

Clan

AGE EXCHANGE THEATRE PRESENTS
“WINTER WARMERS”

A warm play for a winter's night



“We're not afraid of Winter...
...we
know the
Surest
PROTECTION
of
Health”

*Remember-
OVALTINE
is now served
at Cafés,
Restaurants,
& Milk Bars*

OVALTINE
to drink it always —
is to be always well

The Bakehouse
Age Exchange
11 Blackheath Village
5th & 9th November
2.30 & 7.30pm



WINTER WARMERS

SONGS: RED RED ROBIN AND TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF

- MOLLY: We used to make Winter Warmers out of an old tin and a bit of cloth .We'd whoosh them about and the smoke would come out of the holes and you'd put your hands 'round and you could feel the warmth then.
- JOE: There were jobs you just couldn't do in the cold weather,and the builders weren't paid unless they were working. It wasn't easy to make ends meet but the children never went hungry.
- LIL: We made up on suet puddings and stews, anything you could make cheaply.I used to say to the children : "There's not much meat but the gravy is good for you and it'll stick to your ribs."

SONG Red Red Robin

When the red red robin comes bob bob bobbing along,along
There'll be no more sobbin' when he starts throbbin' his old sweet song
Wake up, wake up you sleepy head! Get up,get up,get out of bed.
Cheer up, cheer up the sun is red,Live,love laugh and be happy.
What if I'd been blue,now I'm walkin' through fields of flowers,
Rain may glisten but still I listen for hours and hours,
I'm just a kid again Doin' what I did again,Singing a song
When the red red robin comes bob bob bobbing along.

MOLLY and SID are in bed,head to toe,each hugging a blanket and a coat.

- LIL: (Off) Come on children! Time to get up.
- MOLLY: We had a lino floor,without even a mat to put your feet on when you got out of bed.
- LIL: (Off) Molly.Sidney!
- MOLLY: Coming! And a potty under the bed because it was too cold to go out to the loo.In the mornings I'd lay there and go Huhhhh! See the steam,Sid? Look I'm smoking!
- SID: So am I Molly,look!

They both "smoke" in the cold air

LIL: (Off) Are you two up yet?

MOLLY: And the windows was all crusted over where the condensation had froze so I'd.....

LIL: (Off) You're not mucking up those windows are you?

SID: Yes she (SID is gagged by MOLLY)

MOLLY: (To SID) Little sneak. (Calling) No Mum. (To audience) And I'd draw faces on the window.

SID coughs

SID: My toes are frozen solid.

MOLLY: Mine too.

MOLLY forces herself to get out of bed onto the cold lino.

SID: Why doesn't Mum ever light a fire in here?

MOLLY: They only light the fire upstairs if someone's dying.

SID does overacted impression of someone dying.

SID: Moll,Moll.I'm really ill...Tell Mum to light the fire,will you? I think I'll have to stay in bed today...

SID dives deeper into the blankets.MOLLY pulls him out of bed.SID clings onto the blankets as he falls onto the floor.

LIL enters.

LIL: (To Sid) I heard you coughing in the night,love:

SID: (Aside to MOLLY) See,I told you I was ill...

LIL: Let's rub a bit of Vick on you.(She rubs it onto his chest) The smell'll do you good,if nothing else.And tonight I'll sew a block of camphor on the front of your vest in a little bag so that you can inhale the vapours tomorrow.That should help.And Molly,while I remember you're to put some Snowfire on those chilblains.

MOLLY: I had chilblains on my hands and I had chapped legs.Your gymslip just came down to your knees,and so your legs got chapped because your socks just came up so far,and then you had that gap.

LIL: And if the Snowfire don't work Molly,you know what else to do about them,don't you?

MOLLY: Yes Mum.(To audience) You'd have to pee in a bowl and then put it on the bit with chilblains..

SID: Ugh! I'm never doing that..Yuk...

LIL: (To audience) But sometimes you just had to..

SID: And I don't want a big bag sewn to my chest!

LIL: It's either that or I'll rub your back and front with goose grease and cover it with brown paper and peel off a layer each day, like your Aunt Beatrice does with Albert! Right,that's you done.

MOLLY: Mum?

LIL: Yes?

MOLLY: Have I GOT to wear the woolly vest?

LIL: You ask me that every day!

MOLLY: And every day it gets itchier!

LIL: But it keeps you warm.That's what's important.

LIL EXITS.Both children go to separate parts of the stage to get dressed.

MOLLY: Mum was a great one for knitting.Socks ,pullovers,scarves,bonnets...I had a home-knitted vest.I don't know what kind of sheep that wool was from but those short-sleeved vests were like wearing barbed wire! Anyway,you tucked them into your navy blue,fleecy- lined cotton bloomers with short elasticated legs and there was usually a small pocket on the right leg where I could put a hanky.Then over that went a liberty bodice.I always had to wear one,and your knickers used to button onto it,so they didn't fall down!!

LIL; Breakfast!!!

MOLLY and SIDNEY go downstairs.

LIL: Now,you two, it's time for your cod liver oil.

MOLLY: I don't think I need it today,Mum.

SID: Nor me. I'm feeling really strong today!

LIL: That's because I make you take it. Come on. Get it down you!

LIL serves up the porridge which they love.

LIL: Now. Eat up your porridge.

SONG : AIN'T WE GOT FUN

Every morning, every evening,Ain't we got fun,
Not much money,Oh but honey,Ain't we got fun.
The rent's unpaid dear, We haven't a sou,
But smiles were made dear, For me and for you.
Though there's nothing in the larder,Don't we have fun.
Times are here and getting harder Still we have fun.
There's nothing surer, The rich get rich and the poor get Nothing!
In the meantime, in between time, Ain't we got fun.

LIL: Right Sidney. Off to the lavvy now ,and you can take this with you.(LIL hands him some newspaper)

SID: I don't need to go,Mum.

LIL: You're going to the toilet and that's that!

SID: But it's freezing out there.

LIL: And hang some extra on the hook

SID: (Reluctantly cutting up the paper) Look Molly,a picture of the King! Just think where that's going!!!

MOLLY and SID giggle

LIL: Don't be so disgusting.And the paper's not there for you to look at,just to use. Now off you go,Sid,and stop messing about.

SID goes outside to the toilet.
MOLLY and LIL "Freeze"(!)

SID: (To audience) The toilet was down the garden.In the mornings it could be foggy even getting that far.(He mimes sitting on toilet) Then the seat was always so cold I used to rub it with paper first to try and warm it up a bit. Didn't really work,but I'd do it all the same.And there were ALWAYS spiders.It was horrible!

Freeze on SID as he undoes his trousers.
Focus goes over to LIL and MOLLY.

LIL: Molly,would you go out and bring me some coal?

MOLLY: Yes Mum.

LIL: I don't think we've got much left out there,(To audience) We'll just have to watch what we burn for the next few days.

MOLLY Exits.Focus returns to SID who is pulling the chain.We can tell that nothing has happened.He pulls chain again and returns to the house.

SID: It's frozen again.

LIL: Take the bucket then.

SID takes a bucket of water,pours the water in the toilet.

LIL: Good boy.

MOLLY returns with Coal which is clearly heavy.

LIL: Molly.It's going to be a cold one today!...

LIL starts putting layer upon layer of clothes on MOLLY.

MOLLY: (To audience) When I think of the way she used to wrap us up! I'd have one coat on and then she'd put on another coat,some oiled type of thing,and it was black.She'd put that on top.Then I would have a beret pulled right down over my ears and then she'd tie a scarf round my neck twice,take the ends round the back,fold them,bring them round and pin them round the front.
(To LIL,waddling around) Mum,I can't move!!!

LIL: But you're warm,and that's the main thing. Sidney? Are you ready?

SID: (Offstage) Yes!

LIL: Well off you go to school then and let me get some work done!

MOLLY and SID leave for school.

LIL : (To audience) Keeping the children warm and fed.That way there was a chance they'd stay healthy. There was a lot of illness around. Pneumonia,diphtheria.Them sort of things,especially in the winter.Children caught them a lot.We've been alright so far this winter but Annie,next door,her little one's sick.She can't afford the doctor,and on top of that her old man's done his back in.Well,that's no good if you're a docker,all that lifting...And last night..I was in here with Joe (JOE enters and sits) and well,we couldn't help hearing...these walls are so thin..

Cut to "Flashback " of last night.LIL and her husband JOE are sitting in their living room.From offstage they hear

ANNIE: (Offstage in a slightly raised voice) I didn't say it was your fault, I'm just saying I'm worried. Bailiffs at the door. Little Alice poorly and you out of work. What's going to happen to us? I've promised them we'll come up with a payment in a fortnight. We've only got til then or we'll be thrown out. Bob, I'm scared.... (We hear ANNIE weeping)

LIL: (To audience) And the two of us, me and Joe, we were just stuck there, feeling helpless. All of a sudden Joe says to me:

JOE: Don't suppose they've got any coal next door?

LIL: And I said "No" and he goes:

JOE: I'll go and give 'em half of what we've got then.

LIL: Just like that he says it. He's a good man, my Joe. But that's how we got by, see. Neighbours shared. Nobody went without.

JOE EXITS. LIL starts cleaning outdoor steps at front of house. ANNIE comes out from next door to do the same.

LIL: Annie! How are you today?

ANNIE: Better than I was last night. I don't usually let things get on top of me.

LIL: Well you've got a lot on your plate..

ANNIE: No point complaining though. That don't get you anywhere!

LIL: How's little Alice? Any better?

ANNIE: Not really. All I can do is try and keep the house warm, give her a chance to get well. Yesterday I sent the boys out wooding and they came back with some twigs. And then you gave us that coal so we'll be fine for a few days now.

LIL: No sign of work yet for your Bob?

ANNIE: No, but he don't give up. Still goes down the docks every day, in spite of his back. There's not much doing down there, anyway. They're all frozen in, see.

LIL: I suppose I should count my blessings. At least Joe's earning, but I don't know where his wages go, I really don't...

They both carry on scrubbing

ANNIE: Oh! I almost forgot! I made your Sid a little plum pudding. I'll just pop in and get it.

ANNIE goes "Inside"

LIL: It wasn't the first time she'd done that! She was always making puddings for little Sid, and he loved them!! That's how he got his nickname... We still call him "Pudding" sometimes!

ANNIE: (Returning with pudding) Here you go!

LIL: You didn't have to...

ANNIE: Just my way of saying "Thankyou" you know?.. For last night...

LIL: Nothing like a pudding for filling them up and keeping them warm!

ANNIE: (Laughing) I remember once when my Bob was in work, one Friday the little 'uns came home dinnertime to a huge tray of spotted dick on the table. I couldn't afford any meat. Payday was Friday evening and the money had run out, see, so all they got was spotted dick pudding spread with margarine. But it did the trick, filled them up and kept the cold out.

SONG . REPRISE OF AIN'T WE GOT FUN?

ANNIE: Well, I'd better be getting on. It's time I went down to the school. Catch the boys in their break. Ta ra then!

LIL: Bye! (To audience) Every day Annie makes a jug of steaming cocoa and takes it down to her boys when they're in the playground. I went with her once and they rushed up to the railings when she called them and gulped it down. She can't afford nice winter coats for them, see and she says that's one way of making sure they keep warm during the day!

JOE enters (With tools)

LIL: Joe! What are you doing back here?

JOE: (To Annie) Well that's a fine sort of welcome, isn't it?

LIL: Sorry love. But why....?

JOE: Been laid off, haven't I?

LIL: Oh Joe. What happened?

JOE: Well the Gaffer just calls me in, out of the blue and says:

GAFFER: (Played by ANNIE) Now the job you was working on has finished there's nothing else I can offer you. Sorry, Joe, but I'm going to have to let you go.

JOE: When have I got 'til?

GAFFER: Dinnertime.

JOE: (To audience) An hours notice was all you had to give a man and that was it and there he was with nothing.

GAFFER: You know how it is...in this weather?

JOE: (To audience) He was right, of course. If it was below freezing then you couldn't cement. Can't lay the bricks. (To Gaffer) But I'm on your books, been working here a while now.

GAFFER: Not as long as some, Joe.

JOE: (To audience) .Some blokes had been working there years.

GAFFER: As far as I'm concerned you're still only a Casual...Look,we'll give you a shout as soon as the weather gets better.You're a good worker,Joe.Sorry it has to be this way...

JOE: (To LIL) Nothing I could do about it,Lil.

LIL: What do you mean "Nothing you could do"??? You should have stood up for yourself more.

JOE: That's not how it works.You have to wait 'til....

LIL: But you've been there ages.They've no right to kick you out and keep others on.

JOE: I know it's going to be hard for a while.

LIL: You can say that again.What with Christmas coming up...What are we going to do then,eh? What are we going to tell the children ? That there's no presents for them this year all because their Dad wouldn't speak up for himself??!!

JOE: It wasn't my fault,Lil. It's just the weather...

LIL: I wish I'd been there. I'd have given him a piece of my mind....I wouldn't have let them get away with it....Not without a fight,at any rate.

JOE: I'm not listening to this.I'm off.

LIL: Where do you think you're going? Not down the pub,I hope.That won't solve anything.

JOE EXITS

LIL: (Calling after him) Joe? Joe.I'm sorry love.... Joe??

LIL goes over to the door.Tears well up.She moves over to the fireplace.

SONG: BESIDE AN OPEN FIREPLACE

Nature is sleeping out in the gloom,
Shadows are creeping inside my room
Logs all aglow in the fireplace there,
Lonely I'm dreaming in my old arm chair

Beside an open fireplace I sit and dream of you
In every flame I see the face that time and place will not erase
And when the cooling embers die Just as your love died too
There's nothing in my fireplace but broken dreams of you.

LIL EXITS

MOLLY: When we go to school sometimes there's a real "Peasouper". That's what they call it when it's foggy. Gets so thick sometimes I can't see a thing. Uncle Jim, he drives the trams, and when he comes home from the fogs, he wears goggles, and when he takes his hat and his goggles off all you can see is a white patch around his eyes. Rest of him is all black!! Nan says her cough's three time's worse when there's a pea-souper about. Sid! Hurry up! Stick close.

SID ENTERS

SID: Are we lost, Molly? I can't see nothing.

MOLLY: 'Course we're not. You can smell the leather, can't you?

SID: Yes

MOLLY: So, we're near the leather factory. Now in a minute....(they carry on walking)..... You'll catch a whiff of pickles... So that means we're near.....

SID: Dobsons!!!The pickle factory!!!

MOLLY: Right!! You're getting the hang of it now... And then you'll smell
(She sniffs the air) Well??

SID: (Sniffing) ~~Umm, Chocolate.~~
~~Umm, Perfume.~~

MOLLY: So we're near?

SID: ~~The Panama perfume~~
~~factory??~~

MOLLY: That's it.It's easy when you know how.

SID: But I still can't see a thing.What if we get run over?

MOLLY: We won't.Not with me looking out for you..uuuoooooh!!!!

A Tram bell Rings

MOLLY: Quick!! (She pulls SID violently) The tram!!!

The bell rings again.

SID: You said we wouldn't get run over!!!

MOLLY: Well we didn't,did we?!!! Listen,there's a car coming.We can earn some money.

Car approaches very slowly.

SID: It's up on the pavement.

The two children press themselves up against a wall as the car approaches.

MOLLY: Mister,you're up on the pavement!! You're driving on the pavement! Do you want a hand? We can guide you.We can see the road better than you can.

SID: Mister....If you give us thruppence....

MOLLY: Sixpence.....Give us sixpence and we'll show you the way.

They guide him onto the road and on his way.

MOLLY: Over here,Mister. This way.

SID: (Collecting sixpence) Ta Mister.

MOLLY: I never let Sid know it but sometimes I was a bit scared too.People could suddenly come out of nowhere and it was frightening. I suppose it was because at the pictures we'd see these films where people'd loom up out of the fog and kill somebody! On the other hand there was always the chance of earning sixpence!!! When we got to school Teacher would make us sing a song to warm us up.

TEACHER: Come along children!

SONG "This is the way we wash our hands....

TEACHER: Now, everybody 'round my desk for prayers.Come along. Hurry up!!

MOLLY and MARTIN move to her desk

MOLLY: There was this boy at our school,Martin, nice boy he was,but I don't think he ever got enough to eat.

TEACHER: Our Father..

MOLLY/TEACHER/MARTIN: Which art in Heaven hallowed be thy name...

MOLLY: And this one morning Martin had walked to school in the freezing fog...I don't know if he'd even had any breakfast...

MARTIN begins to sway

MOLLY/TEACHER/MARTIN : Thy Kingdom come,Thy will be done on earth as it is in ,
Heaven..

MOLLY: And we noticed that he wasn't joining in no more.

MOLLY/TEACHER: Give us this day our daily bread..

MOLLY: And all of a sudden Martin's swaying about like he's acting drunk! Teacher thought he was messing around and he was just about to cop it when ..

MARTIN collapses.

MOLLY: Miss!Miss look,Martin's dead!

TEACHER: No Molly.He's just fainted.

TEACHER goes to help Martin who gradually comes round.

TEACHER: Are you alright?

MARTIN: Yes Miss.

TEACHER: You're freezing cold.

MARTIN: I'll be alright, Miss.

TEACHER: Right. You find your brother and get him to walk home with you.

MARTIN: I've got to go home?

TEACHER: Yes, you have.

MARTIN EXITS

MOLLY: So off he went. Had to walk all the way back home in the fog. Least at school there was some heating. He might not have had any at home....

TEACHER: Now Molly. Would you like to sing that song for the class that we learnt last week. children, ~~we're going to sing that song we all learnt last week~~. I hope you can remember all the actions...

MOLLY sings The North Wind Doth Blow

MOLLY: Another time there was a boy named Wilkins came in late to class wearing a girl's coat. All pink it was!

TEACHER turns round to address the class who are giggling and gives WILKINS a severe look.

TEACHER: Warm enough, Wilkins?

WILKINS: Yes Miss.

MOLLY: He was very very poor. One of those that'd wear socks on his hands for gloves.

TEACHER: Take that coat off.

WILKINS: My Mum said I've got to keep it on. Said I'd catch my death of cold if I take it off.

TEACHER: Well you're at school now, so you do what I say and I'm not telling you again.

Slowly Wilkins takes the coat off. He is bare from the waist up, apart from his scarf and muffler. Slight pause. Molly sniggers.

TEACHER: Quiet everybody. Wilkins, come here. Where are your clothes?

WILKINS: My Mum's washing them.

MOLLY: That was it. I thought to myself "He's really going to get it now" But she just said:

TEACHER: Be a good boy and get the milk for the class, would you?

MOLLY: And at dinner time I'd fetch Sid and we'd both walk back home. And every day I'd go and take Dad his dinner where he was working. This was MY job! It was usually meat pudding and I'd carry it between two plates wrapped up in a tea towel. My Mum would say:

LIL: Keep it straight, duck, in case you spill the gravy!

MOLLY carries the dish carefully.

MOLLY: My Dad was a wonderful bricklayer. He used to have his hot dinner at half past twelve and I used to have to wait for the whistle to blow before he could knock off and come down and get it. He might be up on the ladder, see. And when he came down I'd give him his dinner and he'd give me something to eat out of his pocket. Maybe a bit of cheese and bread, something like that.

LIL: Hello, love.

MOLLY: (Turning to Lil) What am I taking Dad for his dinner today?

LIL: Erm... He's been home already, love.

MOLLY: What?

LIL: He's.. Well I suppose you'll know soon enough. He's been laid off. He's out looking for work now.

MOLLY: (Putting her arms around LIL) He'll find something else, won't he?

LIL: Well if he doesn't it's not going to be much of a Christmas this year....

MOLLY: I don't mind if I don't get a stocking...

LIL: (Hugging her) I'm sure we'll be able to get you something, love. Now wrap up warm before you go back to school.

MOLLY puts her coat on and EXITS

LIL sits down on” Dad’s” chair looking sad.

Underneath the following speech is the

MARKET FLOWERS SONG.

Underneath the gaslight’s glitter Stands a little fragile girl
Headless of the night winds, bitter,As they round about her whirl
While the hundreds pass unheeding,In the evening’s waning hours
Still she cries with tearful pleading,Won’t you buy my pretty flowers?

LIL: I hope Joe finds something soon.I couldn’t bare the idea of doing Christmas on a shoestring.I remember one year MY father was out of work and it was terrible for us children.The stocking I got was full of coke and it had an apple and an orange and a farthing at the bottom. I cried my eyes out and my Mum said “ What d’you expect? Your Dad’s out of work.It’s all we can afford.” And when I had a family of my own I always had one thing in mind...never to let your kids put up with what you had to put up with.....Oh I hope my Joe finds something.....

SONG. Work, for the night is coming.

At the front of the stage JOE is out looking for work .He talks to imaginary people beyond audience.

JOE: Mister,hey Mister? You got any work I can do for you?I’m a bricklayer,.... Call round next week,shall I? See if anything’s come up by then?Right you are.....

JOE picks up his tools and moves to another part of the stage.

JOE: (Cont) Can I talk to the Gov'ner?That's right.I'm looking for work.Builder and bricklayer.... I'm a good worker....No?Alright then

JOE moves on

Mister? Any work going?Alright... I was only asking.

Mrs?. You got any odd jobs you need doing? Well,I'm a builder by trade,but I'll do anything..I'll give you a good price.... I'll take anything,any work at all.

JOE goes home despondently.

LIL: Is that you back,Joe?

JOE: Yes.

LIL: I'm sorry,love,about before... I didn't mean to bite your head off.

JOE sits down in silence.

LIL: I know you do your best.I'm sorry. (She kisses him) Where have you been all this time,love?

JOE: I've been out looking for work, but either the jobs are taken or there's nothing going because of the weather.

LIL: There will be.Come the Spring,There'll be all that outside work at them big houses won't there?

JOE: Maybe.That's if we make it through 'til then!

LIL: Something'll come up love.

JOE: It 'd better, or we'll be turfed out by the bailiffs.

LIL: It won't come to that,Joe.We'll get by somehow..

ANNIE knocks at the door.

ANNIE: Lil? You there?

LIL: (Comes to door) Hello,love.What can I do you for?

ANNIE: It's Joe I wanted to see.Is he here? It's about some work...

JOE: (Coming to door) Oh yes?

ANNIE: Just a tip off I've had.Thought you should know.There's a lady down Cooper Avenue,number 37,needs some guttering doing.

JOE: Just the guttering? Nothing else? No brickwork?

LIL: Something's better than nothing ain't it?

JOE: Yeah .You're right. (To ANNIE) What about your old man.Isn't he interested?

ANNIE: He's the one what heard about it.But he can't do no lifting,see,so I thought I'd mention it to you.

JOE: Thanks,Annie.I'll get down there right away.

LIL: Here! Don't forget your coat!

JOE EXITS.

LIL: That was kind of you to think of my Joe.

ANNIE: I just hope he gets there before it's gone.

LIL: You're a good friend,Annie.I just wish we could help you out in return.

ANNIE: You do already,you know you do.

LIL: (To audience) Annie was so careful with what little money she had. Well she had to be. She'd take in washing whenever she could and she was always down the pawnshop. When her Bob was working full time down the docks he'd be wearing boots at work, so Annie would pawn his shoes during the week and get them back for him to wear at the weekend! And then there was the Tallyman. Now, he'd come 'round and sell her something on the never never, you know...

Tallyman: Afternoon Mrs Williams. Anything I can interest you in today?

ANNIE: Well. I do need some longjohns for my old man. Nice and thick, mind, what with this cold weather setting in.

Tallyman: I think I can help you out there.

ANNIE: And a set of nice blankets and some sheets if you've got them.

Tallyman: Righty Ho! It's your lucky day. There you go! *See you next week.*

LIL: (To audience) So she'd get these things, all new, from the Tallyman, but she didn't have to pay for them up front. She'd give him a shilling a week, see, pay him off bit by bit.

ANNIE hands the Tallyman a shilling and takes the blankets etc.

LIL: Then straight away she'd go down the pawnshop.

ANNIE: (To Pawnbroker, played by LIL) How much would you give me for these, then?

PAWNBROKER: (Inspecting them) Well.... They seem to be in reasonable condition. Let's say two shillings for the blankets and 1/6 for the sheets.

ANNIE: But they're brand new. Look at the quality!

PAWNBROKER: Alright, alright. Four shillings for the lot and not a penny more.

ANNIE: Ta.

PAWNBROKER: Here's your ticket, and remember.... If they're not collected in three months we sell them.

ANNIE: (Showing money to the audience) That way I'd have four shillings cash in my hand and I wouldn't be seeing the Tallyman for another week.

LIL: And if the worst came to the worst and she couldn't pay the pawnshop to get them back she could always sell her ticket to someone else.

ANNIE: You do what you can to get by and hope one day things'll get better. Well, they've got to, haven't they? They can't get any worse!!

SONG

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL

COAL MAN: (Offstage) Coal! Coalman!!

LIL: Oh it's Friday, isn't it? I'll just go in and get my purse.

LIL goes inside to mantelpiece

COAL MAN: Best CoalDerby Brights....Nutty Slacks.....

ANNIE: (To audience) Every week the coal man would come round regular. Half a crown a hundredweight, it was. Derby Brights was the best coal you could get. You had to be careful 'cos some of the other brands was all slack...It didn't burn.

LIL reappears with her purse

COAL MAN: Coal....Coalman!.... Alright now ladies? What can I do for you?

LIL: I'll have half a hundredweight please, ta.

COAL MAN: (Picking up sack for Lil) There you go.

COAL MAN turns to ANNIE

COAL MAN: Any for you, Mrs Williams?

ANNIE: No. Not this week.

COAL MAN: (Opening his account book) Oh... Now I've got it down here that you still haven't paid for the last lot.

ANNIE: I've been up the yard Mister and they said they'd give me another week

COAL MAN: Right you are then...

ANNIE: I'll settle up before you come 'round next time.

COAL MAN: Ta ra then, ladies. (Calling) ~~Best Coal... Derby Brights... 12/6~~...Coalman... Coal

COAL MAN EXITS

LIL: (To ANNIE) Have you got enough to get by?

ANNIE: Well we've still got some of yours' and nearly half a bag of slack out the back. That should do us for a while.

LIL: (To audience) Slack was like coaldust. You'd put it all around a big lump of coal on the fire and it would make it last longer.

ANNIE: And I'll be sending the boys out for some more tarry blocks. (To Audience) We used them to keep the fire going. The fumes they give off are good for your chest, like when my youngest had whooping cough.

LIL: (To ANNIE) But all that grit and stone they're covered with, spits out like anything when the fire heats it...Flies out everywhere!

LIL and ANNIE do Tarry Block "Spitting" Impression!

ANNIE: (To LIL) We'll put anything on our fire to keep it going, we will! Nothing ever goes in the dustbin. Potato peelings, tea leaves, whatever! If it burns, it goes on the fire. That's what I say! Anyway I've got to get on, Lil. Get that washing off the line for a start. It'll be as stiff as a board in this weather! (To audience) I have to dry it all outside 'cos damp clothes are bad for my little Alice.

LIL: Should have seen the load I did the other day. Hours I'd spent washing and thanks to that bloomin' fog there was soot smuts all the way over.

ANNIE: Still. It's all got to be done, hasn't it?

ANNIE EXITS and LIL wraps herself up in a coat and scarf. She carries a basket and goes off to the MARKET.

LIL: One thing I never complained about was going down the market on a Friday! Oooh I loved it there!! East Lane! That's where I went. Famous market place, that. Winter and Summer it was there, but it bustled more in the Winter!

MARKET SONG

I've Never Seen A Straight Banana!!

I've seen lots of funny things in my time
But there's one thing I've not seen up to now.
For years and years and years I've kept on searching
But I always seem to have bad luck somehow.
To find the thing I'm searching for all 'round the world I've been
And now I'm goin' tell you what it is I haven't seen.

CHORUS

Well I've never never never never, I've never seen a straight banana
I've searched every town ,I've searched every town
I've seen bananas standing up, and seen them lying down
I've tried everywhere to find one
Africa,Jamaica and Havana,
But I've never never never never,
I've never seen a straight banana.

I've seen cabbages I have,with nobs on,
I've seen lovely red tomatoes turning blue.
I may say I've seen scarlet runners running
And I've seen them when they couldn't walk too.
I've seen some new potatoes with their eyes all filled with tears,
Because an onion friend of theirs got sentenced to three years.

LIL: Because it was so cold the first thing you'd do was go to the Sarsaparilla stall. There was a chap there...

SARSAPARILLA MAN: Afternoon,Love.Fancy a drop.Warm your cockles it will,and I can tell from over here that they need warming!!

LIL: Don't be so cheeky! (To Audience) He had a barrow with a big old tank on it,full of boiling water. (S.MAN acts out following) He'd pour some Sarsaparilla...that's a herb,that is,from the bark of a tree or something,and you'd drink that. We used to have it hot.

S.MAN hands her the bottle.

S.MAN: How's that for you,Mrs?

LIL: Ummm.Lovely.(To Audience) Went down a treat in that weather,I can tell you!

S.MAN: (To another customer) Glass of quinine,Mister? Keep the cold out?

LIL: (To Audience) He'd sell that to the old soldiers who'd been abroad in the war. Everywhere you looked there were people trying to sell you things to help you stay warm.

EMBROCATION WOMAN: Keeps you healthy.Keeps you strong.

LIL: This one lady,she sold bottles of embrocation that she'd made up.

E.WOMAN: Come on Madam.Got to keep the cold out somehow,ain't you?

LIL: So I'd buy that and all, and rub it on me. I think it was turps or something! But it did the job.And every market day Bob Strong'd be there.Now he was a character and a half! Used to sell Phosphorene,he did.Advertised as a tonic.

BOB

STRONG: Put a spoonful in a glass of water and it'll make you strong and healthy.Guaranteed,Luv! And if you don't believe me...see what it's done for my son!!

LIL: (To Audience) And he'd bring out this boy,a strong looking lad,'bout twelve or thirteen he was and Bob'd say:

BOB: See that.Look at those muscles! A fine strapping lad who takes his tonic every day.

BOB's son (Played by ANNIE) struts around.

LIL: I never bought the stuff myself but I'd always go and have look at the boxing.It was all part of the entertainment! Then I'd go and do the food shopping. Somedays...just for a little treat,I'd buy a couple of eels...

EEL SELLER: How about these ones, Madam?

LIL: They look fine to me.

EEL SELLER: Cut their heads off for you, shall I?

LIL: If you would. My little one, Sid, he always starts screaming when I do it at home!

EEL SELLER: Couple of beauties you've got there!

EEL SELLER cuts their heads off and wraps them up.
LIL puts them in her basket.

LIL: Or sometimes I'd get some live mussels...

EEL SELLER: Coming right up!

LIL: I'd put them in a bucket with some oatmeal and fatten them up for a nice Sunday meal. But today I've got to watch the pennies, what with my Joe being laid off. Think I'll get some tripe and cow heel, do it in milk. I've got some onions and carrots at home. I know Sid's not too keen on the heel part, 'cos of the gristle, but he loves the milky gravy. He'll mop it all up with some bread. Which reminds me, I'd better get a move on. They'll be home from school soon.

OFF USR

Second verse of STRAIGHT BANANA

We return to the Classroom. Schoolbell rings.

MOLLY: Even at school it was still cold. We had what I call a "smoky stover" in the corner of the classroom with a big fireguard 'round it, but unless your desk was right next to it you still felt cold. One day last week we had Mr Hitchcock giving us a History lesson.

Mr Hitchcock: I've written down some dates on the board...

MOLLY: We were all shivering because the open coal fire was almost out and the room was freezing.

MR H: I'm just going out for a minute, Class. I want you all to write down what I've written here, and no talking while I'm gone.

MOLLY: Well the minute he went we all jumped up saying how cold we were and we leapt about to try and get warm.

She does so.

MOLLY: I looked at the fire, just smouldering in the grate, and I looked at the coal scuttle and the shovel and I decided to put some coal on the fire.

MOLLY mimes doing this.

MOLLY: I poked it about. The smoke rose and the sparks flew and back comes Mr Hitchcock.

MOLLY runs back to her desk. MR H. sits. MOLLY continues writing. MR H notices the fire.

MR H: (Gently) Who was it that has kindly thought to put some more coal on the fire while I was gone?

MOLLY: Me! Me, Sir!! It was my idea!

MOLLY shoots her hand up and stands

MR H: Just who do you think you are Molly Carter? Think you can stoke up the fire whenever the fancy takes you? You're to stay behind after school in detention.

MOLLY: (To Audience) And I had to write the story of George Stephenson and the Rocket in my best handwriting, and I was not to make any spelling mistakes else I'd have to do the whole lot again. Well I did as I was told but I was late home, so I got a good ticking off from my Mother as well! That had happened last week so I was still on my best behaviour, but today it was Wilkin's turn to get into trouble.. How it happened was that he got a bad case of the snuffles...

WILKINS Sniffs.

TEACHER: Wilkins! Stop that sniffing use your handkerchief.

WILKINS: Sorry, Miss.

MOLLY: Not many of us had proper handkerchiefs so we'd make do with pieces from old pillowcases or old shirt. But in the winter when the boys had runny noses they'd draw the cuff of their jersey across their nose. "Cuffing it" That's what it was called.

WILKINS sniffs and wipes his nose by Cuffing it.

TEACHER: Wilkins!!! I will not have you doing that in my classroom!! It's not only disgusting but it's also unhygienic.

WILKINS: I can't help it, Miss. I've got a cold.

TEACHER: That's perfectly obvious, but you MUST use your handkerchief. Now where is it?

WILKINS: It's ...erm...it's in the cloakroom, Miss.

TEACHER: Well, go and get it then.

WILKINS Exits.

TEACHER: (To Molly and "Others") I will not tolerate bad manners in this classroom.

WILKINS returns with a huge silk handkerchief in a long strange shape.

TEACHER: Is that yours'?

WILKINS: Yes Miss.

TEACHER: Right. Now sit down and be quiet!

MOLLY: We all thought that was the end of it, but at the end of class, just when we were all packing up to go home, there was this terrible scream! Miss Dickenson ran out to the cloakroom where the noise came from and she came back holding up a coat that had all the lining ripped out of it.

TEACHER: Finnus has just found his coat in this terrible condition. No one is to go home until I find the culprit... We can wait here all night until somebody owns up...

Suddenly Wilkins sneezes very loudly. He looks sheepishly up at the teacher

TEACHER: (Angrily) I said "Use Your Handkerchief"!!

WILKINS takes out the hanky. It is the same material as the lining. TEACHER goes over to him, and takes ahold of him by the ear.

TEACHER: Right Wilkins. I think you've got some serious explaining to do, young man.

MOLLY: At four o'clock when we started home it was just beginning to snow a bit and the paving stones were as slippery as ice. In the summer it was different, you'd go out and play, but Winter time we'd come in from school and that would be it. At the weekends though, if it was snowing we'd go up Canobie road and play.

SID enters and sits on sledge with MOLLY

SONG: ICICLE JOE

Icicle Joe the Eskimo, he lives upon the ice,
He says it's rather nice, when he cuts himself a slice.
Icicle Joe the Eskimo, he's always on the go,
When he fishes he gives three wishes
And then a spear he'll throw.
Then he claps his hands and he stamps his feet
He says it keeps him nice and warm when walking down the
street
Icicle Joe the Eskimo, he's got a frozen nose
And he always says whenever it snows "Jolly good luck to the
Eskimos!"

MOLLY: One day we were out on the sledge that Uncle Jack had made us and we went down so fast we got out of control. I wanted to stop it but I couldn't, and at the bottom there was Forest Hill Road and all the cars! So we went right down across Forest Hill Road and halfway up Brenchley Gardens before we could stop. We could have been run over about ten times!

They finally stop. MOLLY is shaken.
SID is perfectly happy.

SID: Ooh, that was great! Let's do it again!!

MOLLY: Uncle Jack might mend the toboggan if we ask him...

SID: (To Audience) It got all smashed up, see.

MOLLY: And it was you that got it smashed!

SID: Wasn't my fault. That tree came out of nowhere!

MOLLY: Uncle Jack had made one out of fish boxes. Wooden boxes with a thick wire band nailed on 'round them. He pulled the wire off and put them under as runners.

SONG: Second verse of Icicle Joe

MOLLY and SID arrive home.

LIL: There you both are. Get those things off quick and warm yourself by the fire.

SID: I want to make a snowman and stick a carrot in for his nose..

MOLLY: There ain't enough snow yet.

SID: Well, I'll just wait outside 'til there is!

LIL: (To Sid) Don't go far and come in when I call you.

SID: Yes Mum. (He runs off)

MOLLY: Sometimes I thought my brother was a penny short of a shilling.

LIL: Molly, I need you to help me with some cooking.

MOLLY: (To Audience) It didn't seem fair being a girl. Sid was allowed to play out much longer than me. (To LIL) What are we making, Mum?

LIL: Bread and Butter Pudding.

MOLLY: Ummm! (To Audience) My Mum was a lovely cook. She used to say to me:

LIL: Molly, you should watch me.

MOLLY: And I wasn't a bad cook myself..But I sometimes found it difficult to concentrate...

LIL: Now. Let's see..... What do we need? One pint of milk...

MOLLY: Mum could also do a lovely Bacon and Onion pudding. I liked that!

LIL: Two eggs.... Two tablespoons of flour....

MOLLY: She'd make it with suet and roll it out...

LIL: Two ounces of raisins..

MOLLY: Then she'd line it with bacon and onion. Roll it up, put it in a cloth and boil it.

LIL: Molly! Concentrate on what we're making NOW! Or you'll never learn...

MOLLY: Sorry Mum.

LIL: Four slices of white bread.

MOLLY: (To Audience) Or she'd do rice pudding, baked slowly in the oven 'til the skin went brown on the top and the rice bit is all firm...

LIL: A knob of butter...

MOLLY: And you could stand a spoon on its own in the middle!!

LIL: Pay attention!

MOLLY: Sorry, Mum.

LIL: And a little nutmeg. That's all you need. Now, young lady, you repeat back to me all the ingredients I've just used.....

MOLLY: Ermm... There was erm....

LIL: Well?

MOLLY: Er... I don't remember. I wasn't really listening.

LIL: ^{you wasn't was you?} No you weren't, were you? Now next time you pay attention! Molly. Now perhaps I can put my feet up for a minute before your Dad gets home. I do hope he's had some luck.

MOLLY: Don't worry Mum. He'll find something. I just know he will...

LIL: But what if he don't????

JOE ENTERS

LIL: Joe!

Slight pause while LIL looks at Joe hopefully and Joe sits down by the fire.

LIL: Up to your room Molly. (MOLLY EXITS) I'll make you a cuppa, love.

JOE: Don't bother. I'm going down to the pub in a bit.

LIL: (Restrained) Look, I know it's hard for you but we're going to have to watch what we spend now...

JOE: (Producing some money from his pocket) That's enough for me to buy a pint, isn't it?...

LIL: Where did you get that? /

JOE: That guttering job. Did it this afternoon and she paid me in cash.

LIL: Oh Joe.

JOE: Weighed a ton! Cast iron, it was. But it was worth it! She's a few other jobs need doing as well. Reckon I've got work there for a couple of weeks!

LIL: (Slightly worried) Well I suppose that'll tide us over for a bit.

JOE: And besides, I'm only human...

LIL: What? /

JOE: Well a man can't do two jobs at once, can he?

LIL: What are you on about?

JOE: I'm starting full time in a fortnight building forty new properties down Bellingham Way!!!

LIL leaps up and hugs him.

LIL: (Nearly crying) Oh Joe !! /

JOE: I dropped by Mr Blake's. You know? My old foreman? He's in charge of picking his team and he said he'd take me on!

LIL: Oh that's wonderful!!! /

MOLLY ENTERS

MOLLY: Can I come down yet?

LIL: 'Course you can love. Your Dad's got himself another job! /

MOLLY: (To Joe) I said he would, didn't I, Mum?

LIL: Yes you did, love!

JOE: She knows her old Dad wouldn't let her down.

LIL: I know that too, Joe.

JOE: There's plenty of other women out there would snap me up if they had half a chance!! They're all after my money now, not to mention my good looks and my charm!!

LIL: You wish!

JOE: But since I'm an old fashioned kind of a chap I think I'll stay with you and the kids and that way we'll all be rich together.

SONG:

It's a hap hap happy day
Toodle loodle loodle loodle lay
You and me and us and we
All the clouds have rolled away (rpt)

The sun shines bright and the world's alright
It's a hap hap happy day.
Four and twenty sunbeams are dancing 'round my face
Four score and twenty more are dancing every place (rpt)

You can't go wrong if you sing this song
It's a hap hap happy day!

JOE: Right! Well I'm off down to The Dog and Duck to celebrate, if that's alright with you, Mrs Carter!!

LIL: Go on then. Here! Joe! Buy a half pint for Gran while you're down there, and pop in on your way and tell her to warm the poker up. Hang on, I'll get you a jug.

LIL gets a jug for the beer

MOLLY: I didn't know Gran drank beer!

LIL: Well it's sort of medicinal.

JOE: Is that what she tells you?

LIL: Joe! Tut! (To Audience) She warms a poker in the fire 'til it's red hot and then Joe comes back from the pub with some beer and she puts the poker in it and drinks it warm.

JOE: That way it gets rid of all the gas. (He winks to audience!) She says it goes down a treat on a winter's night.

LIL: Well go on then, if you're going.

JOE: See you later then. Bye!

JOE EXITS

LIL tends the fire(?) humming to herself as she does so.

MOLLY: Mum?

LIL: What is it, love?

MOLLY: Can we make a winter warmer for going out tomorrow?

LIL: 'Course you can. Have you got everything you need?

MOLLY: Erm..Oh! Have you got an old cocoa tin or something?

LIL: Let's see (She rummages around a cupboard) Here's one. I was going to give it to your Dad for his paintbrushes. Still he won't miss what he never had, eh?!!

MOLLY: Thanks, Mum. And can I have some old bits of paper or rag?

LIL: I thought you was meant to be the one making this!

SID Appears

SID: Making what?

MOLLY: A winter warmer.

SID: Oh great! Can I help?

MOLLY: I suppose so. Go and get some bits of twig from out the back.

SID Exits

MOLLY: Now, all we need is a bit of string...

LIL: I can't help you with that love, we've run out.

MOLLY: (Devastated!) Oh!!! Sid! We can't do it! We've got no string!!

SID: I know! I know! (He reaches deep into his pocket and produces a conker)
This is a seventeener.....

MOLLY: You sure you don't mind, Sid?

SID: (Taking the string off the conker with reverence) No. You can have it.

MOLLY ties the string through the two holes near the top of the tin and then proudly swings it back and forth.

MOLLY: Now all we have to do is get Dad to make some holes in it.

SID: Yeah! And it'll keep our hands all warm.

LIL: That's right. Winter warmers tomorrow but now it's bath time.

MOLLY/SID Aw...Mum!!

LIL: Did you think I'd forgotten it's Friday? Go and get the tub, Sid.

MOLLY: (To audience) We bathed in front of the fire. In a big tin bath. Used to keep topping it up with hot water.

LIL: Right then. Who's going to be first?

MOLLY/SID: Me! Mum!! Me!

MOLLY: (To Audience) We weren't that keen on baths but when we had to have them we'd fight to be first 'cos we both had to use the same water and the second one in'd get it all cold and dirty.

LIL: Now, let's see... Molly was first last week so that means it's your turn, Sid.

SONG: Reprise of AIN'T WE GOT FUN.
During song MOLLY and SID bath and put on their
nightshirt and dress.

LIL: Now you two, it's time for your liquorice powder.

MOLLY and SID take bath offstage and chatter on the
way

MOLLY: (To SID) I'll give you two marbles if you take mine..

SID: That's naughty. I'm going to tell Mum.

MOLLY: Three marbles, then?

SID: Alright. Give us 'em.

LIL: I heard that! You can both take your own. It's good for you. Clears you out.
(To MOLLY) I'm on to you girl. I know you got Sid to take both lots last week, and he was doing the back door trot all day Saturday. Weren't you, Sid?

The children take a spoonful each.

LIL: Now I'll go and put the brick in your bed. *- to bed*

MOLLY: (To Audience) Every night Mum would heat a brick in the oven, wrap it up in an old towel and put it in the bed for us to put our feet on. Come on Sid, let's warm our bums before we go up!!

LIL: You watch your language, girl!! *OFF J.L.R.*

MOLLY and SID turn their backsides to the fire and lift up their nightclothes.

MOLLY: Ready, Sid?

SID: Ready.

MOLLY and SID run off and jump into bed.

SID: There wasn't enough for a snowman. I waited and waited.....

MOLLY: There will be by tomorrow.

SID: Do you think?

MOLLY: (Looking out the window) Look, Sid. It's snowing really hard now.

SID joins her. LIL comes in.

LIL: Come on now. Settle down, you two.

SID: But it's so cold, Mum.

LIL: Well breathe down the bedclothes then.

The children do so then settle down..

LIL: Sleep tight.Molly.Sleep tight Pudding..(She kisses them)..and you can dream of the lovely Christmas we're all going to have now your Dad's found work again...

MOLLY: (Very very drowsily) Umm...A proper christmas.Hope it's going to be a white one this year...

SID: (Almost asleep) Hope I'm going to get a Meco set from Father Christmas..

MOLLY: Listen,Sid! Mum's playing the piano downstairs....

SONG: FEATHERBED LANE

That sly old Gentleman from Featherbed Lane
Is watching you, he's peeping through your window pane
He's gathered sand from the skies that glitters and gleams
He'll sprinkle your eyes with dreams
He'll make your little heart so happy and gay
You'll ride a rocking horse along the milky way
Why stay awake? Better take that slumber train
With the sly old gentleman from Featherbed Lane.

SID and MOLLY go off to sleep and then EXIT.

LIL: (To Audience) What a day!! Joe losing his job ...Oooh that put the wind up me! But it looks like we'll be alright now,thank goodness.And at Christmas time you need the extra cash,don't you? We always have a houseful here.Aunts, Uncles,cousins,and Gran of course. She's here and all!.... And it's the one time of the year we have a fire in the front room!A lovely roaring fire,and everyone 'round the piano.

ENTER JOE

JOE: Well we made it through another year,didn't we Lil?

LIL: Yeah....Looks like the Bailiff won't be knocking on OUR door :/

JOE: He's not getting us this time round.That's for sure.

LIL: Joe....??

JOE: Yes love?

LIL: I feel so bad about Annie and her family....What are they going to do? It's not going to be much of a Christmas for them,is it? No money...no fancy food...no presents...

JOE: There's only one thing left for them to do then,isn't there? They'll have to come over here and spend Christmas day with us!!!

LIL: Oh Joe.That's good of you... I can't wait to tell Annie...Thankyou.

JOE: This Christmas is going to be the best ever,with all the trimmings.We'll have thrupenny bits in the pudding for the children...

LIL: A bottle of port for you..

JOE: And a golden tiara for you...

LIL: Oh,Joe.Don't be soft !

JOE: (To audience) My Lil. She's the best wife a man could ever have.

END SONG: SWEETHEART WE'LL NEVER GROW OLD.

THE END