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# The Entertainer

By John Osborne

(man) Why should I care?  
Why should I let it touch me?  
Why shouldn't I  
Sit down and try to  
let it pass over me?  
Why should they stare?  
Why should I let it get me?  
What's the use of despair  
If they call you a square?  
You're a long time dead  
like my old pal Fred  
So why oh why should I  
Bother to?  
If they see that you're blue  
they'll look down on you  
So why oh why should I  
Bother to care?  
Thank God I know more  
Why oh why should I  
Bother to care?  
God bless you.  
- I haven't seen him on the TV. Have you?  
- What's that?  
- I've not seen him on TV.  
- Who?  
Archie Rice.  
It's only a lot of daft girls  
standing about with nothing on.  
- Come on, Father.  
- He looks daft.  
- Will you come on when I tell you?  
- He's never been on TV.  
Granddad!  
Granddad! Granddad!  
- Hello, Granddad.  
- Jean! I wondered who it was.  
- I'm sorry if I startled you.  
- I didn't know who it was.  
- I was miles away.  
- It's good to see you.  
It's good to see you, my darling.  
Give your grandfather a kiss.  
- Give me your case.  
- I can manage.

Hold your bloody noise.  
Your stepmother's in  
one of her moods so I came out.  
I can't stand rows with Phoebe any more,  
so I come and sit on the pier.  
Albert. Take care of this for me, will you?  
- This is my granddaughter.  
- Have you come to see your dad?  
Thank you. Come on.  
- Who's that?  
- Archie Rice's daughter.  
It's good to see you.  
How long are you going to stay?  
Just a few days, I expect.  
- Have you heard from young Mick?  
- Yes, he's fine.  
He'll be all right. But it's a nasty  
business to get mixed up in.  
All those people in Egypt  
and God knows where else.  
They seem to do what they like  
to us nowadays.  
I went to the rally last Sunday.  
- What for, for God's sake?  
- I don't know.  
I've got myself steamed up  
about a lot of things lately.  
You want to have your bloody head read.  
- That's more or less what Graham said.  
- Graham?  
My fianc.  
(horn)  
- Can we go now, miss?  
- All right.  
Paints and brushes on this table  
and paintings over here.  
(mouths)  
(rock 'n' roll music from next room)  
- Finished?  
- Yes, miss.  
Don't you want to go and dance?  
You don't have to go if you don't want to.  
Good night.  
Here, watch out where you're going!

- Am I late?  
- (wolf-whistle)  
No, his train doesn't leave for an hour.  
You were making a lot of noise.  
Well, my little social worker,  
what was it tonight?  
The bicycle-chain ball  
or the flick-knife excuse-me?  
Can't see the soldier brother off  
to the wars with a long face like that.  
No, I should look pleased  
about it, shouldn't I?  
How do you think you could ever  
make anything out of those monsters?  
Don't let's do this again.  
You are never going to do anything  
with those sort of people.  
Don't talk to me about  
those sort of people.  
If it weren't for your sort of people  
still in other people's countries,  
my brother wouldn't be  
going off to fight.  
- The telegram came at breakfast.  
- Why didn't they wait till February?  
Oh, I don't know.  
I'm thinking of signing on.  
Well... up the flag, Mick.  
Here's to you.  
Let's hope it's a false alarm.  
Thank you.  
- You're leaving tonight?  
- No, they're flying us out in the morning.  
It's nice of you to come and see me off.  
- Off to defend the Empire.  
- My queen and country need me.  
I wish I could think it was funny.  
Give him a break. He'll be all right.  
Jean's always taken everything seriously.  
I've always taken it as it comes,  
but not Jeannie.  
Cheer up, love. Life isn't as bad as all that.  
Even if it is, there's nothing we can do.  
I must be off.

- Come on.  
- Well, that needs cleaning for a start.  
- I'll do it.  
- Good lad. Come on.  
Don't come any further.  
There's my mob there.  
- Goodbye, love.  
- Bye.  
- Stick in the back if there's shooting.  
- You bet.  
- Go up and see Phoebe and the old boy.  
- I'm going to.  
Goodbye, Graham.  
Are you two getting married?  
- Ask her.  
- Well, make her! It's what Jean needs.  
I'll bring you back a fuzzy-wuzzy  
for your wedding present. Bye.  
- Bye-bye.  
- Goodbye.  
Let's go.  
- Do you want to eat somewhere?  
- No, thanks.  
- It might cheer you up.  
- I want to go home.  
All right.  
- Do you want to come?  
- What about the landlady?  
We'll beat her up.  
I've been longing to tell you all day.  
They want a decision pretty soon.  
- Why Africa?  
- The firm's expanding out there.  
You know - young men, big opportunities.  
- Do you want to go?  
- Yes, I do. I've thought about it a lot.  
We could get married next month.  
Supposing I don't want to go, Graham?  
Would you go just the same?  
- I don't think that's a fair question.  
- No, but I'm asking it.  
- If we married it might change your mind.  
- What if I didn't?  
- Why do you want to go?

- I've told you.  
Big opportunities. Big deal.  
You love me, don't you?  
You still want to marry me?  
- Of course.  
- Then why do we argue?  
I don't understand you.  
There's nothing to keep you here.  
Nothing.  
Nothing but a bunch of teddy boys  
who ought to be put in jail.  
Don't pretend you can't leave  
that deadbeat family of yours.  
Can't you understand?  
This job means something to me.  
I'm not good enough to paint myself,  
but this is something I really can do.  
Maybe the first term has been hell,  
but I'm not going to give up.  
There's nothing to keep us here.  
You've never stopped saying everything  
about this country's dead. I agree.  
This would be a wonderful chance  
for us to get out of it.  
I'm sorry.  
- I'm so tired.  
- (whispers) I know. I'm sorry.  
Don't be.  
Take me to bed.  
I'm all right, Granddad.  
I feel better now I've talked about it.  
You always liked coming to see me.  
You were a pretty little thing.  
Not that looks are everything.  
You don't look at the mantelpiece  
when you poke the fire.  
Archie always saw  
you were nicely turned out.  
He was a smart little boy himself.  
Used to dress 'em in sailor suits then.  
- Funny how they all turn out.  
- How is Dad?  
He's a fool. Raising money for another  
show when he hasn't enough for this one.

- What's this one like?  
- I don't know. I haven't seen it.  
They don't want human beings any more.  
You're a lovely lot tonight.  
I've played in front of them all, you know.  
The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh,  
the Prince of Wales...  
- What's that other pub?  
- (faint titters)  
That went better at first house.  
What about these crooners?  
I don't know what they're coming to.  
Look at the stuff they sing.  
"The Darktown Strutters' Ball".  
"The Basin Street Ball".  
"The Woodchoppers' Ball".  
It's a lot of... rubbish, isn't it?  
- He's a bit suggestive, isn't he?  
- Now I'm going to sing you a little song.  
A little song written by Rimsky-Nastikov.  
It's entitled "The Church Bell Won't Ring  
Tonight as the Vicar's got the Clapper."  
Hide your face, Mum,  
the girls have got me  
I shan't be home for an hour or two  
I've got all sorts of nice things to do  
They've got me worked up  
in such a state  
So hide your face, Mum,  
cos I can't hardly wait  
So hide your face, Mum,  
the girls have got me  
The girls, the glamorous gorgeous girls,  
have got me  
All right, Nicky?  
- Hey.  
- Take her up.  
- Jean!  
- Hello, Frank.  
Nice to see you, love.  
- Got a holiday?  
- Sort of. I've just seen Granddad.  
Dad's on.  
As you may possibly have guessed.

- He'll be off in a minute, though.

- OK.

But it's when she'd gone and left me

That I started to say good night

(thin applause)

- Can't be anyone in front tonight.

- Look who's here.

Hello, Jean!

This is nice.

I haven't got my glasses on.

I know. You thought I was

the income tax man.

- All right, are you?

- Fine.

Hide your face, Mum,

the girls have got him

He won't be home for an hour or two

He's got all sorts of nice things to do

They've got him

worked up in such a state

Hide your face, Mum

The girls, the glamorous gorgeous girls,

have got him now

(applause)

(applause peters out)

- How's it going?

- First house about 60 sad little drabs.

- Tonight about 200 sad little drabs.

- Excuse me.

Frank! I'd like to see you.

If we go on next week, it will be by very

reluctant agreement of 20 angry people.

- Have you been home?

- No, not yet.

- I ought to have warned Phoebe.

- Not to worry. You can have Mick's room.

- How is Mick? Have you heard from him?

- Yes. He's just twiddling his thumbs.

It's hot, he says. Not one for subtle detail.

- Kids say if they aren't paid they'll quit.

- Well, let 'em.

Go and get a couple of bottles.

I'm going to have a celebration.

- Of what?



- My 20th anniversary.  
Of not paying income tax.  
You go with him, love.  
I'll meet you at Buckingham Palace.  
I've got a couple of people to see.

- Good night, Frank.

- (wolf-whistles)  
(classical music)

- Did you see Ree?  
- Better get some lolly for her.  
Here's your week.  
It's not so hot.  
(sighs)

- Want one?  
- I don't think I'd better, had I?  
- Uh-oh.  
- Well? What about it?  
I'll just be five minutes.  
I've got to listen to the news.

- I'm not leaving this theatre without it.  
- Just five minutes.  
(radio) There'll be another programme  
in this series next week.  
The eleven-o'clock news summary  
follows almost at once.  
(pips)

This is the BBC Home Service. Here is the  
summary of the news. First of all, Suez.  
A number of British paratroopers  
are reported to have been captured.  
Names will be withheld  
until the next of kin have been informed.  
The House of Commons is debating  
the situation in the Middle East tomorrow.  
Latest reports were considered  
at a cabinet meeting this afternoon.  
Oh, this is nice! What a shame - if I'd  
known I could have been back earlier,  
but I saw a bit of the picture round again.

- What was it like?  
- Wasn't up to much.  
They're showing  
a lot of rubbish these days.  
They're going to close it down.

Everything's doing badly.

- That's what worries Archie.
- Good night, Mum. See you, Jeano.
- Where are you off to?
- He's got an extra job.

He's playing the piano in one of these late-night drinking places.

- It is lovely to see her, isn't it, Dad?
- Yes.

He's pleased. He doesn't have anyone much to talk to, do you?

He won't come to the pictures with me.

He likes to listen to a play on the wireless.

- (shouts) You like a nice play!
- I can't sit for long.
- I'm all right.
- I'm at Woolworth's now. Did I tell you?

I'm on the electrical counter.

Not bad. Girls are a bit common.

- It is nice to see you.
  - Archie says you've heard from Mick.
- Yes, he's out there. You think he's going to be all right, don't you? Why do they send these boys out? They're just kids. That's all he is, a kid.

- They do look after them, don't they?
- Oh yes, they look after them all right.

They look after them better now than they did. The Dardanelles.

I went through that without a scratch.

Not a scratch on me.

Aye aye. I've just been talking to our coloured friend on the stairs.

- He's a student.
  - No, he's a ballet dancer.
- Is he? He's a big fellow.
- Playing the Winter Gardens.

- Ballet dancer?

He says if you drop your hat outside there,

kick it all the way to the promenade before you pick it up.

- There's a telegram come for you.
- Don't you think she's looking peaky?

- There's a telegram come for you!  
- It's probably one of my creditors.

Good girl.

You remembered Phoebe's Dubonnet.  
She likes that. Don't you? She thinks  
she's being awfully U when she drinks it.  
Well, I like it. It seems to soothe me.

- Was it all right at the theatre?  
- No, it was not all right at the theatre.  
Have your Dubonnet, dear.

Jean, that's yours.

- Billy, wake up!  
- I am awake.  
- Well, stop yelling, then. Here's a drink.  
- I don't want it.

Yes, you do. Don't argue.

I'm having a celebration.

- What have you got to celebrate about?  
- Oh, dear.

Not a thing you can call your own,  
and as sure as God made little apples  
I'll lay a sovereign to a penny piece  
you'll be bankrupt before Christmas.  
And you'll be lucky not to end up in jail.

- Get him to go to bed.  
- Go to bed. You're overtired.

I'm not overtired. I don't relish  
the idea of a jailbird in the family.  
Shut up, Dad.

You've had too much to drink.

I used to have half a bottle  
of brandy for breakfast.

And a pound of steak  
and a couple of chorus girls.

I leave chorus girls to you. Do you know  
what James Agate said about me?

That you and Pat Campbell were  
his favourite female impersonators.

You know bloody well what he said.

We all know what he said  
and every word of it was true.

Your daughter went to that  
Trafalgar Square circus last Sunday.

Did you really? Are you one of those

who don't like the prime minister?

I've grown fond of him.

Does he bring you out in spots?

- I wish I knew what was going to happen.

- I feel like that about that dog downstairs.

- What is going to happen?

- Three things do that to me.

- Nuns, clergymen and dogs.

- I don't want to always have to work.

You want a bit of life before it's all over.

Takes the guilt off if you've got to go on

and on until they carry you out in a box.

- Did I tell you my nun story?

- It's all right for him.

He still has his women.

While it lasts, anyway.

But I don't want to end up

being lain out by some stranger

in some rotten little street in Gateshead or

West Hartlepool or another of those holes.

Phoebe, don't upset yourself.

Let's enjoy ourselves.

Do you think I don't want to enjoy myself?

(wails)

I wish women wouldn't cry.

I wish they wouldn't.

- Say something to her, Jean.

- Why don't you?

I wish I could. I only wish I could.

Phoebe...

Phoebe, dear,

would you like to go to bed?

Yes, I think I will if you don't mind, dear.

I think perhaps I've overdone it a bit.

I never could stand too much excitement.

And I'm worrying about Mick underneath.

I keep thinking about all that fighting.

Get some sleep.

You'll feel better when you wake up.

Yes, dear.

- Would you come and say good night?

- Yes, I'm just finishing my celebration.

- He's funny.

- Good night, son.

- Good night.

- Good night, Jean.

It was good seeing you.

We'll have a good talk tomorrow.

- Dad?

- Yeah?

You're keeping something to yourself.

- You never miss a trick.

- What is it?

Mick's been taken prisoner.

No point in breaking it tonight.

I think I'd like some of that.

We'll drink to Mick.

Let's hope to God he manages.

Mick. And... the income tax man.

With you it's prime ministers.

With me it's dogs.

Nuns, clergymen and dogs.

Did I ever tell you the greatest

compliment I ever had paid me?

I was walking along the promenade

somewhere. I think it was here, actually.

One day...

25 years ago.

I was quite a young man.

There I was walking along the promenade

to meet what I think we used to call

a piece of crackling...

when two nuns came toward me.

Two nuns.

Talk to me.

(yelling and shrieking)

(puppet) Get down. Get downstairs.

Get down there.

- Jean.

- There's nothing fresh.

It's the same description

as we heard on the news.

You'd think those rogues in Parliament

were glad our boys were taken prisoner.

Their own country always wrong

and the other lot's always right.

Dad, we're worried enough as it is.

It says "Lt Pearson, who had been with

Sgt Rice shortly before he was captured, said he killed at least seven attackers before he was overwhelmed."

"'He must have run out of ammunition,' he said. 'Rice wasn't the type...'"

Don't go on.

I just can't bear to think about it.

I fried these up for your breakfast.

They don't look very nice. I'm sorry.

Never mind. I'm not really hungry.

- Where's Frank?

- He went to the theatre.

Said he wouldn't be in for breakfast.

- Where's Dad?

- Out. He had a call from the town hall.

- Sit down?

- No, thanks, Granddad.

About the bathing beauty competition.

He'll be in his element.

Bathing beauties? Haven't got the figures nowadays. They're all skin and bone.

What'll he do after this?

Is he really trying to put on another show?

I don't know how, after that last business.

He's still a bankrupt.

You knew that. I have to sign everything for him. He can't get any credit.

Still, he could always twist me round his little finger.

He won't listen to me.

He spends half his time in that Rockcliffe.

That damned meat market by the clock tower.

- How'd you do that?

- How'd I pay income tax 20 years ago?

Pure bad luck. I was trapped in a hospital with a double hernia.

Very nasty it was. I thought all my plans for the future were going to be finished.

That's another story

I'll tell you sometime.

There I was lying on my back

wondering whether draught Bass alone

was enough to make life worth living...

Arnold, five more.

...when two men sprang at me  
from behind the screens.

That was Archie's one downfall.

I think the ward sister tipped them off.

She used to tell me she was spiritual.

I'd gone legit just then

and I was in A Tale Of Two Cities.

When I told her, she said

"I've heard of that." She was Irish.

"Isn't that about Sodom and Gomorrah?"

Hey, Harold. Can I have a word?

Harold, how about...

How about a booking?

At the Winter Garden,

when the season's over?

What do you have in mind?

Something lavish. A couple of top-liners.

I've got hold of those costumes

from Syd Stein's Blackpool show.

- Fabulous stuff.

- Leave it alone.

I was having a drink with

Doreen Maine's agent last Thursday.

Doreen Maine. You know. One of her

records hit the top ten. Last February.

- I'd like to do you a favour.

- I'm not asking any favours.

- What management?

- Me.

- Are you really serious?

- Serious? You don't understand.

- I need this booking. I really need it.

- I'd have to see the show first.

- I've got to open somewhere.

- Now, Archie.

We've had some laughs.

Let's leave it like that.

With a booking like this

I could break the circuits.

You know me.

I only deal with established properties.

I'm asking you as a friend.

You know my office. If you've got a

concrete proposition I'm ready to listen.  
Sorry about that, Harold.  
Worrying about young Mick, I dare say.  
That's all right, Archie.  
Well, I must rush now, boys.  
The call of the bathing belle competition.  
- I'm judging the finals.  
- I thought Wally Barker was.  
He dropped out,  
so they sent for the expert.  
Mind you, they don't understand  
the business in this country.  
On the Continent  
they put the girls up for auction.  
Did I tell you about the chap  
who'd take out a pen... Sorry, too late.  
- So long, Frank.  
- So long.  
- Can I help you, darling?  
- I'm looking for Mr Rice.  
- I'm his daughter.  
- Which one are you?  
The one born yesterday?  
As a matter of fact, she is my sister.  
Oh.  
Sorry.  
Jean! Jean.  
- Now listen, he didn't mean anything.  
- I know what he meant.  
- Who is he?  
- The new manager of the Winter Garden.  
- I wouldn't trust him behind a curtain...  
- With his feet showing. As Dad says.  
- Why does he go on with it?  
- Who, Dad?  
In the blood, I suppose. Yours too, I'll bet.  
- I wish sometimes he'd face up to reality.  
- I don't think he faces up to much else.  
He knows music hall's dying  
better than you do.  
And what about you, Frank?  
Are you going on with it?  
Talent got a bit thin  
when it come down to me.



- And the courage too.

- Courage?

Yeah. Courage to go on.

Like Archie. He's got it.

- Walk to the Winter Garden with me.

- Why?

I'm standing in for the lady horganist  
for half a hour. Come on.

(organ music)

Course Granddad had the real talent.

He had what it takes.

People still remember him.

They stop him in the street.

He's about all that's left of all that  
music-hall stuff and all them other things.

Still, as Phoebe always says...

- Better to be a has-been...

- Than a never-was.

It must have been

better than this, anyway.

Something's missing, isn't it?

(Scottish accent)

Mrs Sandy MacPherson calls.

You'll be late for the beauty competition.

I'll see you.

(organ music)

(Archie over PA)

Miss Vicky Thelwell of Leeds.

She likes weightlifting and dislikes  
men with beards. Has no hobbies.

What about her, eh? She needs some  
beef putting into her, if you ask me.

Nobody's asked me. Never mind.

Miss Anne Thomlinson of Heysham.

Likes steak, dislikes getting up  
in the morning, and has no hobbies.

Miss Shirley Lawrence from Ripon.

She likes midnight swimming and  
dislikes wolves and her hobby is sailing.

Now Miss Joyce Richards from Heysham.

She likes weightlifting and dislikes  
men drivers and she's got no hobbies.

- (wolf-whistle) She's a smasher.

- Give over, Father.

Don't look so worried. Your old man may be square, but he still loves the curves.

- How about that for a bit of Pi R squared?

- Where did they dig him up?

- Hello. Hello, Granddad.

- Hello, dear.

You've missed most of it. This is the final walk-round. Archie's been good.

- Yes, I was watching from the back.

- He hasn't said a word about Mick all day. He's worried about him.

That's why I came out.

- To take my mind off it.

- She's pretty.

And now Miss Tina Lapford from Burnley. She likes meeting people. Dislikes sarcasm. Hobbies: Amateur dramatics.

(wolf-whistle)

Whoo!

- I wonder which he's picked for himself?

- Hold your bloody noise.

Doesn't like me talking about it.

As if she doesn't know!

- There's no reason to talk about it.

- She's not soft. Are you, dear?

I don't want hear about it and I shouldn't think Jean does.

And now, before our distinguished judges make their final selection, these lovely girls are going to line up for you so you can make yours.

I've made mine. Of course this is a very tense moment, very tense indeed.

The judges have an elaborate system of marking. They're marked "good", "very good" and "wow".

There you are, boys.

Aren't they gorgeous?

Come on, boys. That'll take the tops off your boiled eggs for you.

If I mention the women, it's because it's always been the same thing with them.

Still, I suppose it's different with men.

More important to them.

- Will you hold your bloody nose?

- Why don't you?

Now the moment you've all been waiting for - the judges' final announcement.

For the third prize we have

Miss Joyce Richards of Heysham.

- Just 19 and very nice too.

- (applause)

Thank you.

To present the prizes, I have the great honour and pleasure to introduce to you that great star of TV, stage, screen and labour exchange, Mr MacDonald Hobley.

Congratulations to you.

And the second place, Miss Tina Lapford from Burnley. Age 20 and very nice too.

I'd vote for her.

Oh, no. Don't think much of her.

Good luck to you.

(organ plays)

- All yours, Mac.

- Thanks.

Ladies and gentlemen,

the winner of the cheque for 1,000

and the holder of the title

of Miss Great Britain

is Valerie Martin from Salisbury.

Listen. You two wait here while I

try and find Archie before the big rush.

They'll be starting the photographs soon.

- And you behave yourself.

- Yes, yes, yes.

Beauty competition? I can't tell the women from the men, not from the back.

Even from the front

you have to take a good look sometimes.

You look thirsty.

How about having a drink with me?

I can't because I've got my mum with me.

- Bring her along too.

- Really?

- Of course. Is she here?

- Come over and meet her.

- I'd love to. Is she pretty?

- No!

- She must be.

- No, she's not a bit. Mum!

This is Mr Rice. He wanted to meet you.

This is my mum, Mrs Lapford.

Go and get changed  
and then you won't get cold.

I thought they'd never decide.

I'm not saying that because of Tina.

Second prize is better than no prize.

- Everyone said it should have been first.

- What did they see in that girl?

- Archie?

- A lot of the girls were extremely ladylike.  
But that one?

The one that won first prize?

I'm sorry, I shall just have to say it.

She was just common.

That's all I can say. Just common.

I knew our Tina had it in her  
when she was a little girl.

She was always doing impersonations.

Weren't you?

- Oh, that.

- "Oh, that?"

Film stars. Veronica Lake she used to do.  
And Donald Duck.

And... who else did you do, love?

- I don't remember. I was only a little kid.

- I knew she had it in her then.

That's why she had elocution lessons.

She started those before school.

She's worked hard.

Of course she's got her head screwed on.

You'll have seen that. You see, she wants  
to get on, so I'm quite sure she will.

All she needs is a little push.

When you see some of those girls  
on television... honest.

You're right, Mrs... Lapford.

I think... Tina, your Tina,  
could easily go places in a big way.

It's just a question of the breaks,

as you say.

Now, I'm just wondering.

You see, I have a new show opening  
at the Winter Garden, actually.

The Winter Garden? Have you?

Yes. You see, it's an expensive show.

Doreen Maine and thousands  
of pounds' worth of costumes.

It's quite a proposition.

It just might be the right break for Tina.

- You're late.

- I'm sorry. I got held up.

- Had to sort out some scenery.

- Why'd you want to meet in this dump?

- We can have a drink in the caravan.

- What caravan?

I'll show you.

Friend of mine owns a site.

There.

I thought we could be alone  
for the afternoon.

OK?

OK.

Don't worry.

- How do you feel?

- I feel...

- Happy, I suppose.

- So do I.

I've never been as happy as this.

Have you?

No, I don't think I have.

I've only ever had a young boyfriend.

- Not used to the old crocks, then?

- Don't be so daft.

I mean, I've never made love.

Not like this afternoon.

Haven't you?

Do you think I'm in love with you?

- You tell me.

- Yes.

Yes, I think I must be.

What was your wife like, Archie?

She was...

a bit difficult to describe.

Didn't you get on very well?

Well, yeah, well...

She didn't really approve of  
the way I carried on, you see.

- What do you mean?

- Well...

She didn't think I took life seriously.

Why should you take life seriously?

What good does it do you?

I think you look smashing  
when you're on the stage.

- Where are your children, then?

- The girl's in London.

One of the boys is in the army.

Hey.

What time have we got to meet  
your mum and dad?

Half past five.

I'd better get dressed, hadn't I?

Yeah.

I can't wait to be in the new show.

Dad'll help with the money.

He's driving over today to talk about it.

So don't worry. Mum'll fix that.

Oh, Archie. You make me feel so good.

You do, really.

There's something... I don't know...  
marvellous about you.

- Did you ever want to get married again?

- No.

- Never met anyone, I suppose.

- That's right.

(radio) Here is a summary of the news.

The War Office announced that  
Sgt Michael Rice was being released  
after negotiations which began  
at 11 o'clock this morning.

Sgt Rice is reported to be fit and well.

An allocated aircr...

What is it, eh?

Tell me, Archie. What is it?

What?

What's that

that makes you so marvellous?

Say you love me, Archie.

I love you.

Home in a few days! I can't believe it.

I knew they wouldn't keep him.

They wouldn't dare. Even nowadays.

I hope it's true and nothing will go wrong.

You do talk the most almighty rubbish.

They say they've got

an aeroplane standing by.

I don't want Archie to be disappointed

on top of everything else.

You should never build things up.

You're always disappointed.

That's Archie's trouble. Always builds things up. Always off on some new idea.

- And he said...

- I say, he's the limit.

- Wait a minute.

- Sorry, go on.

He said "Why do they call it

the Cat-Rice Inn?"

He said "By the time the cats are finished

chasing the electric saucer of milk,

it's turned into a rice pudding."

That one's not so good,

but I got it from my landlady.

It's not the only thing I got off her.

I haven't laughed so much in a long time.

You know that boy they took prisoner?

His name's Rice. Did you see the papers?

I heard it on the radio. Another cup?

- I don't mind if I do.

- Hold on. I'm mother.

Now it's time we got down to business,

as the bishop said...

- To the actress. I know.

- Don't worry, Archie.

I'll see her right. You have my hand on it.

- Then the deal's all set?

- It is.

- And Tina's happy. Aren't you, love?

- Oh, yes.

Well, thanks.

Well, I've got to get off to the theatre.

Why don't we all come,  
now we're in show business?  
Tina can pick up a few tips.  
This is just a little summer show.  
It's nothing like the glorious  
shape of things to come.  
But if you understand that, by all means.  
I'll leave seats at the box office for you.  
Bye-bye, now.  
Oh, I say. He's a charming man,  
isn't he, Wilfred?  
- Now, Ada, this is just a business deal.  
- I'm well aware of that.  
Archie?  
I can't see you tonight.  
It'll have to be tomorrow.  
All right, love.  
- That wasn't Archie, was it?  
- No.  
Jean, could you lend me ten bob?  
Do you mind, dear? Just till I get paid.  
I thought I'd buy this for Mick.  
He's got such a sweet tooth.  
He loves anything like this.  
- It's a bit jazzy, isn't it?  
- Jazzy? I don't think it's jazzy.  
I don't know what you mean by jazzy.  
Mick'll like it anyway.  
Look, take this.  
Archie gave it to me this morning.  
I'll borrow that, then.  
I'll give it you back.  
OK. Only I can't come.  
I promised to meet Granddad at the club.  
- All right, dear.  
- I'll see you later.  
- Can I wear my diamond brooch?  
- Course you can.  
My diamond brooch. Eh, Dad?  
You can't all get to the top.  
You can't make your own luck.  
Me, I was always lucky.  
Mind you, I was good too.  
Granddad. I must talk to you some time.



- Of course. What about?

- It's about Dad.

Oh, yes. Later.

- It makes you proud.

- The ambassador I was telling you about.

Sir something Pearson, his name was.

Charming fellow. Absolutely the best type.

Told me I was his favourite comedian.

Barring George Robey.

Tonight is a great occasion for one

of our most distinguished members.

He's just had very good news

about someone in his family.

I'm sure you'll all want to join with me

in drinking his health.

Billy Rice!

I'm going to ask him to do us the honour

of singing some of his favourite songs.

(cries of encouragement)

Look at him. You wouldn't

remember him properly, would you?

No, no. I don't want that thing.

The so-called government

we've got today

Are cutting down expenses, so they say

To save a few odd million, more or less

They want to scrap the navy. Do they?

(all) Yes!

We know they're broke, well, I'm broke

So are you broke, we're all broke

As we were when Bolingbroke

first sailed away

But we've got the men,

we've got the ships

What's more, we've got the water

And it's just as wet

as in Lord Nelson's day

So don't let 'em scrap the British navy

Don't let 'em scrap our men o' war

What do we care if the income tax

is twelve bob in the pound?

We can owe it

like we've always done before

Let Winston say ta-ta

to all the tartars he adores  
But not ta-ta to all the tars  
that guard our English shores  
Let him scrap his high hats,  
squash hats, straw hats and velours  
But they mustn't never scrap, no!  
They mustn't never scrap, no!  
They mustn't never scrap  
the British navy  
For I'm sure you'll agree  
That a fellow like me  
Is the salt of our dear old country  
Of our dear old country  
(orchestra mimicking explosions)  
But when our heritage is threatened  
At home or across the sea  
It's chaps like us - yes, you and me  
Who'll march again to victory  
Some people say we're finished  
Some people say we're done  
But if we all stand  
By this dear old land  
(Land Of Hope And Glory)  
- Don't look sour.  
- You would if you'd been messed about.  
You'll get what's coming to you.  
The battle will be won  
Thank God we're normal,  
normal, normal  
Yes, thank God we're normal,  
we are the country's flower  
And when the great call comes  
Someone will gaze down on us and say  
They make no fuss  
For this was their finest shower  
Yes, this was their finest shower  
So thank God we're normal,  
normal, normal  
Yes, thank God we're normal  
For this was their finest shower  
- What do you mean?  
- There's a new show.  
Backed to the limit. I've a new backer.  
(piano music on radio)

(door bell)

(music ends)

And now a request from Mrs Connie  
Morris of Northwood, Middlesex,  
for her husband, Flight Sergeant Ozzie  
Morris, who is serving in the Middle East.  
Sorry, I've forgotten my key.

I don't like to answer the door in case  
it's a policeman with another summons.

There'll be a policeman  
at the door all right.

- I do hope Archie won't be long.

- Well, Frank's with him.

Frank's a sensible boy.

He'll see he doesn't stay out too late.

Archie's a fool. Always got some  
big idea he's going to make money.

A while ago it was female impersonators.

We were going to make a packet.

But by the time Archie got started on it,  
it had all petered out.

Oh, well. It's no good worrying.

It says on the telly that Mick's coming  
home and that's all that really matters.

- Come on. Have a drop of this.

- Not for me, thanks.

Getting low on the drink.

You need something to eat. You've had  
nothing but tea and cigarettes for days.

- I couldn't eat anything.

- People have got to eat.

"People have got to eat" she says.

That's a good one.

- You can't carry on...

- "People have got to eat" she said.

- Where's he got to?

- He's gone into the kitchen.

That's not all they've got to do. They've  
got to do things you don't know about.

- I know, love. Things have been tough.

- You're a very sweet girl, Jean.

- But you're not even my own daughter.

- All right, I'm sorry.

- Don't presume too much.

- I just said...

- Don't presume too much!

- Let me get you some tea.

Why doesn't Archie come back?

You'd think he'd come back here and celebrate after hearing his son was safe.

- I don't know. You people...

- Don't let's have a row. It's silly. It's not silly.

Anyway, who said we were having a row?

All I said was that I wasn't hungry. And you start getting at me.

- I wasn't getting at you.

- I can't eat.

You don't know what it's like.

We've lived on penny pieces of bacon and what we've got from the tribunal.

- You're all alike.

- We should have stayed.

Archie, I'm talking to Jean.

I thought you were.

I sized up the situation in a flash. It's easy for people like you to make fun. I left school when I was 12 years old. If she tells me that once more I'll get up on this roof, drunk as I am, I shall get up and scream. I've never done that before.

You had to pay sixpence a week. Some weeks my mother couldn't find it. But this is a welfare state, my darling. Nobody wants, nobody goes without.

- I was scrubbing a dining hall...

- Everybody's all right.

- Young Mick's all right, Frank, Jean...

- I wish you'd both shut up.

She'll make it up with old Graham and forget all about silly old Trafalgar Square. You don't understand.

Phoebe scrubbed a dining-hall floor for 500 kids when she was 12 years old. Have you any idea how often she's told me about those kids and that hall?

- Oh, shut up.

- OK, son. Pass one of those to Jean.  
- She looks as though she could use it.  
- Every night's a party night.  
And do you know why? Look at her.  
Look at that poor, pathetic old thing there.  
She's very drunk.  
And her untrained mind is racing because  
her blood's full of alcohol we can't afford.  
- What's he talking about?  
- She's tired and she's getting old.  
She's tired of me. Nobody ever  
gave her very much except me.  
And my God, she's tired of that.  
Aren't you, my old darling?  
I tried to make something of myself.  
I really did try.  
I was nothing much to look at.  
I was a plain kid.  
No, I wasn't. I wasn't even plain.  
I was the ugliest bloody kid  
you ever saw in your life.  
But I made something of myself.  
I made him want me.  
- It was a long time ago.  
- Have a row, but can it be a quiet row?  
Stop yelling, I can't hear myself shout.  
Sing us a song, there's a good boy.  
- Where's the old man?  
- In the kitchen.  
Billy, come out of there.  
You know you're only reading.  
What's he doing messing in there?  
He knows I don't like him being in there.  
Leaves everything in such a mess.  
- You've been at that cake.  
- What?  
- You've been at my cake.  
- I was hungry.  
But that cake was for Mick.  
It wasn't for you.  
- I'm sorry.  
- I bought it for when he comes home.  
- Why couldn't you leave it alone?  
- I just fancied it.

Couldn't you leave it alone?  
It wasn't for you.  
What's the matter with you?  
I feed you, don't I?  
Don't think you give me  
all that much money every week.  
- Forget it.  
- I won't.  
- We'll buy another.  
- You'll buy another!  
You're so rich.  
You're such a great big success!  
What's a little cake?  
We'll order a dozen of them.  
Well, I bought that cake.  
And it cost me 30 shillings.  
It was for Mick.  
Because I wanted to give him something.  
Something that I know he'll like  
after going through what he has.  
And now that bloody greedy old pig.  
That old pig!  
As if he hasn't had enough of everything  
already, he's got to get his fingers in it!  
(wails in despair)  
Excuse me, Jean.  
Well, I suppose he's had more out of life  
than any of us and he's enjoyed it.  
Good luck to him.  
All the same, you needn't have done that.  
I'm so sorry, Archie.  
Please try and forgive me.  
Come on, love! Pull yourself together.  
We should have all done that years ago.  
Let's all pull ourselves together,  
together, together  
Let's pull ourselves together  
and the happier we'll be  
That's right. Remember we're British.  
Don't worry, Jean. You won't  
have to endure this much longer.  
Phoebe, let's see you do your dance.  
Jean, play something. She dances well.  
I wonder if she'll make me cry tonight.

We'll see. Frank, sing us a song.  
When there isn't a girl about  
you feel so Ionely  
When there isn't a girl about...  
Wait a minute.  
I'm just trying to remember...  
The girl I love is up in the lavatory...  
Archie, no. Not like that. It's rude.  
- You sing it, Phoebe.  
- No, I can't sing.  
All right, then.  
The boy I love, he's up in the gallery  
The boy I love, he's smiling now at me  
Where is he? Can't you see?  
Waving his handkerchief  
As merry as a robin that sings on a tree  
- Jolly good, old girl.  
- No, it sounded bloody awful.  
- This letter's from Claire.  
- May I have another cup of tea?  
Just a minute. I want to read it.  
I want you to listen too.  
Claire's my niece, the one in Canada.  
John's daughter.  
They're all there now,  
my brother John as well.  
They started off in the restaurant business  
with \$500. There's their little girl.  
Now they have a hotel in Toronto.  
And they're opening another.  
You don't have to look interested.  
She's not interested in that.  
- Of course she's interested.  
- Frank, would you get me another tea?  
I'm only trying to explain to her.  
They've got this one hotel in Toronto.  
Now they're opening one in Ottawa.  
John manages the hotel  
in Toronto for them  
and now they want us to go out there and  
for Archie to manage the hotel in Ottawa.  
- What do I know about hotels?  
- He gets cross if I mention it.  
Don't say that once more.

You've mentioned it and I'm not cross.  
I just think it's a bloody pointless idea.  
Anyway, you can't get  
draught Bass in Canada.  
- I'm going to the theatre.  
- Do you want dinner?  
I don't think so.  
I'll grab a bite somewhere.  
Jean, why don't you bring some  
fish and chips to the old dump?  
Remember, when you were a kid?  
I'll bring the champagne.  
I don't often see my little daughter. Ta-ta.  
Bye.  
He doesn't like me talking about it.  
But we needn't decide for a month or two.  
- What about the boys?  
- They can come too if they want.  
I don't know about Mick,  
but Frank likes the idea.  
- Do you, Frank?  
- Well, take a look around you.  
Can you think of any good reason for  
staying in this cosy corner of Europe?  
Who are you? You're nobody.  
You're nobody, you've no money  
and you're young.  
And when you're not,  
you'll still have no money,  
you'll still be nobody  
and the only difference is you'll be old.  
Sometimes I think you're the only  
sensible one of any of us.  
Here we are. Champagne.  
Remember when I picked you up  
at the bottom here?  
You'd been very naughty on the toboggan.  
(laughs)  
- Phoebe seems very keen on Canada.  
- Yeah.  
- I went to Canada during the war.  
- I remember.  
Couldn't get draught Bass,  
not even in Toronto.



Seemed to think that was pretty English.  
Didn't seem very English to me.  
That Trafalgar Square thing.  
Did you really believe in all that?  
I thought I did at the time.  
Like me and draught Bass  
and women, eh?  
- Are you meeting someone?  
- No.  
Just a man about some scenery.  
Got half an hour.  
Phoebe seems to have set her heart on it.  
Your mother...  
Your mother caught me  
in bed with Phoebe.  
I didn't know.  
I don't know what I really expected,  
but I expected you to say more than that.  
You'd...  
You'd just been born.  
And your mother caught  
poor old Phoebe and me together.  
Poor old Phoebe.  
She's never even enjoyed it very much.  
Anyway, your mother walked out.  
She walked out just like that.  
She was what you'd call a person of...  
a person of principle.  
You mean, you didn't love my mother?  
Yes. I loved her.  
I was in love with her.  
Whatever that may mean.  
Anyway, a few months later  
she was dead. That was that.  
Tell me something. Will you?  
I want you to tell me something.  
Well, what would you say  
to a man of my age  
marrying a girl of...  
about... your age?  
Oh, Dad!  
You're not serious.  
You couldn't.  
You couldn't do

a thing like that to Phoebe.

You've been away from  
your old man a bit too long.

- My scenery man. Got to go.

- Where are you meeting him?

- At the Rockcliffe.

- I'll walk down with you.

Don't bother. I'm in a bit of a rush.

Why don't you take old Phoebe  
to the pictures?

Here you are, love. Thanks.

- What's the matter, Jean?

- It's Archie.

- What is it now?

- A girl.

- That's nothing new.

- He's thinking of marrying this one.

- I don't believe it.

- It's true.

- What about Phoebe?

- Exactly.

- Who is it?

- She was in the beauty competition.

Tina Lapford. She won second prize.

Daughter of some bakery people  
in Burnley.

They must be quite well off.

Here's the end of the ride.

Come along, my dear.

- Let me help you down.

- Thank you, Granddad.

You know, I wonder...

He was with her and her parents  
yesterday at Stocks's caf.

Do you suppose that  
he's pretending we don't exist?

I don't know.

Her parents are here, you say?

They're staying at the holiday camp.

Part of the prize.

Damn waste of money.

Town hall pays and shoves it on the rates.

Granddad, will you walk down

to the station with me to meet Graham?

- You'll want to be alone.  
- No, I'd love you to come.  
I've got some business to do.  
Bye-bye, Jean.  
Bye.  
- Can I speak to Mrs Lapford?  
- I'll find out if she's in the camp, sir.  
Calling Mrs Lapford. Please go to  
reception, where friends are waiting.  
Mrs Lapford? That's me.  
What can I be wanted for?  
I wonder what they could want.  
Hang on. I can hear him coming now.  
- Call, Mr Rice.  
- Not now.  
She's called twice.  
Female named Lapford.  
- Could I have your autograph?  
- Shh!  
Hello? Archie Rice speaking.  
Yes.  
(angry female voice)  
No. Look, wait a minute.  
I don't understand. What's wrong?  
I don't understand. There's evidently  
some misunderstanding.  
Well, look...  
Don't be a cow and stand there. Get out.  
No, I'm sorry. Look.  
Let me ring back, will you?  
What do you mean, the last time?  
It's ridiculous.  
Is Tina there?  
Can I speak to her, please? Why not?  
Who? Who's been telling you all this?  
Who?!

I'm sure... He couldn't have.  
On stage, everybody!  
He couldn't have understood.  
Listen, Mrs Lapford.  
I want her... I meant it, I want her in  
the show and I want her to be the star.  
And I want her too. Tell her that.  
No, you can't.

I'm depending on you. You promised.  
Everything's fixed up.  
I've paid out cheques.  
Yes.  
Yes, it's true.  
Seven years ago, that's right.  
Still in the receiver's.  
Well, you didn't ask me.  
Well, for God's sake, give me some time.  
At least let me come and see you.  
(hangs up)  
On stage.  
Mr Rice, could I have your autograph?  
You look so daft.  
- That was Mrs Moneybags, wasn't it?  
- Shut up!  
You've mucked it up, haven't you?  
I said you've mucked it up!  
- Gawd, you need a keeper.  
- (Frank) What's the matter?  
(music starts on stage)  
- Dad, what's the matter?  
- Shut up. Shut the door.  
Just a second. Hey, John.  
Take these costumes  
down to the girls for me.  
Check the board and tell Charlie  
to keep going. Be about two minutes.  
- Got all that?  
- Yep.  
- Dad, what's got into you?  
- That's it.  
Who do you think narked?  
Shopped me? Grassed?  
- Better get used to prison language.  
- What are you on about?  
The show. The old man.  
My old man, Billy Rice. Old-time favourite.  
- The new show. It's finished.  
- What's Granddad got to do with that?  
There's no time to explain that now.  
Better get on the blower to everybody,  
make all cancellations. Every single thing.  
Oh no, it's too late now. Send wires.

- Does Harold know?

- Oh, God.

Tell Harold... Get Harold...

Get him on the blower for me

as soon as I come off after the first act.

(knocking)

OK. Curtain up.

What happened, Archie?

- He's still with us. That's something.

- Will you not be doing the new show?

- Just give me a chance.

- You had your chance, mate. And ours.

(upbeat music and thin applause)

- Good evening, ladies and gentlemen.

- (music drowns him out)

Does he think he's funny?

- Shut up!

- (music stops)

Hello, ladies and gentlemen. Archie Rice

is the name. Mrs Rice's favourite boy.

We're going to entertain you for the next

two and a half hours... half hours... Whoo!

I want to see your father.

I'll be in his dressing room.

All right, Granddad.

Now I'm going to introduce to you

Beryl and BoBo, the trampoline tramps.

You swine. These kids have

turned down other work for you.

- I'll see what I can do.

- We know what you can do.

I'll get lawyers and I'll...

- What about you lot? Not interested?

- He didn't want us anyway.

Take your spoon out of

the mixing bowl and get ready.

I don't care about the bloody money,

but I'm owing the bookie 15 quid.

Look, be a pal and forget it, would you?

- How can I? I paid it in.

- You paid it in?

- Of course.

- When?

Yesterday. And I've made out

payments on the strength of it.

- You'd better think about...

- OK, Harold.

Granddad's arrived.

He's in your dressing room.

Look. Wire Jimmy Collins.

"Cancel shoes order. Snags. Archie."

- And try and get Lennie again.

- Archie!

- Not now, dear.

- It's not fair, Frank. (grumbles)

- Frank, I've lost one of me scallops.

- You'll have to turn sideways then, dear.

Before you say anything, I had to do it  
to stop you making a fool of yourself.

- You stopped me. Congratulations.

- I didn't know about this financial thing.

I like that phrase. "This financial thing".

I'll make it up to you, I promise.

I realise I've put you in a bit of a spot.

- "Bit of a spot."

- Look, I've had an idea.

I'll come in with you. How's that?

- You mean to jail, dear?

- My name's still worth something.

We'll give 'em the old songs.

People still want them, you know.

What about it? What do you say?

- God help you.

- Archie...

Listen, Frank. Maybe you can understand.

His mind's going.

I'm an undischarged bankrupt, see?

I do everything in my wife's name.

But just this once I signed the cheques  
myself, for very obvious reasons.

- Cripes! You really are...

- Archie, listen.

Listen, son. Just no more interference.

Yes? Thank you.

I've got a few pounds in the post office.

- You're on again.

- It's not much, but it's a few pounds.

I'd like you to have it.

I didn't mean it. Doesn't he know?

I didn't mean it.

(applause)

Why should I care?

Why should I let it touch me?

Why shouldn't I

Sit down and try to

let it pass over me?

Why should they stare?

Why should I let it get me?

What's the use of despair

If they call you a square?

You're a long time dead...

Thank you.

Thanks.

- He's a bit down tonight.

- Is he?

- Seems all right to me.

- Does he?

(song ends)

I'm not much in the mood

for a show, I suppose.

What happened about the Africa job?

- I turned it down.

- Oh, I'm sorry.

Something like it'll turn up again.

Something like you might not.

I can't leave here yet. I'm too involved.

- You do understand, don't you?

- I'm beginning to.

Whatever it is, you're up to your ears in it.

- I'm not much help, am I?

- You've been patient. I don't know why.

Because I love you. That's why.

- You'd still rather I went back to London?

- Yes.

It's not that I don't want you to stay, but...

there's something I must see Dad about.

- Would you like me to come with you?

- I'd rather you didn't.

Not tonight.

All right.

She'd steal your knickers

and sell them for dusters.

- Jean!

- Mrs Roberts. I always used to say that.  
What are you talking about,  
you right-wing old poop?

- Old poop maybe, but not right-wing.

- Can we talk?

- Your dad's a bit slewed.

- I don't want any. I want to talk to Dad.  
I'm talking to Frank about my landlady.  
She always used to remind me  
of a bloke I used to know.

- Listen, this'll interest you.

- I want to talk to you about Phoebe.  
He was Irish and he did a trampoline act.  
We called him Lady Rosie Bothways.  
The end of me old cigar  
Oh, shut up, Frank!

What's the matter with you? Don't you  
care what's going to happen to Phoebe?  
Jeannie, love. Shall I tell you something?  
All my life I've been  
searching for something.  
A draught Bass you could drink all night  
without running off every ten minutes,  
without feeling sick, and all for fourpence.  
The man who could offer me that  
would really get my vote.  
Oh, he's funny. Archie, you're a bit  
of a bastard, you really are.

- Insult me. I don't mind.

- Don't start being humble.

- What's the matter with her?

- Don't ask me.

You can't hurt yourself  
any more, can you?

- Why don't you leave him alone?

- That's right.

He doesn't give a damn about anyone.  
He's two pen'orth of nothing.

- That sums me up.

- Leave him alone.

He wants to divorce Phoebe.  
What's going to happen to her?  
You can't change anybody.



Have you seen this girl  
he wants to marry?  
I caught them together yesterday.  
She's a professional virgin.  
If you're going to start that,  
I'm going home.  
She's pretty, spoilt, vain and stupid.  
Her parents are probably stupid too.  
- How old is she?  
- 20.  
I suppose you think you're going to get  
them to put up money for this new show.  
- That was the idea.  
- What do you mean "was the idea"?  
Well, before you started getting fussed  
about it, old Billy went and did something.  
He went and saw my little girlfriend's  
parents and he... told them.  
Unfortunately he did not realise that in  
the meantime I had signed a few cheques.  
- He scotched it?  
- Oh, yes. Completely.  
So you needn't worry.  
About Phoebe, anyway.  
Old Archie isn't going  
to get his oats after all.  
("Why Should I Care?" plays on piano)  
Dad...  
Yeah?  
Oh, I... (sniffs)  
You're like your mother.  
She always felt everything very deeply.  
Much more deeply than I did.  
You're what they call a sentimentalist.  
- What are you talking about now?  
- (laughs) I know.  
You think I'm just a tatty old  
music-hall actor.  
But you know, when you're up here...  
When you're up here...  
you think you love all those people  
around you out there.  
But you don't.  
You don't love them like...

Oh, if you learn it properly  
you get yourself a technique.  
And smile, darn you, smile and look  
the friendliest, jolliest thing in the world.  
But you'll be just dead and used up.  
Just like everybody else.  
See this face?  
This face can split open  
with warmth and humanity.  
It can sing.  
Tell the worst,  
unfunniest stories in the world  
to a great mob of dead, drab erks.  
And it doesn't matter.  
It doesn't matter because look.  
Look at my eyes.  
I'm dead behind these eyes.  
I'm dead.  
Just like the whole  
damn shoddy lot out there.  
Hey.  
Did I ever tell you  
the most moving thing I ever heard?  
- Oh, Dad...  
- No, no, it's not a gag.  
It was when I was in Canada.  
I used to slip over the border sometimes.  
One night I heard some Negress  
singing in a bar.  
If ever I saw any hope or strength  
in the human race,  
it was in the face of that old fat Negress  
getting up to sing about...  
Jesus, or something like that.  
I never even liked that kind of music,  
but to see that old bag singing  
her heart out to the whole world...  
And you knew somehow that it didn't  
matter how much you kicked people,  
how much you despised them.  
If they can get up and make  
a pure, natural noise like that,  
there's nothing wrong with them.  
If I'd done one thing as good as that

in my whole life,  
I'd have been all right.  
I wish to God I was that old bag.  
I'd stand up and shake  
my great bosom up and down  
and lift up my head and make  
the most beautiful fuss in the world.  
Dear God, I would.  
But I'll never do it.  
Do you think you're going to do it?  
Well, do you?  
I don't know.  
I really don't know.  
I'll probably do exactly the same as you.  
Of course you will.  
Mind you, you'll make a better job of it.  
You're more clever.  
(Phoebe) Archie.  
Aren't you coming home?  
Frank sent me here.  
There's a policeman outside asking  
for you. What do you think he wants?  
It's the income tax man.  
I've been expecting him for 20 years.  
Don't look so scared, Phoebe, love.  
Old Archie's drunk again.  
It's only the income tax man.  
The policeman's outside with Frank.  
What do you think he wants, Archie?  
Bastards. The rotten bastards.  
They've killed him.  
They've killed Mick.  
O Lord  
I don't care where they  
Bury my body  
No, I don't care where they  
Bury my body  
Cos my soul's gonna live with God  
Quick march!  
- They're giving him quite a sendoff.  
- They say he'll get the VC.  
What will they do, send it on to him?  
- Could I have a photograph?  
- Oh, please.

- Who are you?
- I'm the boy's uncle.
- They've got a job to do.
- Don't think they're not enjoying it.
- Are you all right?
- Yes, I'm all right, dear.
- I'd like to go now.
- Just one last question.

I do realise that this  
is a very difficult situation.  
I wonder if you could spare me  
a few minutes.

All right, boys. Wrap it up.

Bum.

About this story - this is how I've angled it:

"The background of a hero".

I thought we could do something with  
those patriotic songs you sing in your act.

That's... They're my own material.

I don't think...

- How's the show going?

- Eh? Oh, well...

People just sit back and stare at you.

They just sit. But London, that's the place.

You're not planning a comeback  
by any chance, are you?

No return to the stage?

- He's retired.

- Pity.

There's nothing like the old music hall.

Well, thank you so much, Mr Rice.

Please accept my sympathy...

- They look as if they're about to go now.

- I'll pay all your debts, settle everything.

- I'll see that nothing happens.

- You're the one to persuade him, Bill.

Only don't tell him that I asked you.

Frank's all set to go, aren't you?

- Could we have that? Want some, Dad?

- Yes.

Brother Bill. Admiring the view?

Worth the climb, isn't it?

Frank's been telling me about

Claire's letter. I'm willing to help.

I'll pay all your fares and you can start a fresh life. The three of you.  
What's the matter, son?  
You want to be a Mountie?  
We could all be together.  
Bill would look after everything.

- When's the London train?  
- 9 o'clock.  
- Who are we seeing? Rubens?  
- No, Klein.  
- Charlie Klein?!  
- What are you going to London for?  
It's about a new show.  
He's coming to make it look respectable.  
Why don't you come too?  
You can see Graham.  
Afternoon. Mr Klein, please.

- Who shall I say?  
- Mr Billy Rice, Mr Archie Rice.  
Will you take a seat, please?  
Charlie Klein's all right. I used to know him when he was about Jeannie's age.  
Put him up for my club.  
As soon as I heard the name Rice,  
I said to myself "It can't be!"  
Nice to see you. How are you, Archie?  
Let's come into the office.  
You're getting younger and younger.  
You're looking wonderful.  
Wait for us in the pub next door, will you?  
Won't be long.  
We all had our own style, our own songs,  
and we were all English.  
What's more, we spoke English.  
Ah! There you are, Jean.  
We knew what the rules were.  
Even if we spent half our time making people laugh at them,  
we never suggested  
anyone should break 'em.

- What are you having to drink?  
- Scotch.  
- Scotch all round, please.  
- A real pro is like the run of people.

Only he's a lot more like them  
than they are themselves.  
Hey, Billy. See who that is?  
Eddie Trimmer!  
Eddie, my favourite comedian.  
Archie, I love your dad.  
He's such a sweet old man.  
And still a first-class performer.  
Still a first-class performer.  
It's going to be great  
to see him up there again.  
What are you doing? You're not going  
to put him back into the business?  
It's our only chance.  
Klein wouldn't look at me.  
- Old Billy's sold on this idea himself.  
- And you're going to let him do it?  
You'll kill that old man.  
Just to save that tatty show of yours.  
It isn't to save that tatty show of mine.  
It's to save your tatty dad from jail.  
They may not come in to see Archie,  
but they may remember Billy Rice.  
Worth a try, anyway.  
He wants to do it. Look at him,  
poor old gubbins. Top of the bill again.  
With your lips close to the telephone  
When they might be close to mine  
Well, here's to the Billy Rice show at  
the Winter Gardens Illuminations Week!  
(orchestra plays jaunty overture)  
(music continues)  
- Have you seen the old man?  
- Yeah, he's OK. Jean's with him.  
Frank, we're stuck!  
Pour a bucket of water over 'em.  
Oh dear, I've made a mess of this.  
Don't bother about it. Wipe it off.  
It's your face they've come to see.  
- Do you want a drink?  
- No, no. Not before the show.  
- Granddad? Overture.  
- Already?  
- Don't worry. I'll be down.

- He's nearly ready.

After "Put Me Amongst the Girls"

it's my first change.

I'll have everything down.

- Good luck.

- Good luck, Mr Rice.

Thank you!

Once I get that backcloth behind me

I can hold them for half an hour.

I'll see those five-minute

microphone wonders out any day.

- Did you realise what time it is?

- Don't worry.

He's on his way down now.

- I'm getting a problem with the voltage.

- Don't be trouble.

- Is the overture on?

- You've got a good two minutes.

- You look great.

- Thank you.

- Warn the orchestra.

- He's not ready yet.

It's all right, love.

You've got a good minute.

- Good luck, Billy.

- And the same to you.

Always be nice to them on the way up

in case you need them on the way down.

Put me amongst the girls

Put me amongst the girls

Do me a favour, do

You know I'd do as much for you

- Are you ready, Granddad?

- Yes.

- We're coughing better tonight.

- Yes.

Put me amongst the girls

Those with the curly curls

They'll enjoy themselves and so will I

If you put me amongst the girls

Tell Rita to keep going. Get a chair.

- What's the matter?

- It's my breath.

Brandy, quick, someone!

Renee!

- What?
- Something's happened to Granddad.
- You've got to go on again.
- What?
- What is it?
- Stand by to go on again.
- It's so hot.
- Give us the bottle.
- A little snifter.
- No, I'm all right. I'm all right.
- Go on. Do a reprise.
- I've got to go on now.

No, Dad. No... Billy!

Put me amongst the girls

Carry on.

Put me amongst the girls

Do me a favour, do

You know I'd do as much for you

Put me amongst the girls

Those with the curly curls

(song continues)

I'm sorry.

(song fades out)

- Jean thinks I killed him.
- You didn't kill him, Archie.

He was such a sweet old man.

Do you know who said that?

Charlie Klein.

He said old Billy was  
the nicest old man in the business.

Klein's cancelling the show  
as soon as he gets a replacement.

I've booked your tickets to Canada.

I'm going anyway, Dad. So you'd better  
start thinking about number one.

Can't get draught Bass in Canada.

I've tried it.

I'm not doing anything for you  
to stay here. Not any more.

It's Canada or jail.

You know, I always thought

I should go to jail.

I should think it must be quite interesting.



Sure to meet some people I know.  
Oh, well. Just two more performances.  
Seems a pity, though.  
I'd like to have notched up  
21 years against the income tax man.  
I'll never make my 21st now. It would  
have been fun to get the key of the door.  
Why should I care?  
Why should I let it touch me?  
Why shouldn't I  
Sit down and try to  
let it pass over me?  
Why should they stare?  
Why should I let it get me?  
(Archie tap-dancing)  
Mr Klein.  
What's he up to, saying  
he can carry on next week?  
- He said that?  
- Yes, to all these people.  
I was meant to be in Blackpool, but I had  
to come all the way down here to fix this.  
I'm telling you, he's out. Finished!  
Why should I care?  
Why should I let it touch me?  
Why shouldn't I  
Sit down and try to  
let it pass over me?  
Why...  
(orchestra plays on)  
There's a bloke out here with a hook.  
You know that, don't you?  
He's standing there. I can see him.  
Must be the income tax man.  
- This show finishes tonight.  
- Yes, Mr Klein.  
(Klein) This show finishes tonight.  
Why should I care?  
Why should I let it touch me?  
Why shouldn't I  
Sit down and try to  
let it pass over me?  
Why...  
Why should I let it get me?

What's the use of despair...

(orchestra plays on)

If they see that you're blue

they'll look down on you

So why oh why should I

(music stops)

Oh, well. I have a go. Don't I, ladies?

I do. I have a go.

You've been a good audience. Very good.

A very good audience.

Let me know where you're

working tomorrow night.

I'll come and see you.

(talking and scattered clapping)

(orchestra plays upbeat tune)

(Frank) Ghost lights up.

(Frank) Take the front curtains up.

("Why Should I Care?" plays on piano)

Subs ripped by Ingolf 2004