

RHAPSODY FOR RITA

original screenplay

by

Roger Tucker



fabulator limited

fabulator

28 Elm Park Road, London, SW3 6AX
telephone & fax : +44 20 7352 5158

tucker@fabulator.uk.com

FADE IN:

Cloudy sky – grey sea – waves roll onto a shingle beach –
RAZOR WIRE.

A male voice whistles a few lonely bars – waiting.

BLACK

The WAIL of distant air-raid sirens.

MAIN TITLES BEGIN.

US BROADCASTER (VO)

The noise that you hear is the
sound of the air-raid siren ...
There is no panic. People are just
walking along. We're at the
entrance to an air-raid shelter
here in London, and I must move the
cable over – just a bit – so people
can walk in ... We'll just listen
for a moment to the sound of people
walking along, quite quietly. No
one is hurrying. It's one of the
strangest sounds, like ghosts shod
with steel.

INT. CHURCH CRYPT – EVENING

Beneath the vaulted roof, a poster stuck to the wall:

IF YOUR KNEES KNOCK
KNEEL ON THEM

City workers flood quietly down the stone steps. A vicar
in steel helmet and air-raid warden's tabard ushers them
through.

On a trestle table an enormous tea urn and wire baskets
of mugs, are being lined up by women with pinafores over
their top coats.

An old man gets out an accordion; the bellows wheeze
against the background of the sirens.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DUSK

Searchlights sweep the darkening skies.

a FIREWATCHER clammers out of a skylight with a camp stool, to take up position next to a line of buckets and sandbags. He wears a tin helmet and, cross-strapped over his grey flannel suit, an army kit bag and binoculars.

EXT. CHIC SHOPPING STREET - SAME

No lights illuminate the black and white shop fronts. A last shopper hurries to her waiting Rolls, followed by an assistant with candy-stripped boxes.

EXT. ARCADE - SAME

The passageway is strung with nets to stop falling glass.

A frock-coated jeweler double locks the door of his boutique, and strides off.

EXT. BACK MEWS - SAME

A delivery van stands by an open loading bay. A wind-beaten umbrella lies abandoned. An alley cat stretches.

The wail of the siren seems to grow louder in the stillness.

INT. GENTS LAVATORY - SAME

Against the white-tiled bricks, three silhouettes their faces to the wall.

On the flanks, two with worn macs and brown trilbies. At the centre, the bulk of a prize-fighter draped in a black oilskin; on his head a bowler hat, tipped foreword exposing his shaved back and sides.

He turns away from the urinal to reveal a well-battered face. In his fifties, he has a nose broken and badly reset, and, the length of his cheek, a livid SCAR LIKE A TICK that records the slash of a razor. He is JACK GARLICK. He turns over a white mint on his tongue, consults his watch.

GARLICK

Give 'em five - and the rats'll be
out to play.

He is soon joined by the other two, PORTER and BLUNT.
Both in their forties, Blunt wears a tie with horse shoe
motif and suede shoes, Porter sports a handlebar
moustache. The urinal sluices behind them.

BLUNT

Nice evening for it, any rate.

PORTER

If Gerry doesn't put the kibosh on
it.

EXT. CHIC SHOPPING STREET - CONTINUING

The street deserted - but, then, the roar of cars,
getting louder, approaching fast.

MAIN TITLES END

A saloon screeches around the corner, followed by a
second.

The lead bumps up onto the pavement. Through the sunshine
roof shoots up the wiry figure of a young man, his face
masked with a silk scarf, like an outlaw in a western. He
is BOBBY GRIBBLE.

His feet up on the passenger seat, he leans over and
strikes at the glass shop front with a coal hammer.

INT. CRYPT - SAME

The crypt echoes with voices and accordion.

CROWD

(singing)

There'll always be an England,
While there's a country lane.
Wherever there's a cottage small
Beside a field of grain
There'll always be an England ...

EXT. CHIC SHOPPING STREET - CONTINUING

A leather-gloved hand scoops up tiaras, necklaces,
bracelets. Then - the shrill of a police WHISTLE.

Bobby looks round, his eyes like diamonds above the silk.

The old delivery van swerves across the end of the road, blocking the escape route.

BOBBY

Sod it! Who invited them?

Uniformed police with regulation steel helmets come running from various directions.

BOBBY (CONT.)

We've been ratted. Get the hell out!

The driver tugs on the wheel, wrestles with the gears — SCRAPING METAL sounds from beneath the car. He sucks in air beneath scarf that, likewise, covers his face.

DRIVER

Jam-jar's fucked!

BOBBY

(shouts)

Every bugger for himself.

One arm full of loot, he vaults out of the roof, bounces off the side of the car.

The back-up car behind is already making a turn in the road. Bobby hops onto the running board as it lurches off.

From the pavement a War Reserve policeman steps out into its path — and hurls his truncheon. The windscreen SHATTERS.

COPPER

Howzat?

The car buffs and bumps the curb. Bobby leaps from the running board, and is away like a streak of lightening.

His footsteps echo through the arcade, the thunder of policemen's boots follow.

INT. CRYPT — SAME

Old and young sing at the tops of their voices.

CROWD

While worlds may change and go awry,

Whilst there is still one voice to cry!
There'll always be an England
And England shall be free ...

EXT. SERVICE YARD – CONTINUING

Porter and Blunt charge down a narrow passageway into the back quad. A bunch of uniformed police come from the other side. They all look round as blank as each other.

BLUNT

Little bugger's given us the slip.

Then, the blast of a WHISTLE like full time at a football game. Porter scans the surrounding elevations. A shout –

FIREWATCHER (OS)

He's up 'ere. He's on the roof.

EXT. ROOFTOPS – CONTINUING

A rattle of broken slates as Bobby slithers down the roof slope, his pockets bulging with gems, and lands in a flat, wet, gully.

The Firewatcher turns to face him, spits the whistle out, and spreads his arms like a goalkeeper defending a penalty.

BOBBY

You little cunt!

FIREWATCHER

Language! Language! My Old Man'd give me the slipper for that!

BOBBY

That ain't nothing to what I'd give you!

He snatches up a fire bucket, water and all, swings it round, and launches it at the Firewatcher. The water splashes him, the bucket lands at his feet.

FIREWATCHER

Missed.

He pops the whistle back in his mouth and gives another blast.

BOBBY

Pity I got to dash or I'd shove
that whistle up your ass and flush
you down the karsy.

He turns and scampers back along the gulley, finds a
junction between gable ends, and makes for the stone
parapet on the far side.

He leans over, searching for a way down, but, before he
can figure it out -

VOICE BELOW

There he is! He's on this side.

BOBBY

Shit!

He turns back. The search lights are now raking the
clouds behind him. Reflections dance on the glass panes
of a skylight.

He looks left and right, but can see no other way. He
prepares his gloved fist to smash through the glass, and
rushes forward.

The skylight opens and UP COMES GARLICK. Bobby stops
short.

BOBBY

Blow me, Jack! Gave me a nasty turn
popping up like that.

GARLICK

Bring your parachute, Bobby?

Bobby starts to back off, his eyes darting right and
left, like an animal at bay.

BOBBY

What you getting at?

GARLICK

You can go down in cuffs, or you
can jump.

BOBBY

Come off it! Fair cop, eh?

Garlick moves forward at a measured pace. Bobby backs up
to the parapet behind him.

BOBBY (CONT)

Now, now, Jack, no hard feelings?
Don't do something you might
regret, eh?

INT. THE RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

From blackout drapes that mask the entrance, seeps the muffled sounds of hot jazz. The devil-may-care pass through the velvet chicane and down stairs beneath a banner:

**SAFEST PLACE IN TOWN
TWENTY FEET BELOW GROUND**

At the bottom of the descent, a room ablaze with glamour. Uniforms of many nationalities mix with black dinner suits, the women in shimmering cocktail dresses. There is no sign of war shortages here.

On stage the Zigzag Zigler Band are in full swing. The sax section come out from behind their stands decorated with a "ZZZ" and form an arc around the man himself.

ZIGGY wears a zebra-patterned drapecoat over dress pants, pleated and pegged, and is conducting the band with an over-sized baton. This he flips into the bell of the baritone as he delivers his famous "wibble-wobble" dance.

With the spots flashing on his round glasses, you have to look hard to see that Ziggy is well into his forties, and, but for the chutzpah, could pass for a Jewish accountant.

Amidst the whistles and cheers a group of dignitaries and high-ranking officers are met by the manager and led through to a favoured table. Among them is a young buck in major's uniform: he is LUDO. The red and white flashes at his shoulders indicate that he is a member of the Polish Free Army.

The music changes and with it the mood. The lights come down, Ziggy mops his brow.

ZIGGY

(singing)

I'm shooting high,
Got my eye,
On a star
In the sky,
I'm shooting high!

ZIGGY (CONT.)

(speaking)

Yes, I'm shooting high ... got my
eye on a star in the sky ... and
tonight ... the fieriest in all the
firmament. It's the lady herself,
she who must be obeyed. It's ...

He puts a finger to his lips and creeps away in a half-hunch.

A chant erupts from men in the audience – RITA, RITA, RITA!

Suddenly, a blast of brass, and, in a dazzle of sequins, RITA appears. Every man sees only his dream. As if in slow-motion she walks to the mic and purrs –

RITA

Remember, fellahs, you only live
once.

Once more the music changes and Rita prowls around the stage through the intro to her song, as if throwing down a challenge to the audience.

Ludo rocks back in his seat, his mouth slack, his eyes wide. A ribald comment in his ear, but it goes unheard. To the amusement of his companions he is bewitched.

Now Rita sings: her voice is innocent, but her eyes and body are saying something else.

RITA

When we go strolling in the park at night,
All the darkness is a boon,
Who cares if we're without a light?
They can't blackout the moon.

I see you smiling in the cigarette glow,
Oh the picture fades too soon!
But I see all I want to know,
They can't blackout the moon.

We don't grumble,
We don't worry 'bout alarms,
When you stumble,
You stumble right into my arms.

Ludo drags his eyes away from Rita to find that he is the butt of his companions japes. One waves him down, tells him he has got not a chance. Ludo rises to the bait. He

takes out his wallet, and pulls from it a crisp, white, five pound note. A beat before several match the wager.

INT. RAILWAY STATION - DAY

The hoot of a train. Feet walking. A man dragging one foot - the leg false.

A leg lost, but barely out of his youth: he is ROPER Coutts. He stops, sets down a small suitcase, fumbles for cigarettes and lighter.

He wears an army office's trenchcoat lined with khaki flannel, over an ill-fitting demob suit. Lank blond hair falls over his face.

He blows out the smoke, looks up at a pigeon fluttering against the sooty glass roof.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - DAY

An old Jewish tailor, MANNY, hands Roper a bunch of keys.

MANNY
(sighs)
Oi-vey ... oi-vey ...

INT. SERVICE LIFT - DAY

Roper stands in the old iron-caged lift, slowly, noisily, ascending.

INT. CORRIDOR/OFFICE - DAY

In gold letters on the frosted glass door:

EAGLE-EYE SURVEILLANCE

Roper turns the key in the lock, pushes the door slowly open. He goes in to the dimly-lit and deserted office.

He drops the case, stands for a moment looking around at the several empty desks, hat stand with an umbrella and gas mask in its case, the buttoned leather couch.

On the wall is pinned a picture of Churchill, in pin-striped suit, cigar in mouth, with - a Thompson sub-

machine gun – tucked under his arm, looking more like a Chicago gangster than a British Prime Minister.

Roper goes through to the inner office, gently pushes open the door. The black-out blinds are half down, the windows beyond crossed with brown paper tape to protect against breakage.

He turns to the mahogany desk, picks up a framed photo. It is of himself, in cricket blazer and cap. After a moment, he drops it face down into a drawer.

On a hook hangs a trilby hat. He takes it down, runs the brim through his fingers.

EXT./INT. BOMBED HOUSE – EVENING

A notice has been pinned outside of the devastated house.

LOOTING
can lead to
LIFE IMPRISONMENT

But still, nothing portable has been left, as far as can be seen.

Roper takes out a torch, and hobbles down over the rubble into the interior. Floral wallpaper still clings to the breached walls.

He comes to where the floor above has fallen into the one below. Through the twisted steel bed frame can be glimpsed the red night sky.

Amidst the rubble and brick dust he spots a little book, broken and abandoned –

RAMBLERS' GUIDE
TO
THE LAKE DISTRICT

On the cover is a drawing of a teenage boy and girl, in shorts with rucksacks on their backs, heading down a trail towards distant lake and mountains.

He balances himself, stretches towards it – SOMETHING MOVES – he jumps back, totters and lands on his behind.

In the torch beam a RAT scrabbles over FALSE TEETH lying amidst the shards of a tumbler in which they once stood.

VOICE

Who's in there? Come on out.

ROPER

It's me, Roper.

Roper scrambles out into the beam of the torch held by an air raid warden.

ROPER (CONT.)

You remember me?

WARDEN

(nods)

Rotten luck, old son. Must have been a direct hit. The only house in the street.

Before more can be said, Roper is spotted by another.

LUCY

Roper!

A girl in one-piece overall, WVS badge on the chest, hair tied in a scarf, runs across from the house opposite. She is LUCY, an *English rose*, much the same age as Roper.

ROPER

Hello, Luce.

LUCY

You're back!

ROPER

Like a bad penny.

WARDEN

I'll be on my way, then.

The Warden moves off, leaving them together in the falling light.

LUCY

Gosh, I didn't expect ...

Roper's staggers on the rubble. Lucy is taken aback by his unsteadiness ... but surmises what has happened.

LUCY (CONT.)

You won't be returning?

ROPER
(shakes his head)
Hardly think so.

LUCY
(covering)
Excuse the get-up but, well ...
we've all got to do our bit,
haven't we?

ROPER
You look tops.

LUCY
(a beat)
How was it?

ROPER
Well, you know ...
(shrugs)
... nothing to write home about.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Two Veganin pain-killers are shaken from a tin tube onto a plate.

The desk has been spread with newspaper, on it a half loaf, a jar of meat extract, and a pot of tea.

Roper sits before it, unshaven, in his vest. He takes the pills, drinks them down with the remains of his tea.

Suddenly, he jumps as the telephone RINGS. For a moment he sits fixed, before batting away the newspaper to pick up the receiver.

ROPER
(into phone)
Hello? ... Yes, Coutts speaking ...

EXT. INNS OF COURT - DAY

Roper, wearing his father's trilby, walks by sandbagged buildings, passing several barristers in silks and a top brass army officer.

He stops by an entrance to speak to the top-hatted doorman, OLD TOM.

ROPER
I'm looking for the chambers of -
(reading from note)
- Alloysius Lafferty.

OLD TOM
First time here?

ROPER
That's right.

As Old Tom turns to give him direction, Roper's attention is caught by the livid SCAR LIKE A TICK on his cheek. It is the twin of that on Jack Garlick's face.

OLD TOM
Past the stairs on your right, Sir.

He watches as Roper goes in.

INT. OUTER OFFICE, LAFFERTY'S CHAMBER - DAY

Roper sits on a hard chair, his hat in his lap. He has been sitting there for some time.

The heavy door opposite opens and out steps MRS HYDE, in high-necked, pleat-fronted, white blouse.

MRS HYDE
Who are you?

ROPER
I'm Coutts.

MRS HYDE
You're not Mr. Coutts.

ROPER
I'm Roper Coutts, his son.

MRS HYDE
I expected Mr. Coutts to come in person, not send a junior.

ROPER
I'm afraid, Madam, I am the only one available. If that doesn't suit ...

She gives a snort, turns, and, after tapping on the door, goes back in.

No sooner has Roper slumped, than the door creaks opens again. But, when he looks up, it is not Mrs. Hyde at the crack, but the blue eye of a ruddy-faced man with ginger side-whiskers: he is Aloysius LAFFERTY. After a cool appraisal, he closes the door once more.

At length Mrs. Hyde comes out bearing a large brown envelope, which she hands to Roper.

MRS HYDE

Mr. Lafferty will give you a trial.

ROPER

Jolly decent of him.

MRS HYDE

A trial, you understand? You will, of course, be required to sign an undertaking of strictest confidentiality - *if you wouldn't mind?*

She goes to her stationery cabinet. Roper opens the envelope, slides the contents half out, and stops in his tracks.

On top is a photograph of the most beautiful woman he has ever seen. It is a publicity shot, over-printed with a scrawled autograph and kisses, and beneath the legend - RITA McVIE.

EXT./INT. ARCADE - DAY

Rita saunters down the arcade where previously Bobby attempted his escape.

She zigzags through the well-heeled shoppers, then stops and takes out her powder compact, as if to check her makeup. But, after a few flicks at her hair, she angles the mirror to reveal - Roper following.

Roper freezes, as he fears that he has been spotted. He turns away, pretends to look in a shop window.

Rita snaps the compact shut, drops it into her bag, takes a few steps and - makes a beeline for the street.

Roper suddenly realises that she is making a dash, and limps after her.

Rita gets to the end and raises a finger in the air to summon a cab.

Roper clears a path as he barrels down the arcade as fast as his gammy leg will carry him.

EXT. BLACKMARKET LANE - DAY

Rita, now wearing dark glasses, examines some sheer silk stockings that are being sold by a spiv from a suitcase.

She smiles to herself as Roper appears drenched in sweat and looking desperate. It is another moment before he spots her. He turns his back and tries some lighters, keeping watch on her every move from the corner of his eye.

Rita makes her purchase and wanders off through the throng, drawing Roper along after her. They meander through barrows and boxes, past a lookout, standing on a chair, who signals using tic-tac language to another at the other end.

Suddenly, Roper is button-holed by a stubble-chinned man in a hotchpotch of cast-off clothes.

MCBAIN

Love a duck!

ROPER

Are you ...?

MCBAIN

Couttie!

ROPER

Yes.

MCBAIN

You got out?

ROPER

Well, yes.

MCBAIN

All of a piece?

ROPER

But for the leg.

MCBAIN

Bargain, if you ask me.

ROPER

McBain, isn't it? Good Lord, not a dodger, are you?

MCBAIN

Couldn't take it no more, could I? It weren't Gerry, it were all the bull in the British Army, and that's the truth of it! Worse than borstal!

ROPER

There is a war on, don't you know? Got to brace up, or we'll end up with a swastika on Big Ben.

MCBAIN

Wouldn't make no difference, if you ask me. When it comes to the brass, they're, both sides, bad as each other.

ROPER

Come off it! England may not be perfect, but at least we try our damndest to do the right thing. At least we ...

But, before he can protest further a commotion breaks out in the market. Roper looks round, suddenly remembering – but Rita has long gone. The tic-tac men are now making frantic signals, and suitcases and boxes packed away like lightning.

Spivs scatter in all directions as Ministry Inspectors, conspicuous in bowler hats, make their way into the market. McBain grabs Roper by the sleeve, and pulls him down a side street where a box van is parked up on the curb. His partner in crime is already packing up.

MCBAIN

(gestures to mate)

'Ere, give us the good'uns.

His partner in crime reaches in and hands out a box of cigars and a bottle of scotch. McBain presses them into Roper's hands.

MCBAIN (CONT.)

Old times' sake.

Before he can answer, McBain is away and climbing into the driver's cab.

MCBAIN (CONT.)

You ain't seen me, right?

Roper stands, looking with embarrassment at the spoils in his hands, but no-one comes to take them off him. The van pulls away.

He quickly drops the goods into the poacher's pocket of his raincoat, about turns, and is gone.

INT. TAILOR'S SHOP - DAY

The old-fashioned shop is in a backstreet, the window smashed in, despite the display of union jacks.

Roper stands with an over-sized dinner jacket over his day clothes. The old Jewish tailor moves around him with pins and chalk. In the background several women work treadle sewing machines.

MANNY

Tomorrow is another day - that's the last thing he said to me ... Oi vey ... nice bit of barathea, few tucks - fit you like a glove. Yes, Young Man ... what a night it would be, if I was your age ...

INT. RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

Roper in his new dinner suit negotiates the long staircase down into the club with difficulty.

He pauses to regain his breath, lowers himself down to sit on the steps. From there he has the perfect view.

A spotlight follows Rita as she works the floor. With a hand microphone she struts and sashays from table to table, flirting with any likely male.

RITA

(sings)

Oh, oh, you rascal you!
Oh, what a man you turned in to,
What pretty things you've learned to do,
Oh, I didn't know you'd get that way.

Roper draws one of his fresh cigar from the breast pocket of his jacket, strikes two matches together, and puffs it into life.

RITA

(sings)

I didn't realize that twinkle in your eyes,
Was just ___ in disguise ...

The audience roars with laughter at the omission. Rita gives them a little wink.

RITA

(sings)

Oh, I didn't know ...

She now comes to rest at a table with Ludo and his friends. Rita with a long painted finger nail scrapes the bristle of his chin, tilts his face towards her ... lowers herself to him as if she is about to kiss him full on the lips ... but the instant he stretches up, she chucks him under the chin, and swirls away on the tide of the music.

RITA

(sings)

My heart is full of joy,
Oh you naughty boy!
What a man you turned in to,
How d'you do-do-do what you do-do-do?

Roper blows out a smoke ring; he can only dream.

EXT. BACK ENTRANCE, RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

Roper waits in the shadows of an alleyway opposite the back entrance to the club.

A Bentley flying a red and white pennant glides to a stop outside, and the driver gets out. He is a thick-set man with shaven head, in Polish dress uniform, including jodhpurs and high boots. He is MAREK, Ludo's aide-de-camp.

He goes to the club door, opens it and parts the blackout curtain. Rita's laughter drifts out into the night air. She follows carrying a posy of violets, followed up by Ludo.

RITA

A castle?

LUDO

So to speak.

RITA

In a forest?

LUDO

On every side.

RITA

(laughs)

You, rascal, you! I don't believe a word of it.

LUDO

But Marek, here, will vouch for me.

Ludo opens the car door for Rita. Marek opens the door for Ludo. As he returns to the driver's door, he throws a sharp glance at Roper, who masks his face by pretending to light a cigarette in cupped hands.

The car moves off, leaving him deflated. He gathers himself and turns to walk back up the alley.

Suddenly, pencil TORCHES snap on, here and there, right and left, each briefly illuminating the heavily made-up face of a different girl.

TART ONE

Looking for snookums?

ROPER (O.S.)

Not tonight, Josephine.

TART ONE

'Ere, how did you know my name?

TART TWO

Try my nookie-pie? You'll be licking up the gravy.

ROPER

Please, ladies, just let me pass.

TART THREE

Never mind that old slag. My place is proper cosy, warm as toast ...

Roper pushes on into the darkness.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — DAY

BANGING on the hammered glass door. Roper rouses himself from his bed on the couch.

ROPER

Who is it?

VOICE

Mr. Roper Coutts?

ROPER

(a beat)

Who's there?

VOICE

Police.

INT. POLICE MORGUE — DAY

Roper is lead down an echoing corridor by an old man with an asthmatic wheeze and a complexion as grey as his over-all coat.

ROPER

Why was he brought here?

MORTUARY MAN

He's dead, sir.

ROPER

I mean, the *police* morgue?

MORTUARY MAN

Couldn't tell you that.

ROPER

And, this district in particular?

MORTUARY MAN

Not my business, that. In here, if you please.

He leads him into a stone-floored storage room, lined with drawers. To one side stands a wooden table with ledger and wire baskets. From it he picks up a brown card, reads off it.

MORTUARY MAN

Coutts?

(Roper nods)

Brace yourself. Ain't a pretty sight.

He heaves open one of the drawers, waits for Roper to creep forward, look in. For a moment, he stands,

motionless, then swallows hard, takes a pace back again, and nods.

MORTUARY MAN (CONT.)

Just the paperwork then.

He heaves the drawer closed again.

ROPER

Why is he that ghastly colour?

But another voice answers. Roper turns to see Porter in the doorway.

PORTER

Would have been the effects of the gas, sir.

ROPER

Gas?

PORTER

Just your ordinary coal gas.

ROPER

But ... I don't understand.

PORTER

Daresay the impact severed the mains supply, and he asphyxiated on it while lying there unconscious.

Roper shakes his head, unable to take it in.

PORTER (CONT.)

Beg your pardon, sir, but Inspector Garlick sends his condolences and asks if you'd join him for a half?

INT. SNUG BAR - DAY

Jack Garlick sits in the motley light from the stained glass window, his hat still on, a small glass of beer in front of him. Opposite sits Roper with a similar glass of beer, untouched, on the table beside his father's trilby. They are in a section of the bar screened off from the rest by mahogany and hammered glass partitions. On the other side, Blunt keeps guard while chugging a pint.

GARLICK

Do you believe in Fate, Mr. Coutts?

ROPER

Stuff and nonsense, if you ask me.

GARLICK

A man of my own persuasion. Yet it makes you wonder when one stray bomb comes down and lands on the pin-prick of a single house.

ROPER

What are you getting at? If you think there's something amiss ...

GARLICK

I'd investigate if I had the manpower, but ... Between us two, the Met are four thousand down. Best lads off fighting the war, and we're left with the codgers, cadgers, and sissies. A few stout hearts apart, that's about it - to take care of all the lousy vermin the military won't touch.

ROPER

I'm sure you're up against it - well, aren't we all? But ...

GARLICK

It's a case of catch who catch can. May not always be cricket, but ...

ROPER

Dirty water will quench the fire.

GALICK

(impressed)

Couldn't have put it better myself.

ROPER

I think I get your drift.

GARLICK

(confidential)

Word is you've been cited for bravery.

ROPER

Well ... I don't know where you heard that.

GARLICK

Of course, we don't recruit
cripples, that would never do. But
doesn't mean to say they can't be
of use. A man like yourself ...

Roper gasps at his audacity.

ROPER

Thanks, thanks for thinking of me,
but I ... I don't think so. I've
done my bit.

GARLICK

I seem to remember, your old man
once used those very words.

ROPER

Then - like father, like son.

GARLICK

I'd say that remains to be seen,
wouldn't you?

He drains his mug, slams it down on the table.

GARLICK (CONT.)

While the cat's away ...

Roper gets up to offer his hand, but, with no more than a
nod, Garlick is heading towards the door.

GARLICK (CONT.)

Settle with you later, Blunt.

BLUNT

Very good, sir.

Roper draws up behind, as Blunt hurries up with his pint.

ROPER

Bit of a rough diamond, isn't he?

BLUNT

If you say so, sir.

ROPER

Tell me, that scar on his face?

BLUNT

Best not mention it.

(confidential)

But between you and me, he was nabbed taking a leak, poor sod, blindfolded, and then chivvied.

ROPER

What?

BLUNT

Cut with a razor.

ROPER

Good lord.

BLUNT

Wouldn't stand up in court of law, of course, but there's only one person leaves a mark like that. Trademark, you might say. Calls it a "*ticking off*". Meant as a warning to all and sundry. Works like mustard.

(gulps his beer)

Gov'n'r lost half his team after that - including your Dad.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

A Voigtlander folding camera in a drawer; Roper takes it out, swings his good leg up on the desk, and sits playing.

He flicks a catch which opens the bellows, closes it. With his thumb he twists a button on the back, which exposes a red glass window showing a number on the roll film inside - the number of exposures. He wonders ...

Roper opens the door to a box-room; on the back is a dart board, stuck with three darts. He stares into the gloom - amongst the clutter is a photo enlarger, developing trays.

RED LIGHT

In the box-room Roper gently swills the developing tray back and forth, watching the images slowly appear in negative on the strip of film.

They appear to be shots taken from a car in a chic shopping street. In several, there are a group of men in

suits and trilbies, strolling, pausing to look in the windows. And, then, a shot of one turned to look into the camera – it is BOBBY GRIBBLE.

Roper wonders about these men, the significance of the shots, the fact that they were the last shots taken.

And, then – his attention is caught by goggles hanging on a hat stand, beneath them a Belstaff jacket.

EXT. BACK COURT – CONTINUING

Roper comes from an emergency exit and looks around the enclosed yard.

Beneath the bridged entrance is a bulk covered with a tarpaulin. Roper drags it off – to reveal a Norton motorbike.

He heaves it up, onto it's wheels, rocks it from side to side – fuel can be heard sloshing in the tank.

EXT. BLAZING BUILDING – NIGHT

A car with hooded lights emerges from the darkness into the awesome radiance of the blaze. It is Ludo's Bentley, driven by Marek, Ludo and Rita in the back.

Firemen battle with the flames, as a volunteer auxiliary directs the car around fallen rubble. It glides past, Rita looking on, wide-eyed, through the fiery reflections in the glass.

And then from the dark comes Roper on his motorbike, his eyes hidden by the golden reflections in his goggles.

Cowering from the heat, he guides his machine round the debris and guns it back into the dark of the blackout.

EXT. EXCLUSIVE SQUARE – NIGHT

Flashes from above illuminate an exclusive square with portico entrances. There are many *TO LET* signs, the occupants having gone. Roper rolls in on his motorbike, spots Ludo's Bentley drawn up alongside several others.

He parks up, walks across to where Marek is smoking a cigarette, with another driver, both shielding the glowing tips in their hands. From inside the house comes the sound of a jazz record, Django Reinhardt and the Hot

Club du France; from the distance the pounding of anti-aircraft guns.

ROPER

Beg your pardon, Gents, got a message to deliver, but, half the signs are down. Bit of a trial, eh?

The two men stare at him blankly.

ROPER (CONT.)

Perhaps, you can tell me? Who lives here? Or, what this place might be, exactly?

MAREK

Polski. No English. So *piss off*.

EXT. KEW GARDENS - DAY

A small band on a platform draped with Union Jacks plays a polka as jolly couples prance around the portable dance floor having fun. Among them is Ludo and Rita in carefree mood. As the music stops, she stretches up to whisper something to him, he gives her a little kiss on the nose.

From behind the flaps of a refreshment tent appears Roper, still in his motorbike gear. He pushes the goggles up onto his forehead revealing the beady look in his eye - he hates that privileged foreign bastard with the beautiful English woman.

From his pocket he takes out the folding camera, opens the bellows, carefully clicks the chrome stays into place, raise the viewfinder to his eye, and - finds that Ludo and Rita are gone.

ANOTHER PART OF THE PARK

The band can still be heard in the distance. Rita kicks off her shoes, leaves Ludo to gather, as she rolls down her stockings to walk barefoot in the grass.

Roper creeps up, under cover of the bushes. He has the pair in his sights again. He takes a quick light meter reading, sets the exposure, estimates the focal distance ...

But, before he can snap the shot, they have moved off again. Exasperated, he follows.

INT. PALM HOUSE, KEW GARDENS – CONTINUING

Ludo and Rita stroll through the giant glasshouse arm-in-arm.

Roper hobbles along a parallel path, tracking them through gaps in the foliage. And, then, quite suddenly, they disappear from view. He peers up, down, this way and that, but cannot find them.

He lopes down the path to a fork, and draws up short. Against the trunk of a giant palm Ludo and Rita are in deep embrace.

Roper draws back behind foliage, raises the camera and finally gets the perfect shot. He winds the film on, shoots again, and is about to make another, when he is distracted by a shout from behind him.

MAREK

Hey, Tommy, what you do, eh?

He turns to see Marek at the far entrance. Roper makes a dash for the exit opposite.

EXT. KEW GARDENS – CONTINUING

Roper comes out, loping along, trying to lose himself among the day-trippers.

Marek emerge from the palm house and soon spots him.

Roper moves faster, as fast as he can go. He glances back to see Marek striding after him.

It is inevitable he will be caught, but then – he throws himself onto his backside and slithers down the grass embankment to the towpath.

On the gentle water a HOME GUARD river patrol are chugging along. Roper runs forward, waving his camera at them, as if wanting to take a picture.

Marek stops at the top of the ridge, shakes his fist and shouts after him.

MAREK

I remember you, Peeping Tommy!

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Roper typing with two fingers, finishes the sheet pulls it and a carbon from the roller, and proudly lays them on the desk.

The compromising pictures of Rita and Ludo - two dabs of glue on the back, and he carefully presses them home on the final sheet of his immaculate report.

He staples the sheets together, and then, with a square rubber stamp and a red ink pad, adds the finishing touch:

EAGLE-EYE SURVEILLANCE
CONFIDENTIAL

EXT. EXCLUSIVE SQUARE - EVENING

The air raid SIREN WAILS, rain splashes in the gutters.

Ludo comes from the porticoed doorway, and stands for a moment looking up at the sky. In a moment Marek hurries forward with a large umbrella and takes him to the waiting car.

INT. LUDO'S CAR, (TRAVELLING) - EVENING

Ludo sits in the back going through papers with the aid of a small battery light clipped to the inside of his dispatch case.

The wipers beat furiously at the rain, and Marek leans forward trying to peer through them into the darkness. Suddenly, he slams on the brakes as he sees torch lights in the middle of the road.

HIS P.O.V

A torch beam illuminates a sign - UXB - (indicating an unexploded bomb), which hangs from tapes across the road.

The beam is then waved sharply to the left, directing him down a narrow side road.

Marek mutters expletives in Polish as he is greeted by another torchlight waving to him to make another turn.

Suddenly, he finds himself facing a dead end.

EXT. CUL-DE-SAC - EVENING

The car pulls up. Shadowy figures wearing rescue workers steel helmets appear from loading bays on either side.

In an instant, spars of wood are slid beneath the handles of the front car doors - JAMMING THEM.

At the same time, Ludo's door is opened, his arm pulled out, and the door SLAMMED AGAINST HIS WRIST.

Before he can grasp what is happening, he is dragged out, THUMPED IN THE STOMACH, and pushed to his knees.

IN THE CAR

Marek fights desperately to get out but the big man is effectively trapped in the tight space.

OUTSIDE

A hand grasps Ludo's hair and jerks back his head, to look up at the giant silhouette that towers over him. His jaw is covered with a silk kerchief, but there can be no doubt, it is ROCKFIST REAGAN.

With the flick of his wrist the cold steel of a RAZOR is exposed. He raises it high over his head.

His accomplice exposes Ludo's heaving throat, and, in one swift motion, Rockfist SLASHES down.

IN THE CAR

Desperate, Marek has drawn his side-arm and SHOOTs out the windscreen.

He struggles through the shattered glass onto the bonnet - but, too late. It is over, the attackers gone. He let's out a torrent of Polish expletives, before he sees -

Ludo lies in a limp heap, BLOOD coursing from his neck into rivulets between the wet cobbles.

Marek, almost in tears, raises him in his arms.

BLACK

US BROADCASTER (VO)

I am a neutral reporter, and I can
assure you that there is no panic,
no fear, no despair in London Town
... London can take it.

EXT STREET NEAR EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Roper limps into view, hunched against the drizzle. On
the corner is an old man selling papers; over the years
his cry of "Newspaper" has been eroded to a single
syllable.

PAPERBOY

(shouting out)

Pa ... Pa ... Pa!

Roper hands over a threepenny bit. With a flick of his
wrist, the old man pulls the top copy off his bundle,
while speaking out of the corner of his mouth.

PAPERBOY

"Fires were started" - Surrey
Docks, weren't it?

ROPER

Really?

PAPERBOY

And, you heard, one broke through
Marble Arch tube? Killed half the
poor sods sheltering down there.

ROPER

Good god! Is nowhere safe?

PAPERBOY

Not 'till we do for them Nazis
buggers.

He goes back to his monosyllabic cry. Roper moves off,
head down, looking at the paper. He turns over the folded
front page, and stops dead.

For a moment he stands poleaxed, before he draws back into a doorway, still staring aghast at the headline near the bottom:

FREE POLISH HERO
FOUND DEAD

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — NIGHT

Roper sits slumped at the desk. He shakes out two Veganin onto a white plate, picks up the heavy bottomed glass, holding a finger of whiskey, and uses it to grind the pills to powder. He scrapes off the glass on the edge of the plate, tips the powder into the spirit.

From behind him, an amber glow emanates from the wireless, along with broadcast voices.

LORRIE
(from wireless)
... for your further delight,
Whistling Jack, who is going to
give you his rendition of *When a
Nightingale Sang in Berkley Square*.
Evening Jack.

WHISTLING JACK
(from wireless)
Evenin' Lorrie.

LORRIE
Now, it's not just a nightingale
you've got in there, is it Jack?

WHISTLING JACK
No, I've got a few cockney sparra's
as well.

LORRIE
And half the avian population of
the Capital, I wouldn't wonder.

WHISTLING JACK
Odd thrush got a habit of croppin'
up. All depends 'ow it goes.

LORRIE
Well, what d'you say, we toss a few
crumbs and see what wings in?

WHISTLING JACK

Right you are.

LORRIE

Are you ready, Jack?

WHISTLING JACK

Rarin' to go, Lorrie.

LORRIE

Then, *Maestro*, it's all yours. Take it away!

Whistles, warbles, and trills burst onto the airwaves; from beyond the blackout drapes the continuous pounding of anti-aircraft guns give accompaniment.

Roper takes a sip, leans back, closes his eyes, but, in a moment ... soft flip-flopping sounds from outside. Roper strains to listen - a CLACK and CLATTER from the roof.

He sits bolt upright - BIFF BAM against the rafters, like a ball in a pinball machine. Then, THUMP on the ceiling above his head, and a shower of plaster, as a dark object BREAKS through.

Roper shoots back in his chair as it rattles and bounces on the boards at his feet. It rolls, comes to a stop.

Roper stares at it: it is a dull metal tube, little more than a foot in length. Suddenly, the tip bursts and fizzes out BRILLIANT BLUE-WHITE LIGHT.

Roper lurches from his seat and grabs up the thing by its tail. He turns this way and that, not knowing what to do. And, then, holding it out before him like a roman candle, he crashes out the doors and into the corridor.

INTO. LAVATORY, EAGLE-EYE'S BUILDING - CONTINUING

The blinding light comes through the door, Roper behind it. He shafts it into the lavatory pan, pulls the chain, turns away and flattens himself against the wall.

The usual deluge of water, and then ... and then ... nothing ... but for the eerie sounds of the tank refilling.

Roper hazards a look: the incendiary has gone out.

INT EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Roper, red-eyed and unshaven, stares up at the hole in the ceiling, diffuse light breaking through the roof beyond.

EXT. BOMB SITE, NEAR EAGLE-EYE'S - DAY

A silhouette in the fog, Roper, straddles the rubble, and strains to dislodge a bit of old asphalted board.

Though the find is next to worthless, he still gives a quick glance left and right, before making off with it.

EXT. EYE-EYE'S OFFICE BUILDING - CONTINUING

Roper hobbles down the street lugging the board. He peers around it to see his way, and freezes.

Outside the office entrance is drawn up a large BLACK SEDAN.

Roper drops the board, and is off, back the way he came.

A grating of gears, and the car reverses up the road after him.

But, before it can reach him, Roper darts into an alleyway between buildings.

EXT. BOMB SITE, NEAR EAGLE-EYE'S - DAY

Roper scrambles over the brow of the rubble, starts to slither and slide down the other side, when ...

The BLACK SEDAN draws up on the road before him. The door opens and - out steps Blunt.

BLUNT

Morning, sir. Can we give you a lift?

EXT. ROOFTOP, POLICE STATION - DAY

Nothing can be seen but giant silver barrage balloons, anchored in the grey sky. Garlick stands at the parapet, sucking on a pipe, gazing out over the city.

A door opens in a service tower and Porter and Blunt lead Roper out onto the flat rooftop. Roper is still unshaven and without collar and tie.

GARLICK

Only one foot, eh Mr. Coutts? But still manage to put it in the mire.

ROPER

I beg your pardon?

GARLICK

A little birdie tells me you've been playing *private eye*, operating without a licence.

ROPER

That's not strictly true. I had my father's licence.

GARLICK

It's not something you inherit, like a country pile.

ROPER

I'm sorry. I didn't realise. Look, I'm just an ingénue in these matters. To be honest ...

GARLICK

Poppycock! Ask me, you're a young man with an eye for the main chance.

ROPER

What do you mean by that, sir?

GARLICK

I made you a proposition – to help the war effort. But, instead, you chose to help yourself.

ROPER

For goodness sake, can't you see the pickle I'm in? What more do you want? I've done my bit. *There's not a lot a man can do with one leg.*

GARLICK

I'd say, you've proven otherwise, wouldn't you, Porter? Eh, Blunt?

The other two suck in breath.

GARLICK (CONT.)

You've done plenty Mr. Coutts. No doubt about it. Trouble is, it's been more to the betterment of the other side.

PORTER

That's a fact.

GARLICK

Carry on the way you're going and you'll be more in line for an Iron Cross, than a British gong.

Roper starts to break up.

GARLICK (CONT.)

Give him y'r hanky, Blunt. Bad enough to see a woman cry.

ROPER

That won't be necessary. God, damn it!

BLUNT

Buck up, sir.

PORTER

Show him your metal.

GARLICK

I'm giving you a chance to redeem your good character.

ROPER

Is that so?

GARLICK

You've got yourself into a tidy position, my lad. But that's something I can use. You can gain entry where yours truly would stick out like a sore thumb.

ROPER

What is it you want of me?

GARLICK

Simple ...

CONTINUES OVER:

INT. TEA SHOP - DAY

Roper sits at a table by the window with the dregs of a cup of tea. The window is draped in nets, but he can see through to the road outside.

GALICK (V.O.)

You've heard the phrase "The walls have ears".

ROPER (V.O.)

So?

GARLICK (V.O.)

Think of yourself as a brick.

Roper gives an ironic snort. He takes out his cigarette case, but finds there is only one left.

Then, he spots someone passing outside. He returns the case to his pocket, drops some coins on the table and hurries out.

EXT./INT. ARCADE - DAY

Rita, in funereal black, saunters aimlessly, window shopping without a spark of interest.

At a discreet distance, Roper follows along behind her.

She stops by a shop selling *Shelter Slacks* and *Siren Suits*, decides to go in.

Roper arrives outside, edges forward to peer past the mannequins, but can see no-one. He glances round - and jumps.

RITA stands behind him, having come out of the next door along. He is shocked to see behind her half-veil, she has a BLACK EYE.

ROPER

(embarrassed)

Beg your pardon, I

RITA

Do you have a light?

Roper fumbles in his pocket, finds his lighter, and clicks it, and clicks it, and - he shakes it violently, tries again ... it flickers hesitantly into life. He

smiles with satisfaction. She goes on staring at him as if he is quite mad.

RITA (CONT.)

A cigarette, perhaps?

ROPER

Of course. Sorry, I ...

He pulls out his cigarette case, with its solitary cigarette.

ROPER (CONT.)

Running a bit short, I'm afraid.

RITA

Tough luck.

She takes the cigarette, eyes him as he tries again with the lighter. He cups his hand around the shy flame, offers it. With a gloved finger she draws it closer.

He watches her exhale the smoke, searching desperately for something appropriate to say.

ROPER

Sorry. I mean about ... well, just, the way things have turned out ...

She looks at him curiously for a moment, shrugs, turns about, and mooches off.

He stands, watching her go. After a few paces, she takes another puff of the cigarette - and drops it into a drain.

Suddenly, a FACE over Roper's shoulder, a half-caste Jamaican with a gold tooth, and homburg hat: he is GOLDIE.

GOLDIE

Don't think about it, Boy.

CONTINUES OVER:

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

A stream of silvery rain falls from the hole in the ceiling to a galvanized bath tub below.

Roper stands looking up at it, trying to fix his bow tie.

GOLDIE (V.O.)

Not even in your dreams.

He moves around in the shadows of the room, threading his cuff-links, pondering how much separates his reality from his desire.

INT. RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

The band is in full-swing. Roper makes his long and clumsy descent of the stairs, when a rumbustious party flood down behind him.

BOBBY (O.S.)

*Safest place in Town - dandy
shelter this, eh?*

A hand lands on Roper's shoulder to hold him back while the party passes. It is that of Rockfist Reagan.

Roper sits down on the steps in the same place as before. He watches the group being greeted, Bobby Gribble in pride of place, like a conquering hero. Several jump up to shake his hand, pat him on the shoulder. He breaks into a little dance step, shakes his hips, rolls with laughter.

Roper summons the CIGARETTE GIRL, gives her a ten shilling note through the gilded stair rails.

ROPER

Who's the show-off?

CIGARETTE GIRL

Shhh! Don't let him hear you say that?

ROPER

Why should I care?

CIGARETTE GIRL

Just out of the Scrubs, they say.
He is one tough guy!

INT. SNUG BAR - DAY

The pictures from Eagle-eye's camera are laid out on the table.

BLUNT

Where d'you get these?

ROPER

Left in my father's camera.

Roper sits opposite Blunt. Porter keeps an eye out over the top of the screen.

BLUNT

Not his usual line of floozies.

ROPER

Snooping for you, wasn't he?

BLUNT

Let's say, Eagle-eye paid his dues.

Blunt sucks his beer. Roper looks at him aghast.

ROPER

Who are these hard nuts?

BLUNT

Weasel faced one, that's Bobby Gribble, I do believe. Governor thought he had him locked up for a long day, but - they haven't got the room inside. Judge let him trade time for the birch. Big mistake: the welts have gone down and he'll have clean forgotten all about it.

CONTINUES OVER:

INT. RAZZMATAZZ - (A/B) - NIGHT

Bobby and his party are being seated at a big round table. Last among them is a swell with ginger side-whiskers - Aloysius Lafferty, accompanied by a fair-haired boy, who looks too young to be out so late.

Bobby raises a finger, makes a circular gesture above his head - he will buy drinks for everyone. The manager hurries off as champagne on the house arrives.

BLUNT (V.O.)

Bobby ran errands for the Ambrosini Gang. The ol' *padre*, Caesare, took a shine to him. Made him their chivvy man. Many a year, those boys ruled the roost 'round here. Had a finger in every pie. But we could
(more)

BLUNT (V.O. CONT.)
never touch 'em because of their
fancy lawyers. Until, that is ...
day Italy joined the war we swept
the lot of them up, and had 'em
interned as aliens. Only trouble
was *Bobby*. He's about as English as
Margate rock.

On stage, Ziggy sidles up to the mic to sing a comic
song, accompanied by two members of the band.

ZIGGY
(sings)
You call yourself the Jungle King,
You call yourself the Jungle King,
You call yourself the Jungle King,
Well, I've found out you ain't no such thing!

BOBBY
(whistles)
What's this shit? Where's Little
Honey-pot?

ZIGGY
(sings against whistles)
Said the monkey to the lion on a bright summer day,
There's a big bad dude living down the way,
And, he talks about your folks in a heck of a way,
Says a whole lot of things I'm kinda afraid to say!

EXT. BLACKMARKET LANE - DAY

In a crate, a live turkey, and above the sign:

win your
CHRISTMAS TURKEY
second prize a
CHICKEN

All about a lively trade is being done in raffle tickets.

A ripple runs through the crowd, as Bobby, flanked by
Rockfist and Goldie make a lordly progress down the lane.
A dwarf selling from a suitcase on the ground shouts out.

TITCH
Wotcha, Bobby! Want some olive oil
for yer backside?

BOBBY

'Ere, mind what your saying,
y'little bleeder.

The two men put up fists like prize fighters and jostle backwards and forwards, all in good fun.

The group move on through the crowd, passing a barrow with a sign scrawled on cardboard –

YOUR LAST CHANCE

– beneath, one bunch of bananas. The old barrow boy breaks one off to hurry over and present it to Bobby.

ARRY

'Ere Bobby. Don't say I never done nothing for ya.

BOBBY

Koo, thanks, 'Arry. Not many of them where I've been.

He unzips it, takes a healthy bite, before an old biddy rushes forward to squeeze his hand.

BIDDY

'Allo, Bobby, you young rascal!
Remember me, don't ya?

BOBBY

Having a laugh, aren't ya?

BIDDY

I knew your mum when you was a nipper.

BOBBY

Course you did.

BIDDY

Lovely woman, she was. Them were the days, eh? Used to help each other in them days.

Bobby nods to Rockfist who takes a ten shilling note from his wallet, pushes it into her hand.

BIDDY

(calling after him)
'Ave your reward in heaven you will, Bobby.

Roper watches from cover of the crowd, moves off behind stalls.

At the end of the way Bobby shakes hands with the tic-tac man, who climbs on his chair to keep lookout, as he and his boys convene with another spiv and his henchmen; in his thirties, he has greased back hair with one white streak, and is known as TIGER TIM.

BLUNT (V.O.)

He used to say the blackmarket was only good for pocket money. Now that the shortages are biting, he's changed his tune.

Roper watches for a moment, slips away down a side street.

EXT. SIDE STREET OFF MARKET - CONTINUING

Roper finds McBain's lorry, parked just where it was before. He looks round but there is no sign of McBain.

He notes, on the tailgate, the name stenciled:

BULLDOG VAN HIRE

He takes out a man's purse, shakes coins into the lid - a glance back over his shoulder - and then he upturns it. Pennies scatter on the ground.

He lowers himself down onto his knees, starts gathering the pennies, and then stops to look up at the underside of the vehicle.

Suddenly a voice from behind.

MCBAIN

Groveling for pennies?

Roper peers out, drops the coins back in the purse.

ROPER

Can't afford to throw it around.

MCBAIN

Give it a rest, will ya? Heard enough hard luck stories for one day.

He helps Roper up.

ROPER

Did you manage to get the ...

MCBAIN

Can't get them for love nor money.

ROPER

Ah, pity.

MCBAIN

(grins)

But a word in the right ear, and
Bob's yer uncle.

He climbs up into the van.

ROPER

Saw some flash type in the Lane,
looked like he was trying to muscle
in ...

MCBAIN (O.S.)

No skin off my nose, Just got to
stay sharp, watch what side yer on,
eh?

He hands Roper a string bag containing a small red box —
on it, a picture of a Christmas pudding.

MCBAIN (CONT.)

Make sure it's the side what comes
out on top. Cheers!

EXT. BULLDOG VAN HIRE — DAWN

Union Jacks flutter against a red sky. The guns have
stopped and there is an eerie quiet,

In crude painted lettering on a brick wall:

BULLDOG KEEP OUT

The wall is topped with barbed wire. High gates bound
with chain, whine and clank in a sudden gust.

Roper, goggles on head, sips tea from the cup of his
Thermos. He sits astride his motorbike pulled up in a
dark petrol station, festooned with signs:

AUTHORISED VEHICLES ONLY
CLOSED | SOLD OUT

From the distance comes the sound of several vehicles approaching. Roper tosses away the dregs of his tea, prepares for action.

A short convoy draws up at the gates. The lead vehicle sounds its horn, and men come running from within.

Roper lopes along close to the wall.

The gates are pulled wide, and the lorries start to roll in.

VOICE ONE

Eyes right.

VOICE TWO

Playing on yer dick again?

VOICE ONE

Alright for some i'n't it? Snooze
job in the warm.

With a bound Roper grabs the tarpaulin rigging on the blind side of the trail lorry, and hoists himself up on top the wheel guard.

He clings on tight as his ride bumps over a rut. The gates close behind.

As the drivers jump down, so does Roper. No-one seems to notice the crunch on the gravel of an extra man.

VOICE TWO

All dilly ducky, lads?

VOICE ONE

All but one bloomin' thing.

VOICE TWO

What's that?

VOICE ONE

Sods at Ministry ...

VOICE TWO

What them buggers been up to?

VOICE ONE

Put dye in it, haven't they? Red as
a parson's nose.

VOICE TWO

Well, who cares what bloody colour
it is?

VOICE ONE

Only means the crafty sods can trace
it.

During this, the drivers gather round the men talking.
Roper scampers off in the other direction – towards a
long low shed.

IN THE SHED

The windows are blacked out, the inside lit only by the
glow from a paraffin stove.

Roper takes a small flashlight from his pocket, scans the
room.

Around the stove are some mismatched easy chairs with
blankets. To one side a long trestle table bearing
paperwork.

Roper flips through some dog-eared ledgers, but nothing
catches his eye. In the background, the sound of oil
drums being unloaded.

He raises the torch to see, pinned above, pages from a
wall calendar, and a hand-drawn booking chart. One date
has been entirely blocked out with a column of red
crosses.

Suddenly, the DOOR IS FLUNG OPEN behind him, and a clump
of boots arrives. Roper turns to see a thickset bruiser
of a man: Voice Two, BERTIE.

BERTIE

Who the fuck ...?

He snatches up a TYRE IRON. Two others appear behind him,
one of them, Voice One, a hard young driver, PERC.

PERC

What's up, Bertie?

Bertie slaps the iron against the palm of his hand, takes
a step towards Roper.

ROPER

(gruff)

You touch me with that and Bobby
will give you the closest shave
you've ever had.

Bertie is stopped in his tracks.

Roper turns the flashlight on his own cheek, and with his
index finger makes a TICK shape across the stubble, like
the slash of a razor.

All three men are shot through with doubt and fear.

BERTIE

(quietly)

I ain't never done nothing to give
offense to Bobby.

Roper turns the flashlight to shine in Bertie's eyes.

ROPER

(spits it out)

Know what's good for you, Old Man,
you'll keep it that way.

BERTIE

He plays ball with us, we'll play
ball with him.

Roper flicks the light into the faces of the other two.

PERC

No worry on that score. You tell
him.

BERTIE

Whatever he wants. Just give us the
nod.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

Daylight creeps beneath the half-closed blinds. Roper
lies asleep on the couch, buried under a pile of coats
and blankets.

The RING of the telephone jolts him into life. He stares
into the gloom: RING RING. He swings up to go answer it,
but is stopped in his tracks.

At a distance, his FALSE LEG stands upright in its boot.

He stares at it, as if at an unbeatable conundrum: RING RING. At length he pushes himself up, lurches from couch, to chair, to desk, and grabs up the phone.

ROPER

Eagle-eye ...

(clears throat)

Yes, this is Mr. Coutts ...

EXT. INNS OF COURT - DAY

Roper, Eagle-eye's hat crushed onto his head, eyes down, passes by the doorman.

OLD TOM

You'll know the way, sir.

ROPER

Righty ho.

OLD TOM

Never forget a face.

Roper glances back, to see him looking on, the light catching the scar on his cheek.

INT. OUTER OFFICE, LAFFERTY'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Roper waits. The heavy door opposite opens, and Mrs. Hyde comes out. She hands Roper another brown envelope.

MRS HYDE

Very well, Mr. Coutts ...

ROPER

The last job, Mrs. Hyde, came to an end rather sooner than expected.

MRS HYDE

If your work had not proved satisfactory you would not have been recalled.

ROPER

I'm sure. Might I ask who the client is this time?

MRS HYDE

That is strictly confidential, as
you should know. Terms will be as
before, and you will please keep a
check on your expenses.

She goes to her stationery cabinet. Roper opens the
envelope, slides out the dossier.

Revealed is a publicity picture, beneath the legend -

ZIGZAG ZIGLER.

EXT. TELEPHONE BOX BY RAZZMATAZZ - DAY

In the box, Roper is making a call.

ROPER

(into telephone)

Instructions were identical, except
for the target, that is ... No, no
explanation...

A woman with crimpers in her hair, who looks like she has
just rushed out, bangs with a penny on the glass.

ROPER (CONT.)

You want me to carry on with this?
... Yes ... Well, be it on your
head, Inspector. I won't be
responsible for the consequences.

He bangs the phone down, stands for a moment; already the
woman outside is opening the door. He moves out, letting
her in.

Deep in thought, he puts a cigarette to his lips, takes
out a box of matches: on the label -

LIGHTS
IN DARKEST
ENGLAND

As he exhales, he spots a big man, bald on top with long
hair hanging down, emerge from the club lugging a double
bass, without case. He is MIGHTY MO. Roper hurries to
catch up with him.

ROPER

You're the bass player ...

MIGHTY MO

You some kind of psychic?

ROPER

... in the Zigzag Band, right? I've heard you play.

MIGHTY MO

No kidding?

ROPER

Always right on the beat.

MIGHTY MO

Even when I'm on the off-beat?

ROPER

Fancy a spot of tea and toast?

Mo puts down the bass.

MIGHTY MO

What's your game, sonny? 'Cause I'm not in a *giving* mood.

ROPER

No, no, on me. Know a little place, they've got a fair tea-time spread. Sardines on the menu. Would that suit?

INT. TEA SHOP - DAY

The bass is propped on a chair. Mighty Mo sits munching tinned sardines mashed onto triangles of toast. Roper sips a cup of tea opposite.

ROPER

I can hear it now, "And on string bass, Mighty Mo!"

MIGHTY MO

Well, you ain't going to hear it no more, least, not at the Razzmatazz.

ROPER

Shame. In my humble opinion, you were the keystone of the band.

MIGHTY MO

Damned if I'm going to be kicked
around by a bunch of numb-skulls in
big hats.

ROPER

Who do you mean, exactly?

MIGHTY MO

How should I know? These types say
they're moving in, taking over the
band room. I'll tell you this for
nothing - things ain't what they
used to be.

ROPER

What about Ziggy? Bet he kicked up
a hell of a fuss.

MIGHTY MO

Not a bit. Meek as a church mouse.
Like he had no fight left in him.

ROPER

Is that so? You must have got
pretty close over the years?

MIGHTY MO

(shrugs)

Never was a man of many words.
Think he had a wife and kids tucked
away somewhere. Showed me a picture
once, but ... I just know he was a
man who loved music. You could see
it in his eyes. He'd follow every
note like he was on a magic mystery
tour.

ROPER

What about Rita?

MIGHTY MO

What about Rita?

ROPER

Well ... just wondering ... her and
Ziggy ...

MIGHTY MO

Heard him call her "angel" once.
Doubled me up. He gave me a look
like, "what's the big joke?" I said
to him, "Boss, one thing for sure.
She ain't no angel".

INT. RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

A sultry saxophone introduces Rita - who yawns.

She stands in the spotlight, swaying to the rhythm,
eyeing each man in the audience. Roper moves forward,
rests against a pillar, his drink on the shelf.

The brass drops out and only the rhythm section play -
but they are doing double-time. Ziggy runs on the spot,
and mops his brow, to comic effect, while Rita now
mooches forward and lethargically sings.

RITA

(sings)

There's so little time,
So much to do.
There's so little time,
For dreams to come true.
Many a ship just sailed,
To many a magic land,
Many a moonlit trail,
Many a road to walk hand-in-hand.

The rhythm continues, as Rita comes to rest quite still
in the spotlight, looking out into the audience, like a
lost waif. Ziggy peers around at her, perhaps, not
knowing what she will do next. And, then, as if in a
dream, she speaks softly, slowly, into the mic.

RITA (CONT.)

(speaks)

So little time, everyone in such a
hurry. They used to say "pleasure
today, pain tomorrow", but who says
that any more? Who can make plans?
Not any more. No more gentle years,
only crazy days hurtling by. All we
have are these foolish, fleeting,
moments. No good regretting. No
time for second thoughts. This is
it. This is the time, *the time of
our lives.*

A tear wells in her eye, and when she returns to the song it has taken on a new poignancy, the mood in the audience completely changed.

RITA (CONT.)

(sings)

There are songs of love,
We never have sung,
Let's not waste an hour,
The night is still young.
Life is not long enough,
For the love I have for you,
So little time, so much to do.

EXT. RAILWAY STATION — DAY

A shoeshine boy buffs black and white shoes; Ziggy sits in the raised chair, reading a paper.

Roper watches from the cover of the time table boards. He moves off after Ziggy.

EXT. STREET CORNER — DAY

A Salvation Army Band play *Silent Night*, collecting pennies from passers-by. Roper hovers behind them, not to be seen by Ziggy. An army maid shakes a collecting box in front of him, he drops in a few pennies, moves on.

EXT. EMBANKMENT — DAY

Ziggy hurries down stone steps, approaches the figure of a woman wrapped in a cape, leaning against the balustrade.

As she turns to greet him, the fur-edged hood falls back to reveal RITA.

INT. BOX ROOM (EAGLE-EYE'S) — NIGHT

RED LIGHT

In the developing tray, images slowly appear —

Ziggy with Rita — laugh together — talk intimately — stroll arm-in-arm — beneath a sprig of mistletoe their lips meet.

Suddenly, Roper SHIVERS. He tugs the string above his head.

WHITE LIGHT

He sits with his face in his hands, the naked light bulb swaying over his head.

INT. EAGLE'S OFFICE - DAY

The National Anthem blares from the wireless.

Roper rushes in, drops a steaming plate onto the desk, flicks the tea towel over his shoulder and stands to attention behind his chair. He is just in time for the last couple of bars.

That over, he plumps down in the seat, and grins at the Christmas Pudding, like a cannonball with a gilded paper emblem of holly on top.

ANNOUNCER

(from wireless)

You have been listening to the
Christmas Day address to the Empire
by his Royal Highness King George
VI.

Roper pulls off the decoration, rolls it into a ball, flicks it across the room.

ANNOUNCER

This is the British Broadcasting
Service, London calling.

He splashes brandy over the pudding, hunts for matches.

ANNOUNCER

There will now be a short interlude.

From the wireless erupts the sound of a mass Nazi rally -
ZEIG-HEIL, ZEIG-HEIL, ZEIG-HEIL!

Roper freezes; then a chirpy little cockney voice -

COMEDIAN

(from wireless)

Well I think it's proper daft!

He smiles to himself, lights the brandy and sits gazing at the dancing blue flame.

COMEDIAN

(sings)

Adolf, you've bitten off,
Much more than you can chew.
Come on, hold yer hand out,
We're all fed up with you,
Cor blimey!

Adolf, you toddle off,
And all your Nazis, too,
Or you may get something to remind you,
Of the old red, white, and blue!

BLACK

And then —

WHISTLE / SILENCE / THUNDEROUS BOOM / RATTLING GLASS /
STUTTERING DEBRIS

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — NIGHT

All lights are off: Roper raises the blackout blind, and is lit up by the flares and flashes from the inferno outside.

He is dressed for the evening, in dinner suit and black tie. He glances at his watch — it has stopped. He shakes it, puts it to his ear; it is ticking again.

He feels slightly rattled, as if this were an omen, looks around — grabs his coat and hurries out.

EXT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE BUILDING — NIGHT

Roper emerges from the building and draws back as flashes light up a panicked dray horse being lead to safety by an ostler.

INT. RITA'S DRESSING ROOM, RAZZMATAZZ — NIGHT

Rita slumps before the mirror, still in her street clothes. In the background the Zigzag band can be heard playing their opening set. She pulls off her quarter-length gloves — around her wrists are ROPE BURNS.

She reaches out, flips open an onyx box, and takes out a fat reefer rolled in course buff paper. There is a rattle at the door of someone trying to come in, finding it locked.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Rita?

RITA
(pause)
Yes.

She proceeds to light up the reefer.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Door's locked.

RITA
(pause)
Yes.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Peachy, Honey?

RITA
(pause)
Yes.

BOBBY (O.S.)
Later, eh?

He goes. Spliff between lips, she digs two fingers into a jar of cold cream, starts to massage her wrists.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Roper is making his way through the bright flickering night. The street is near deserted. An OLD MAN, on a push bike, shouts out as he passes.

OLD MAN
Another night of it.

ROPER
By the looks.

The sound of an approaching bus, and then -

Roper draws back in HORROR - the whistle of a falling BOMB - he flings himself to the ground - DEAFENING EXPLOSION - covers his head with his hands as debris rains down.

INT. RITA'S DRESSING ROOM, RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

Rita is sat at the dressing table, applying lipstick, when - she looks up - above her the RUMBLE of crumbling masonry.

Suddenly, the MIRROR CRACKS.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Roper raises himself from the ground, bangs at his ears - he can hear nothing.

He screws his hat back on his head, twists his false leg back to face front. As his hearing returns he registers the SCREAMS OF PAIN.

Guns pound, more distant bombs explode. Roper struggles back onto his feet, lopes up the debris strewn road.

The old man lies in the tangle of his bike.

OLD MAN

Bleedin' Gerry! I've only just had them spokes done.

ROPER

You alright?

OLD MAN

Just me knee. Looks like bus took a fair wallop.

A red double-decker has been toppled over by the blast and rocks against an iron lamp post. The driver's body sprawls against the wire mesh that protects the cabin from shattered glass. Sounds of pain and confusion come from within.

ROPER

Oh my god!

INT. BACK CORRIDOR, RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

Rita runs along the deserted corridor, plaster dust falling from the ceiling, the band grinding to a halt in ragged confusion.

She wrenches open the door, looks out into the club,

Rippling murmurs spread in the sudden hush. From above there is a great RUMBLE. Suddenly, the lights go out. A woman SCREAMS.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Roper helps survivors scramble from the tilted platform of the wrecked bus. Others come running from different directions to help.

Roper staggers comically under the weight of a **STOUT MATRON**. A **RESCUE WORKER**, more able-bodied, steps in to take the brunt.

RESCUE WORKER

Reckon she's more my size, Mate.
Alright, Luv, I got you.

STOUT MATRON

There's another in there.

ROPER

Alive?

STOUT MATRON

Can't move, poor dear.

He hoists himself up into the dust and fumes.

IN THE BUS WRECK

A man with broken legs is trying to lower himself down the stairs. Roper peers into the smoke-filled lower deck.

ROPER

(calling)
Anybody there?

Soft moaning comes from deep within. Roper makes his way, hand over hand, down into the twisted wreckage.

ROPER (CONT.)

Stay calm. We'll soon have you out.

He wrenches one of the steel-framed seats away to uncover the girl trapped beneath. She catches her breath, lets out a long sigh. Roper looks at her in disbelief.

ROPER

Luce!

It is Lucy, the girl next door during all the years of his growing-up. She blinks up at him in astonishment, unable to speak for the pain.

He tugs desperately at the steel that traps her, but cannot budge it.

ROPER

Hang on there, Luce. Rescue chaps
will soon be here.

He takes her free hand, squeezes it. She tries to say something, but he cannot make it out.

ROPER (CONT.)

What was that?

He gets down to put his ear close to her lips.

LUCY

(feint whisper)
Are we down-hearted?

Roper looks at her in disbelief.

LUCY (CONT,)

Are we down-hearted?

Roper shakes his head, hardly able to hold back the tears.

FULL MOON IN THE NIGHT SKY

US BROADCASTER (V.O.)

It was the kind of night poets sing
about. On a night like this the
Thames would be a white ribbon of
milk pointing towards London. You
can't black-out the Thames, and the
Thames tells the German bombers
everything they want to know ...

INT. RAZZMATAZZ - NIGHT

The glamorous interior is devastated, the devil-may-care spirit turned into eddies of anguish and grief.

A slide of beams and masonry has broken through the ceiling from which the dark chandelier sways precariously. Electricity is down, the smoky interior cut only by the flickering beams of torches and lamps.

Staff are lighting candles. One is placed atop the piano where Ziggy sits alone on the bandstand in a cocoon of his own emotion, playing a romantic RHAPSODY.

A rescue worker lifts the sales tray from bloodied face of the Cigarette Girl.

CIGARETTE GIRL

What's happened to my face? It's all wet ...

ARP OFFICER

Saved you that has, my girl - that old tray. Thank your lucky stars.

Some of the able-bodied are helping others up the stairs. The first ambulance teams rush down past them with stretchers. Behind them come Garlick and Porter, both in steel helmets, carrying torches.

PORTER

What a sorry sight this is.

GARLICK

Not much glitter about the glitterati now. Looks like the diamonds have turned back into soot!

But Porter is distracted by a posse of urchins who have come in from the street and are going round bodies stealing jewelry and handbags.

PORTER

(shouting)

Hey! Hey! You, you little varmints! Drop that or I'll put you over my knee.

He makes a lung at a pair who shoot past him and disappear into the smoke.

PORTER (CONT.)

Did you see that, Sir?

GARLICK

In Germany they've got the Hitler Youth; here they open up the borstals and let 'em run wild.

PORTER

Still in short trousers, one of 'em.

GARLICK

Tiddlers in the pond but we know
how they'll turn out ...

PORTER

Sure as eggs.

GARLICK

... less they get an education and
take a turn for the worse.

In the beam of his torch he has caught Aloysius, sitting
on the floor, his brow being wiped by his young friend.
He moves towards him, Porter follows.

GARLICK

Well, well, well ... Mr. Lafferty.
Still sound of limb, I see. Devil
takes care of his own, eh?

Aloysius struggles to get up.

ALOYSIUS

Don't think I've seen you here
before, Inspector.

GARLICK

Not a place for an honest man on an
honest day's pay.

ALOYSIUS

No cause to be sour. A man needs a
little gaiety to lighten the
burden.

GARLICK

How about your client, Mr. Gribble?
Was he frolicking tonight? Or was
he out on business?

ALOYSIUS

How the fuck should I know?

GARLICK

Watch your language when you speak
to me.

ALOYSIUS

For god's sake, Inspector! Good
people are here dying. I've escaped
myself by a whisker. This isn't a
time for personal vendettas.

GARLICK

You don't have your wig on now, my boy, so don't lecture me.

ALOYSIUS

Sir, I have no desire or inclination to do so, or, for that matter, to address you further in any way whatsoever.

GARLICK

Mark my words, Mr. Lafferty, if the Fuehrer doesn't put a full stop to your client, I will. Come rain, come shine, so help me! You can give him that *billet-doux*, with kisses on the bottom.

Garlick pushes past him, looks to Blunt who has just emerged from a staff entrance. He blows out his cheeks, shakes his head.

PORTER

Slippery bugger!

GARLICK

Like an eel in the hand, but, sooner or later, he'll fry with the rest.

In a tumbling cascade of notes Ziggy comes to the end of the rhapsody. There is no applause: the cries of agony seem all the louder, there are calls to clear the way, someone is sweeping up glass.

ZIGGY

(sings to himself)

I'm shooting high,
I'm shooting high!

He gently closes the piano lid, stands up – and swoons – but catches himself. No-one notices. He looks around, gathers himself, shambles into the darkness.

INT. HOSPITAL STAIRWELL – DAY

Roper comes through the doors from the wards. He is still dressed as the night before, dirty and exhausted. He hunts for a cigarette.

Porters on high stepladders are taking down the blackouts. The grey light of dawn comes through the window. Outside the *all-clear* is sounding.

A NURSE comes up the stairs with an Auxiliary AMBULANCE WOMAN.

AMBULANCE WOMAN

I felt such a fool. Could hardly hold back the tears. The two of them, young chaps – they looked so dashing in their pressed blue uniforms – came up the stairs, carrying their girlfriends, dead in their arms.

NURSE

Just goes to show, doesn't it? They always said that place was the safest place in Town.

Roper suddenly looks up from lighting his cigarette.

EXT.\INT. TELEPHONE BOX BY RAZZMATAZZ – DAY

Roper is in the box, making a call; outside it is pouring rain.

ROPER

(into telephone)

I don't know, Mrs. Hyde, because my investigations were somewhat hampered by a twenty pound bomb.

He glances back, clears the condensation with his fingers.

Opposite, old decorators' planks have been threaded through gilded salon chairs to cordon off the front of the club. Beyond, a scarred mirror ball lies atop the rubble. Some of the staff, wearing tin hats, are struggling to clear salvage.

ROPER (CONT.)

That's precisely what I was asking you ...

Bobby comes out of the club in a bad mood. Goldie comes out after him with a doorman's umbrella. He tries to hold it over Bobby, but gets thumped in the chest for his trouble.

ROPER

Than you for your advice, Madam. I
shall endeavor to do just that.

He slams down the phone, and glances in the little mirror
above the coin box.

Outside, a sedan draws up, at the extent of the barrier,
Rockfist at the wheel. Bobby strides over the piles of
debris, followed by Goldie scrambling, umbrella in hand.

Roper quickly turns his back as they come straight
towards the box; looks again over the collar of his mac.

Bobby scissor-steps the planks, wrenches open the
driver's door of the car, and drags Rockfist out into the
rain. He climbs in himself and screeches off.

Rockfist and Goldie huddle together under the umbrella.
They look right and left up the street, then at each
other.

ROCKFIST

What you looking at?

GOLDIE

Ain't looking at nothing.

ROCKFIST

Never a hackney when you needs one.

GOLDIE

'Cause it's raining.

ROCKFIST

I know it's 'cause it's ...

(raises back of his hand)

You think I'm a thicko?

GOLDIE

Hey Man, I don't think nothing.

Right? Just saying ...

But, before he can complete the sentence, Rockfist
marches off. Goldie hurries after him with the brolly.

Roper slips out of the box, buttons up his mac against
the rain, and follows.

EXT. ANOTHER STREET - CONTINUING

The pavement is an eddying stream of umbrellas. Roper slips between them, as he follows Rockfist and Goldie.

A military vehicle swings into the junction ahead, cutting him off from view of his quarry. He quickens his pace to get past, when -

A burly figure in field jacket climbs from the driver's cab, peers at Roper through the rain: it is Marek.

MAREK

Tam on idzie! Który jest on -
(pointing)
Peeping Tommy!

Four troops in Polish uniform leap from the back of the vehicle.

Roper back tracks, and runs as fast as a man with one leg can - not fast enough.

He dodges behind a hawker, selling custom gas mask cases dangling from a pole.

EXT./INT. NEWS THEATRE - DAY

Roper lopes in from the street, straight past the ticket office and presses a pound note into the hand of the uniformed USHERETTE.

In a twinkling she registers the feel of money, and side-steps to let Roper slip behind her into the cinema.

The Poles appear, guess where Roper has gone, and ...

USHERETTE

Queue up and get your tickets,
lads. All one price. No-one comes
in without a ticket.

Marek pushes through, waves her aside. She does not budge.

MAREK

Wychodzą drogi!

USHERETTE

I'll have none of your cheek! Just
you remember you're a guest in this
country so you'd better mind your
Ps and Qs.

IN THE CINEMA

The entire audience are rocking and rolling from side to side singing the cockney song, *The Lambeth Walk*.

Roper glances back over his shoulder – and crashes to the ground – his false leg caught in a seat.

He struggles back up, scans the little auditorium, and spots an emergency exit. He hurries down the aisle, across to the far side, and crashes out of the doors, just as –

The first of the Poles comes in clutching his ticket. He blinks, trying to accustom his eyes to the semi-darkness; looks around, but – his attention is caught by the film.

The following Poles pile up behind him. He bursts out laughing and points to the screen.

ON SCREEN

Film of Nazi Storm-troopers on parade has been edited so that the precision force appear to be jiggling backwards and forwards, goose-stepping and zeig-heiling in time to the old cockney song.

The audience sings; the Poles roar with laughter.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR – DAY

The BELL is ringing to signal the end of visiting hours. Roper lopes along, threading his way through the crowd coming out.

INT. WOMEN'S WARD – CONTINUING

Roper sails through the doors and comes face to face with the ward sister.

ROPER
(out of breath)
Miss Lucy Partridge?

SISTER

Visiting hours are over.

ROPER

But, Sister, I could hardly hop here much faster. Since Jerry shot off the old leg ...

SISTER

Enough of that. I'll give you one minute. No longer or Matron will be on my tail. Sixth along to your right.

Lucy is propped up in bed, one arm and shoulder in a cast; bruising makes breathing and speaking difficult. She sees Roper approaching, smiles.

ROPER

Hey ...

LUCY

What donkeys eat.

ROPER

Lucy!

LUCY

What ho, Roper?

ROPER

How about you? That's more to the point.

LUCY

Life of Reilly, isn't it?

ROPER

That's my girl. Soon be back in fine fettle.

LUCY

I don't want to think about it.

Roper sits down on the wooden chair. They remain for a moment, side-by-side, without speaking. Shyly, Lucy extends her free hand. After a heartbeat's hesitation, Roper takes it.

LUCY

Funny, isn't it?

ROPER

What?

LUCY

I had a dream that I took a hit,
and you came along and saved me.

EXT./INT. RAILWAY STATION — EVENING

Over the siren wail, from loudspeakers around the station, comes the sound of GIRLS SINGING in close harmony to a bop rhythm:

HARMONY SISTERS

(singing over speakers)

Bomb, bomb, get in your shelter,
Bomb, bomb, don't helter-skelter,
Get yourself right under ground,
When those Nazis fly around.

Bomb, bomb, get in the habit,
Bomb, bomb, just like a rabbit.
Get yourself right underground,
When those Nazis fly around.

The station starts to clear. Many hurry towards the Underground. Many make a deliberate effort not to appear afraid. Men in uniform put on their steel helmets. Others just defiantly refuse to budge.

The Shoe-shine Boy is packing up his brushes, when — a big hand grabs him by the scruff of the neck, hoists him into the air.

ROCKFIST

You seen a little creep in two-tone shoes?

GOLDIE

Black and white, like the Devil
wouldn't miss 'em.

IN THE BUFFET

Ziggy sits, finishing off a letter he is writing on a sheet of music paper. Behind him on the wall is a Ministry poster which has been doctored by anti-semites.

*Your courage, your cheerfulness,
your resolution,
will bring ~~us~~ JEW victory!*

He breathes on the ink to dry it, folds the sheet in four, and slips it into a brown envelope.

ON THE CONCOURSE

Ziggy, digging for pennies in his pockets, winds through embracing couples unable to break their farewells lest this be their last.

He puts a coin in the slot-machine, tears off the stamp that issues from below, licks it and sticks it.

A last look at the envelope, before he touches it to his lips, and inserts it in the mouth of the post box.

Suddenly, Rockfist and Goldie appear on either side.

GOLDIE

If it ain't the Zigzag man!

ROCKFIST

Going somewhere, by any chance?

Ziggy sends the letter into the box; shakes his head, speechless with fear.

GOLDIE

(to Rockfist)

He ain't going nowhere.

ROCKFIST

Well, ain't that a bit of luck?

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — DAY

Roper closed the door behind him, rests against it, exhausted.

He gathers himself up, shakes the rain from his hat, flips it onto the stand.

He crosses, drops keys on the desk, turns on the desk light — against the brass stem is propped the picture of Rita.

From the poacher's pocket of his mac he takes a steaming newspaper-wrapped parcel, drops it on the desk, and crosses to the window.

Outside, light is falling; the SIRENS are now joined by the sound of ack-ack guns.

He scans up and down the street - there is no-one untoward there. He pulls the blackouts closed.

EXT. NAPOLI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

In the doorway, a young woman in WAAF's uniform is sheltering from the rain. A Dutch Army officer in green uniform comes along, and can hardly believe his luck.

He steps in, and offers her a cigarette. She looks him up and down, takes two, puts them both to her lips. He lights them; she gives him one.

Against the glass of the blacked-out door, a sign:

PRIVATE FUNCTION

Over this, a piano rendition of Rita's song, *They Can't Blackout the Moon*.

INT. NAPOLI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Ziggy sits at a baby grand in an alcove painted with a mural of a Neapolitan landscape, playing dinner music, and wishing he was some place else.

Gathered in the dining room are a convention of ugly geezers in sharp suits. In pride of place is Bobby, sitting with Tiger Tim. He and his henchmen are in close conference, while Goldie and Rockfist, keep an eye on proceedings from close-by.

Oddly out of keeping with the decor, the restaurant staff are all Chinese, including the head waiter in full tails, MR. CHIN, and a severe beauty in a cheongsam, LILY, the only woman present.

Tiger Tim and Bobby shake hands, all at the table clink glasses, their deal done.

BOBBY

'Ere, heard about the Tommy, went into a pub, raised his pint, and shouted, "To Hell with Hitler". Next thing he knows he's being arrested for shouting "Heil Hitler!"

(does Nazi salute)

True. They thought he was a bloody Nazi.

They all roar with laughter, bang the table-top. Mr. Chin leans over and whispers in Bobby's ear; he strikes his fork against a carafe to summon the attention of the room.

BOBBY (CONT.)

Right, lads, you knows the regulations – only one meat or fish per person. Right?

(groans from all round)

Alright, alright! You don't want Choo Chin Chow 'ere to get into trouble with the inspectors, do ya? So, all sign the chit you've been given and move round. Whoever you was before, you're somebody different now, alright?

Ziggy plays appropriate music and they all move round as if they were playing musical chairs, while Goldie stands conducting the flow.

A florid-faced heavy with a double chin, and belly to match, called, BUST-A-GUT, plumps down in the seat next to Bobby. There is a strict pecking order, and this is not in dispute.

BUST-A-GUT

Wotcha, Bobby!

BOBBY

Busta, me old cock, 'ow ya doing?

Ziggy modulates his piano-playing back to easy listening. Lily comes along and places a silver tray with a glass of schnapps down beside him. As she does so, she stoops to whisper in his ear ... but, he cannot quite grasp her Cantonese accent.

ZIGGY

(confused)

Beg your pardon?

LILY
Must go. Go, run way.

ZIGGY
What?

LILY
Run! Or they kill you.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Roper twists the dial of the wireless, makes some fine adjustments, and - from the hiss emerges the plummy and over-precise diction of the traitor, Lord Haw-Haw.

VOICE OF HAW-HAW
(from wireless)
... all the horrors of war. The Royal Airforce is too weak, the Royal Navy is too weak, and, as yet, the common sense of the British People is too weak - to perceive the catastrophic nature of the plight into which, like dumb animals, they are being lead.

Roper slumps back in his seat by the desk. The room is lit only by the desk lamp, the radiation from a small electric fire drawn up close to his feet, and the ghostly glow of the wireless.

VOICE OF HAW-HAW
The French forces were better trained, better equipped, and more numerous than the British. And the defeat of France within six weeks of the entry of German troops into Belgium and Holland is the most eloquent testimony, as to what Germany can do in modern warfare.

The newspaper parcel is open before him, exposing a half-eaten meal of fish and chips. He picks up a chip with his fingers, and is distracted by the headline on the old grease splattered newspaper -

**KING & QUEEN VISIT EAST END
SPIRITS HIGH**

Beneath the scrummy crumbs of batter is a picture of the Royal Couple standing amidst devastation and cheering

crowds. Roper slowly licks his fingers; his own spirit is sinking fast.

VOICE OF HAW-HAW

Is it not amusing to think of the trumpeting with which Churchill became prime minister? He was the man to frighten Hitler! He was the providential leader who was going to lead Britain to victory. Now, disillusionment grows deeper every day, blending – not unreasonably – with fear of invasion ... As to the end result? About that here can be no doubt whatsoever. But that degenerate of Downing Street, and his confederates of Jewish finance, insists on pursuing war to the *bitter* end. And *bitter* it will be for England!

INT. NAPOLI RESTAURANT – NIGHT

JANGLING PIANO: Ziggy hammers out *Roll Out the Barrel* at madcap tempo, perspiration pouring down his face. The assembled spivs and heavies are gathered in an arc around him. He comes to the end of the piece, and reaches for his schnapps.

BOBBY

Hey! What d'you stop for?

He rests the glass back down.

ZIGGY

Well ... that's it. That's the end of the tune. I just ... ran out of music.

BOBBY

The end? Is it now? Alright then, play us another. How about, *When You're Smiling*? That was my old mum's favorite, that was.

BUST-A-GUT

Nice one! Be a tonic, that will.

BOBBY

(to Ziggy)

She liked it with a bit of oomph, mind.

ZIGGY

In a minute.

He reaches again for the schnapps.

BOBBY

(quiet)

No, now.

Ziggy looks at him, freezes, the glass half way to his lips. Bobby stares blankly back at him. There is a hush. Ziggy puts the glass down once more, and immediately starts to play - *loud and fast*.

BUST-A-GUT joins in, singing along with gusto. Bobby remains staring at Ziggy.

BOBBY (CONT.)

(to Rockfist)

Looks a bit hot, don't he?

ROCKFIST

It's all that drapery, in't it?

BOBBY

(to Ziggy)

Don't know who your tailor is, old son, but he ain't half made a mess of that.

(to Rockfist)

Here, lend us your blade.

Rockfist hands him a cut-throat razor. With a practised flick of the wrist he exposes the shining steel. Ziggy glances sideways in terror, but dare not stop.

Bobby feels the wide lapel of Ziggy's drape jacket, and then makes a sudden SLASH at it with the razor. Ziggy keeps playing his tongue hanging out in terror.

BOBBY

There, that's a bit more like it.

BUST-A-GUT

Ask me, it's all them buttons on his sleeve. He'd be better off without them.

He takes out his own razor, slashes off the cuff around Ziggy's trembling wrist.

ROCKFIST

You can't leave him like that. All
lob-sided, ain't he?

He takes back his razor from Bobby and deftly slashes off
the other cuff, Ziggy still playing.

ROCKFIST (CONT.)

Talk about Saville Row, eh?

GOLDIE

The way I looks at it, it ain't the
coat that's the trouble, it's them
trousies.

He flicks out his blade, and dives beneath the keyboard.
Ziggy suddenly stops playing.

ZIGGY

Please, gentlemen, I beg you ...

He starts to get up, but meets Tiger Tim's hand on his
shoulder forcing him down hard.

BOBBY

(quietly)

Nah, don't stop. We was having a
sing-along.

BUST-A-GUT

That's right. Just getting into me
stride.

Ziggy swallows hard, hammers out a few more chords, but
has difficulty finding his rhythm with Goldie at his
trouser leg with a cut-throat.

BUST-A-GUT

What the Donald Duck's that?
Thought you was a professional.

BOBBY

She liked it with a bit of oomph,
remember?

Ziggy nods, starts with sudden pain, starts to play again
at a furious tempo. Bust-a-gut turns to conduct the
singing with his open razor.

Tiger Tim takes out his, leans over Ziggy's shoulder and
flips out his tie with the tip of the blade. Ziggy
flinches - erratically - goes on playing.

TIGER TIM

Would you credit it? Ain't going to get into no gents' club with a bit of old rag like that.

He proceeds to saw off the hand-painted silk tie, as Goldie emerges from below wiping blood off his razor on a swatch of Ziggy's peg-pants.

GOLDIE

Should have kept still. What about the other leg?

EXT. ALLEY, BACK RESTAURANT - NIGHT

The door from the kitchen opens, and Lilly propels a kitchen boy out into the rain. In Cantonese she urges him to go as fast as his legs will carry him.

The alleyway is lit up by flashes from the aerial bombardment above. The boy runs, leaps a spilt rubbish bin, scattering scavenging cats.

EXT POLICE BOX - CONTINUING

The blue wooden box appears from the darkness with a flare from above. Through the little glass window a police constable can be seen on the phone.

The Kitchen Boy runs up, hammers frantically on the door. The policeman opens it a crack, but can understand nothing of the hysterical Cantonese which meets his ear.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

An EERIE WHISTLE and hiss comes from the wireless: broadcasting has long ended for the night.

Roper is slumped over the desk asleep. Beneath his fingers, the little book he found in his bombed-out home - *Ramblers' Guide to The Lake District* - open at a drawing of a rowing boat on a lake. Beyond that, a near-drained whiskey glass, and empty Veganin tube.

From afar, the ECHOING CLUNK of the old service lift juddering into the start of its climb.

Roper raises his head, cranes round - becomes aware of the approaching sound. With a start, he sits up, his eyes wide. He listens - SOUND OF THE LIFT slowly climbing.

He spins his chair round, stops – at a short distance, his false leg stands upright in its shoe.

He calculates: the time he would take to put it on – too great. His eyes fall on the bunch of keys still on the desk. He snatches them up, turns off the light.

The lift CLANGS to a stop – sound of the gates opening, and then, the corridor light comes on throwing a pale light through the hammered glass partition and door.

In great hops Roper crosses the room, his free trouser leg flapping. He lands at the door, but too late – a rustle APPROACHING, A SHADOW – he flattens himself against the wall beside it.

There is a HAMMERING on the door. Roper fumbles with the keys, finds the one, turns it towards the hole ...

But before he can slide it home, the KNOB TURNS, the door flies open, and in runs –

RITA: she looks round the office, turns, looks at him. Wearing only a flimsy peignoir, soaked to the skin – she is almost naked.

The corridor light clicks off on the time-switch, plunging the room into –

BLACK

And then, the jazz of Django Reinhardt and Stephane Grapelli ...

A curtain swishes back, moonlight floods in, to reveal –

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

A recording of Le Quintette du Hot Club de France turns on the gramophone.

Rita stands at the windows drawing on a reefer: the room is exquisitely furnished in the art deco style. Though dressed only in the silk peignoir, she opens the french windows, steps out into the cold night air, drifts to the balcony rail.

Dreamy-eyed, she stands staring at the searchlights criss-crossing the sky, listening to the bright, hopeful music from within. It is starting to drizzle: she closes

her eyes, raises her face, feels the moisture on her skin.

The spliff fizzes. She pushes the butt into a planter of winter clematis, reluctantly, steps back in, closes the door, and watches the first raindrops settle on the glass.

The record comes to an end, and then ... Rita turns: did she hear something?

VOICE
(calling softly)
Rita, Rita, Rita ...

Rita turns on a standard lamp, draws the curtain closed. Again, the voice, louder now.

VOICE
Rita! Rita!

IN THE HALL

She turns on the light, stops as she sees someone is pushing open the brass letterbox.

VOICE
Angel, tell me you're there ...

And now she recognises the voice, hurries to open the door, gasps as she sees — kneeling before her, Ziggy, his clothes slashed to ribbons, smeared with blood from the many nicks of his skin.

RITA
Oh my god!

She pulls him up, drags him in, quickly looks behind him, closes the door.

RITA (CONT.)
Why have you come here? Don't you know, they watch me? The stoker — did he see you? Bobby pays him.

He shrugs, shivers, becomes self-conscious at his pathetic state.

ZIGGY
Apologies, but ... I had to come, had to see you.

RITA

Oh Ziggy! Ziggy!

She walks past him, he follows her through.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

Rita switches on more lamps, turns to look at Ziggy who is wiping clear his spectacles on a hanging fragment of shirt.

RITA (CONT.)

Look at you. Bobby's men? Why have they done this?

ZIGGY

Don't think they liked my honky-tonk piano - not my forte.

RITA

My god, you're cut all over. You're bleeding.

ZIGGY

Death of a Thousand Cuts - it would have been, but for the inspectors. They came knocking. The bully-boys locked me up in the gent's room. There was a latch window high up; dim-wits forgotten. I just slipped through.

RITA

Oh, Ziggy! I'll run a bath. Then ... we'll think what to do.

ZIGGY

Never mind now, Angel. I'm on borrowed time.

She becomes aware of the gramophone needle knocking on the centre of the record. She looks at him aghast, waiting, but no explanation comes.

RITA

What have you done?

A little smile creeps over his face.

RITA (CONT.)

(intense)

What have you done?

ZIGGY
(croons)
Foo a little bally-hoo *me?*
Foo a little bally ...

RITA
Ziggy!

ZIGGY
... hoo *you?*

He breaks, off digs in a pocket hanging on a ragged strip of his jacket.

ZIGGY
Those lardy cakes never guessed ...
it's for you, Angel.

He brings out a closed fist, holds it before her ...

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Rita and Roper sit on the floor, lit only by the glow from the electric fire. She has Roper's trenchcoat wrapped around her.

RITA
And then he said ...

She raises her hand in a fist, opens it to reveal a cheap little green ticket with a printed number.

RITA (CONT.)
... it's the ticket to your dreams.

Roper looks at the ticket, back to her.

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

THUNDEROUS BANGING on the front door, sound of a bath running: Rita comes through into the hall.

RITA
What is it? What the hell do you want?

ROCKFIST
Rita, open this door.

RITA

It's late. I'm having a bath.

ROCKFIST

Open this fucking door!

She slides the chain on, turns the latch. Immediately the door flies back and stops short. Behind Rockfist stands Goldie, and two other henchmen.

RITA

Come back tomorrow, after ten. Now, if you'll excuse me ...

ROCKFIST

The fuck, I will! I ain't playing games here, Rita. Open this door or you'll answer for it.

She gives a snort of contempt, but thinks better of it. She slides off the chain, opens the door again.

Immediately, the flat of a giant hand over her face pushes her back against the wall. Rockfist stands aside to let the others rush through.

She pulls his arm down; he takes her by the elbow, propels her forward.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

Rita crosses to the mantel shelf, picks up a silver table lighter in the shape of a Spitfire, lights a cigarette.

The two henchmen look around the room with prurient interest. One of them, sporting a tie-pin in the form of a clef sign, is known as LOONY TUNES; the other, with a face scarred by the pox, TOTTENHAM TED.

TOTTENHAM TED

(whistles)

Bit of class, this.

RITA

The kind of girl I am.

LOONY TUNES

'Scuse him: he ain't got no manners.

He biffs him about the head. They both straighten up as Rockfist comes into the room, followed by Goldie. Rockfist surveys the room.

GOLDIE

Turned the taps off for you, Rita.

RITA

Thanks.

ROCKFIST

Where is he, Rita?

RITA

Who the hell are you talking about?

(Rockfist sighs)

I'm not dressed for visitors. So,
if you'll excuse me ...

She starts to move towards the bedroom; he holds her back by the elbow.

ROCKFIST

You're going nowhere.

He motions the others to the bedroom. Goldie crosses, the others fall in behind him. Rockfist sniffs the air.

ROCKFIST

You been at the weed again, Rita?

RITA

Mind your own business.

He picks up a bubble of brandy from a side-table.

ROCKFIST (CONT.)

This yours?

RITA

Thanks.

She takes it from him, sips the liquor.

IN THE BEDROOM

The three creep into the room on guard — slump as they find the room empty, a window wide-open, curtains billowing.

GOLDIE

Little Fuck's done a runner.

He crosses, leans out, peers right and left.

Loony Tunes takes the opportunity to peep inside a tall cabinet, and does a double take.

LOONY TUNES

(hushed)

Eh, take a decko at this!

He reaches in and pulls out a long, snappy, school cane.

Tottenham Ted can hardly contain himself, before Goldie raises a hand to still them. He looks pointedly to the ground -

On the cream carpet is a trickle of FRESH BLOOD. With his eyes Goldie follows the trail to a giant wardrobe. All three stare at it, still as statues. And then -

From within comes the CREAK of a hanger moving on the rail. Goldie takes out his blade, the others follow suit.

Slowly, all three creep towards the walnut doors, their RAZORS AT THE READY. Goldie reaches out, and, at arms length, flips the handle. The door swings back ...

Suddenly, GUNFIRE BLASTS out from between the gowns.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

Rockfist and Rita look up, mouths open.

ZIGGY (O.S.)

Who's the big shot now?

IN THE BEDROOM

Goldie staggers back, eyes wide, his finger clutching his belly.

RITA (V.O.)

He'd found it - the gun Bobby gave me: said it was just a *handbag gun*, but ... it did the business.

IN THE SITTING ROOM

There is the sound of the wardrobe doors being crashed, more shots, the splintering of wood.

ROCKFIST

Hell's bells! Who the fuck ...?

He takes out his blade, moves toward the bedroom.

Rita seizes her chance; she backs off, turns, and makes a dash to the front door.

INT. RITA'S, LANDING & STAIRS - CONTINUING

Rita hammers the lift button; it starts its slow ascent.

Screams of AGONY and TERROR come from the apartment. She cannot bear it, cannot wait - runs down the stairs, past the flat-capped stoker, runs as fast as her legs can carry her.

RITA (V.O.)

And, I ran, and ran ... till, I thought of you.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Roper and Rita in the glow of the electric fire.

ROPER

You knew who I was?

RITA

I've seen you Razzmatazzing - always alone. I made my own enquiries.

Roper looks away, gets up. Rita runs Roper's comb, with many broken teeth, through her wet hair.

Roper switches on the desk light, looks closer at - the ticket, on it the number, 1634 - turns it over, just a cheap paper ticket.

ROPER

"The ticket to your dreams"

(laughs)

Know how many there'll be, just like this?

RITA
But this one's different.

ROPER
It is?

RITA
It's the winning number.

He checks the whiskey bottle, finds it empty. Still picks up a fresh glass.

ROPER
You've got a lot of faith!

RITA
And you don't?

DAY

Roper pulls back the blackouts and wintry sunlight floods in. He blinks, runs a hand over his stubble, looks around.

There is no sign of Rita ever having been there. But ...

On the desk, beneath the inverted whiskey glass is — THE TICKET — curled green paper on a pale green blotter.

ROPER (V.O.)
You've got a lot of faith!

RITA (V.O.)
And you don't?

Roper raises the glass, picks up the ticket.

EXT. BLACKMARKET LANE — DAY

The old barrow boy, Arry, stands by his barrow with the hand-written sign — *YOUR LAST CHANCE* — and, beneath it, one solitary bunch of bananas, twin to the one that was there before.

ARRY
(shouting out)
Have a banana! Have a banana! You know you wants to, Ladies. This is yer last chance!

Behind the barrow is parked up a high box van, with a tarpaulin curtain across the back.

INT. BOX VAN - DAY

Four characters sit on apple boxes around an improvised table draped with a baize cloth. They are illegally gambling with *Crown & Anchor* dice.

The oldest of them is THE FORGER. He sits examining the little green ticket just given him by Roper.

Roper stands opposite, wearing his hat but no coat; McBain at his shoulder, having just made the introduction.

FORGER

Bit previous, in't it?

ROPER

I beg your pardon?

FORGER

Got yourself a wooden spoon, old son.

ROPER

When I was last down here I noticed they were selling a lot like this - raffle for a turkey.

FORGER

Well, there ain't going to be much of it left now.

The men all roar with laughter.

FORGER (CONT.)

Never mind. You want to hang on to that. Might be a gold goose next year.

MCBAIN

Told you, didn't I, Couttie?
Wasting your fucking time, mate.

Annoyed at being the butt of the joke, Roper takes the ticket back, returns it to his wallet.

ROPER

Alright, alright, I just thought you might be able to tell me ...

FORGER

You don't need me for them. Now, if you interested in a few books of clothing coupons, I'm your man. But you can buy any number of them over the counter at Woolie's.

EXT. RAILWAY ARCH - DAY

Roper comes from beneath the arch, stops by a hoarding advertising a film - Charles Chaplin in *THE GREAT DICTATOR* - consults his pocket book.

A portly sergeant in the Home Guard comes along, gestures to the poster.

SERGEANT

I ask you, how can you take a dictator serious what looks just like Charlie Chaplin?

ROPER

(chuckles)

Spot on!

He moves on down a side street, passing a woman bent over an old cart filled with aluminium pans.

EXT. BASEMENT FLAT - CONTINUING

Roper stops at the railings, looks down towards the half-basement flat.

The glass in the front door has been smashed ... and, from within, comes a haunting piano melody.

He descends the steps, goes quickly, quietly, to the front door, puts his arm through the smashed glass, and lets himself in.

INT. BASEMENT FLAT - CONTINUING

Roper moves silently down the short corridor, and looks in the one room; it has been worked over, things scattered everywhere.

A woman sits with her back to him, playing an upright piano. She suddenly stops, turns towards him. She wears black-lensed glasses; he realises that she is blind.

She is MRS. ZIGLER, an open-faced woman in her thirties, a good complexion without make-up. She speaks with an Austrian accent.

MRS. ZIGLER

Who is there?

ROPER

Pretty tune.

MRS. ZIGLER

My husband wrote it.

ROPER

You're Zigzag's wife? I mean ...

MRS. ZIGLER

Sigmund's, yes - or rather, his widow. Who are you?

ROPER

(a beat)

Just a friend - of a friend.

MRS. ZIGLER

Then you can tell me, yes? Why did they do it? Take my husband away?

ROPER

I don't know the answer to that.

MRS. ZIGLER

He was a gentle person. He cared only for his music. And for his children. And ...

(Roper is silent)

Whatever he did, he did not deserve this.

ROPER

Did he ever talk to you about any get-rich-quick scheme?

MRS. ZIGLER

He just wanted to make enough to buy us a little family house somewhere - when the war ended.

ROPER

Right.

MRS. ZIGLER

Once we dreamed of living by a lake
— that's where we met — where the
water was so clear you could drink
it. But that was not to be.

She closes the piano lid, turns towards the window.

MRS. ZIGLER (CONT.)

You see, we came from Austria, poor
Jews, running from the Nazis. But,
when war broke, they said we were
"enemy aliens" — just the same as
the rest, and sent us to a camp.
Husbands could not stay with their
wives? My husband ... Siggy, he
just went on working. He thought
they had lost his papers, but, no
... they had a use for him.

ROPER

I don't understand.

MRS. ZIGLER

To keep his permit he had to do
what they said: look, listen — tell
them everything.

ROPER

Who's "they"?

MRS. ZIGLER

(shrugs)

Whoever. He knew, you know? Knew he
was going to die.

ROPER

You mean ...?

MRS. ZIGLER

He wrote me a letter saying that he
was going on a long journey, and
would never see me or the children
... again. Just that ... I didn't
understand it, but now ...

A tear runs down from behind the black lens. Roper looks
away, embarrassed. He becomes aware of a photograph of in
a smashed frame on the floor: it is of Rita in a sequined
sheath, with Ziggy on one side, and a sax player on the
other. He bends to pick it up, puts it down on the piano.

ROPER

Well ... was Siggy a gambling man?

MRS. ZIGLER

Oh no; not even a sweep-stake.

ROPER

The number, one-six-three-four —
does that mean anything to you?

A beat, and then her face lights up.

MRS. ZIGLER

Why, yes.

ROPER

It does?

MRS. ZIGLER

The first of June — our wedding
anniversary.

(a beat)

Why do you ask?

ROPER

Just ...

(a beat)

... it was a number on a scrap of
paper. Must be, what was on his
mind the day he died.

EXT. ROOFTOP, POLICE STATION — SUNSET

The array of barrage balloons reflect a glorious sunset;
there is a lull in the blitz. Garlick stands by the
parapet replenishing his pipe. He turns to see Blunt
leading Roper towards him.

GARLICK

I hear you're out of a job, Mr.
Coutts.

ROPER

Not from my doing. I am not
responsible.

GARLICK

Sounds like a guilty conscience.

ROPER

Zigler was another of your narks,
wasn't he? Perhaps that had
something to do with it.

GARLICK

He did us a service – up to a
point.

ROPER

Up to a point? You mean, the
point ...?

GARLICK

... at which temptation got the
better of him. Alas, the trouble
the fair sex can wreak!

Garlick chuckles; Roper is unable to join in. He finds
himself nervously turning his hat, becomes self-
conscious, decides to put it back on his head.

BLUNT

Fag, sir?

He takes one from the case offered; Blunt lights it for
him.

GARLICK

Mr. Zigler made the mistake of
boasting that he could hear the
music of a combination lock – the
notes the tumblers make as they
fall. I rather doubt that was true,
but some may have believed it.

ROPER

So what was the dope you wanted
from him?

GARLICK

At the back of the cupboard where
he kept the band music was a
ventilation brick: on the other
side Bobby's Den.

ROPER

Another of your walls with ears.

BLUNT

Tactical blunder moving in there!

GARLICK

We were soon party to his schemes
— schemes to organize the
blackmarket on unprecedented
scale. Make no mistake, we're not
just talking a bit of bacon and
butter on the side, but gross
supplies that should be going to
our troops — food, blankets,
clothes, guns ...

BLUNT

Talk about the enemy within.

GALICK

I dare say you remember your time
at the front, Mr. Coutts?

ROPER

Well enough.

GARLICK

Then you know how you would have
felt — cold and miserable, while
knowing the likes of Bobby Gribble
was profiteering from the few
comforts and consolations that
should have been yours.

CONTINUES OVER:

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — NIGHT

The slow movement of an Elgar symphony comes from the wireless; Roper sits, his hat on the back of his head, staring at the picture of Rita propped up beneath the desk light.

ROPER (V.O.)

Why are you telling me this? If you
know his plans, why don't you set-
to, and put a stop to them?

GARLICK (V.O.)

Because he's a wily devil. Those
that know the time, don't know the
place. Those that know the place
don't know the time. No-one ever
knows the two till the last minute.

(more)

GARLICK (V.O. CONT.)

It could be any number of venues,
at times various. We don't have the
manpower to cover that, and he
knows it.

He flips open the lid of the wooden cigar box – inside is
just one, half-smoked cigar, and matches. He takes it
out, lights it.

He blows a smoke ring that floats over the picture of
Rita.

EXT. SHOESHINE STAND, RAILWAY STATION – DAY

Roper sits in the chair, his shoes being polished,

ROPER

I've got a crisp five pound note in
my wallet. I'm willing to trade it
for information I don't already
have about one of your customers.

The Shoeshine Boy pauses his brushes for a beat, does not
look up.

SHOESHINE BOY

Who would that be?

ROPER

The band leader, Zigag Zigler?

He resumes his brushstrokes at a faster pace.

ROPER (CONT.)

You must remember him, wore two-
tone brothel creepers.

SHOESHINE BOY

(not looking up)

I shine a lot of shoes, guv.

Roper sighs, exasperated, but realises that he is onto
something. He decides to try another tack.

ROPER (CONT.)

You ever shine the shoes of Bobby
Gribble?

The Shoeshine Boy stops polishing – he looks up, slaps
his brushes together. A flight of pigeons take off, swoop
through the station.

EXT STREET NEAR EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE - DAY

The old Paperboy stands on the street corner.

PAPERBOY
(shouting out)
Pa ... Pa ... Pa!

Roper comes along, hunched against the cold, wearing his hat but no coat. He stops to buy a paper.

PAPERBOY
'Ere, why don't Mussolini never change his socks?

ROPER
Got me there.

PAPERBOY
'Cause he smells de-feat! Get it?

Roper's polite laugh, is cut short by a hand thrust under each arm - on one side is Loony Tunes, on the other Tottenham Ted.

LOONY TUNES
Hungry?

ROPER
Not especially.

TOTTENHAM TED
Rationing on, and he ain't hungry.

LOONY TUNES
Shame, 'cause you got an invite.

They march Roper off. The Paperboy watches them go a distance, before turning his back.

PAPERBOY
(shouting out)
Pa ... Pa ... Pa!

INT. NAPOLI RESTAURANT - DAY

Roper is propelled in by Loony Tunes and Tottenham Ted; they stay outside, close the door behind him.

Mr. Chin appears, bows in professional greeting.

MR CHIN.

Good day, sir. Very nice weather.

ROPER

I'm here to see a ... *customer*,
called *Gribble*.

MR. CHIN

Mr. Gribble, I tell; you wait,
please.

He disappears within. Roper's attention is caught by a framed photograph on the wall: it is of the male members of an Italian family and clan. An old man, with white moustache, in laced boots and straw boater, sits centre on a hard chair; a young Bobby Gribble lurks at one end of the back row.

Lily comes from the kitchen.

LILY

You leave hat.

Roper gives her his hat; she hands him a ticket. He is about to slip it in his wallet, when - he notices that it is just like the one given him by Rita.

He looks up to find Mr. Chin there, waiting for him. He gestures Roper through to the dining room. Roper slips the ticket into his wallet as he goes through.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Behind screens sits Bobby with Rockfist at a table laden with dim-sum baskets. Mr. Chin guides Roper in.

BOBBY

Well, if it ain't Hop-along.

ROPER

I beg your pardon?

BOBBY

Old Rocky was just leaving -
(to Rockfist)
- weren't cha?

Rockfist gets up, taking his plate with him. Mr. Chin calls over a boy, and they clear the place, while Bobby goes on munching.

BOBBY (CONT.)

They locked up all the wops, left us with the chinks. Ain't so good on the spaghetti; better stick with the chow-mein.

ROPER

I'm not hungry.

Bobby gives him a cold eye; looks to Mr. Chin.

BOBBY

Hear that, Mr. Chin? He ain't hungry.

The waiters both go; Roper sits down.

BOBBY (CONT.)

Have a glass of water.

ROPER

No thanks. So ...

(takes cigarette)

... you have something to tell me?

BOBBY

Yeah? Like what? I thought it was the other way round.

ROPER

(lights cigarette)

Like what happened to the Zigzag Man.

BOBBY

I couldn't give a flying fig for that little fart. Where's the girl?

ROPER

What girl?

BOBBY

Very funny. But my sense of humour's wearing a bit thin.

Roper blows smoke into his face.

BOBBY (CONT.)

'Ere, you need to learn some manners. I'm going to have to give you a good ticking off, I can see.

ROPER

You'll be setting up a finishing school next. Or should that be a *finishing-off* school?

BOBBY

I invite you here, offers you nosh, and all you does is insult me. That ain't nice.

ROPER

Hardly call it an *invitation*. Your goons marched me here. And that *ain't exactly nice*, either.

BOBBY

That's as maybe, but as you's 'ere, let's get down to business, shall we?

ROPER

(glances at watch)
Best be quick about it.

BOBBY

(quiet)
No-one takes my girl, understand that? I want her back.

ROPER

If we're talking business, for my usual fee I'll see if I can find her.

BOBBY

Fees don't come into it. I'm giving you one last chance. Either way you'll be taken care of. Got that?

ROPER

You know, watching you eat makes me feel queasy. I need to take a walk.

BOBBY

You want to walk, walk.

Roper hesitates, wondering if it will be so easy. He gets up and quickly goes; Bobby spears another dim-sum on his fork, puts it whole in his mouth.

IN THE FOYER

Roper strides out, past Rockfist, who is still wiping his mouth with a napkin, straight out the door. Rockfist tosses the napkin at Lily and follows

But immediately they are both outside, Roper does a quick about-turn and goes back in.

He approaches Lily behind the counter.

ROPER

Forgot my hat.

He pulls out his wallet, hesitates ... slides out his ticket, and then the one given him by Rita.

The two tickets - number apart - are identical.

He swaps them over, puts the one with the number 1634, on the counter. Lily snatches it up, goes off muttering in Cantonese.

Outside, Rockfist stares back through the glass door confused; he is soon joined by Loony Tunes and Tottenham Ted. Rockfist waves the back of his hand at them, and they drop back out of sight again. He turns away, digs his hands into his side-pockets with impatience.

A HAT is placed on the counter - like the one Roper wore in, except the brim of this one is a little wider, the band pleated.

He looks at it for a moment, and then, in one swift move, snatches it up, swings past Lily and crashes through a door, marked - *Private*.

She looks after him for a moment, before turning back to see the door opens and Rockfist lean in.

ROCKFIST

Where did the little fuck go?

She waves her hands, answers him with a stream of Cantonese.

EXT. ALLEY & STREET, BACK RESTAURANT - CONTINUING

Roper comes out the kitchen door, clutching the hat, and lopes up the alleyway as fast as he can travel. He glances back over his shoulder - still no-one is in pursuit.

He comes out of the ally, screws the hat on in his hands, and steps to the curb to hail a taxi, when -

a HAND GRABS him from behind, turns him one way; another hand grabs him, turns him the other.

Loony Tunes and Tottenham Ted are on him; they jerk down the top of his jacket to trap his arms, turn him to face back down the alleyway.

Walking up the alley towards him, as if he has all the time in the world, is Rockfist.

He prepares his fist, lengthens his stride, and thumps Roper hard in the solar plexus.

Roper doubles over like his heart is going to stop. The henchmen release him, and he crashes to his knees.

Rockfist bends over, and hoists him up by the ears. He dumps him back on his haunches, while the others go through his pockets - but they find nothing that interests them.

ROCKFIST

Take my advice, old son, deliver
the girl. She ain't your type.

Suddenly, the loud CLANG-CLANG of a bell. They look up to see the blue light on top of the Police Box flashing.

With contempt, they drop Roper back down, and saunter off as if nothing untoward had happened.

On the ground, his false leg at an unlikely angle, Roper still struggles to regain his breath. He feels like death, but then ...

From the corner of his eye, he sees - the HAT - lying beside the gutter.

He rocks forward onto all fours, crawls towards it. He stretches his fingers out - as he grasps it a smile of triumph creeps over his face.

BLACK

US BROADCASTER (V.O.)

Tea is more than a drink in London;
it's a symbol of sanity and a
reminder of days that were normal
and will be normal again.

INT. VISITOR'S LOUNGE, HOSPITAL - DAY

A tea tray, with pot, strainer, sugar bowl, milk jug, and two cups and saucers.

ROPER

Shall I be mother?

LUCY

(giggles)

If you wouldn't mind?

She sits in a hospital gown tied over her plaster casts, at a small table opposite Roper. He proceeds to set the cups up, and pour tea through the strainer.

ROPER

Right pair, aren't we? One arm; one leg.

LUCY

The surgeon came round this morning. Told me I might never regain the use of ...

ROPER

Oh.

LUCY

And I just laughed.

ROPER

But why?

LUCY

He had such a grave face. And ... I suppose I was glad to be alive.

ROPER

I wish I was like you, Luce - always so positive. Sugar?

LUCY

Two. I think it's just that my feelings are a bit out of kilter. I've got into a terrible muddle with all this trying to live with no thought for tomorrow. How can you know what your sentiments are when you're always in such a rush?

ROPER

That's the rub. War is rude, makes
you thick skinned.

LUCY

When I get out of here, I'm just
going to be who I am, and carry on
regardless – not go round like a
spinning top. If Gerry drops
another bomb on me, then, at least,
I'll know that Lucy Partridge lived
here a while, if not for very long,
and ...

ROPER

Luce, do you remember that trip we
did to the Lakes?

LUCY

What made you think of that?

ROPER

(shrugs)

I found the guide book – in the
rubble, back at the ...

LUCY

Gosh, it's hard to remember what we
were like then – such a short time
ago.

ROPER

That was the last time we were all
together, you and your family
and ...

LUCY

You read me Wordsworth, I remember
that.

ROPER

I've been thinking: when you're up
and about ... perhaps, we could go
again.

LUCY

No, Roper, Dear ... it wouldn't be
the same, would it? One can never
go back.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DAWN

The train emerges from a tunnel into the pale dawn light. Roper dozes, his closed eyes flicker, deep in his dreams.

The carriage is packed: on one side of him is a stout matron, who is snoring, chin on chest, on the other is a young soldier, who's head lolls onto Roper's shoulder - waking him.

He pushes the soldier back upright, looks at the small advertisement over the bench seat opposite -

VISIT THE
LAKE DISTRICT

Over, the *Elgar* music heard on the radio returns.

CONTINUES OVER

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

Roper sets the delayed shutter on the Voigtlander camera, which is balanced on a rock. He runs and poses before it, a magnificent view of the Lakes behind him. The shutter clicks.

ON THE LAKE

Roper rows a small boat out into the middle of the deserted lake - looking just like the illustration in his guide book.

He rests the oars down, sits quite still for a moment, looks up at the clouds above.

INT. GENT'S CLOAKROOM, STATION - DAY

Roper stands before the basin, striped down to his singlet, shaving with a safety razor. From outside comes the sounds of the busy station.

He wipes the remaining soap from his face with a towel, catches his own eye in the mirror.

EXT. ALLEY & STREET CORNER — DAY

A narrow brick-sided alleyway: beyond a Salvation Army Band is playing a sombre hymn.

Roper, Ziggy's hat on his head, walks down the alley towards the music.

The band are gathered outside a pub on the street corner. Roper stops by.

A girl in uniform is doing the rounds with a collecting box. As she raises her head, we see that, beneath the bonnet — is RITA. She shakes the box before him.

RITA

Fight the good fight.

Roper tosses in a coin.

ROPER

Till the final bell.

INT. CHEAP HOTEL ROOM — DAY

Roper rests, exhausted, on the bed. From outside comes the sound of someone approaching. He swings his legs down, and turns as the door opens and in steps Rita, still in her Salvation uniform.

ROPER

You cut quite a dash in that.

RITA

Nothing new to me, Mister.

She quickly closes the door behind her.

RITA (CONT.)

I grew up in it, and, out of it.
One hell of a family. Drunk one minute, teetotal the next. By the time I was eleven I'd done all the bringing-up baby I'd ever want. By the time I was twelve ... but let's not go into that.

She undoes the bonnet, tosses it aside, shakes out her hair.

RITA (CONT.)

One thing I learnt good was not to
let this world weary you down. But
to hang onto your dreams ...

As she turns back – Ziggy's hat comes skimming across the
room to her.

ROPER

Here, try this one for size.

She catches it – looks at it curiously – turns it over –
sees on the inside, the initials, Z.Z. – her eyes light
up.

RITA

Ziggy's hat!

She runs her fingers all around the inside, beneath the
band – but finds nothing. She looks up to Roper, like a
disappointed child at Christmas time.

He holds up his empty hands – and then, with a conjuror's
pass, knocks his fists together – and produces a little
flat silver key. She claps with girlish glee.

ROPER

The key to a left luggage locker.

In an instant she crosses the room, takes his head in her
hands and kisses him full on the lips. He is dazed. As
she steps away, she slips the key from his fingers – he
feels his power slipping away with it.

ROPER (CONT.)

The hours I've spent dreaming of
you!

She turns away, pops the key into her tunic breast
pocket. When she turns back to face him, her expression
is transformed into the knowing nightclub diva. The point
of her tongue circles her lips.

RITA

(sings softly)

Oh, oh, you rascal you!
Oh, what a man you turned in to,
What naughty things you'd like to do,
Oh, I didn't know you'd get that way!

As she sings, one-by-one, she undoes the silver buttons
of her tunic, doing a strip just for him.

INT. EAGLE-EYE'S OFFICE — EVENING

A havoc of scattered reports of infidelity, snaps of cheating wives, couples caught in flagrante. Outside the air-raid SIREN WAILS.

Roper stands surveying the room, which has been thoroughly done over, the desk drawers turned out, the filing cabinets emptied.

He stoops to pick up the photo of Rita from the mess on the floor, floats it back onto the desk.

From outside, the ECHOING CLUNK of the old service lift juddering into the start of its climb. Roper looks around, thinking fast. He crosses to the boxroom, slips in, closes the door.

IN THE BOXROOM: RED LIGHT

Roper throws off his outer clothes, grabs motorbike gear from the coatstand, starts changing at whirlwind speed — freezes as he hears the CRASH of the outer door thrown open.

IN THE OFFICE

Rockfist stands in the open doorway surveying the scene.

He kicks his way through the mess, throws back the inner door, peers into the shadows cast by the falling light. He sees nothing, and is about to go, when —

On the desk: Roper's bunch of keys.

ROCKFIST

(calling)

Coutts — come out or I'll cut the other fucking leg off.

He scans the room, sees the door to the boxroom. The only place his quarry can be is behind that door. He takes his razor from his pocket, flicks it open, moves slowly, stealthily across the littered boards — raises the CUT-THROAT in his right hand, rests his left on the doorknob. And ...

As the door is opened, Roper draws a DART from the board hanging on the inside, and FLINGS it, full force.

With a GREAT SQUEAL of pain and rage Rockfist staggers back, the feathered DART STUCK IN HIS EYEBALL.

INT. CARTERS PUB - NIGHT

A BARREL-HOUSE PIANO plays *Knees Up Mother Brown*. Around it a few plump women are prancing about, but mainly the pub is filled with hardened men, among them, the driver, Perc, and his mate.

Heads turn as the door opens and in steps OLD TOM, the doorman from Aloysius's chambers, a tweed coat over his uniform.

Several greet him respectfully; he silently nods in reply, starts working his round the various groups, whispering the same short message in the ears of each of the main men.

Slumped in a corner is a figure behind a newspaper with a morale boosting headline:

175 NAZI PLANES DOWN
RAF TRIUMPS IN AIR BATTLES

As the paper is lowered we see that it is Roper, an oilskin cap pulled down on his head, and the Belstaff motorbike jacket below.

He watches as Perc bends down and pulls out a long cricket bag from beneath the table. He and his mate go out. The other men, finish their pints; gradually all are moving out.

As Old Tom turns in Roper's direction, he, too, decides it is time to leave. Head down, on the pretext of pulling on his gauntlets, he turns to slip out a side door - and almost collides with a burly figure coming in.

BERTIE

Oi! Watch yerself!

He draws up short as he recognizes Roper from their confrontation at the lorry park. Roper raises one finger to his lips, looks him hard in the eye. Bertie diverts his gaze, shambles on past.

BERTIE

Evenin' Tom, what you having?

OLD TOM

Very kind. I'll partake of a
whiskey, if I might.

INT. HALL, RITA'S APARTMENT BLOCK - NIGHT

As the front door opens, flashes from the sky light up Rita's silhouette. She quickly steps in, closes the door behind her as quietly as she can manage.

The hall is lit only by a pale glow from a light below stairs. Rita slips off her clumpy uniform shoes, tiptoes up the long staircase.

As the swish and rustle disappears into the darkness, a figure emerges from below stairs - the Stoker. He creeps to the banister post, listens, before switching on his box torch and pointing the beam up the now deserted stairwell.

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT - CONTINUING

Rita comes in, makes her way to the bedroom, and switches on lights.

She looks around in despair at the shambles to which the room has been reduced. At her feet is a pile of her clothes in a tangle of coat hangers and bloody splinters.

She stoops to pick up an exquisite silk gown, then sees beneath - the pearl-handled Smith & Wesson .22.

EXT. BULLDOG VAN HIRE - NIGHT

Roper takes cover in the disused filling station and garage. He watches the men gathering outside the closed gates of the lorry park opposite.

Perc opens the cricket bag and takes out giant bolt-cutters. He and his mate set to using them on the chains locking the gates.

GALICK (V.O.)

They fake it up to look like a
break-in, so that when the lorries
are found abandoned the next day,
the owner can claim he knew nothing
about it.

The chains are cut, the gates pushed open, and the waiting men flood in. Roper dashes across the road, and joins the tail.

IN THE LORRY PARK

The men quickly disperse to the parked vehicles.

Roper runs to the blind side of one on the end, throws himself to the ground. He rolls underneath as feet come round the front to climb into the cab.

Engines are being cranked, lorries around the park starting up. The reflection from moving torch beams reveal Roper, beneath the vehicle, wedging his false leg between and the spare wheel and the underside of the tailgate.

The engine suddenly jumps into jittery life. Roper hammers on his knee to drive the leg home, and then, with his free leg and arms, hoists himself up. With a screech the lorry moves off.

BLACK

— sound of the engine traveling, and then —

FLASHES

Roper and Rita make love in the cheap hotel room.

The sea-green satin eiderdown slides to the ground, their near naked bodies on top, all their repressed desires and nervous energy set free.

BLACK

— sound of the lorry drawing up, others stopping — the dull thump of a body falling to the ground.

EXT/INT. GOODS DEPOT — NIGHT

Roper rolls out from under the lorry and into the shadows. His face is covered in oil and grime, the palm of one of his gauntlets smoking.

He looks around the railway goods yard, at the ramshackle silhouettes of various warehouses, service areas and offices. He moves quickly, with stealth towards what looks like a security post.

He crouches beneath a window, takes out a small flashlight from his pocket, raises himself to look over the ledge, and shines the light in.

INSIDE

In the torch beam, sit four uniformed night-watchmen bound to wooden chairs, gags tied loosely over their mouths.

GARLICK (V.O.)

You can bet your boots they'll have the night watchmen "*straightened*" – which means the very opposite. They're only too happy to sit it out till the morning for an extra week's pay.

Roper goes in, nods to the men.

ROPER

Evening.

They all mumble a muffled polite reply. He crosses to a telephone on a deep shelf, picks up the receiver and dials. He reads the location details from a framed notice on the wall above, and then his attention is caught by a poster of a derailed train with the slogan –

BEWARE
THE WALLS HAVE EARS

ROPER

(into telephone)

Good evening – D29, siding S1-207,
and – bring a flask will you?

INT. RITA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

Rita sits before the dressing table mirror, putting the finishing touches to her make-up, her glamour restored.

Finally, she pins a leopard skin pillbox hat to the side of her head, when – there is a RING at the doorbell.

She looks at the clock, wonders – the bell RINGS again, more insistently. She puts on her coat, looks at her reflection in the long mirror. Again, the bell RINGS, RINGS. She picks up a round leopard skin case, goes.

IN THE HALL

Rita puts on the lights, strolls calmly to the front door from which now comes THUNDEROUS BANGING.

ROCKFIST (O.S.)

Open this fucking door, Rita. I warn you, I am not in a good mood.

She rests down her case, opens the door to reveal – Rockfist, cotton wool and bandages over one eye, the other blood-shot red.

RITA

You always were a miserable sod, Rocky.

Before he can reply, a SHOT rings out, and the big man topples over.

Rita stands with the .22 held waist high, having shot at point-blank range. She waves the smoking barrel in the air, blows on the end, and puts it back in her pocket.

The Stoker gaping from his perch halfway up the stairs, turns in a panic, trips, crashes down the stairs.

Rita picks up her case, steps over Rockfist's body, and rings for the lift.

INT. WAREHOUSE, GOODS DEPOT – NIGHT

From the shadows of packing cases and pallets Roper watches the busy scene of men coming and going with trucks and handcarts moving goods to the queue of lorries at the loading bay.

To one side, Bobby is with Tiger Tim, watching as an outsize packing case is maneuver into position.

TIGER TIM

Brim full of pussies, that one.

BOBBY

Go on then, open her up.

Two men lever off the lid with warehouse irons.

TIGER TIM

We're talking the real McCoy here: tattoos on the skin.

Bobby puts his hand in and suddenly jumps back.

BOBBY

'Cor blimey!

He puts his hand in again and pulls out a black fox fur stole, complete with head and teeth, claws and bushy tail.

BOBBY (CONT.)

Gave me a bit of a shock he did.

The others all roar with laughter as Bobby drapes the stole around his shoulders. And, then, suddenly, from outside a voice over a loudhailer -

GARLICK (O.S.)

(into megaphone)

This is the Police. You are surrounded. All gates are closed.

BOBBY

It's that fucker Garlick and his flat-foot boys.

He darts to the loading bay, look out.

GALICK (O.S. CONT.)

You are under arrest. Put everything down where you are and come out with your hands up.

The voice is now louder to his ear. Loony Tunes and Tottenham Ted come up behind him.

BOBBY

(quietly)

He ain't goin' to take me in again. I've had enough of that.

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

Rita stands on a corner illuminated by the flashes and flares from above, the leopard skin pillbox hat on her head, the matching round case at her feet.

The aerial bombardment echoes from a distance. She paces, stamps her heels with impatience, and then, at last, sees a free cab. She pulls off one glove, and, with two fingers, makes a piercing whistle.

The cab pulls into the curb, and smartly the driver hops out, and around the bonnet to collect her bag. Already Rita has the passenger door open.

CABIE

Hey, aren't you ...?

RITA

A figment of your imagination,
fella. You need to get more sleep.

INT./EXT. WAREHOUSE, GOODS DEPOT - NIGHT

Tottenham Ted prises the top off another wooden crate. Inside are machine guns intended for the army. Loony Tunes dives in with glee.

LOONY TUNES

That's the business! Rat-tat-tat
guns. How d'you work 'em?

TOTTENHAM TED

Easy peasy. I'll show you 'ow to
take 'em apart, as well, if you
like.

LOONY TUNES

Never mind that. Just show us where
the bullets go?

BOBBY

That's it, boys. Get yerself well
tooled up.

Tiger Tim shakes his head, backs off.

TIGER TIM

That's goin' a bit far, that is. I
ain't having nothing to do with it.

BOBBY

You please yourself Tim. Every man
for 'imself, Just watch out old
Loony Tunes don't get you in the
back.

OUTSIDE THE GATES

The blackmarket crooks are trickling out, hands in the air, through the barbed wire chicane that has been erected across the yard entrance. Uniformed policemen are

handcuffing them and lining them up to be taken away in Black Marias.

Garlick stands watching, megaphone in hand, Blunt and Porter at his side.

GARLICK

Still only the tiddlers.

(He raises megaphone)

This is the Police. All gates are blocked. So, let's get this over with, shall we? Give yourselves up, and ...

He is answered with a burst of wild MACHINE-GUN FIRE. Everyone ducks and scrambles back.

GARLICK (CONT.)

That boy is testing my patience to the limit.

BLUNT

Shall I have a go, sir?

GARLICK

Don't be foolish, Blunt.

BLUNT

Best be prepared.

GARLICK

But no heroics: got that?

That's good enough for Blunt. He turns and waves to a uniformed officer who comes forward with a purple leather-bound box. He puts a chit on top, offers it to Blunt. Blunt signs the chit, and unlocks the box. Inside is a single revolver.

Another rally of MACHINE GUN-FIRE, bullets ricocheting in all directions. The night-watchmen all coming running through the chicane, as does Tiger Tim comes, blood oozing from a shoulder.

GARLICK

Well, well, Tiger Tim, looking a bit hot and bothered.

TIGER TIM

I had nothing to do with this, Guv.

GARLICK

Tell it to the judge.

TIGER TIM

Look – they winged me. Fucking lunatics.

GALICK

Didums. Gribble still in there, is he?

TIGER TIM

I only answer for me, meself, and ...

Before he can complete the sentence, there is the sound of a lorry over revving and crashing through the gears.

GARLICK

(shouts)

Everyone back! Take cover!

A flatbed lorry is being driven straight at the barricaded gates, Tottenham Ted at the wheel, and standing up on the back, FIRING THE MACHINE GUN over the cabin, Loony Tunes. Both men have tied handkerchiefs over their faces.

The vehicle crashes and crunches, drags the barricades with it a distance, before grinding to a halt in a tangle of barbed wire, wooden spars and steel spikes.

LOONY TUNES

(points at Garlick's car)

We're going to take that car. Get us out of 'ere, leave you to it. So, whoever got the keys better give 'em up, or you're all dead ducks – the whole fuckin' lot of you.

He swings the gun in an arc before a voice comes from behind him.

BLUNT

Here you go, Sunny Jim.

Loony tunes wheels round, the machine gun before him. He doesn't see, peeping just over the tailboard at his feet, Blunt aiming the revolver at point blank range. He shoots – straight at his groin.

Other policemen rush forward to grab him, and Tottenham Ted.

GARLICK

(to himself)

What is this country coming to?

And then, in the corner of his eye, something catches his attention. Above the track, a SIGNAL clangs down.

IN THE WAREHOUSE

Roper in the shadows, cocks his ear: from the distance, the CLICKETY-CLACK of a slow goods train approaching.

The place is near empty now: he breaks cover, lopes towards the rolling doors opening onto the track. The sound of the TRAIN GROWS LOUDER. He peers through a gap out onto the loading platform – but it is deserted.

OUTSIDE THE GATES

Garlick, Blunt, and Porter stand listening to the approaching TRAIN – GROWING LOUDER.

GARLICK

Time to break out the sausage rolls.

Porter reacts immediately, turns and strides to the passenger door of the black sedan. He gets in, and opens the glove compartment, to reveal – not meaty snacks, but – a MORSE SENDER.

BESIDE THE TRACK

The goods TRAIN APPROACHES the platform. Roper watches from the crack in the giant doors. And, then he hears FEET DOWN STEPS.

Bobby comes down the wooden steps from the signal box. Pauses a beat to adjust to the speed of the approaching train.

Roper catches sight of a dockers' hanging on a beam beside the door.

The train breaches the platform, it's long load slowly rolling through. Bobby moves towards the train –

From the gap in the doors Roper lunges out SWINGING THE HOOK down. It narrowly misses Bobby's shoulder, catches in the back of his jacket, rips through the material.

Bobby's momentum sends Roper crashing to the ground. Bobby looks round in shock, sees him, the hook still in his hand.

BOBBY

I said you need a good ticking off.

The train is rolling through.

BOBBY (CONT.)

Lucky for you I'm in a bit of a rush.

He turns, the back of his jacket rent in two, runs and jumps with agility onto the buffers of the tail truck.

— SOUND OF MORSE CODE —

— BILLOWING WHITE CLOUDS OF STEAM —

EXT. RAILWAY BRIDGE — NIGHT

As the steam clears, a military vehicle pulls up, the Polish troops, seen earlier, leap out. Two bring up a search light, another readies a marksman's rifle. Marek comes forward, and as the tail of the train clears the bridge, gives the order.

The searchlight is snapped on; the marksman takes aim.

ON THE TRAIN

Bobby looks up into the dazzling beam of light. Suddenly he is jolted with the impact of a single shot. The light goes out. He slumps and slithers from the back of the truck.

ON THE TRACK

Bobby comes to rest on his back. He blinks at the night sky, exhales and murmurs ...

BOBBY

Rita.

INT. PASSENGER STATION – NIGHT

Rita crosses the concourse as fast as her four-inch heels will carry her, to a corridor of battered left-luggage lockers.

She pulls off her glove to reveal the flat silver key held in her palm. She checks the number etched in the metal, finds the matching numbered locker.

With trembling fingers, slides in the key, turns the lock, opens the door ... inside is Ziggy's old music satchel.

She recognises it instantly, pulls it out, throws back the silver bar, opens the flap to find – a dog-eared sheath of music paper, on the cover page, a hand-written legend –

Rhapsody for Rita.

She rifles through the pages, but there is nothing there – nothing but pages and pages of penciled in music.

Over the Tannoy comes the station announcement for the departure of the night train.

She tosses the papers down, runs her fingers around the inside of the case – but there is nothing to be found.

With tears of rage, she flings it at the lockers, runs off towards the barrier.

Pages of notes flutter across the concourse behind her.

EXT. SEA FRONT – DAY

The cloudy sky, the grey sea, the shingle beach, the razor wire – and a little sea front shelter.

Mrs. Zigler comes along the deserted promenade with two young children of six to eight.

As she reaches the shelter she turns, her white cane comes to a stop on Roper's false leg.

MRS ZIGLER

Mr. Coutts?

ROPER
(he stands to her)

Yes.

MRS ZIGLER
The friend of a friend?

ROPER
I've traveled here without a pass
so you won't want to be seen with
me. I'll be brief.

He takes a thick Manila envelope from his pocket, presses
it into her hands.

ROPER (CONT.)
In the north there's a little town
beside a lake, not comparable with
the lakes in Austria, but still
quite beautiful in a modest way. On
the High Street is a bank, the
address is on the front of the
envelope - your son will soon be
able to read it to you. Inside are
details of a deposit of war bonds
in your name. When the conflict is
over, it should be enough for a
small house. I think it's what
Ziggy would have wanted.

MRS ZIGLER
But why? Why have you done this?

ROPER
When I was a kid I dreamed of my
Mum and Dad getting back together,
and us all living there. Of course,
it didn't happen. And you don't
have to stay there either. By then
you'll be able to go where you
please. But ... I'll think of you
there.

She runs her fingers over the thick envelope, shakes her
head, unable to take it in.

ROPER
Now, put that in your pocket, and
please move along, or someone might
take us for spies.

She suddenly turns, and to his surprise, extends a hand to his face, runs her fingertips over his features, ending with the lightest touch of his lips.

MRS ZIGLER

I'll remember you.

She gathers her children and goes off along the windswept front.

Roper sits down on the bench, lights a cigarette.

From the distance come two specks that turn into Spitfires, one with an engine trailing smoke, but for sure they will make it home now.

Roper is filled with hope.

END