

“WHEN THE LIGHTS GO ON AGAIN.....”

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FOR AGE EXCHANGE THEATRE TRUST

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When the lights go on again

SONG: ROLL OUT THE BARRELL

THE CAST ARRIVE THROUGH THE AUDIENCE.

MAN: Come on girl, get a move on.

WOMAN: What is it?

MAN: We're all going up to town.

WOMAN: Whatever for?

MAN: To join the crowds, to celebrate!

ROLL OUT THE BARREL REPRISE

NEWS REPORTER: Here in the heart of London the crowds have gathered to celebrate the victory. Everyone's in terrific spirits. They're packed so tight you could walk on their heads. Sardines have nothing on the crowds in Trafalgar Square and Piccadilly.

WOMAN: Where are we going now?

MAN: Up the Mall and along to the Palace.

WOMAN: So on we went - thousands of us! - through Admiralty Arch and into the Mall. A huge 'V' was in the sky, made by searchlights, and there were bonfires everywhere, throwing flames into the air. After all the years of blackout and blue lightbulbs, it was glorious to be able to have light around us which was of our own making, not caused by German bombs and incendiaries.

ALL FREEZE FOR A MOMENT.

GIRL: I'd been evacuated with my baby to a village in Derbyshire. The people in the village lit a bonfire on the nearest open space with dancing and singing. Me, I got to see all this from the door of the house, my thoughts not on the end of the fighting and bombing, but oh, to get home to my own house in Deptford, my own gas stove, my own bed. And most of all, to see my dear old Dad again. He slept all through the bombing at his old shop in Deptford Broadway.

MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME - THERE'LL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND (AND UNDERSCORING THE FOLLOWING).

NEWS REPORTER: A man we seem to have seen before somewhere looks down from a balcony in Whitehall. Mr Churchill stands on the balcony of the Ministry of Health. He's wearing that famous boiler suit and has the audacity to put on his famous black hat. No-one could say that it goes with the boiler suit but you could hear what a cheer it raised from the crowd. (CHEERS) Mr Churchill is conducting the singing of this song. This has suddenly become a very moving moment. Will you listen please.

MAN AND WOMAN SING -

*Land of hope and glory
Mother of the free -
How shall we extol thee
Who are born of thee?*

MUSIC STOPS; MOMENTARY FREEZE .

SAILOR 1: VE Day - that was when I deserted. I just came out on the train, down to London, went to Whitehall and joined in the festivities - everyone dancing, saluting everybody. And the next day I went back. No-one knew I'd been gone.

*Wider still and wider, shall thy bounds be set
God who made thee mighty
Make thee mightier yet
God who made thee mighty
Make thee mightier yet.*

LAND ARMY GIRL: We were in the Land Army but we *had* to get to London that evening. It was one great huge party. What did it matter if we'd have to sit on the platform the rest of the night and catch the milk train home? It was fantastic! And I was back on the tractor at seven in the morning.

MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME.

WOMAN: Come on - right along to the memorial!

MAN: I'm going to climb up it - get a better view of the palace!

MAN STARTS TO CLIMB.

MOMENTARY FREEZE.

VERA: I was trying to finish a rather important piece of work. Somebody rushed in the office and said -

COLLEAGUE: It's over, it's over! Come on - put that down!

VERA: No, I'm finishing my work. You're telling me that the war is over? Well, one expected that. That's all right.

COLLEAGUE: 'All right'?

VERA: And I continued my work until I finished it. That was me, the way I liked things. You felt a great sense of relief that you could cope and that you could plan for a better life, but you didn't go riotously joyful or anything.

MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME.
ACROSS THE MUSIC -

WOMAN: (CALLING) I just can't believe it - no more war!
I was 11 when it started and now I'm 17!
No more war!

MUSIC STOPS; MOMENTARY FREEZE.
MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME.
WITH INCREASING VOLUME -

ALL: We want the King!
We want the King!
We want the King!

WOMAN: They must be able to hear this miles away!

MAN: Here they are!

CHEER.
MUSIC STOPS; MOMENTARY FREEZE

SOLDIER 2: I was in Naples, in Italy, with all my bones broken. In a hospital where they put the wounded having to wait for a ship to bring you home. VE Day I didn't feel anything. All of a sudden the men are going barmy shooting off rifles and that and one comes in and says 'The war's over. Don't go out or anything. They're going mad out there.' Well, I wasn't going out was I?

MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME.
MAN AND WOMAN ARE DANCING THE CONGA

WOMAN: No more blackout!

MAN: No more bombs!

WOMAN: No more going down the shelters!

MUSIC STOPS; MOMENTARY FREEZE.

YOUNG WOMAN: I felt... numb. No feeling of euphoria. We'd just had confirmation of the death of a friend of mine on a bombing raid. And earlier in the war my young brother had been killed in a similar way - and so many of the boys from the church wouldn't be coming home. I felt a bit like a robot. I remember just finishing my household chores. Then I sat by the window with my 20-month-old daughter on my lap. Six years out of our lives. And I knew it would never be the same again. I went to bed early that night, and cried myself to sleep.

MUSIC AND ACTION RESUME.

WOMAN: Every nationality was there, cheering, really going mad. We were so happy it was over, I don't think we thought about anything else. Lots of people fainted, the excitement and the joy just too much for them. The war was over at last. The lights were on again!

SONG: *I'm Going To Get Lit Up*

*When the nations lose their war-sense
And the world gets back its horse-sense
What a day for celebration that will be.
When somebody shouts 'The fight's up!'
And 'It's time to put the lights up!'
Then the first thing to be lit up will be me.*

*I'm going to get lit up when the lights go up in London
I'm going to get lit up as I've never been before
You will find me on the tiles, you will find me wreathed in smiles
I'm going to get so lit up I'll be visible for miles*

*The city will sit up when the lights go up in London
We'll all be lit up as the Strand was only more, much more
And before the party's played out they will fetch the fire brigade out
To the littest uppest scene you ever saw*

PEGGY: The street party Mum and I were planning with our neighbours, we were all scrimping and saving every little bit of food and tea we could.

MUM: It's going to be such a big do, Peg, with singing and music.

PEGGY: We cut old sheets into zigzags and dyed them with red and blue dolly dyes, sewn together and draped across the street. Flags came out from nowhere.

MUM: We were still on rations. We didn't really have a lot.

PEGGY: Old Mr. Grey's given us some tins of ham and stuff. He must've been storing it up in case there was an invasion.

MUM: We made jellies with fruit juice, gelatine and water. People made fairy cakes, blancmanges, spam sandwiches.

PEGGY: You all took it and it was all pooled together. Everybody put in.

FRED: Trestle tables covered with sheets and long benches each side placed in the centre of the road and the traffic was diverted, not that there was much traffic in them days.

MAUD: (LOOKING ON) I didn't celebrate. I had nothing to celebrate. Losing my brother and my husband lost his brother. I lost all my home. I didn't feel like doing anything that day. There was a street party for the kids and I just looked you know.

PEGGY: A lot of people gave me sweet coupons and I took all the coupons I'd collected up to the man in the shop. I said to him, "Do you think you could make them all up into little bags for the children?" He said "Yeah, it would be nice if all the children had a little present. All the children were pleased as punch about that.

ENTER PAT, AND VIC AS KIDS IN IMPROVISED COSTUMES.

PAT: We dressed up, and it was nice to do things with my cousins because I'd lost contact with all my friends while I'd been evacuated. Once cousin was dressed in white sheets as Britannia

PEGGY BECOMES THE COUSIN, IS DRAPED AND GIVEN A TRIDENT FOR BRITANNIA; THEY ALL STRIKE POSE)

PAT: Another cousin Maria was the statue of liberty and I was Russia. I wore my aunty's blouse and bolero and a skirt made out of a Russian flag.

A BURST OF THE RED FLAG.

PAT: I danced and sang at the street party and I was happy the war was over, but I was sad too. Other people's fathers and older brothers would be coming home, but my dad wasn't coming back. He was in the Submarines. He and his shipmates died under the sea. For a long time I kept hoping and dreaming that he would come home but I knew I'd never see him again.

VIC: One of the soldiers who'd come back brought bars of chocolate for all us kids. He'd collected them from all the soldiers in his barracks. We had a smashing time.

PAT: There were games and races during the afternoon with prizes...

PAT: (WINNING RACE) 1/6 for the first prize!!

VIC: And sixpence for the third!!

PEGGY: On the day of the party my daughter Jenny developed chicken pox. Oh what a disappointment. We sat at the window watching the tables being set with all the goodies, flags out, children playing and sing-songs after tea, poor Jenny covered in spots and longing to get out. (THIS IS PLAYED OUT) Kind neighbours brought us lots of goodies and we could hear the music play so we had our little party indoors. Later in the day, there was a knock at the door...

CARL, A GERMAN POW STANDS AT THE DOOR. PEGGY IS SURPRISED AND JENNY CURIOUS.

CARL: Mrs. Knight? I want to thank you.

PEGGY: Oh Carl. (TO AUDIENCE) This German POW had worked with my cousin and he was stationed at a local camp. I'd always put an extra sandwich in my cousin's lunch box for Carl because I felt sorry for him.

CARL: You were very kind. I'll never forget what you did.

PEGGY: It was nothing. (TO AUDIENCE) I always hoped that if my husband was caught someone over there would treat him the same way.

CARL: I am leaving soon for Germany. I bought this for you and your husband.

PEGGY: They are wonderful. Did you make them yourself?

CARL NODS.

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) They were rope slippers. It must have taken him weeks.

CARL: And this is for your little girl. (JENNY COMES FORWARD)

PEGGY: I can't ask you in because she's got chicken pox.

ELSIE SCRATCHES TO ILLUSTRATE

PEGGY: Come and look Jenny.

JENNY: (UNPACKING A BROWN PACKAGE WITH A BIRD TABLE WITH PECKING BIRDS ON A STRING...A HOME-MADE TOY) It's lovely. (SHE PLAYS WITH IT) Thank you.

CARL: I am sorry that is all I could bring. It is my thank you and goodbye present.

PEGGY: Goodbye. Go safely. (TO AUDIENCE) I was so grateful to him for his kindness. I've never forgotten him.

JENNY: Then at night time, after all us children were put to bed, it was all the grown-ups.

PEGGY: We'd borrowed a tea urn from a place on the corner which used to be a shelter and they were taking it down. We had it with tea first and for the evening we filled it with beer. We took jugs up the pub and we put all the beer in the urn and put it on the table outside.

JOAN: My family's contribution to the street party was putting the radiogram outside in the front garden playing Ink Spots records and all the street came out to dance. I danced with a sailor who lived opposite. Unfortunately I was still only fourteen and I had to work the next day. My father said:

INKSPOTS SONG WHISPERING GRASS BEHIND THIS SEQUENCE.
MUSIC SUDDENLY STOPS.

FATHER: "Ten o'clock! Bed!"

JOAN: And he pulled the plug out. I was furious. We could have danced all night.

PEGGY: The lady opposite where we lived, Mrs. Hemmings, she had two men bring the piano out into the street. They got it through the window.

FRED: Every street had a makeshift stage with a piano and singing and dancing. I ran an electric light off my light in my front room and we had dancing and all that, and Mr Cammell from Bradall Street playing the piano, and a knees up and everything. There was one young girl whose voice was the image of Vera Lynn's.

WHEN THE LIGHTS GO ON AGAIN Vera Style leading into KNEES UP
MOTHER BROWN

ELSIE: We danced half the night, so happy that we wouldn't have to dive into a shelter ever again. It was lovely.

PEGGY: Everybody said after they'd never enjoyed themselves so much.

END OF PARTY WITH KNEES UP REPRISE.

FRED: After that everybody got back to work. You had to. Those who were coming home were trying to find work. They wanted to get back to work. Course, some of them weren't fit to work. They looked terrible. They didn't want unfit men. Some had to have hospital treatment, psychiatry and things like that. The war certainly had its after effects.

PEGGY AND MUM ARE FINISHING A "WELCOME HOME" SIGN
FOR BOB FROM BOTTLE TOPS NAILED INTO WOOD. THEY
HANG IT ON THE WALL. MUM GETS WEEPY AND GOES IN.

PEGGY: Bob'd written to say he was on his way and we were expecting him any day. I was worried about how Mum would react when my Bob came back. My brother Eddie was a gunner and he'd died out in India in 1944, drowned. He was Mum's favourite and she'd gone to pieces when she'd heard. For nights she roamed the streets looking for him, peering into all the water tanks, cos she couldn't believe he was gone. We've still got his last letter over the mantelpiece, written a week before he died. She read it aloud over and over again.

MUM: (READING LETTER) To Mrs Shelton, Grange Road Bermondsey. From
Gunner Shelton, number 5 Holding, Mobile AA Regiment, India Command.
Dear Mum -

SHE READS ON AND SON IN UNIFORM TAKES UP LETTER

EDDIE: Sorry this letter is being scribbled as I'm writing this on the quick. By the time you receive it I shall be on the move. (MUM REACTS) I hope that Gerry isn't making a nuisance of himself over there. (WORRIED AS HE THINKS ABOUT IT) We had two bottles of beer last week. Only thing

was, it was Indian beer, but not too bad. Enough to whet my whistle.
(MUCH CHEWING OF PEN) There isn't much more I can say except
Cheerio, TTFN, Take care of yourself. Love to all the family. (BLOWS
KISS AND LETTER AND GOES)

MUM: (FINISHING IT) Your loving son, Eddie. Love to all the family. Your
loving son, Eddie. (SHE GOES OFF WITH LETTER SHAKING HER
HEAD)

PEGGY: Now she can't really bear to think about it. We don't mention it any more.
(SWEEPS ENTRANCE READY FOR BOB) And now Bob was coming
home. I wasn't too sure how Jenny would react to seeing him. She'd been
surrounded by women, and she'd hardly seen her father, except when he
put in an occasional appearance on leaves. She was used to having me all
to herself. I always had a photo of Bob in his uniform on the sideboard. I
used to say to Jenny, (JENNY COMES IN AND HUGS HER) "That's
Daddy." (JENNY LOOKS AT PICTURE) I'd say "Say Goodnight to
Daddy." (JENNY KISSES PHOTO).

SONG: *WHEN DADDY COMES HOME.*

*Your Daddy's gone a long, long way
We know tht he'll come back some day
And he'll have such a lot to say
That day when Daddy comes home*

*He's never been away before
That's why we miss him all the more
And we'll be waiting at the door
That day when Daddy comes home*

*And in your picture book you'll read a different story
Because you'll find your fairy tale has all come true
And while the stars begin to peep
It's time for you to go to sleep
So kneel and pray that God will keep you safe
Till Daddy comes home.*

JENNY: *When's Daddy coming home?*

PEGGY: Won't be long now. (KISSES HER) Sleep tight.

JENNY GOES.

PEGGY: I don't think I though Bob would come back, and that we'd meet up again. And then, when I heard he was on his way, I dreamed about what a beautiful loving time we'd have, like one long leave.

BOB: I didn't think I'd come back. No, I didn't. And I didn't know if Peggy'd come through the bombing in London. The times I came home on leave, I thought she was more dangerous here than what we was out there. And now I'm here. She's still here.

SONG: THE HOMECOMING WALTZ

*I can be gay though you're far from me
And I will tell you why
Each passing day means we soon will be
Together you and I*

*Dance the homecoming waltz with me
What a homecoming that will be
I don't need to tell you I've missed you so
Funny how slowly the days can go
Let the melody as we sway
Tell you what I've been waiting to say
Now all our goodbyes are history
With the homecoming waltz for me*

*I'm making plans for that happy day
It won't be long till then
You'll be my partner when dreams come true
And we can waltz again*

*Dance the homecoming waltz with me
What a homecoming that will be
I don't need to tell you I've missed you so
Funny how slowly the days can go
Let the melody as we sway
Tell you what I've been waiting to say
Now all our goodbyes are history
with the homecoming waltz for me*

BOB ENTERS KITBAG ON SHOULDER AND BIG BOX UNDER ARM

BOB: I'm home. I can't believe it.

PEGGY: Hello, love. (HE CRIES. SHE GOES UP TO HIM, HUGS HIM) (TO AUDIENCE) He just stood there and cried with his kit bag on his shoulder.

(THEY KISS. THEN SHE STANDS BACK TO LOOK AT HIM.)

PEGGY: He looked very thin and he'd not had a wash or a haircut.

SLIGHTLY AWKWARD PAUSE

PEGGY: Better get you in the bath. You're a scruffy looking soldier. (SHE ORGANISES TIN BATH AND BUCKETS)

BOB: What do you expect? We've just crossed France on a Gerry train with no lights and no food. It took two days, cos every bridge we came to, we had to get out and walk across in case they were mined. I've come straight off a troop ship.

PEGGY: I filled the bath and left him to it. (TO AUDIENCE) He had this enormous cardboard box with him and I wondered what was inside. I thought it might be a present for me and Jenny or some food, mushrooms, a ham.

BOB: Will you bring me in a cup of tea? (TO AUDIENCE) Being back, it was a bit awkward at first cos you'd been away so long. You was a bit of a stranger to them. And of course you did change in that time...five years... you was a different person when you came back.

PEGGY: You'll never believe this, but I wouldn't look at him in the bath. I took him his tea and said (CLOSES HER EYES) "Here you are", and I wouldn't look. (SHE GOES AWAY WHILE HE BATHS)

BOB: (CONTINUES BATHING) One of the greatest reaction when I first came back was that there was nobody I knew. I went in June '39 and came out in June '45. That's a long time. I did all the whole war. So when I came back, there was nobody I knew. They'd all dispersed. (STARTS TO GET INTO DEMOB OUTFIT FROM BATH WITH MUCH TOWEL ROUTINE) They gave me this demob suit and a trilby hat and these shoes that always hurt my feet. And there was a mac with a belt. (HE IS NOW FULLY DRESSED)

PEGGY: (COMES IN AND IS STARTLED BY TRANSFORMATION. SPEAKS TO AUDIENCE) (TO BOB) So that's what was in the box. (TO AUDIENCE) I think it was at that moment I realised that Bob was home for good. As for Jenny....well she didn't want to know.

JENNY: (TO PEGGY) Is he staying here with us?

PEGGY: Yes of course he is.

JENNY: How long for?

PEGGY: For always darling.

JENNY: Why isn't he going home?

PEGGY: This is his home now. (TO AUDIENCE) She was absolutely petrified of him. She wouldn't stay in the room with him. (JENNY CLINGS TO MUM) If I went to the loo she would come and wait outside the door for me. And she was always saying,

JENNY: When's that man going home?

PEGGY: It was very difficult for Bob. And when it came to bedtime it was worse.

AS BOB PREPARES FOR BED -

JENNY: That's my place. (CRYING)

PEGGY: It took quite a long time to settle that score. She'd never had to share me, you see. As far as she was concerned I belonged to her. It must have been puzzling for her. Before Bob came home, Jenny and I had done everything together. And she was such a helpful little soul really. I remember once when I'd ordered some lino, and I was always going in the shop to see if it was in. It went on like this for weeks and then one day it arrived. And I said "When will it be delivered?" Well, the man said, "Delivered? You're joking. Take it or leave it. I can't keep it for you." So there I was with a roll of lino and a little girl of four years old and about a mile to walk home. Well, I held one end of the lino and Jenny held the other. Of course she kept dropping her end.

JENNY: It's heavy Mummy. It keeps slipping.

PEGGY: And I was shouting at her, "Hold your end up!" Poor little love. I feel quite ashamed of myself when I think of it now. It took us a long time but we did eventually get it home and we both sat down and cried. But we soon got over it and then started laughing. (THEY CUDDLE) So you see, up to when Bob came home, I'd been the sole person in her life. But gradually she accepted him and we began to get to know each other again.

THREE OF THEM DANCE HOMECOMING WALTZ AND POSE FOR FAMILY PHOTOS.

BOB: Better go and sort out me old tools and get myself a job. And I'll see to all the bills now.

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) And actually I thought, 'Oh, that's good!'

A SHORT BURST OF "PICK YOURSELF UP, DUST YOURSELF"

*Nothing's impossible I have found
For when my chin is on the ground
I pick myself up, dust myself off
And start all over again.*

*Don't lose your confidence if you slip
Be grateful for a sudden trip
And pick yourself up, dust yourself off
And start all over again.*

VERA: I'd worked very hard, as we all had in the Civil Service during the War. 52 hours a week and extra as well. I'd been promoted to a responsible position, but I wasn't what was known as a permanent civil servant.

SHE SITS AT HER DESK. THEN SMART NEW MAN ENTERS

NEW MAN: Ah good morning, Miss.. er -

VERA: Miss Wilkins actually.

NEW MAN: Miss Wilkins. Yes of course. (INDICATES LOWER DESK) This will be your desk from now on. (VERA RELUCTANTLY MOVES)

NEW MAN: If you could just type this.

SLIGHT PAUSE.

NEW MAN: Please.

VERA: (TO AUDIENCE) All right, I was a conscript, the war was over, but I don't see why I should go to the bottom on the lowest salary?
(SUDDENLY STANDS UP, TURNS TO MAN) Well, why have I got to be humiliated and go to the very bottom?

SHE THROWS HIS LETTER AT HIM. HE IS LOFTILY AMUSED.

VERA: I later learned that those that did accept, and accepted Grade Three, which was the lowest form of life in the Civil Service, never got out of it.

SHE WALKS OFF.

REPRISE OF "PICK YOURSELF UP".

*Work like a soul inspired
Till the battle of the day is won
You may be sick and tired...*

MARY, WEARING AN OVERALL, IS IN A FACTORY. SHE IS AT AN ASSEMBLY LINE, DOING ONE MOVEMENT OVER AND OVER AGAIN.

MARY: I'd been called up, and I hated that job. The work was very boring, drilling nuts and bolts. And the factory where we worked was freezing in winter. But when the war ended -

SHE TAKES OFF HER OVERALL.

MARY: - that was it! We were supposed to give the jobs back to the ex-servicemen, which was fair enough. And so far as I was concerned - (HOLDS OVERALL AT ARM'S LENGTH FROM HER) it was wonderful!

SHE LEAVES, AND ARTHUR STAGGERS IN ON CRUTCHES.

*Will you remember those famous men
Who had to fall to rise again*

ARTHUR: Work? I was good for nothing. Could hardly get about. I'd been blown up on the Cruiser Ryan, coming away from Crete. I'm very sorry I joined up. I lost a good job and good money fighting for this country, and nobody wants to know you. You fight for the country and the government and they give you nothing to help you, knowing what you've done.

ARTHUR LEAVES AND BARBARA APPEARS .

BARBARA: It was a terrible wrench. I felt as if I'd lost something, part of me. Part of me was still in the country. Odd really, for a girl from South London. I hated coming back. I was at a real loss. All my old friends in London had dispersed. Worst of all, I couldn't get any kind of a job. I mean I was a fairly highly qualified book-keeper and typist before I left, though now I'd lost my typing speed. That made me absolutely livid! And I couldn't get any work at all -

MILKMAN OFFERS HER A JOB.

BARBARA: I did finally get a job at the United Dairies depot, checking the milkmen's round books. How low can you get? And one of the Head Managers... he tried it on all the young girls. Wandering hands. And one day he made the mistake -

FROM BEHIND, EMPLOYER PUTS HIS HANDS ROUND HER WAIST.

BARBARA: - of trying it on me.

BARBARA TURNS ROUND.

BARBARA: (VERY LOUDLY, TO 4th MANAGER) And I told him in a very loud voice exactly what I'd do to him if he did it again. (A GESTURE FROM EMPLOYER.) Shortly after that I was asked to leave.

*Don't lose your confidence if you slip
Be grateful for a sudden trip*

MR HARRIS APPEARS IN HIS SHOP.

HARRIS: It didn't change that much in the shop. Still the rationing. And you never had enough sausages, or enough liver to supply everybody. That was off rations, so you see of course you formed your own rationing system by putting a mark on their ration books. And I'd say, "You had sausages last week. You can't have them this week." And they'd say - "I'm willing to pay twice as much." Yes, you always got some of those. But me, well - (PRODUCING A BUNCH OF SAUSAGES, HOLDING THEM TO HIS CHEST) I looked after myself. You wouldn't believe me if I said I didn't.

JOAN: When I got back from evacuation they didn't think it was worth me having any more schooling, cos I was just fourteen. My mother got me a job in the glass factory where she was working. They were turning out medical supplies. I was a box labeller. That was my worst time. I desperately wanted to go into nursing, and they'd already accepted me into the hospital to do the menial tasks at weekends. I loved every minute of it. But it meant living away from home and my mother said -

MOTHER: But it's so nice to have you back home again.

JOAN: (TO AUDIENCE) She didn't realise what it meant to me. I was so keen to do it - to go and get trained. At the hospital we were all talking about the Beveridge Plan - I thought it was super. Everything free - it was going to make such a difference.

MOTHER: Your Dad and I have decorated the whole of your bedroom and put new furniture in.

JOAN: (TO AUDIENCE) Emotional blackmail.

MOTHER: You don't want to go straight off again do you?

JOAN: So I didn't. But it would have been so much better if I had. She got me in this job at fourteen and that was that. I was stuck there till I got married in 1952.

*Pick yourself up, dust yourself down
And start all over again.*

OLIVE COMES ON, IN CIVILIAN CLOTHES, WITH A PILE OF PAY BOOKS AND SOME LETTERS. ON A SEPARATE PART OF THE STAGE, ANOTHER WOMAN ALSO APPEARS. OLIVE PICKS UP A PAY BOOK, LOOKS AT IT. WE CAN SEE A HOLE IN IT, AND BLOODSTAINS.

OLIVE: I'd left the ATS. Now I was in the Army Pay Corps, as a civilian. We had a lot of letters from people trying to claim money. Wives asking -

WOMAN: Why has my allowance been stopped?

OLIVE: It was usually because the husband had disappeared, gone AWOL. And pregnant girlfriends, trying to track down their men. -

WOMAN TURNS, BECOMES 2nd WOMAN, AND PREGNANT.

2nd WOMAN: I just wondered if you had any information on Private Smithers. You see, I'm... expecting his baby.

OLIVE: Course, he'd probably gone back to his wife.

OLIVE SHAKES HER HEAD, PICKS UP ARMY PAY BOOK.

OLIVE: Then we had a lot of these to deal with - pay books still coming in from men killed in action. A lot of them were like this - covered in blood, or even with a bullet hole through them. Each one represented a young life that had been lost.

OLIVE LEAVES, BOB ENTERS WHISTLING "PICK YOURSELF UP" HE IS CARRYING HIS BAG OF TOOLS.

BOB: There was plenty of work for us then, in the building trade. You could get a job anywhere then. You could pick and choose, no bother at all. If you heard of a job that was more money - you just left it and went there. It was so easy. That's how hard it was to get labour. We could do what we liked. We had the upper hand.

REPRISE OF WHOLE CHORUS OF "PICK YOURSELF UP"

REPORTER: Emergency housing is already being tackled. The building programme generally is being speeded up to help solve the urgent need for new homes. Here in Woolwich, permanent prefabricated homes costing between eight and nine hundred pounds each are being erected in the present day manner of building. In ten weeks something like a little suburb will have been fitted out and slotted into place.

MUM AND PEG FOLDING SHEETS AND LISTENING TO ABOVE ON RADIO

MUM: It's time you and Bob and Jenny had your own place.

PEGGY: It is a lot for you Mum.

MUM: No, it's not that, I love having you, but this place...

PEGGY: It's Bob, isn't it? I don't know what's the matter with him.

MUM: He is a bit touchy. He'd probably settle better in his own home.

PEGGY: It's getting our own home Mum, isn't it? Council don't seem to want to know. I went up the Town Hall again this afternoon.

MUM: Any luck?

PEGGY: They're sending someone round. I really want one of those lovely little prefabs.

PEGGY: Elsie's got one and it's like a little doll's house. Got a fridge and fitted cupboards. Check curtains. All new. She spends all day polishing the brass window fastenings. (KNOCK AT DOOR) Ooh that might be him.....the man from the housing. (LOOKS OUT) It is.

MUM: Lay out some tea things in your room as if you have to eat up there, and pull out some clothes. Make it look crowded. Like you're only allowed in the one room. (ACTS OVER THE TOP, SHOUTING) I'm not having that

pram in the hall. Not any more I'm not. We're crammed out. (MUCH WINKING)

PEGGY: Don't overdo it Mum!

MUM: (OPENING DOOR) Oh do come in. You from the housing?

MR CHARLES: Yes. Are you Mrs Knight?

MUM: No that's my daughter. She's lodging here, till they find her and her husband a place. Sorry it's a bit poky, but do squeeze your way in. (SHOUTING AFTER AS IF TO PEGGY....AND SHARING JOKE WITH AUDIENCE)

MR CHARLES: We'll just go through these forms again....

MUM: (LISTENS AND HAS ANOTHER GO) And keep the noise down. Just stop that child running about.

PEGGY: (APOLOGETICALLY TO MR CHARLES) You can see what it's like.

MR CHARLES: Yes, well we'll be in touch as soon as anything comes up. Good day to you.

PEGGY: Thank you very much. Goodbye.

HE GOES.

PEGGY: Oh Mum really (THEY LAUGH) (TO AUDIENCE) You had to fight. Of course I was dreaming of a nice cosy little prefab....Everything you could think of and only sixteen shillings a week. And what did they give us? Two huge rooms in an old requisitioned house.

BOB: It's grand isn't it. Great big rooms. Nice bit of wooden floor that. Classy!

PEGGY: Might have been once. It's all splinters. It's in terrible repair. (TO AUDIENCE) The Army's Bomb Disposal Unit had been in it before us and they'd wrecked it. (NEAR TO CRYING AS SHE LOOKS AROUND AND TRIES TO HANG CURTAINS) Our utility furniture everything's lost in this great vast space. (TO AUDIENCE). We were allowed one 3 foot by 4 foot carpet, so we had no floor covering except that bit in the best room. And the allowance for curtains only covered one window as they were so large. I had to buy Folk weave, that was hessian stuff, for the rest cos you could get it off rations. We couldn't get enough coal rations to heat the rooms. And Jenny had a cold from the day we moved in.

BOB: Stop moaning. I've shovelled up some coal from the railway sidings and put it in Fred's sidecar. I'll bring it in when we're back from the pub.

PEGGY: Oh not out again. Can't you stay in with me and Jenny for once.

BOB: I've promised Fred. You wanted the coal. Get your mother over to mind Jenny and you can come and have a drink. See you later.

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) Of course during the war when he came home on occasional leave, we were staying with Mum and she'd sit with the baby. But now I was sitting in on my own night after night in this barn of a place. I missed Mum. During the war years, Mum and I had just sort of mucked in together. Mum went to work mornings and nights and I looked after Jenny and did the dinner.

MUM: Course, if there was anything going for food, I'd line up for it on the way home. Peg and I used to pool the food and have one main meal a day.

SONG: *If I had lots of coupons, I'd be a millionaire*

Time I'd got home and we'd had lunch and done a bit of washing, I used to have to go back to work at four o'clock in the afternoon. Then I'd get home, well, my time to get home was nine, but if there was the raids on, I wouldn't come back till I'd cleared up the next morning. Sometimes I'd be over there all night.

PEGGY: (TAKING UP STORY FROM MUM) I would would take Jenny into bed with me when the raids got really bad. Or we'd go under the old dining table. Funnily enough, when Jenny got bigger she used to play under the table, specially if an aeroplane went over. She'd say "Plane" and go straight under the table. I think it was born in her to do that.

PEGGY: I used to help my mum and she used to help me. That's how we coped. Your mother was your best pal in those days. (LOOKS AROUND SADLY) She doesn't get over to see me in this place very often.

MUM ARRIVES AND PEGGY IS GLAD TO SEE HER. HUGS.

MUM: Hello Peg, love.

PEGGY: Oh Mum.

MUM: You don't want to be sitting in on your own. Isn't there anyone in the flats upstairs you can talk to.

PEGGY: I don't know any of them Mum. Don't know anyone round here. I wish we hadn't moved out.

MUM: I'm missing you and Jenny as well. I had such a tooth ache yesterday and I had nothing to take my mind off it. I'm going to have to do something about it, but I can't afford it. (NURSING TEETH) Yes, the place feels empty without you. But we couldn't have gone on the way we were.

PEGGY: I know. I don't know what got into Bob. He was so possessive and I think he was jealous of us. Felt squeezed out.

MUM: It must be difficult for him, getting used to Civvy Street, missing his pals. Why don't you and Bob go out on the town and I'll mind Jenny. It'd do you good.

PEGGY: I'd love to dress up nice and go to a dance Mum, but I've got nothing to wear. I'm not going in that old black maternity dress again.

MUM: I've got a bit of a surprise for you. (UNPACKS NEW LOOK DRESS) I got Gladys to make it for you. It's the New Look.

PEGGY: Oh Mum it's smashing. I love it.

MUM: It's got a square neck, and look, a long full skirt.

PEGGY: Thanks Mum (HUGS HER, SINGS AND DANCES AS MUM GOES)

BOB: (ENTERS EXCITEDLY) Guess what! I'm getting a car.

HE PRETEND DRIVES, REVS UP AND DISAPPEARS, LEAVING HER STANDING OPEN-MOUTHED. SHE DANCES A LITTLE ALONE UNSURE HOW TO REACT.

PEGGY: I couldn't manage new shoes for Jenny....

JENNY: (ZOOMING ROUND ROOM WITH EXCITEMENT) But we had a car.

NEWS REPORTER: The last part goes into the last Spitfire. Now we've got more Spitfires than we know what to do with.

JENNY BECOMES SPIFIRE

NEWS REPORTER: If the Misses doesn't fancy a fighter plane in the empty garage, tell her to sit tight for here they come. Cars, cars and more cars. A sight for war-weary eyes.

JENNY BECOMES RACING DRIVER

NEWS REPORTER: By the way you can have any colour you like for the car as long as it's black. Already a few thousand wives are getting in their applications for back seat driving lessons.

PEGGY: Course ours wasn't a new one. It was one that had been laid up during the war.

BOB: £85.

PEGGY: Your gratuity money?

BOB: That's right. Why not?

PEGGY: It was a little Morris.

JENNY: With a little dickie seat at the back for me.

PEGGY: And a hood you pulled over.

BOB: Hood's a bit broken. Soon put that right.

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) He mended it on my sewing machine. Ruined it, I might tell you!

BOB: Off we go then.

THEY ALL CLIMB ABOARD

BOB: (WAVING) You know where we live... (BANGS HORN) It's the house with the car!

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) Say that now and you'd never find it!

BOB: Days out in London. Hyde Park

PEGGY: We'd take a picnic. I loved watching the people in the park.

JENNY: Or the seaside. (SONG: *HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN*)

PEGGY: We'd take all our food with us. And a kettle, a teapot and a little paraffin heater.

JENNY: (TO BOB WHO IS PEELING AN APPLE WITH AN ORIENTAL LOOKING KNIFE) Daddy, what is that knife for? Why is it all curly?

BOB: A soldier gave it to me when I was away. He was a Ghurka soldier. (THINKS ABOUT HIM ABSENTLY)

JENNY: What's that?

BOB: An Indian man I got to know. He gave it me to keep. (PUTTING KNIFE AWAY...TURNING EVASIVE) He was in the same camp. (GOES OFF ALONE)

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) He'd never talk about what he'd seen over there. Just couldn't I suppose. He used to say,

BOB: "It's all behind me. I don't want to think about it."

PEGGY: (PACKS UP PICNIC THINGS AND CALLS) Ready Bob?

BOB: (RETURNING RECOVERED) Whitstable was our limit. Fuel was hard to come by. Still rationed.

THEY STUMBLE TO A SUDDEN HALT. BOB GETS OUT AND IS BUSY ROUND THE BACK OF THE CAR.

PEGGY: I never asked him, but I wondered where he got the petrol for those trips. (ENGINE REVING NOISES) I wouldn't be surprised if he syphoned it from someone else's tank, but he never said.

CAR STARTS AGAIN AND SPURTS TO FINAL HALT AND THEY GET OUT

BOB: Well, at least it got us home. (BOB LIFTS BONNET AND STARTS FIDDLING ROUND WITH ENGINE)

PEGGY: Actually he knew very little about car engines, but we spent many hours all night with me holding the torch through the window over the engine so he could see.

BOB: Up a bit. Left a bit. Got it.

PEGGY: Or he'd dismantle an engine piece by piece, numbering every little part, and I sat on the top step writing down where each piece came from.

BOB: Top right gasket.....bottom left gasket.....

PEGGY: It's amazing how much I learned about car engines, but I never drove.

BOB PAUSES IN HIS WORK, LOOKS AT PEGGY.

BOB: You know, we're getting sorted out, Peg. Back home, all of us in one piece, a decent job - and now even a little car of my own. Who'd have thought it?

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) So Bob's dream had come true. But mine hadn't. Not yet. I was still dreaming of a nice new prefab or a council house. I was still going up the council every week, but they didn't seem to want to know.

SONG: *A DREAM IS A WISH YOUR HEART MAKES*

*When I was a little boy
My father used to say
If troubles ever trouble you
Just dream your cares away*

*A dream is a wish your heart makes
When you're fast asleep
In dreams you will lose your heartaches
Whatever you wish for, you keep*

BOB AND PEGGY AT HOME.

BOB IS SHOWING PEGGY THE FRONT PAGE OF A PAPER.

BOB: Look, banner headline, Daily Mirror - 'Vote for Him!' "Vote the way the absent soldier, sailor or airman would have done. Thousands of women are saying this every day. Thousands more will be saying it before and on July 5th." You can't get it any clearer than that, Peg.

PEGGY: But I can't vote against Churchill.

BOB: He's a war monger.

PEGGY: That's not fair.

BOB: He was the right man for the job, I'll give you that, but I've had enough

of him.

PEGGY: That's all right for you to say, Bob, but you weren't here for most of the war were you, you don't know what he meant to us. When we were going through a bad patch, and we had disasters, Churchill would come on the radio and give a speech.

CHURCHILL: (BY BOB BEHIND PAPER) I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We will wage war with all our might by sea, land and air. Our aim is victory at all costs, however long and hard the road may be.

PEGGY: Next morning you could see the difference in everybody. People would go, 'Did you hear him last night? "... don't you expect anything but blood, sweat and tears"'. And we said, 'Yeah we believe that. We'll get through'. This business of 'We'll get through' was in everybody.

BOB: But the war's finished, Peg, and he's a Conservative. You can't trust the Conservatives. They're for the rich and Labour's for the poor. Simple as that.

PEGGY: I'm not sure, Bob.

BOB: The rationing - I know none of us like it but it's the fairest way. Well if the Tories get back in it'll be straight back to the people that can afford it buy it - and those that can't can go without.

PEGGY: I don't know...

BOB: You're always on about getting into a council house - it's Labour you'll get it from, not the other lot. Look it says here: "Tories kill housing bill."
(SLIGHT PAUSE)
Come on Peggy, you've got to.

PEGGY NODS.

*Have faith in your dreams and some day
Your rainbow will come smiling through
No matter how your heart is grieving
If you keep on believing
The dream that you wish will come true.*

PIANO FROM DREAM SONG INTO JERUSALEM. POLLING BOOTHS SET UP

NEWS REPORTER: From 7 o'clock in the morning to 9 o'clock at night on July 5th the people of Britain decided on what kind of government they wanted. It was the first General Election for 10 years and experts early estimated a record poll.

JERUSALEM LINK. A VOTER APPEARS IN EACH POLLING BOOTH.

1st VOTER: Before the war there was still a lot of unemployment, we'd gone through the depression. Even up to '37 and '38 there was still quite a bit of unemployment. We were told by Labour there would be a better Britain. Everyone would have a house. Everyone could have a job.

2nd VOTER: If you think back before the war, my Mum, with all us family, she couldn't afford to pay half a crown to get a doctor in. But now they were saying, 'A general health service, you'll have free this, free that, you'll be able to have a doctor, you'll be able to go to the dentist and have your teeth seen to' - that was the biggest thing. Specially us people with young children. We wanted them to have better things than what we'd had.

3rd VOTER: There was 5 million of us in the services with nothing to do for those three months between VE Day and the election. There was a lot of talk, about Beveridge, housing, full employment, and there was time to think...A lot of us that had been called up were factory workers, strong union men, and we wanted a better life. We wanted a car and a home when we came back from all the fighting.

WOMAN 1: I'd always idolised Churchill It was under his leadership that we won the war, wasn't it? If it wasn't for him we wouldn't have got through it, and I can't understand people letting him down. I thought it was terrible. I voted for him.

WOMAN 2: I was all for Churchill - in a way. I was in one of those crowds who came out to applaud him and then voted against him. But you've got to vote for who you're going to get most out of. And if Labour say they're going to build new houses, if they say they're going to give you a decent standard of living, they get my vote.

JERUSALEM UNDER (Bring me my shield, oh clouds unfold)

VOTER: There were all kinds of ideas being put forward - family allowances, national insurance, get rid of the means test, knock down the slums, house all the homeless, build a National Health Service. A fair deal for all. At last we were going to do something!

JERUSALEM

*I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.*

PEGGY: Bob- we've got a place!

BOB: What?

PEGGY: A council house - they've given us one - we've got one! It's semi-detached - with an entrance at the side. And it's got a bathroom. And a garden - a garden!

BOB: (NOT ENTHUSIASTIC) Has it got a garage?

PEGGY: You know very well council places haven't got garages.

BOB: I'm not having it if it hasn't got a garage.

PEGGY: Well we can't stay here!
Come on, come and have a look at it.

BOB: I don't want to see it, I'm not going.

PEGGY: (TO AUDIENCE) But we did move there. I was over the moon.
(SHOWING MUM) Look Mum. Isn't it lovely?

MUM: Oh Peggy! It's got a built-in fridge, and this cupboard, when you open it you can pull down the ironing board or if you leave the ironing board up, there's this second cupboard, a broom cupboard.

PEGGY: And it's got a hatch - so the man can come and bring the bread and the milk from outside and I can pull it in from inside!

MUM: And there are the two toilets, the one out in the porch and one in the bathroom.

PEGGY: And there's sliding doors, so we can have the dining room separate or we can pull them open and have the two rooms as one if we want to.
(SLIGHT PAUSE)
Bob?

BOB: It's wonderful, Peg.
(HUGGING HER) It's wonderful!

PEGGY: I never dreamed I'd ever live in a place like this. And pretty soon we got to know everyone on the estate. People'd pop round, have a chat. It was a real community. That was the start of a new era.

SONG: A DREAM IS A WISH YOUR HEART MAKES

*A dream is a wish your heart makes
When you're fast asleep
In dreams you will lose your heartaches
Whatever you wish for, you keep*

*Have faith in your dreams and some day
Your rainbow will come smiling through
No matter how your heart is grieving
If you keep on believing
The dream that you wish will come true.*

BOW

REPRISE ROLL OUT THE BARRELL

AFTER APPLAUSE, A KNEES-UP.
