the preacher I'll say  
Yes, sir, that's my baby,  
No, sir, don't mean maybe  
Yes, sir, that's my baby now.*

[Instrumental]

*Pretty soon, pretty soon  
When we hear that famous old [Lohengrin] tune  
Yes, sir, that's my baby,  
No, sir, don't mean maybe  
Yes, sir, that's my baby now.*

*Yes, sir, that's my baby,  
No, sir, don't mean maybe,  
Yes, sir...  
That's my baby now!*

- Olive: *(Cont)* After that, every morning when I was getting on the bus opposite the greengrocers he'd run across the road and give me some fruit to take to work or he'd put a little basket of strawberries in my hand.
- Bill: Every single day I'd meet her from work. However late she finished I'd be there waiting outside to see her home.
- Olive: At that time Bill was living with his cousins. His mum died when he was little so he and his dad went to live with his aunty. She had twelve kids of her own so she didn't really want Bill as well. I went there once. I've never been in a house like it. There was nothing. No carpets, nothing.
- Bill: I haven't had much schooling because I was kept home to clean the house and look after the little uns. I had to scrub the stairs every Saturday morning, white wood. I remember the first time I started at the bottom and went up to the top. I got a clout for that 'cos I'd done it the wrong way round. I said: "I always thought you had to work your way up!" and I got another clout for that! This is the room I share with my dad.

Olive: It was a tiny little box room with no windows. And I thought I've got to do something about this. So I asked Molly's mum down our street if she could let him have a room in their house.

Bill: And I moved in, four doors down from Olive. Seven shillings a week for the room including Sunday breakfast.

Olive: He arrived with a suitcase, but do you know there was nothing in it. He only had the clothes he stood up in.

Bill: I used to wash my clothes on a Sunday morning and I'd have to iron them dry before I could go out. *(To audience)* Many's the time I met Olive and I'd be in a pair of damp grey flannels.

Olive: I remember the first Christmas he moved into our street my mum arranged that all his Christmas presents would be clothes.

Bill: From then on, I saw Olive every single day for six years until we got married.

Olive: And we put aside what we could every week for all that time saving up for our life together.

### **SONG: REPRISE OF YES SIR, THAT'S MY BABY**

#### **SCENE EIGHT**

Doris: Frank was the only boyfriend I ever had. I'd seen him around for years, but I'd never taken any notice of him. Then a few years later, when I was seventeen, we were both happened to be at one of those magic lantern slide things.

Frank: Someone was giving a talk about what they'd done and where they'd been and then came the collection plate. Well I hadn't got any money and I don't suppose Doris had either.

Doris: So we both tried to make a quick getaway from this plate and we got jammed in the door! When we got out of the hall and down the steps we both roared with laughter and that was it!

Frank: Doris would you like to come to the pictures with me, the Gaumont in Lewisham.

Doris: And I took the afternoon off school for that! But it was worth it. He bought me some maple brazils. When I got home I shot upstairs and hid them so my mother wouldn't find out what I'd been up to.

Frank: When we were courting we often went round in a group. All friends together.

Doris: You just had the one boy really. But we'd all go walking and dancing together.

**SONG: HAPPY AS CAN BE**

*Here we are again, happy as can be,  
All good pals and jolly good company.  
Never mind the weather, never mind the rain  
As long as we're together, 'Whoops' she goes again.  
La-dee-da-dee-da  
La-dee-da-dee-dee  
All good pals and jolly good company.*

Frank: And finally we got engaged.

Doris: It wasn't a bended knee thing or anything like that. You'd just sort of drift into it and suddenly you'd got the engagement ring staring at you from the box. It was quite nice really. We were engaged for a fair time. You weren't in a hurry in those days.

Frank: And the day we finally settled on for the wedding was the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939. Can you believe it?

Doris: It was at the congregational church at nine thirty in the morning, nice and early because we were going off by train to Torquay for our honeymoon.

Frank: It was just a family affair, and we'd got through the reception and we were sitting round the table just about to cut the cake when the sirens went off.

Doris: And everybody disappeared. They just scattered!

Frank: And of course the honeymoon had to be cancelled.

Doris: Well, nobody wanted to be away. God knows what happened to the cake!

Olive: I remember everyone came out in the street when the sirens went off. The noise, it was deafening! We'd all been issued with gas masks and so I immediately thought we'd be gassed. I was petrified!

Olive: Bill, why haven't you got your gas mask with you???

Bill: Calm down, nothing's going to happen yet!

Olive: For heaven's sake, Bill, just go and get it!!!! It was the only time I ever lost my temper with him! Ooh I was so cross!

Doris: And of course the next thing was all the children being evacuated. We stood on Molly Unstead's steps and we saw the trains taking the children with their little boxes going off to the country. But for Bernard it was different.

Bernard: My mother had a brother living in Jersey and she thought it would be safer for me over there. When the war broke out all my friends were evacuated together, but I was sent to Jersey to be with my uncle. Well, nothing happened for ages. It was what they called the "phoney war". So in June 1940 my Uncle went over to talk to my mother about bringing me back to England. What he didn't know was that the Germans were about to invade the island and his boat was the last one out.

**Following speech underscored by  
SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME**

So he was stuck in England and drafted into the army and I was stranded over there with a horrible Aunt who'd lost a husband and gained a nephew she didn't want. By 1941, she'd put me in an orphanage. We were completely isolated on Jersey and we were half starved by the Germans. I had to stay there 'til 1945.

Olive: It was a long time for children to be away from home and a lot of of parents had the attitude "If we're going to die, we'll all go together". So after a year or two, a lot of the children came back. Like June Neil and her sister from number 22.

June: We'd been evacuated to Bexhill and we came back to London in 1941. We went over to our old school but it had no windows in it. They'd been blown out so we used to go to people's houses and the teacher would come and teach us there. Once when I was about ten, I was coming out of lessons and we saw these German planes flying very low. One of my friends was waving to them because he thought they were British, but me and the girl I was with, we had the sense to lie down because we realised they were German. Well we were all right but the planes went on to Sandhurst Road School in Catford and machine gunned all the children and their teachers coming out of school. Their grave is in Hither Green, a great big massive grave it is. I've seen it. Five, six and seven year olds they were.

**UNDERSCORE REPRISE OF SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME**

## SCENE NINE

Olive: Bill got his call up papers for the Navy in October 1940.

Bill: I done my training in Plymouth. They needed sailors all the time so within twelve weeks I was at sea. We were so in demand. The first ship I was on was the HMS Gardenia. I was away for nearly a year. Our run was from Gibraltar to West Africa and back.

Olive: I was living back at Mum's because I'd just had my first child, a lovely little girl, Annette. Mum'd had a phone put in, quite rare in those days and sometimes Bill'd phone me there.

Bill: I can't tell you where I'm going. I don't even know myself. I just know that I'm off somewhere because my name's been piped up in Chatham.

### **SONG: THE SAILOR WITH THE NAVY BLUE EYES**

*From the shores of Montezuma to the wilds of Timbuctoo  
There's an ever-spreading rumour 'bout a sailor with eyes of blue.  
He causes great commotion with his eyes that match the ocean  
He's listed in the nautical "Who's who"  
Who's got girls in ev'ry port hang-in' a-round like flies?  
Yo ho ho ho Oh! the sailor with the navy blue eyes.  
Who's the guy they love to buy dozens of socks and ties?  
Yo ho ho ho Oh! the sailor with the navy blue eyes.  
When the boat comes home after crossing the foam  
He's still at sea  
Thinking, wond'ring who's he gonna take rowing on the lake.  
Who's the boy who's full of joy wavin' the most good-byes?  
Yo ho ho ho Oh! the sailor with the navy blue eyes.  
The sailor with the navy blue, sailor with the navy blue, sailor with the  
navy blue eyes.*

Olive: That first year, Bill was away the whole time, but after that he'd come home on leave every nine weeks. He'd been put on the Atlantic Run, see. We never had very long together, maybe a weekend, it was quite romantic really and he looked so gorgeous in his uniform!

### **Brief reprise of THE SAILOR WITH THE NAVY BLUE EYES**

Olive: When Bill came home, we lived well.

- Bill: We usually sailed in to Chatham and put up at the barracks there. I knew Olive and her mum were short on rations at home, so I managed to smuggle out two big packs of bacon from the stores. Well, sailors had these loose trousers, didn't they, so I wrapped one round each ankle and you should've seen the look on Olive's face.
- Olive: When Bill first came home on leave, he wouldn't go in the shelter.
- Bill: I found the air raids very difficult.
- Olive: We'd got used to the sirens going off. We knew by the sound of the planes overhead when it was really dangerous. But when the ack ack guns on the railway went off and the batteries on the common started, it was deafening and Bill'd say:
- Bill: I feel worse in London than I do at sea! Well in the Navy I've got something to hit back with, haven't I? I'm a gunner. But here, I'm just stuck in a ruddy shelter all night.
- Olive: My mum had a brick shelter built in our back garden cos it wasn't big enough for an Anderson shelter. It had a concrete roof and the ceiling would only be a few inches above and it would drip with condensation.
- Bill: And if you couldn't stand it in that tiny space you'd go to the big shelter underneath the high street which had proper bunks. Sometimes there'd be at least fifty people down there.
- Olive: Everyone was nice to one another and we'd all have tea or something in a flask.
- Bill: And the times I went down there you didn't sleep much, you chatted most of the time, and sometimes you'd have a good old sing-song.

### **SONG: BYE BYE BLACKBIRD**

*Pack up all my care and woe,  
Here I go singing low,  
Bye, bye, blackbird,  
Where somebody waits for me  
Sugar's sweet so is she  
Bye, bye blackbird  
No-one here can love and understand me  
Oh what hard luck stories they all hand me.  
Make my bed and light the light,  
I'll arrive late to-night,  
Blackbird bye, bye.*

- Olive: Hey Bill, over there, isn't that Lily Avery from number 14? You heard about her, didn't you?

Bill: No, what?

Olive: Well, before the war, she used to work as a chambermaid at one of those boarding houses up in town, Bloomsbury Square. Quite the bottle blond she was. And apparently this foreign man was staying there. He was a dapper little man. He was older than her and I can just see him now in his black jacket and homburg hat and his spats, that's what struck me, these spats. Anyway, he took a shine to Lily.

Furrier: Lily, I would like to give you some money so that you can stop work and stay at home. Then I can take you out in my motor car whenever I'm free. I would be delighted to take you on some trips.

Olive: He had a furriers, a big warehouse place in the east end. And Lily would be dressed up to the nines in all these flashy dresses and fur stoles. Everyone thought they were going to get married and Lily was over the moon, cos of course it would have been a big step up for her.

Furrier: Today we shall go to the coast. Portsmouth, yes?

Olive: It was usually Portsmouth. She told me he was always taking photographs of her with the ships in the background. This went on for a while, and then, I think it was when Hitler was getting very big over there, he didn't come anymore. In the end, she went over to his warehouse and the place was completely empty and he'd gone. Disappeared.

Bill: You mean.....?

Olive: Yes, he must have been a spy.

Bill: Well, blow me down. Often you'd be in the shelter right through till the morning and that man on the radio, Lord Haw Haw, he'd say something like

Lord Haw Haw: "You can come out of your holes now."

Bill: And then I'd go back to my ship

Olive: And I wouldn't see him again for weeks. We just got on with our everyday lives, that's all we could do.

**SCENE TEN**

**SONG: MR WU'S AN AIR-RAID WARDEN NOW**

*Mister Wu is now an air-raid warden  
And don't he look cute in his new siren suit.  
He goes round ev'ry night to make the blackout sure  
So, if you've got a light at you're window  
You'll have Wu round at your door.  
His headquarters it's plain are down by Lover's Lane  
He goes there ev'ry evening anyhow.  
He'll flash his torch into the dark and the girls all cover their laundry  
mark,  
Mister Wu's an air-raid warden now.*

Olive: You had to keep all your windows covered, no lights showing. The warden would come round and shout:

Warden: Put that light out!

Olive: You put up heavy curtains, or black cloths over the windows.

Warden: And those railings will have to go.

Olive: They asked everyone to give up their railings for the war effort. You didn't have a choice.

**SONG: MR WU'S AN AIR-RAID WARDEN NOW**

Olive: A couple of years into the war they started calling up the women. My good friend Pat Greenfield from number four, she was in the women's army, the WRACS.

*PAT ENTERS IN HER UNIFORM*

Pat: I chose the Army because my mother was from an Army family. I did my training at Warrington. It was very tough. Then my first posting was at Gravesend. I worked in the command post as a telephonist and a plotter. Information about enemy planes, like height and distance came over the phone and you passed it on. My fiancée, Les was in the Navy, and he wanted a photo of me in my uniform, so I got one done specially at Jeromes in Woolwich. And I had a copy made for my parents. They had it framed on the mantelpiece, we were so proud of Pat, a Corporal in the Army. And Les kept my photo with him all through the war.

Olive: You'd write to each other all the time they were away. Hoping it'd get through. You'd write something like: "Darling Bill. Missing you terribly. Little Annette's doing this and I'm doing that." Of course you didn't tell them what was really happening. You didn't want to worry them. "Longing for you to come back so we can start our lives again. All love, Olive."

**SONG: I WISH I COULD HIDE INSIDE THIS LETTER**

*I wish that I could hide inside this letter  
And seal me up and send me out to you,  
What a surprise in store,  
They'd bring me to your door  
I'd pop right out and kiss you like you've never been kissed before.  
We'd be so happy we would cry together  
And then we'd love the way we used to do  
I wish that I could hide inside this letter  
And seal me up and send me out to you.*

Olive: One day I was just posting him a letter at twelve o'clock and, do you know, that same day at one o'clock a V2 fell right by that Post Office, blew up the church and destroyed half the high street. I was already back home when it happened, but we still felt the explosion.

Doris: Thursday the 8<sup>th</sup> March 1945 it was. I couldn't believe the damage all around me. We were two or three streets away from where it fell, but there was rubble and broken glass everywhere.

Olive: One of the huge cornerstones of the church was just lying on the pavement. I couldn't believe it'd been thrown so far.

Doris: All the windows of my house had been blown out, and when I opened the door, there were dead birds on the floor inside.

Olive: When I think, if I'd been posting that letter to Bill just an hour later.....

Doris: Those V2s did such terrible damage. It was so close to the end of the war as well.

Olive: In another two months it would all be over.

## SCENE TWELVE

- Bernard: The best train journey I ever had was returning home after five years of being in Jersey. Mr. Unstead from number seven was working on Blackheath station as a porter. He was the first person I saw and he walked with me back to our street and everyone was there, greeting me. I hadn't seen my parents for five years.
- Doris: At the end of the war all the children who'd been evacuated came back to the street.
- Olive: We all knew that the end of the war was near and we couldn't wait to celebrate.
- Doris: We'd bought red and blue dolly dyes from the oil shop and out of old sheeting we'd made bunting.
- Bernard: We cut the sheets into zig-zag triangles, red white and blue and sewed them onto long tapes to be draped across the street  
*They do this and call out to each other*  
"Here, hold on to this"  
"Up your end a bit" etc
- Olive: When the great day came, May 8<sup>th</sup> we were ready! Long trestle tables were laid down the middle of the street with benches at the sides.
- Doris: The food was whatever we could find.
- Bernard: Jellies, sandwiches, blancmanges, lemonade made out of lemonade powder
- Olive: Everybody contributed a little bit towards the party.
- Bernard: And somebody bought out a piano and was playing the old songs.
- Olive: The blackouts were taken down. There were lights on in every window!
- Doris: Mrs Greenfield had sewn "Welcome Home" on a big sheet for the soldiers.
- Bernard: We was up practically all night.
- Doris: And it was wonderful to have everyone together again!

## SONG: THE OLD BULL AND BUSH

*Come, come, come and make eyes at me,  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush,  
La la la la la,  
Come, come, drink some port wine with me,  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush.  
Hear the little German band,  
Tra la la la la la la la  
Come let me hold your hand, dear.  
Do, do, come and have a drink with me,  
Down at the Old Bull and Bush,  
Bush, Bush.*

- Olive: A lot of men were de-mobbed when the German war ended but my Bill was away for another year after that. But the day he came back, that was when our life began again...  
*Bill enters and hugs Olive*
- Bill: I was so glad to be home. I never wanted to move again. And do you know, we stayed on in that street for another fifty years.
- Bernard: When I look back, we were really just like one big family in our street. Maybe that's why I never married any of the girls who lived there, Doris, Olive, Doreen, Molly, they were more like sisters to me.
- Doris: I moved away with Frank after the war, but I still come back and visit, even now.
- Bernard: I moved away too when I got married but I couldn't keep away from the place. Anyway my mother and all my relatives were still there. And if they'd changed anything in the street I'd say "Oy! What happened there? What a cheek! They've interfered with our playground!"
- Doris: The street looks different now. It looks smaller.
- Olive: And it's not so pretty without the trees
- Doris: But it's still the same really.
- Olive: And when I go down there now, I'll tell you what it does for me. When I go past the houses, I name all the people who lived there and what happened there.

Doris: Life wasn't easy but everyone did their best. Very happy times, we had there and a lot of love. What more could you want?

Olive: I had a wonderful childhood in that street and for me it's always been a romantic place.

Doris: We had a great life there. No money but a great life!

### **SONG: HARMONY LANE**

*Let's wander where the birds are singing  
Out yonder where the ivy's clinging sweetheart down Harmony Lane.  
Let's wander now the moon is rising,  
Where ev'ry heart is harmonising, sweetheart down Harmony Lane.  
Where love is just like a song,  
We'll drift along  
Without a care we'll sing a sweet refrain together  
And when we're getting old and grey, dear,  
We'll wander in the same old way, dear, sweetheart,  
Down Harmony, Harmony Lane,  
Down Harmony Lane.*

**FIN**