



# A Season of Happiness

*nothing too serious*

Popcorn



P02-1

## MUSOS MUSES - ACT I



It might sound like money for nothing, but the life of a professional musician has never been easy. They have to go where the work is, often spending a night or two in one town before travelling on for the next gig. That could mean anything from a short bus journey to an overseas trip. Musos, however, take it in their stride. When they aren't delighting audiences, they seem able to find something amusing to make life more bearable. Here are some anecdotes passed down through the years, a few tit-bits to prove that, no matter how hard-going it got, there was always something, or someone, to smile about.

### Overture

#### Pitfall

It was a night like any other. The show was in progress. An artist on stage was entertaining the audience with a performance that required no orchestral accompaniment. So, while they waited for their next cue to start playing, the band in the pit carried on with their crosswords, swapping them around when they'd completed as much as they could of the one they were doing. Third trumpet turned to pass his over to Second and noticed an empty chair at the end of their row. "Where's Tommy, George?" he asked.

George frowned and looked around. He eventually spotted Tommy lying on the floor, his head at a strange angle propped against the radiator. "Down there," he said, "And out for the count, by the looks of it." Then he returned his attention to the crossword.

"He could be dead," said Third, rather concerned.

George thought about that for a moment, then shook his head. "Not Tommy - he's just drunk."

Second trumpet was still perturbed. "What should we do?"

"Only one thing we can do," replied George. "You take mine," he said, passing his music over, then reaching to take the sheets off Tommy's stand, "And I'll play first. We'll worry about Tommy in the interval."

## **Scene 1: Living In Digs**

### **House Pets**

The life of a touring musician is tough, especially when they take the family with them. Arriving in a new town, George and the rest of the band had their own agenda which centred on the venue, rehearsals and the forthcoming performance. In the meantime, his wife, Ivy, had to find somewhere for them to stay and would tromp the streets with a young daughter in tow and a baby son in a pram looking for a boarding house with a vacancy. Considering that the shows the band played for were often running during holiday periods, accommodation was like hens' teeth, so itinerants had to take what they could get.

The odd landlady might feel compassion for a harassed mother foot-sore and wilting on her doorstep, but most knew the power that they had over such unfortunates and weren't backward in wielding it. Their house had rules which they would deliver in a verbal barrage akin to a judge warning of dire consequences, should the defendant be found guilty; and in the event of the recipient being hard of hearing, there was a written version pinned to the wall by the front door, with copies in every room. Just in case a prospective lodger had any misgivings that they might not be well received, the word "Welcome" printed on the tatty coconut matting on the doorstep should have put their fears to rest.

Whether the room was to her liking or not, Ivy usually managed to secure a roof over their heads for the period of the stay. In one instance, a single night was too long. George returned home late after the show, by which time the children were asleep. This gave the parents some quality time before eventually turning in themselves, a practice not always as pleasurable as it might have seemed. Beds were often old and lumpy, certainly not conducive to relaxation, and if that wasn't enough to deter guests from extended stays, having to share with other more permanent residents made up for it. Nocturnal, they were, far smaller than Dracula, but just as voracious and caring naught for those they sunk their teeth into. George was, to say the least, miffed. On went the light, out came the shoe from under the offending bed, and whack, whack, whack went George. Following the enraged onslaught, the pattern on the wallpaper had acquired some new images, splattered remnants of bed-bugs which would bite no more, having gone to their maker. The Landlady presented herself next morning, ranting over the change in decor which was obviously not to her taste, and bemoaning the fate of her house-pets, all of which she probably knew by name. George's subsequent comments are unprintable.

## **Scene 2: Extended Stays**

### **The Chip Butty**

Needless to say, that particular boarding house was a one-night stand which would not be re-visited. But, in case the singular experience was too forgettable, there would be many more to come. One in particular was memorable for a very different reason. The stay was extended this time, and a routine was established. George would return in the evening after the show and Ivy was ready at a small gas-ring, generously and unusually provided for the convenience of guests. Occasionally, another member of the band would follow George in. That was okay - Ivy knew them all and got on well with most; and there were always plenty of potatoes. She simply peeled two more while the fryer was heating up. This was to cook their regular late-night supper - plain, common or garden chips, but tasty and definitely sought-after, judging by the number of freeloaders who had a habit of turning up, just on the off chance of a feed.

No doubt, the appetising aroma permeating the room might have drifted out through the door and up to the floor above. It was unlikely, however, to attract any hungry guests in the rooms below. All except for one who relied less on his nose than he did the clock. Ivy was expecting him and waited patiently with a knowing, benevolent smile. In moments, there was a gentle knock at the door. Standing on the threshold was Larry, a young and definitely-struggling actor of no repute whatever, hungry as usual, holding his calling cards, they being two slices of plain bread. I don't doubt that his taste buds would have been running riot as Ivy drained the chips and transformed his simple contribution into a glorious, good ol' chip butty. A meagre repast it may have seemed to many, but from the look in his eyes as he devoured it, Larry was partaking of a feast fit for King Lear.

Although she didn't know it at the time, Ivy had not only helped save yet another entertainer from starvation, but had also done the world in general a big favour. Young Larry, was not only destined to make a name for himself, but was later knighted and eventually became Lord Laurence Olivier.

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