

Down Stepney Way

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A Musical Play

by David Barrett

Additional lyrics by Mac Brown

The Eastenders:

Tommy Ducket	
Alfie Tapp	
Bill Garnett	landlord of the bull
Harry Wilmot	Jessie's boyfriend
Ted Ducket	Tommy and Alice's dad
Ethel Ducket	his wife
Jessica	Harry's girl
Annie	
Alice Ducket	Tommy's sister
Molly	A friend of Alice and Mary
Sidney	Molly's little brother
Mary Penny	Alice's best friend
Frank	regular soldier, Alice's boyfriend
Dick Robinson	A spiv
Arthur Robinson	A spiv, Dick's brother
Mrs Riley	runs day centre, a former market trader
Old Mother Brown	cockney matron
George Witherspoon	A cockney rogue

The Westenders:

Earl of Gresham	William's father
Lady Gresham	William's mother
Lord William	Heir to the title
The Hon. Edward	His brother
Charles Rotherfield	A rich banker's son
Percival Molyneux	William's naive cousin
Horatio Clarendon	A friend of the family
Lady Sofia	William's sister
Emma Copperfield	Sofia's friend
Maria Sackville	Ugly, snooty cow. engaged to William
Antoinette, Genevieve, Elizabeth, Charity Sykes Roberts	Sofia and Emma's friends Manservant at the Carlton Club Butler

Policeman
Producer
2 Talent Scouts
3 Comedians
Member in the club
Major Potter
Voice in the Street
Maurice
Pierre
Maitre D

Act I, Scene 1 In the market in Stepney Way

SONG 1 Down Stepney Way CD1 Track 1

Down the East End on a Friday night with all me mates,
We love East London, we have so much fun it drives us crazy.
Standing on the corner, eyeing the girls,
Bowling down the high street without a care, 'cos
Dear old Stepney, that's the place I love to be.

Second part:

Boom, boom, boom, boom etc (for 8 bars) Strolling down the streets of Stepney.
Boom, boom, boom, boom etc (for 8 bars) Strolling down the streets of Stepney.

First part:

Walking the beat, down Stepney way,
Life is a treat, down Stepney Way,
Whistling a tune, under the moon as I go strolling down the streets of Stepney.

See an old dame across the street,
See an old flame I'd like to meet,
Waltzing along, singing a song as I go strolling down the streets of Stepney.

And if you're down, when life gets tough,
You're luck's run out, you've had enough,
With all your woes, you're not alone when you go strolling down the streets of Stepney.

And when the bailiffs come around,
Don't hide your face and go to ground,
Just bowl along and join our song as we go strolling down the streets of Stepney.

Down the arches cuddling with a luvly gal by moonlight,
Down our local, you can 'ear us sing from Clapham Common,
We're the sort of folks you'd trust with your life,
If you've got some nouse you'll lock up your wife. Oi!
Dear old Stepney, that's the place I love to be.

During the song a small boy repeatedly steals vegetables from the market stalls. At the end of the song he is spotted by a stallholder who calls for the policeman, who was in the song.

MRS RILEY (*Blowing a whistle*) Oi, stop, thief! Stop that boy, won't you!

OTHERS Thief, stop thief! (*and other exclamations.*)

(Tommy leaps up athletically from a squatting position and apprehends the offender by his braces. The boy struggles wildly.)

SIDNEY Get off me you brute, I'll have the law on yer, yer bully.

(Much laughter from the crowd. Mrs Riley catches up, out of breath.)

MRS RILEY Yer little hooligan, what do you think you're doing, pinchin' them veggies.

(Pulls Sidney's ear)

SIDNEY What veggies? (*The vegetables fall to the ground from under his shirt*)

I'm sorry, Misses, yer see, we ain't got nuffink to eat in our 'ouse, we're that skint. I ain't 'ad no meat since nineteen thirty-eight. Me an' me sister Molly

an' me Gran an' me Mam. Me dad's gawn an' joined the blinkin' army ain't he, me mum says just to spite 'er an' all

(All this is becoming more and more breathless.)

TOMMY All right little man, we're not gonna 'urt yer...we're yer friends 'ere.

SIDNEY She ain't no friend of mine, she ain't.
(Points at Mrs Riley and scowls.)

TOMMY She ain't gonna call a copper. 'Ave no fear.

MRS RILEY No? Says who?

TOMMY Says I, Tommy Ducket, and y'ain't gonna argue with me are yer, Mrs Riley?
(Turning to Sidney.)
Yer see, she's a good sort Mrs Riley - got an 'cart of gold - 'er bark's worse'n 'er bite - really.
(Sidney looks unconvinced. Mrs Riley barks and makes as if to bite him. He runs around behind Tommy for cover.)
The truth is sunshine, she's known yer muvver since she was in nappies and she's known me since I cut me first tooth....

ALFIE Fact is mate, she knows every living soul in this part of London, there ain't nuffink goes on 'ere without Mrs Riley knowing. Ain't that right Mrs R?

MRS RILEY Too right Alfie me boy, too right. I see me reputation goes before me.
(She shrugs and goes back to her shopping at the stall.)

SIDNEY But Tommy, if you ain't stepped in she'd 'ave called a copper, I know she would've.

TOMMY *(Putting his arm around Sidney.)*
No chance... she just wanted to teach you a lesson that's all.

ALFIE That one'll go down in the cockney hall of fame, she will, yer can bet yer life on it.
(Molly, Alice and Mary come out of the crowd)

MOLLY 'Ere, what's this? Getting yourself into trouble again. *(Grabs Sidney's ear.)*

SIDNEY Aah, let go of me you stupid cow!

ALFIE Lay off of 'im Molly 'e ain't done no 'arm.

MOLLY Nah? Well, we'll see what our old man 'as to say about this. He's comin' 'ome on leave today.
(Molly drags Sidney off moaning.)

TOMMY Go with her Alice, make her see sense, won't yer.

ALICE Sure, Tommy, I'll do me best. *(She follows Molly off.)*

TOMMY That's my little sister, always lookin' out for others is Alice.

ALFIE Hold on a mo' look who's 'ere, them fly be nights Dick and Arthur Robinson. You can bet them spivs're up to no good, They can smell trouble ten mile off.
(Enter Arthur and Dick Robinson, the local spivs. They put a suitcase they are carrying onto an empty stall, open it and begin to make a display of their merchandise. The girls gasp as they see perfume, stockings etc.)

DICK Top of the morning to you ladies and gents. Say, what're you all so miserable about. Look, you'll cheer up when you see what we've got to offer.

MARY We ain't gonna buy your hot property, we don't wanna get done for 'andling.

ARTHUR *(Acting la-di-da.)* My goodness me did you hear that Richard? I believe this lady's accusing us of impropriety.

DICK Accusing? Two honest fellows such as ourselves? *(Changes his tone.)*
You've got a cheek you 'ave. Mary, Mary quite contrary. You hypocrite!

ARTHUR *(Closing in.)* Little Miss Righteous! *(Lifts her skirt slightly.)* Well what have we here? Nylons? Get these at Woolworths did we? These look just like the ones we recentlyacquired from the States. *(They circle around her.)*

DICK And what a lovely ring. Is it new? These things are 'ard to come by in

wartime yer know. And, well I never, I recognise that scent; definitely from across the channel. (*Arthur mockingly takes a long sniff. Pretends to faint.*)

ARTHUR From gaie Paris, if I'm not mistaken.
(*Mary is becoming more and more upset and is, by now, close to tears.*)

MARY So what! A girl's gotta make herself respectable ain't she? Even in times like these. I don't wanna be left on the shelf like me Aunt Florence. Proper old spinster she is and she's only thirty-five. (*Starts to cry.*)
(*Alfie puts his arm around her but she shrugs him off and retreats, snuffling.*)

ALFIE Just leave the girl alone you rogues; stop pickin' on 'er.

DICK We was just makin' a point, me old china. We provide a service and you folks benefit. That way everyone's happy.

ALFIE And I ain't your old china, so don't call me that. I'm careful how I choose me friends.

DICK Have it your way, suits me fine. Come on Arthur, business calls.
(*Goes to his stall and starts his sales talk to some girls, who crowd around. Holds up ear-rings, negligees etc.*)
Enter Harry with Jessie on his arm and Frank following with Alice in tow. Frank is dressed in the uniform of a private)

TOMMY Watcher me old tin plates. Harry, how yer been doin', Ain't seen yer for yonks.

HARRY Oh, I ain't doin' so bad. Been workin' the night shift at the East India docks. Been a whole lot of containers in for unloading this last week
(*Looking at Robinson's stall.*) Well can you believe it?

JESSIE Believe what 'Arry? What is it?

HARRY There ain't no market stall in the whole of the East End wiv' nylons on offer. In fact there's been only one shipment of 'em in the last two months.

JESSIE Well, what of it?

HARRY Well, 'ow comes them Robinson boys 'as got nylons on their stall.

ALICE P'raps they bought 'em, legit like.

HARRY P'raps Jessie here is the next queen of England. (*Jessie looks smug.*)
You of yer rocker, Alice? They're alf inched ain't they. Ain't you lot twigged that yet. (*They stare in silence like naughty school children.*)
That's the trouble with war.....it brings out the worst in people. Look at you lot: East Enders, the most kindest-'eartedest, most generous peoples in the 'ole world. Do anyfink for anybody yer would. (*Alice starts to sniffle. The market quietens as people listen to Harry.*)
But war changes people ... brings out the worst in 'em. Take them Robinsons for example; why ain't they fighting for England like our Frank 'ere? I'll tell yer why not, 'cos there ain't no money in it that's why. What's 'appened to yer cockney spirit you've lost it, all of you. You're Jack Frost. (*Silence.*)

TOMMY Yer know somefink 'Arry? I fink you're right. We all need to lighten up and loosen up. So there's a war on. So what? We Londoners ain't never let little things like wars get us down before. We saw off old Boney at Waterloo and Kaiser Bill was no match for us. And why not? We 'ad cockney spirit! That's why not! We gotta rediscover the old cockney spirit.

ANNIE Me old man says Cockney spirit can be found in a clear round bottle.

ALFIE Wrong sort of spirit, Annie. We mean that esoteric, abstract, ephemeral state-an aura of camaraderie and bonhomie!

JESSIE Don't know about an ephemeral state, sounds like an inebriated state to me.

FRANK Elephant's trunk, yer mean!

TOMMY (*Emphatically*) Got it!

ANNIE What've yer got, Tommy.

TOMMY The Bull, of course. The Bull Tavern. Where's old Bill, Bill Garnet, the landlord.

ALICE He's over there at Mrs Riley's stall, repairing her canvas awning, but what's up Tommy, won't yer tell us?
(They all call Bill over.)

BILL Well, well you are excitable, you kids. What can I do for you: an engagement party, a stag night, candlelit dinner for two, a wedding reception?

MARY Ooh yes, can I have all four please, but not necessarily in that order!

ALICE Shut up Mary, this is serious.

TOMMY 'Ow long 'ave you been landlord, at the Bull Tavern?

BILL Let me see now: I left Mile End in nineteen, spent four years in the army so twenty-three, I think. Yes, that'd be right. I came 'ere in nineteen twenty-three.

TOMMY And Thursday nights, Bill, tell us about Thursday nights.

BILL Thursdays was always the night for a sing-a-long. All the local folk would meet for a knees up and a ding-dong at the Bull.

ALFIE I got yer, Tommy. You think we should revive the old tradition, for the sake of morale. Brilliant idea, I think we should.
(All chip in with comments of approval.)

TOMMY Well that's it settled then. Thursday night it is....if that's alright with you Mr Garnett.

BILL Young man, it will be my pleasure... *(aside)* and very good for business.
(All cheer then slowly drift back to their business in the market.)

ALICE But Tommy, you've forgotten the A.F.S. training; that's on Thursdays isn't it?
(Tommy doesn't hear.)

FRANK Don't worry Alice; Tommy's training finishes at eight, we'll start the ding-dong at eight-thirty.
(Mary has been listening in and interrupts.)

MARY What's all this, training? A.F.S.?

ANNIE Sounds like Tommy's training to be a secret agent.

FRANK Don't be melodramatic, Annie. A.F.S. stands for Auxiliary Fire Service. Alfie and Tommy have been training for months now as volunteer firemen. Soon they'll be allowed out on calls.

ANNIE Cor, Frank, that sounds exciting. Do they get to wear a uniform?

FRANK Well, yes, I suppose they do.

TOMMY What's this, Frank, are you broadcasting our war effort to the world?

ALFIE Well, just you remember, young Annie, that this job may not turn out to be as glamorous as you think. We've been used to a quiet life in this 'phoney war' ain't we. Well, I have a hunch things are about to change around here.

TOMMY Those idiots in bomber command really screwed things up for us in August.

ANNIE What happened? Was it someone's birthday?

ALICE Don't be daft, Annie. You're not stupid, surely you remember them Gerry bombs, they made enough noise.

ANNIE Oh my Gawd, you mean....

ALICE That's right, August 25th, the British bombing raid on Berlin, in retaliation for a accidental Nazi raid on the East End. Nothin' like stirring up a hornets' nest.

ALFIE The men from the ministry say that was just the beginning. Here in Stepney we are so close to the docks that we are bound to have a rough ride.

ANNIE Oh, Tommy, I don't ever want anything to happen to you.

TOMMY Don't you worry your silly head, princess, we'll be just fine.
(Gives her a hug. Slight embarrassed pause.)
Well come on then, we've got plans to make if we are to be ready for the

ALFIE Thursday ding-dong. We can't stand around rabbiting all day.
 Come on girls and boys, let's get this market place cleared up.

Reprise Song 1, Verse 4 CD1 Track 14

Down the arches cuddling with a louverly gal by moonlight,
Down our local, you can 'ear us sing from Clapham Common,
We're the sort of folks you'd trust with your life,
If you've got some nouse you'll lock up your wife. Oi!
Dear old Stepney, that's the place I love to be.

End of scene