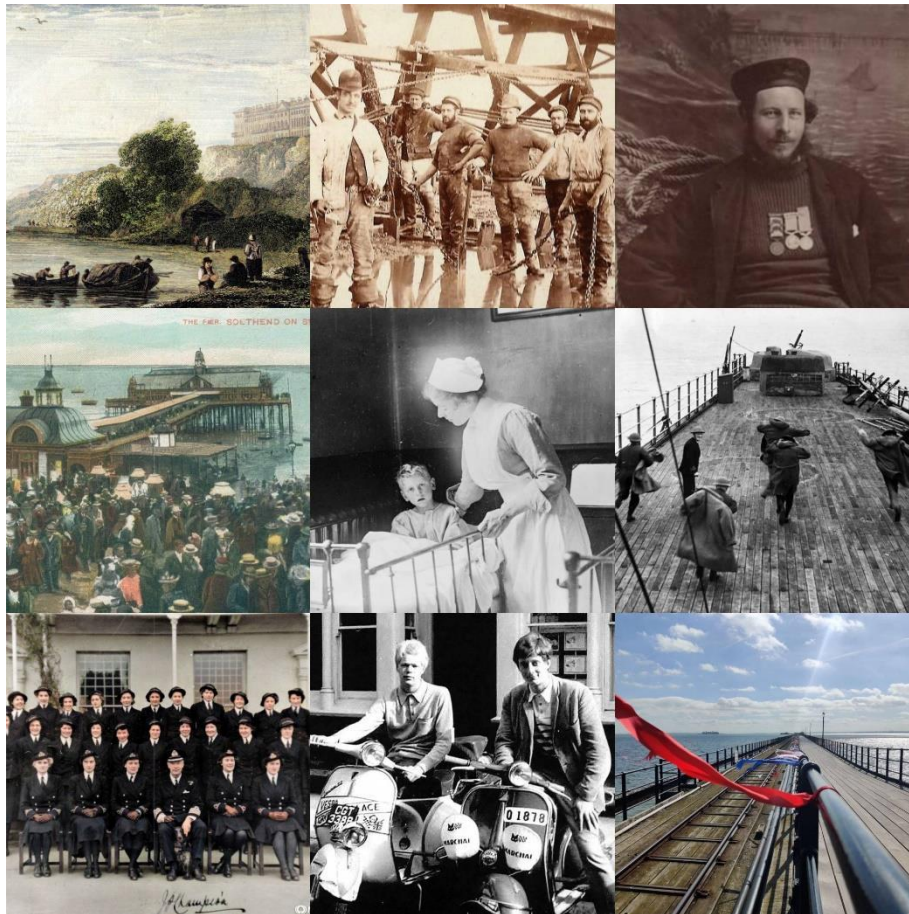




# The City That Walks on Water

## The Consultation



Written By  
**Richard Kurti, Samantha Lierens**  
**Alastair Deacon, Michael Deacon, Beth Hooper**

**September 2023**



## The Consultation

**The scene opens with a raised step and a lectern centre stage. Officer Bosworth enters the stage and stands on the step.**

**OFFICER Bosworth:** Hello and welcome (**nervously and a bit too quietly**) thank you so much for coming to our consultation about the future of Southend Pier. We're very sorry that this is on such short notice but with the new regulations that have been brought in...

**The audience obviously don't hear and keep on talking and it is only when the COUNCILLOR steps forward with a foghorn that he grabs their attention.**

**COUNCILLOR Midas** – Now then, now then ladies and gentlemen, lets get this show on the road or on the river! Ha Ha Ha. Thank you OFFICER Bosworth I'll take it from here.

**COUNCILLOR:** Welcome to what Southend Authority does best – listens to its residents and not just at election time! For any of you who might not know who I am – I am Richard Midas, your elected representative for Southend's Alternative Authority. (**He pauses dramatically**)

We believe in you – the people of Southend. We believe in the vision inside of you. How could we not? You're part of a city now – brimming with confidence and proud of your newfound status.

You're part of something magical and beautiful – the future!

An opportunity has arisen. A great, great opportunity and even better it saves the Authority money.

If it was down to me, I'd just sign on the dotted line and get on with it but OFFICER Bosworth here tells me that we can't just act, get to it and snap this offer up – no, we have to ask you first.

I did say to her if that as I am one of your elected officials you had already resoundingly decided I was in charge, but she insisted on this formality, so here we are. I don't want to waste your time. I know you are all busy people and don't have time to waste on theatrics or anything like that, so I'll crack on.



**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Actually, Cllr – I do need to explain some of the rules-

**COUNCILLOR:** Rules. Who needs them? It is all very simple. Even he/she **(points at the youngest or oldest person in the crowd)** can work this out.

We're drowning in a past we can't afford. Here is a prime example of it – the oddest real estate in the.

What's the point of it? It'll be under water if all the warnings about sea levels are true. A defunct platform built to bring in day-trippers, now known as Southend Pier, officially the longest pleasure pier in the world, should be. We need a new vision to match the greatness of our city!

**HAWKER:** Shame on you! Destroying the town!

**COUNCILLOR:** You all know that the Authority is only acting in your best interests.

**HAWKER:** Best interests! Don't make me laugh!

**COUNCILLOR:** Four million pounds a year! That's what the pier is costing you, four million pounds.

You want us to care and provide for our community and to do that I'm afraid we need to accept when something is of the past. Who decides what heritage is – the people do! And who is so honoured to represent you – I am!

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Um – that's true but this is supposed to be a transparent consultation, or the Local Government Association won't-

**COUNCILLOR:** **(waves her away)**

Why keep pumping money into something that was a ridiculous idea in the first place? Your money should be spent on you. Fortunately, today, I Richard Midas – have come up with the perfect solution.

I am so proud to be introducing the future of Southend Pier which I absolutely believe should return to being in private hands.

After all, that's where it started! Then, no longer will we be forking out huge swathes of cash to beat back the sea.



If we'd only had this foresight to actually sell the Kursaal it would be private apartments already.

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Councillor Midas! This is no way to- I'm afraid I must insist that you give me the microphone.

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Um...right. So, this is a consultation and we have invited everyone in Southend to take part. It has been proposed that the sale of Southend Pier would be beneficial to Southend Alternative Authority finances, and we are here to discuss with our community what you want us to do.

It is true that the Pier might need a little work – we had some problems with the company that was set to do the rebuild – and the trains – well, let's not mention those.

Even though this consultation was set in motion at very short notice, **(she dares to look a little angrily at the Cllr)** it must be done right, and other bidders have been chosen by the Councillor who is the portfolio holder for Improving Southend. I must admit that not all of them are entirely reasonable but-

**COUNCILLOR:** Now, now, OFFICER Jobsworth – you know you are already under review. You don't even live in Southend! Unlike myself, who owns 4 rental properties in the area.

But you are right – it is better to be thorough – no one likes court cases after the event!

Since we are here today to decide whether we sell or lease our greatest white elephant let me introduce you to our first bidder!

**ENTREPRENEUR ROLLERCOASTER #1: (flamboyant salesman)** Forget everything you've heard! Forget the merchants of doom and gloom! This pier is a Great Opportunity!

With a bit of love and a lot of investment, it can become the beating heart of our city once again.

What does everyone remember from their childhood? Candyfloss bigger than



your head. Sucking on a giant stick of rock. Screaming on the world's best roller-coasters! Ah, the joy of screaming.

Which is why my consortium will build the biggest roller-coaster ever imagined at the end of this great pier.

Soaring high into the sky and plunging down towards the sea, the Beast from the East will be like no other ride in the world. If we build it, they will come.

**COUNCILLOR:** So, the question is how much will you pay us for it?

**ENTREPRENEUR ROLLERCOASTER #1** Pay – we were told that you'd give it to us-

**COUNCILLOR:** Give?

**ENTREPRENEUR RC #1:** That's what the officers told us.

**COUNCILLOR :** Hmn...well, let's talk numbers later. Ah – here's a fine upstanding looking businessman. I've heard great things about you and your company. Tell us more, would you?

**ENTREPRENEUR SCRAP #2:** Our proposition is to gently dismantle the pier, reuse the valuable materials and leave a peaceful waterfront landscape. We love the Pier and for that very reason, we'll pay to take it over and free the sea for you as a generous gift to Southend.

We'll give the space back to the fishermen and the tankers.

Did I mention that we'll pay you?

Think of the extra sparkling water and the money we can provide.

**HAWKER:** What about the RNLI? Busiest station in the country, isn't it? How are they going to be able to save people if there's no pier?

**ENTREPRENEUR SCRAP #2:** They can run from the land end – we'll also offer them a generous contribution to their funds.

After all, they're not a real service, not like the police or fire or ambulance, are they? It's all run by volunteers.



I mean if politicians don't think it is worth funding – then it probably isn't.

**HAWKER:** I've heard everything now.

**OFFICER Bosworth:** Trust me, you really haven't.

**COUNCILLOR:** Could you go and get that gentleman's opinions at the other end of the Pier?

Now, oh yes, so, tell me – what is your great offer to the people of Southend?

**ENTREPRENEUR VIKING BURIAL #3:** A retirement home with a twist that you'll never see coming!

**OFFICER BOSWORTH** makes a noise like despair. **The COUNCILLOR** looks amused.

**ENTREPRENEUR VB #3:** A retirement home built at the end of the pier, with the most beautiful views across the estuary. After a lifetime of hard work, our guests can sit back and watch the boats go by, the sun rise and set... and when their time is up, we simply push a button on their armchair, a hatch opens up and the residents are sent down a slide for burial at sea. What a way to go!

**ENTREPRENEUR SUSHI BAR #4: (scathing)** A pier for the old and the dead?

**ENTREPRENEUR VB #3:** Our Premium Clients will be able to upgrade to a full Viking funeral.

We've bought the boat and we have an archer who can stand by with the flaming arrows.

Off the body will float and for an extra cost, you can shoot the flaming arrows yourself!

**ENTREPRENEUR SUSHI BAR #4:** Who cares about Generation Grey! What this pier needs is young people, full of energy and life wanting to party on it!

**ENTREPRENEUR SCRAP #2:** And why would they want to visit a creaking old pier?



**ENTREPRENEUR SUSHI BAR #4:** Because what I see here is not a pile of rotting wood, what I see is the World's Longest Sushi Bar.

A conveyor belt of the finest cuisine stretching a mile and a third, attracting the young and the beautiful.

Drinking hot sake, exchanging steamy glances. Then as the sun sets and the music starts, the whole pier turns into one big Instagram moment!

**ENTREPRENEUR #4:** Can you imagine how Tik-Tok will blow up for this?

**Indignantly, OFFICER BOSWORTH retrieves the air-horn and restores order.**

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** There's one more bid – let them speak.

**ENTREPRENEUR #5:** So we are here to offer a truly spiritual transformation to Southend Pier, because no city is a city really without a cathedral.

We propose that we build the world's first Ca-sea-dral in the middle of the Thames.

Our church has already asked the children to put together some designs and here – we have the option of a place of worship worthy of Southend.

It's beautiful – it's blocky, it's green, the Minecraft Ca-sea-dral.

**OFFICER BOSWORTH looks like she's going to cry.**  
**The COUNCILLOR stands up.**

**COUNCILLOR:** This consultation is a disgrace. You talked to me of standards, of following the rules.

I mean who in their right mind would want to send a loving relative on a boat into the shipping lane with actors dressed as Vikings?

Who in their right mind eats raw fish willingly?

And to propose a church in the style of a children's computer game?!



I stood up for you. I told the investigators that I thought you deserved one more chance but no, you have let us all down. This is not a consultation – this is a shambles!

I propose we move straight to Bid 2 which is the only viable option and just accept that so we can move onto contracts-

**But before OFFICER BOSWORTH can react - FX: Lightning and thunder echoes through the space. All the actors FREEZE, as if held in a trance. A lone figure mysteriously appears: the SPIRIT OF THE PIER.**

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER:** Home very not sweet home!

I thought when Southend got the City status there might be some improvements, but oh no, here I am again having to fight for my survival.

I'm old, y'know – not that anyone understands respect these days.

**She wanders around the frozen actors as she speaks.**

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER:** Nothing lasts forever, does it? Maybe he's right **(indicates the COUNCILLOR and the ENTREPRENEUR #2)** you should cash in quick.

If she's my defence, **(OFFICER BOSWORTH)** I'm not sure if I've got any hope. She looks like she wouldn't say boo to a goose.

How about you lot? **(talks direct to the Audience)** Ready to at least let me have my say? I hope so.

I'm a landmark that you've all taken for granted. I'm so much part of you you think I'll always be there.

People like you built me in 1830 and now all he wants you to see is the rust and rot. But once I was a dream.

Ah that was glorious! I stood proud and defiant during WW2 as the most ridiculous Naval Battle Station during wars that changed history, and many of you have walked on me happy to be alive.





History. If it is everything, how can it be boring? And how can this miracle that walks on water be both an icon and a waste of space? Do you know how hard it is to keep together when a ship cracks through you or someone pours fire onto wood and iron? Oh I've come back from death and disaster, bombs, Russian Tankers and lack of interest.

And who are you? Are you a community proud to live here? Or are you just a set of individuals who thinks it is down to everyone else to get on with the job of serving you?

I still have a few friends, I know.

There are those of you who work in the Museum or those of you keeping me whole. There are still those of you who hop skip and jump to get to the end.

But are the rest of you really going to let profit be the only thing that represents value?

**FX: lightning cracks and thunder rolls.**

**Councillor Midas, Officer Bosworth and the ENTREPRENURs leave the stage noisily.**

I'm taking over this consultation for now. Before you choose to take the easy path I want you to see how of those in our past made this present you're now standing in.

If, at the end, you want more money and less community – then I'll start to disappear into the sea when it calls me. After all, I am very old. Maybe it is time for me to let the elements claim this miracle if it no longer inspires you.

**Spirit of the Pier: GO, hear my story.**



## **The Cocklers**

**As the audience arrives, a Mother (ANN) and Daughter (MARY) are digging for cockles using traditional tools. ANN uses a hook and rake, scoops the catch into nets, which MARY pours into two baskets slung across her shoulders on a yoke.**

**ANN sings a traditional folk song as she works:**

**ANN (singing)**

As I walked out one May morning  
down by the riverside,  
there I beheld a bold fisherman  
come a-rowing with the tide  
come a-rowing with the tide  
there I beheld a bold fisherman  
come a-rowing with the tide.

**But now we realise that while ANN is hard at work, MARY is just daydreaming and lagging behind.**

**ANN (singing)**

Good morning to you bold fisherman  
how came you fishing here I came here a fishing for your sweet sake  
all on this river clear

**As she sings, she walks back to MARY and waves a hand in front of her eyes, trying to get her attention. But MARY is a thousand miles away, a dreamy smile on her face.**



**ANN:** MORNING!

**MARY** nearly jumps out of her skin.

**MARY:** What's goin' on?

**ANN:** Nothin' by the look of it. Get a shimmy on! There's still a mile of sand to cover before the tide comes in. **MARY:** Right.

**She starts to empty nets into the baskets, but it's clear her mind is elsewhere.**

**ANN:** Anyone'd think you were in love.

**MARY:** (defensive) What? Me? In love? No. No! Why would you say that? Course not. Never. In love. As if. No, no, no.

**ANN:** Oh Lord.

**MARY** tries to act innocent, but **ANN** is studying her.

**MARY:** (singing)

I came here a fishing for your  
sweet sake  
all on this river clear.

**ANN:** Who is he then?



**MARY knows it's useless to try and lie to her mum.**

**MARY:** Only the most handsome boy in the world.

**ANN:** Not from round here, then. **MARY:** From heaven, more like. He wore a fine suit, and had such a bold look about him.

**ANN:** Where did you meet him?

**MARY:** Oh, I haven't spoken to him. Don't be daft. **ANN:** Don't you think you're getting ahead of yourself?

**MARY:** I've seen him, walking along the shore... looking into the sunrise... like an angel.

**ANN:** (out of patience) Enough of this nonsense. Time you learned the rake.

**MARY:** I don't mind carrying.

**She takes the yoke from around MARY's neck and gives her a hand rake instead.**

**ANN:** No. Now watch me. Not too deep, mind, or you'll never pull it through the sand. You want to get just beneath the surface... yes... you've got a good touch.

**As they all work, they start singing again.**

**ANN & MARY** (singing)



He lashed his boat unto a stake  
and to this lady went  
he took her by the lily-white hand  
which was his full intent.

**A young SURVEYOR strides into the scene carrying a theodolite bag and tripod over his shoulder.**

**Immediately she sees him, MARY stops work - we can see from her adoring gaze that this is the young man she was talking about. But the SURVEYOR is oblivious to the cocklers. He tramps right into the middle of where they're working and plonks down his tripod.**

**ANN:** (Glares) Excuse me! **SURVEYOR:** (startled) What? Oh, don't mind me. **It's clear from his accent that he isn't a local. He starts to calibrate his theodolite.**

**ANN:** Some of us are working.

**SURVEYOR:** Yes, I am.

**ANN:** Working here.

**SURVEYOR:** Can't you just move to a different bit of mud or something?

**ANN:** We've been working this bank for six generations. Not going to change it for some Londoner.



**SURVEYOR:** Well...

**He gets busy taking some readings.**

**SURVEYOR:** This is very important. So maybe you could just... take the day off, or something.

**ANN:** Day off?! Take the day off?!

**MARY:** Calm down now, Mother.      **ANN:** No! I won't calm down! We don't get no days off here!

**MARY:** He didn't mean-

**ANN:** You got no rights comin' down here, tellin' us what to do! Bossin' us around. These are our sandbanks. So you can bugger off back to London!

**SURVEYOR:** No need to be so touchy.

**ANN:** There's every need!

**SURVEYOR:** And anyway, you'll have to get used to change now.

**ANN& MARY:** Why?

**SURVEYOR:** Because this is the Age of Progress.

**ANN:** No-one told us nothing about no Age of Progress.

**SURVEYOR:** I just did.



**ANN:** So what does it mean?

**MARY:** Is it where dreams come true?

**SURVEYOR:** Oh yes. Progress is going to transform your little fishing village.

**MARY:** Really?

**ANN:** We don't want it transformed.

**MARY:** I do.

**ANN:** Quiet, now.

**SURVEYOR:** Don't tell me you like living in a hovel?

**ANN:** It's time you left. Go on, bugger off! **She tries to grab the theodolite but the SURVEYOR pushes her away.**

**SURVEYOR:** I'm not going anywhere. The decision's been made. The pier's happening whether you like it or not.

**ANN:** Pier?

**MARY:** What you talkin' about?

**SURVEYOR:** Stretching out into the sea. Striding over the water on hundreds of iron legs. It'll be a wondrous feat of engineering, with amusement arcades and tea rooms, dance halls and promenades. Pleasure boats and day-trippers will come from miles around. It will be a city that walks on water!



**MARY** is captivated by his vision.

**MARY:** (dreamy) A city that walks on water. Imagine that.

**SURVEYOR:** (to **MARY**) You'll be able to go on it as well. If you pay the entrance fee.

**But ANN steps between them.**

**ANN:** So what's in it for us?

**SURVEYOR:** What do you mean?

**ANN:** Cockles don't like piers.

**SURVEYOR:** How do you know? Have you asked them? **ANN:** Piers upset the currents. Change the sands. Noise and people and day-trippers...they ruin the sea.

**The SURVEYOR carries on taking measurements.**

**SURVEYOR:** There's more important things than cockles.

**But ANN stands directly in front of the theodolite.**

**ANN:** Not to us.

**MARY tries to defuse the tension by peeling the SURVEYOR away.**

**MARY:** Here, look...





**She scoops some fresh cockles into a pot and offers them to him.**

**MARY** (CONT'D) See how fresh they are.

**The SURVEYOR looks at the cockles with disgust. SURVEYOR:** Really? It looks like something you might find in your handkerchief.

**MARY:** Best seafood for miles around. Why don't you let me show you?

**She moves around him flirtatiously.**

**MARY** (CONT'D): I could take you wading, show you how the tides move. It's lovely when the sun's setting. Like a dream. You'll see it's perfect here the way it is. We don't need a pier.

**The SURVEYOR disentangles himself.**

**SURVEYOR:** All I see is mud. And there's nothing beautiful about mud.

**MARY is cut by his words. MARY:** No need to be like that. **SURVEYOR:** I wouldn't expect people like you to understand the importance of what I'm doing.

**ANN:** Enough!

**She grabs the theodolite and tripod.**



**SURVEYOR:** Leave that alone!

**ANN:** We don't want you here.

**SURVEYOR:** It's scientific equipment!

**ANN:** You can take yer science and yer progress and stick it where the sun don't shine!

**They wrestle over the equipment.**

**SURVEYOR:** You ignorant Luddite!

**ANN:** Toffee nosed Londoner! Bugger off!

**SURVEYOR:** Or what?

**ANN(ominous):** I got four brothers! We've seen off worse than you.

**SURVEYOR:** Well I've got the magistrates.

**ANN:** These are our sands! You can't touch 'em!

**SURVEYOR:** There's an Act of Parliament says otherwise. **ANN:** (stunned)  
What?

**SURVEYOR:** The law's on my side now. The decision's been made. There's nothing you can do about it. **ANN:** (stunned) You can't take the sands away from us.



**The SURVEYOR sighs and turns to MARY.**

**SURVEYOR:** Can't you can talk to her? Explain what's going on?

**MARY:** Oh I know exactly what's going on.

**She stands shoulder to shoulder with her Mother.**

**MARY (to SURVEYOR)** You're trying to steal the sand from under us. But we won't let that happen.

**SURVEYOR:** Not you as well.

**MARY:** These are our sands! **(protest chant)**

Whose sands?

Our sands!

Whose sands?

**ANN:** Our sands!

**MARY:** Whose future?

**ANN:** Our future!

**ANN & MARY (Look at each other and chant)**

Hey! Hey! Ho! Ho!



Your bloody pier has got to go!  
Hey! Hey! Ho! Ho!  
Your bloody pier has got to go!

**They walk off chanting:**

Whose sands? Our sands! Whose future? Our future!  
Hey! Hey! Ho! Ho! The bloody pier has got to go!



## The Sausage

Queen Mary's Royal Naval Hospital, Southend-on-Sea. Noise of riots.

**DOROTHY** in WW1 uniform walking, pats hair, smooths down her apron, clearly proud of her new uniform.

**FELIX**, a German POW sitting up in bed in pyjamas – arms frozen in bandages, head bandage. **DOROTHY**: Hello Sweetheart. Gosh - You poor thing...

**FELIX**: You should see the other fella. **DOROTHY (bristles)**: Say that again?

**FELIX (mystified)**: I said – you should see the... **DOROTHY**: I know what you said. It's the way you're saying it. **FELIX**: What? Should I say it more slowly?

**DOROTHY**: That's an accent that is. **FELIX**: Guten morgen, Sherlock Holmes.

**DOROTHY**: That's a German accent. **FELIX**: Guilty as charged. **DOROTHY**:

This isn't what I signed up for. **FELIX**: I feel the same. **DOROTHY consults notes.** **DOROTHY**: Are you actually German?



**FELIX:** An actual German with a German accent, yes. **DOROTHY (really frustrated):** My husband is in Wipers fighting your lot. How would he feel if I was...getting em ready to go back into the fray? **FELIX (gestures arms):** I don't know if I will be back in the fray very soon? **DOROTHY:** How would he feel? **FELIX:** Don't tell him? **DOROTHY:** He'd kill me he would.. honestly, they told me to turn up to the Hotel on the hill. They didn't say there were ... Your lot. **FELIX:** That is actually awkward. **DOROTHY tidies up.** **DOROTHY:** You know they're chucking rocks at the German bakery and setting fire to the German tea house up off the high street. You're lucky I don't feed you to the wolves. **FELIX:** I feel like the luckiest man in the world. **DOROTHY finds sausage on floor.** **DOROTHY:** And what's this supposed to be? **FELIX:** Half a sausage. **DOROTHY:** I'll take that, thank you. **FELIX:** I really would not eat that if I were you. **DOROTHY Puts it in handbag.**



**DOROTHY:** You don't know how hungry people are – and angry - because of this war. **FELIX:** Sorry. But I still would not eat that if I was... **DOROTHY:** You think I care what you would do... **FELIX:** I think you will care if you eat the sausage **DOROTHY eyes him, thinks it's a trick.** **DOROTHY:** What am I supposed to do with you anyway? **FELIX :** The last Nurse helped me write letters.

**Shows his bandaged arms.** **DOROTHY:** (Sneers) I can't write German.  
**FELIX:** In English. To my English Friend. **DOROTHY:** For all I know you might be trying to communicate with the Kaiser himself. **FELIX:** The censor would paint over it, and I really don't have his address - Der Kaiser, Germany.  
**DOROTHY considers – decides. Takes a pencil out of her uniform pocket and licks the end.** **DOROTHY:** Where's the paper then? **Finds it on the side table.** **DOROTHY:** So, what do you want me to write?



**FELIX:** Dear Edward.     **DOROTHY:** Ooh Edward. Posh Boy, is he?     **FELIX:** It's complicated. (Sighs) I find myself in a predicament in Southend on the Thames.  
**DOROTHY:** You can say – sea.     **FELIX:** Really?     **DOROTHY:** Oh we all do, it's an estuary, where the river meets the sea.     **FELIX:** Where the river meets the sea - It sounds ...almost romantic.     Ok, Dear Edward. I find myself in a predicament in Southend on The Sea.     **DOROTHY :** You don't need a The.  
**FELIX:** Southend on *Sea*. The man next to me is dead.     **DOROTHY:** What? Oh Good Lord.     **She gets up, checks bodies pulse, panics, and realises its true.**     **DOROTHY:** Why didn't you say anything before? What happened?  
**DOROTHY unsure what to do. Rings bell. No one comes.**     **FELIX:** It was the wurst     **DOROTHY:** The what?     **FELIX:** The sausage - It took too long to get here. It only took three days for his insides to... come outside... Sad because his mother sent it all the way from Bavaria with such love.





**DOROTHY looks like she wants to vomit.** **FELIX:** I am lucky I didn't eat it. Its only because he refused to share with me. No dignity in war. **DOROTHY:** Well, I suppose there's nothing we can do for him now. **Takes sausage out of bag and puts on the side table. Takes up pen.** **DOROTHY:** I'm sorry for your loss. **FELIX:** Thank you. So... Southend on ...sea. I was on the hospital boat for the prisoners of war – we went up and down the side of the jetty all day long. **DOROTHY:** Its not a jetty. **FELIX:** What is it then?  
**DOROTHY:** It's a pier – it's nearly a mile and a half long. **FELIX:** A Pier, a jetty, it's all the same, no. **DOROTHY:** I'll have you know, it's a pleasure pier. **FELIX:** Well, I had no pleasure on this pier. **DOROTHY:** There's a waterslide into a pool, an aquarium. A lot of people can only dream of living here...Come for your constitution – stay for the pier. That was before ...  
**She sighs and takes up the pen again.** **DOROTHY:** Carry on. **FELIX narrating:** I was a prisoner on a ship at the end of the pier – we had to pay for the room and board... **DOROTHY:** Good. Shouldn't see why we should have to fork out for you lot.



**FELIX:** At first, it was a relief to be far away from the trenches. Until the Zeppelins came. **DOROTHY stops writing :** The Zeppelins are on your side!  
**FELIX :** They threw bombs at us. The bombs did not ...discriminate... Then they moved us survivors here – we were the only two who made it. **DOROTHY winces:** - Oh I know, why not tell Edward something a bit more cheery?  
**FELIX relaxes slightly:** So I have a Nurse, and she is from Southend on Sea...  
**DOROTHY:** Not quite, I'm from Chatham originally. Across the water. **FELIX:** You came for your constipation? **DOROTHY:** My constitution? - Something like that... I had to get away. **FELIX:** And she is quite... **DOROTHY:** Sensible. Very strict. (ponders) No, I'll put firm. **FELIX:** Firm and helpful. And pretty too. Very. **DOROTHY:** Ahh Thank you. (touched!) No one's said that to me before. Not even my husband. Specially not my husband.  
**Shouts and footsteps off stage.** **FELIX:** What's the noise now? **DOROTHY:** The rioters. It's because of the Zeppelins, see. They want revenge on.. **FELIX uncomfortable:** Ok.



**DOROTHY:** We've had riots before. The Cocklers only 50 years ago... **FELIX:** How did it turn out? **DOROTHY thinks – grimaces –** Not well. Shall we get back to your little friend? **Rioters sounds are getting closer.** **FELIX fearful:** I seem to have run out of things to say. **DOROTHY:** We-ll, when I used to write to my husband- I would tell him what I've done recently. **FELIX:** You don't write him anymore? **DOROTHY:** No....He's... **FELIX:** In Ypres? Injured, Dead? **DOROTHY touches a scar on face!:** He ...wasn't what I signed up for after all... **RIOTERS SHOUTING** **DOROTHY:** But when I did write I'd tell him if I'd seen the neighbours... **They both look over to the neighbouring bed.** **FELIX:** I don't want to worry him. **DOROTHY:** Alright. You could talk about the food? **They both eye the sausage.** **FELIX AND DOROTHY:** Maybe not.



**DOROTHY readies to write again:** You could tell him about the town?

**FELIX:** What's to say? **DOROTHY:** It's a lovely place... **FELIX :** I didn't see it. I can only hear the seagulls circle ready to swoop. And now...the angry men...circle ready to... **DOROTHY interrupts:** There's a statue of the old Queen on the hill. Poets comes here, artists come here, even Marie Curie came here with her little x-ray ambulances. It's not all bad...It has its possibilities. Its where I got away from him. It's a place of new beginnings for folk like me. **FELIX:** And new endings for others? **DOROTHY writes that down.** **FELIX:** Please say... I miss him very much. **DOROTHY hesitates:** You want me to tell *Edward* that? **FELIX:** Yes...And tell him...if things were different. Maybe...I should have been braver...Not in the trenches but..in... **(Struggles to say the word)** ...love. **The noise gets louder/closer and DOROTHY pushes him down (we wonder if she's attacking him) and throws the blanket over him.** **RIOTER shouts outside the door – DOROTHY turns to the door.** **DOROTHY:** Hellooooo! Who goes there – **Door Voice Muffled Indistinct shouts** **DOROTHY decides - to door:** Germans? No, they're all dead in here. Not a pretty sight I can ...you can probably smell – oh you can't...alright.



**DOROTHY to door:** You want food? now? **They both look at the sausage – debate** **DOROTHY to door listens – then repeats:** Or you'll smash the door down? **DOROTHY TO FELIX (Whispers):** Shall I? **FELIX nods head under blanket.** **DOROTHY unlocks door throws Sausage out:** Oh he's gone... phew! **DOROTHY :** There's nothing I abhor more than violence... So shall we finish our letter? **FELIX comes out from under the blanket and wipes sweat off his forehead.** **FELIX:** Edward, the people here are some of the kindest people in the world. **FELIX:** After the war, I hope we shall come to Southend on Sea together and listen to the uh seagulls and... **DOROTHY – both cheered up:** Eat cockles and mussels...It's a local speciality. **FELIX:** It's got to be better than... **DOROTHY:** Don't.



## The Mods

**MUSIC:** Lazy Sunday, a Small Faces MOD classic.

Two MODS on scooters decked with banks of wing mirrors, target stickers and long whippy aerials with fox tails on top, roar onto the stage. They are dressed in the classic MOD gear - Ben Sherman button down shirts, sharp suits, parkas.

**Except...** These two MODS are OLD MEN in their 70s, and their scooters are modified mobility scooters. And the trouble is... No-one has told them they're not 18 anymore. So in their minds, they're still wild boys. They spin their scooters around as if dancing to the music, then screech to a stop.

**ANDY:** It's all about the scooter! Ain't that right, Mikey?

**MIKEY:** The scooter's everything, Andy.

**ANDY:** Freedom.

**MIKEY:** Girls.

**ANDY:** Independence.

**MIKEY:** Girls.

**ANDY:** It defines who we are.

**MIKEY:** And it gets us girls.



**ANDY:** The more chrome, the better. **They both sound the horns on their scooters.** **ANDY:** So this is how it goes. All week you keep your head down. Turn up for work. Don't cause trouble.

**MIKEY:** Don't get fired.

**ANDY:** Too right.

**MIKEY:** Can't be a poor MOD.

**ANDY:** How would you afford the clobber?

**MIKEY:** Ben Sherman ain't cheap.

**ANDY:** Need a smart suit.

**MIKEY:** Desert boots.

**ANDY:** Parka from the Army Surplus.

**MIKEY:** The works!

**ANDY:** Then Thursday lunch, the word goes round. Where's it all going to kickoff this weekend.

**MIKEY:** Hastings?

**ANDY:** Brighton?



**MIKEY:** Clacton?

**ANDY:** Nah. There's only one place for a Bank Holiday rideout...

**MIKEY & ANDY:** Southend! **ANDY:** Ah, the number of fights we've hand on that pier.

**MIKEY:** And under it.

**ANDY:** The big beaches, perfect for a mass brawl.

**MIKEY:** 'Cos the tide washes away all the blood.

**ANDY:** So come Friday, you bunk off early to get ready.

**MIKEY:** Press the suit.

**ANDY:** Polish the scooter.

**MIKEY:** Sharpen up the haircut.

**ANDY:** Then we all meet up at the coffee bar. 'Cos the trick is not to get hammered.

**MIKEY:** Not if you want to last the weekend.

**ANDY:** You just want to get in the mood.

**MIKEY:** Loosen up.





**ANDY:** Get in the groove.

**MIKEY:** Chat up the girls.

**ANDY:** And you got to sort the transport. **MIKEY:** 'Cos someone's scooter's always playing up.

**ANDY:** Italian engineering. Rubbish!

**MIKEY:** But it looks cool.

**ANDY:** So you got to work out who's going on the back of whose scooter.

**MIKEY:** 'Cos no-one gets left behind.

**ANDY:** No-one!

**MIKEY:** We're a crew!

**ANDY:** So Saturday morning we're all set.

**MIKEY:** Down the A13. **ANDY:** Stop at the Little Chef to tank up on a full English, then - Southend here we come!

**MUSIC blasts across the stage: My Generation by The Who. ANDY and MIKEY rev their scooters and drive round in circles, the wind in their hair. In their minds they are hammering down the A13.**



**ANDY:** You can see us now! **MIKEY:** Thirty scooters strong!  
**ANDY:** We all park up on Pier Hill, then it's straight to the bowling alley.  
**MIKEY:** Pavilion Lanes. **ANDY:** 'Cos they're open 24 hours, see? And if you bowl all Saturday night, they give you a free fry-up Sunday morning.  
**MIKEY:** More grease!  
**ANDY:** And then we see 'em, coming out from the roller-skating under the Palace Hotel...  
**ANDY & MIKEY:** Rockers!  
**MIKEY:** Hate rockers!  
**ANDY:** And it all kicks off.  
**MIKEY:** What you looking at?  
**ANDY:** You got a problem?  
**MIKEY:** Yeah! You!  
**ANDY:** So I've got this baseball bat in my Parka.  
**MIKEY:** Love that bat.



**ANDY:** And we lay into them!

**MIKEY:** They lay into us!

**ANDY:** Smashing things up.

**MIKEY:** Such a laugh.

**ANDY:** Nothing serious. Just fists and boots. **MIKEY:** And windows.

**ANDY:** And tables. **MIKEY:** And plates.

**ANDY:** But no knives or nothing.

**MIKEY:** No, no. We're not animals.

**ANDY:** Such a laugh.

**MIKEY:** Until we hear the sirens.

**ANDY:** Coppers! **MIKEY:** The White Helmets. Southend's finest.

**ANDY:** Coppers! So everyone bundles onto their scooters and we're off.

**MIKEY:** Coppers chasing us.



**ANDY:** Rockers chasing the coppers.

**MIKEY:** Such a laugh.

**ANDY:** Such a laugh.

**A Nurse, HANNAH strides in between Andy and Mikey's scooters.**

**HANNAH:** How are we doing this morning? **(or afternoon depending on performance)**

**ANDY:** No time for you, luv. Got to escape **HANNAH:** Very nice.

**It's clear that she has heard this a thousand times.**

**HANNAH:** You just carry on. Don't mind me. **She starts to do routine checks on ANDY and MIKEY – taking their blood pressure, recording their temperature, refilling their medication boxes. As she does that -**

**ANDY:** Where were we, Mikey?

**MIKEY:** Southend seafront.

**ANDY:** Yes, yes. Roaring along the esplanade. **MIKEY:** Roaring!

**ANDY:** Checking out where the Rockers are hiding. 'Cos we're in the mood for



a rumble.

**MIKEY:** Rumble!

**MUSIC blasts across the stage, and the two men start to swerve their scooters in circles...**

**Much to the annoyance of HANNAH, the Nurse. She strides over to the speaker and unplugs it, killing the atmosphere.**

**ANDY:** What you do that for? **HANNAH:** I don't want to spoil the fun, but you're not being very responsible.

**MIKEY:** Course not!

**ANDY:** What's the point in responsible?

**MIKEY:** That's for old men.

**ANDY:** Not rebels like us. **HANNAH points to the audience.**

**HANNAH:** And you're not setting a very good example to them.

**ANDY:** We're just teaching 'em how to be MODs.

**HANNAH:** What makes you think they're interested?



**ANDY:** Because of the scooters.

**MIKEY:** And the girls.

**ANDY:** And the freedom.

**MIKEY:** And the girls.

**HANNAH:** They've got Spotify, Andy. They don't need your scratchy old records. And they're into cars, not scooters.

**ANDY:** Cars?!

**MIKEY:** Cars?!

**ANDY:** Who wants a car when you can have a Lambretta?

**MIKEY:** Or a Vespa?

**They both sound the horns on their scooters.**

**HANNAH:** Please! The other residents are trying to rest.

**ANDY:** Scooters are noisy, luv. That's the whole point.

**MIKEY:** That's why you mod the exhaust, to trumpet the sound. **ANDY:** So people look at you.

**HANNAH:** Andy, that is not a Lambretta. It's a Sunrise Mobility scooter Mark 4. You paid extra for the basket. And you, Mikey, that's an EasyRider Pavement



Master. Second hand.

**ANDY and MIKEY look at their scooters as if seeing what they really are for the first time.**

**ANDY:** Mobility scooters?

**HANNAH:** They do four miles an hour. Eight if you're lucky. **ANDY:** We'll never make the Little Chef at that speed. **HANNAH:** Then it's just as well the only place you're going is the communal dining hall.

**She packs up her medical equipment.**

**HANNAH:** Now, if you're good boys, nice and quiet, I'll make sure you get an extra biscuit with your cocoa.

**And she leaves. ANDY and MIKEY seem crushed. They look at their scooters ... at each other ... caught between their memories and the truth. Then they make their minds up.**

**ANDY:** That nurse is mad.

**MIKEY:** Bonkers.

**ANDY:** Off her rocker. **MIKEY:** Looney!

**ANDY:** Cocoa?



**MIKEY:** Four miles an hour?

**ANDY:** Who does she think we are?

**MIKEY:** OAPs?! Rubbish!

**ANDY:** We're MODS!

**MIKEY:** Best time in our lives.

**ANDY:** You'd be crazy to grow up.

**MIKEY:** Not for me.

**ANDY:** Once a MOD, always a MOD!

**MIKEY:** We're never growing up!

**ANDY:** Never!

**MUSIC blasts out, as ANDY and MIKEY rev their scooters and roar off down memory lane.**





## The Rescue

**Bradley enters the stage with a stumbling cold young woman (Elizabeth) under his arm, guiding the dazed woman forward towards the audience.**

**Bradley: (to an audience member)** Can you help me get this poor, poor lady, warm? **The audience member helps to remove a wet overshirt that the young woman is wearing. He tries to help with her bag, but she grips onto it and mutters**

**Elizabeth:** That's alright I've got it.

**He continues to help her.**

**Elizabeth (splutters):** Oh thank you, thank you- I thought I was a goner until you appeared...(weeps) **Bradley: (to Elizabeth)** Don't be scared, you're safe. And as you can see by my less-than formal attire tonight, I can't worry about getting dressed when a man.. **(correcting himself)** or a woman's life is at stake. Out of bed, into the boat. I don't have any time for protocol or regulation, I'm not one for rules, I find I have to make my own sometimes. **Elizabeth:** I'm not the first then?

**Bradley:** Not the first- doubt you'll be that last... Back in '82 I saved 8 souls out in the gale. One time, a poor lad got himself into real bother and I had to jump off the roof of the cottage - straight into the water, no messing about. it's dangerous but...

**Elizabeth:** You actually live here- on the pier?



**Bradley:** At the end, yes, in case people like you need a bit of assistance against the elements- the tides will take advantage of any lapse in judgement.

**Elizabeth:** I don't know what happened, one minute I was going nice and slowly, and the next I was in the drink. Thank the Lord for you. I don't know how much longer I could have held on.

**Bradley:** It wasn't your time.

**Elizabeth:** It very nearly was.

**Bradley:** This inclement weather, the light, with me nearby! The odds were in your favour- and I don't like failure, not on my watch.

**Elizabeth:** How can I ever repay you- . I don't even know your name...

**Bradley:** The name's Bradley, William Bradley, Miss.

**Elizabeth:** Mr Bradley, thank you so much, I'm so grateful I'm not lying at the bottom of the Thames right now.

**Bradley:** Think nothing of it Miss. **Elizabeth:** It's Mistress actually. Hang on. I know that name, Where do I know your name from? Have we met before?

**Bradley:** Not that I recall mistress, but my job does put me in the limelight every so often, not by my own choice of course. I don't mean to boast but...news of my rescues have spread far and wide...



**Elizabeth:** No it's not that, not in the papers. Your face, I've seen it somewhere else, maybe..

**Bradley:** Unlikely mistress, I'm only ever here, day and night.

**Elizabeth:** Oh my lord. You're Bradley, you're the smuggler! **Bradley taken a back.**

**Bradley:** Are you alright? **Elizabeth:** You're William Bradley, the lightkeeper, and smuggler, I know you!

**She starts towards her wet coat/shirt worrying the documents she is transporting may have gone in the water, she pulls out the letters, shakes them off and begins to struggle to open them.**

**Bradley:** You're not thinking straight, you must be delirious from the cold water. What's the date today?

**Elizabeth:** It's the 19<sup>th</sup> of September 1887? Hang on, - No, no, you can't distract me- you weren't out looking to rescue damsels in distress- You were smuggling contraband! and here is the evidence! **She has finally unfolded a warrant with a small black and white photo and name William Bradley on a page that has a big red stamp that says 'Seizure of Stolen and Illegally Transported Goods' on it'.** **Bradley: (squinting)** I'm not so good at reading mistress.

**Elizabeth:** You've been doing it for years, bringing contraband tea, tobacco and alcohol off the big ships and onto land in your row boat. And I've got the seizure warrant here to prove it, I knew I'd seen your face. **Bradley:** That's a serious accusation. I don't know what you're talking about. **Elizabeth:** You rescued the wrong woman! My husband works for the Revenue



department and has been investigating you for months! **Bradley:** This is the thanks I get? A respectable member of the community such as myself. It's an unfounded accusation! I'm receiving an award for bravery. That's not the type of man that's a smuggler, is it! **Elizabeth:** Going out in the boat, bringing booze in, you're bold, I'll give you that. **Bradley:** You'd falsely accuse a man like me, you'd put away an innocent man! If I was falsely imprisoned, who would save the people in the water? Think of the lives that would be lost. **Elizabeth:** Oh give over, you're in this to make a few quick shillings, you don't fool me. **Stare off between them, he can't believe the woman he's saved is going to get him caught. Bradley's manner changes.** **Bradley: (knowingly)** I think you've got yourself a little confused? **Elizabeth:** Oh spare me - my husband is going to have a field day with you. **Bradley:** And what about you then? What are you up to alone on the river? What would people think! A revenue man's wife no less. **(shaking his head disappointedly).** all dressed up for a secret liaison- people round here talk. **Elizabeth:** This isn't about me, you're a criminal! **Bradley:** An unfaithful wife. Who are people more likely to trust? A gentleman of high standing or a gallivanting wife? **Elizabeth:** Gallivanting!! I'm not the one... Just because you saved me doesn't mean you're above the rules. **Bradley: (holding up his index finger)** The thing is love, I am above the rules. Nobody's going to believe you, and if you think about ratting me out for a



second - your nice little life, that'll all be over in a snap. **(Snaps his fingers)**

**Bradley (Cont):** People talk awfully fast around here, and your little jaunt would be the talk of all the tea rooms in town. Oh and that husband of yours, the shame. I've met women like you before, you'd do anything to keep your standing in the town, it's all you've got. **Elizabeth:** Nobody's going to believe you! I wasn't out with a lover. I went to London to collect these important documents to help my husband.

**Bradley:** Oh likely story, on your own? What are you up to?

**Elizabeth:** I'm helping him out! you're not going to paint me as some hussy! I'll see you taken down a peg or two. **Bradley:** You see, nobody out there

knows I've saved you. All they know is that you got on a boat, somewhere up-river. you'd be just another lost soul, one of the few I didn't have time to save. You can go back in the water if you like? **Elizabeth:** So you're a

smuggler and a thug Mr Bradley? **Bradley:** (smiles *menacingly*) It's not too late, you know. **Elizabeth takes a step back from Bradley and realises the**

**gravity of the situation she's in. She stops and gives Bradley a piercing stare.**

**Opens her purse and takes out a derringer pistol.** **Elizabeth:** I may not be as helpless as I seem, Mr Bradley. As if I'd come out on the water all alone without protection. There are dangerous men around, as is evident from the situation I find myself in.

**Bradley (Takes a step back himself and holds his hands up):** Oh well played. Fair play.



**Elizabeth:** As you have just remarked, nobody knows that I'm out here, all they know is that I got on a boat somewhere up-river. I could just shoot you now and nobody would ever know. I'm not going to let you ruin me and my husband with some rumour mongering.

**He takes a few steps back, she might actually be serious. She could do him in - there and then.**

**Elizabeth:** Or Mr Bradley, I can use your help. You see along with the warrant for the seizure of your possession, I have this seizure of property warrant. This is for a property in Prittlewell, a rather expensive property. My husband, he works at least 11 hours every day, and he gets no thanks for his service, no promotion, no bonus. So I thought I would take the initiative to improve our situation.

**Bradley:** Where do I come into this then?

**Elizabeth:** I would like to change some very, very minor details of the property ownership - namely transfer the ownership to us. Of course, as a poor little woman it can't be in my name, oh and my husband's? It would arouse an audit, much too suspicious. But if there were a third party who we could sign the deeds over to.... **Bradley: (Getting the idea)** Aaaaah. **Elizabeth:** So if we came to an arrangement, that person, my husband and I could become very wealthy indeed.

**Bradley:** Your husband - the tax man - does he really agree to all this?

**Elizabeth:** Oh yes, he is fully on board.



**Bradley:** There we have it, that's why you were out here alone. So I know your secret-and you know mine. You want to steal the property- in my name?

**Elizabeth:** Steal is such an ungodly word Mr Bradley, perhaps re-appropriate?

**Bradley:** You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours? **Elizabeth:** Exactly Mr Bradley. We'll go half and half, and no one finds out anything about either of us. This little seizure of your stolen goods got lost when I fell in, what a shame! **(She throws the notice away)** **Bradley: (Smiles ferally)** Nice doing business with you – , who knows, I might even run to be on the council before long, and then maybe we could have a few more of these little arrangements. **Elizabeth:** Who wouldn't vote for the hero of Southend Pier? **Elizabeth and Bradley face each other, he spits onto his hand and hold it out, Elizabeth recoils.** **Bradley:** Sorry, force of habit. **Bradley wipes his hand on his trousers, they shake hands.** **Elizabeth:** Your secret is safe with me. Now how about a tot of rum to celebrate, I don't suppose you'd have any idea of where I could find some?

**Bradley: (a faux confusion)** oh me mistress, no idea at all.



## The Attack

**Joyce enters stage right, wearing Civi clothes as if she had been out dancing, but with a coat as its winter. Lieutenant Commander Ouvry, and Lieutenant Adler enter Stage left, dressed in Royal Navy Uniform wearing wellington boots rather than shoes. Lt Adler carries a carriage torch and Lt Cmdr Ouvry carries a canvas tool bag. The approach a large black object and the freeze.**

**JOYCE:** I used to complain that nothing ever happens in Southend. Never again. Evie and I went dancing at the Kursaal and then she went off with her new fella, they offered to walk me – what with the blackout I only had the moon to guide us - but I said not to bother - it was as quiet as the grave, just the sound of the seagulls and the wind. I'd be quicker by myself and I was worried Dad might come out looking for me. He says I'll be the death of him. So, I was walking up past the Palace Hotel and was going to turn up the High Street, and no sooner had we come out onto Pier Hill when all hell breaks lose, doesn't it?

**JOYCE FREEZES and ADLER and OUVRY start moving.**

**OUVRY:** Check your pockets lad, we don't want a spark to send us to kingdom come do we?

**ADLER:** Yes sir.

**OUVRY :** We do want it to send us to kingdom come? Hmm. **ADLER:** No sir, I meant yes sir my pockets are empty, sir, apart from my photo of the wife and my new lad sir, you know for good luck. **He shows him a small photograph.**





**OUVRY:** Yes, that'll do Lieutenant, but now it's time to have your wits about you, there's a good chap, eh?

**ADLER:** Yes sir, sorry sir.

**OUVRY:** Righty ho, so you say that this one came down during the attack on HMS Leigh last night?

**ADLER:** Yes sir, the spotters plotted it and coastal watch found it quick smart this morning.

**OUVRY:** If this is what we've been looking for, this might just turn the whole course of this damned war.

**ADLER:** Blimey sir. **Looks at photo again, kisses it, and freezes.**

**ADLER and OUVRY FREEZE, then JOYCE MOVES.**

**JOYCE:** So the air raid siren goes off, and maybe I should have raced for a shelter, but I was frozen to the spot - looking down the Pier, been there all my life she has that pier, but it doesn't look anything like it did last summer when Evie and I had ice cream and played the penny arcades. **She points out along the pier.**

**JOYCE:** I could just make out all these blokes scurrying this way and that, and there's all sorts of uniforms out there, even the WRENS, but its mostly Navy on the Pier - or HMS Leigh as its called now. **Droning Dornier bomber FX low**



**JOYCE:** And the droning's getting louder - and everyone is staring out towards the sea and scanning for the enemy. we're all holding our breath, waiting for the word. And they're getting closer and closer.

**Droning Dornier bomber FX medium.**

**JOYCE:** And then this big blighter with a megaphone shouts FIRE! **JOYCE FREEZES and ADLER & OUVRY MOVE.**

**ADLER has a coughing fit that continues on Joyce's FIRE. OUVRY:** Good god man what the hell do you think you're doing? **He puts his hand on his heart and breathes heavily.**

**ADLER:** Sorry sir, couldn't hold it in.

**OUVRY:** Well damn well warn me next time. If we put a foot wrong here, we're finished. Do you understand that, or are you confused again? **ADLER:** No, sir. I mean yes, sir. I'm not confused.

**OUVRY:** Right, you stand off with the tool bag while I get to know this blighter.

**OUVRY moves closer to the bomb, his face right next to it.**

**ADLER:** (Loud whispers) So it's definitely a mine then sir?

**OUVRY:** Yes Lieutenant, we can be quite confident of that. However, the contact points are not what I'd expect.



**He points to the end of the mine.**

**OUVRY:** Not seen one of these before.

**ADLER:** As in you've not defused one before? **He takes a step back.** **OUVRY:** Chin up man, we're not known as the experts at defusing these buggers for nothing, are we?

**ADLER: (Stands up straight)** No, sir.

**OUVRY:** And there's not a thing the Jerries can drop that we at HMS Vernon can't get to the bottom of, right lad?

**ADLER:** Absolutely sir.

**OUVRY: (To himself)** Even if I haven't seen this type before. **(To ADLER)** More light over here, would you?

**Adler pats the photo in his pocket and moves to the mine and holds the lantern close.**

**ADLER:** Enough for you sir?

**OUVRY:** That's the ticket, careful now.

**ADLER and OUVRY FREEZE, and JOYCE MOVES.**

**JOYCE (Reaching up with both hands):** There must have been thousands of bullets fired, loads of them, guns the whole length of the Pier all firing at the enemy planes. Then from the Pier, rockets start going up at the enemy planes as well. Spotlights lit up the sky sweeping this way and that.



**Reach up and sweeps like a searchlight. JOYCE:** It's like a wall of resistance coming up from our old pier, shouting out NO! We won't surrender! But they keep on coming, and you can see the planes now as the bombs start dropping between the ships. **Droning Dornier bomber FX loud.**

**JOYCE:** The Nazi planes are everywhere, passing over HMS Leigh with bombs dropping like a flock of seagulls crapping on them. It all feels like it's getting a bit close, I can tell you. I thought about me old Dad. I dunno when I last told him I loved him. And I knew he'd be out somewhere – and I thought I'd never forgive myself if something happened to him. I have no idea if anything was being hit, but they fired at us, and we fired at them. And all I wanted was to say sorry to Mum and Dad for causing them such trouble.

**JOYCE FREEZES and ADLER & OUVRY MOVE.**

**OUVRY:** By my reckoning there's 600 pounds of High Explosive in this device.

**ADLER:** That much, sir? **OUVRY: (chuckles)** Make a heck of a bang if we get this wrong. They'll hear it in Dover, I wouldn't wonder.

**ADLER:** That would be ... loud sir.

**OUVRY:** This could be the same type of mine that took out the HMS Belfast, and that destroyer in the estuary. **ADLER:** Very powerful stuff, sir. **OUVRY:** HQ have been trying to solve this riddle since the War began.



**ADLER:** And this is all new to you sir?

**OUVRY:** If I tell you to run, run! Don't wait for me.

**He goes back to looking at the bomb.**

**OUVRY:** Try not to worry, Lieutenant. **ADLER: (mutters to himself)** Try not to worry, he says. 600 pounds of High Explosive, he says. Not seen this type before, he says. **OUVRY:** It couldn't have landed in a better place. This mud - decent bit of luck.

**ADLER:** Yes sir, I was just saying to myself that this was a decent bit of luck.

**OUVRY:** Tracing paper and charcoal, please. Then stand back...I don't need to spell it out for you, do I?

ADLER and OUVRY FREEZE, and JOYCE MOVES.

**JOYCE:** Then they were off again, rat a tat tat, rat a tat tat, rat a tat tat, boom, whoosh, such a racket I had to cover my ears. Then there was a plume of flames in the sky above us and the drone of the bombers is drowned out by what sounded like the screeching of a Jerry plane going down. Everything seemed to freeze, and all I could see was this trail of fire getting lower and lower.

**JOYCE:** I swear the pilot tried to aim for our pier but thank god, he didn't make it - with an almighty splash, the bomber hits the water. And a cheer goes up from Royal Terrace. It looks like all the Navy have come out to watch the fight – of course I join in but I'm worrying too – and I'm thinking nothing is going to be the same again... And the whole flock of bombers starts to move away, heading out towards the sea back to where they came from. Everyone is shouting and pointing at some parachutes coming down in the Estuary. They weren't people



in em, though. Someone said they were mines ... over Shoeburyness way, nasty little goodbye gifts from the Jerrys.

**(sniffs)** **JOYCE:** I watch the naval folk go back inside Royal Terrace. And then I start to notice how cold it is up here on the hill. And then Dad is next to me and he says, 'There, there Joyce, it's over now.' I've never been so happy to see anyone in my life. He says, 'Looks like the war's come to Southend, Sweetheart.' I'm not ashamed to say, I had a little something in my eye. And then I told him, 'I'm going to join the WRENS', and he said, 'let's talk about it tomorrow,' which means no, but I stood up to him. I said, 'Sometimes, things are bigger than we are and this is one of those times. We have to do what's right for everyone not just ourselves.' **[Wipes eyes/pulls herself together]** So ...after I see Evie and find out about her new fella ...I'm off to join up ...

JOYCE FREEZES and ADLER & OUVRY MOVE.

**Reaches for the canvas bag and pulls out a folded wad of tracing paper and a stick of charcoal.**

**ADLER:** Here, sir.

**OUVRY:** Thank you, Lieutenant. Remember, we have nothing to fear except fear itself, eh?

**ADLER:** Nothing but fear and 600 pounds of high explosives sir.

**OUVRY: (Looks to Adler)** And starvation, Lieutenant. If we can't keep the Merchant Navy safe, we'll have no food, and Mr Hitler will win in a very short time.

**ADLER:** Very good, sir.



**OUVRY:** Don't move.

**SILENCE AS OUVRY VERY SLOWLY WORKS ON THE MINE**

**See Adler breathing slowly – waiting – holding his chest – ready to die.  
Tension.**

**OUVRY Turns one of the rings and takes it out of the mine.**

**OUVRY:** Ah! So this is it ... could it be? No, surely not...

**ADLER:** No, Sir?

**OUVRY:** See that there lad, that's a magnetic trigger, ship passes overhead, attracts the magnet, it closes the circuit, and boom!

**ADLER:** Boom sir, yes sir, so this isn't your usual mine then sir? **OUVRY:** No. This. Is. Genius.

**ADLER:** Is it, Sir? **OUVRY:** You have to hand it to Jerry - it's a magnetic mine. Devilishly simple but deadly dangerous. This is what's been sinking our ships.

**ADLER:** So shall I come over there now, Sir? (Steps forwards.)

**OUVRY:** Back off. It could still blow, Lieutenant. **(Steps back)** Go call HMS Leigh and tell them what we've learned. Magnetic Mines. Who would have thought?



**ADLER:** Yes sir. (Pauses) No sir.

**(Adler gets ready to go, but OUVRY is still talking half to himself) OUVRY:**

This will change the direction of the war and be one in the eye for Mr Hitler too.

**ADLER:** One for the newsreels sir! **OUVRY: (chuckles)** This won't be in the newsreels for a very long time Lieutenant, but your son will be very proud of his father, one day. **ADLER:** Thank you, sir. So, Mum's the word then? Or boom's the word if things go pear shaped?

**OUVRY:** Lieutenant, we are going to defuse this mine, but anyone who tells you they aren't afraid, isn't going to live very long. **ADLER:** Here's to a very long life then sir. (Pauses to watch...)

**OUVRY gets back to work. ADLER hurries off.**





## The Apology

**HERBERT:** Nye, I've never said you aren't a brilliant politician but you're out of control. If you want me to support your plans for the Health Service, you must prove to me you can control your ego.

**NYE:** Good God man how on earth do I do that?

**HERBERT:** I know, how about an apology for calling me the witch-finder of the Labour Party? Or that you respect my position and need my support to push this insane plan through?

**NYE:** For God's sake man, we're wasting precious time here! All that matters is-

**HERBERT:** Your precious health service. Then apologise and then we can talk terms.

**NYE:** I have a clear conscience. Everything I said about you was true.

**HERBERT:** Fine. Let's head back to the PM and tell him there's no deal.

**NYE:** You would do that for something THIS important?

**HERBERT:** I must. If you haven't learned anything over the years, then perhaps the Health Service needs another man to take it forward.

**NYE:** I should have known. Always looked down on a boy from the valleys, didn't you?

**Aneurin (Nye) Bevan storms towards the bench near the audience, where a woman has been quietly sitting. Nye is clearly furious but trying not to show it very unsuccessfully. He strides with restrained anger towards the audience. He's muttering to himself.**

**NYE:** Bloody man, I'll give him apologise. And for what? Speaking the truth?

**Voices off stage:** Minister, we don't have permission to stay here!

**NYE:** Says who? I'm a member of the Cabinet for the British Government for crying out loud.

**Silence. HERBERT MORRISON projects his voice but not shouting**

**HERBERT:** I'm a busy man, Aneurin, I can wait for ten minutes and no longer. You know what I need to hear. **(HERBERT walks off out of view)**



**NYE stands still for a moment, heads towards a bench kicks it/punches it hard. Then he realises to his embarrassment there's a woman sitting there. He goes to apologise to her but he's still too furious. He sits on the other end of the bench heavily. Sighs.**

**WIN:** Are you alright?

**NYE:** No, not really. How about you?

**WIN: (startled by his question into honesty.)** No. Not really.

**NYE is clearly having a difficult time controlling his anger. Win watches him pull himself together but doesn't say anything.**

**NYE:** Sorry you had to see all that. I don't normally take it out on perfectly good benches that belong to ooh, who's this? Mary Dowsett, beloved grandmother. She loved this view. Good for her. Jennie was right. He isn't going to make this easy.

**WIN:** Who's Jennie, your wife?

**NYE:** Yes. The thing is she told me that I had to stay in control and not lose my temper-

**WIN:** Hmn...

**NYE:** Bloody war. Made men like him all puffed up. "There must be hierarchy, Aneurin. Men must curb their impulses and work with our colleagues. People can't just do what they like-

**WIN:** Well, he's not wrong, is he?

**NYE: (not really listening to her)** What about making life better for people in this godforsaken country? So, what if, in the heat of the moment, I've told a few home truths about him? How dare he hold everyone's future health to ransom? And for what? An apology? And who's to say he will honour what he says even if I do apologise? And it's not true. I'm not sorry.

**WIN:** It is very hard to apologise truthfully if you don't feel you've done anything wrong.

**NYE:** Exactly, you understand the problem immediately. Just –

**WIN:** Even when you have. **(Nye looks at her properly for the first time)**

**NYE:** Never mind me. What about you? Tell me about you.



**WIN:** Oh.

**NYE:** It's not the best day for being on this Pier of yours. Last time I was here the Luftwaffe was aiming for it-

**WIN:** Yes.

**NYE:** Although, we did all have a laugh when we realised a pleasure pier was going to have to be Thames Naval Control. I remember Winston-

**WIN:** Winston?

**NYE:** Never mind. You. What's wrong with you?

**WIN: (completely startled into telling the truth and like it is being torn from her)** I'm a terrible mother. He's never going to forgive me.

**NYE:** Oh. Come on, every mother must feel like that at least some of the time.

**WIN:** No, you don't understand. You can't understand. I am. I'm the worst. I let him go. He was 5 years old. : I put him on the train. I lied to him. I told him I'd be there every Sunday. At the bus stop. I knew that wasn't going to happen. I said it to get him to let go of me. Other mothers went but I stayed. I was so worried about Chris, too. **NYE:** Your husband? **WIN: (She nods.)**

He was one of the air raid wardens here. He never looks after himself, always looking after other people. Pulled his friend's body out from under a door. Hasn't really been the same since. He's so strong. But he's too kind. He just keeps telling me how lucky we are, to be grateful – but it's all right for him, Den still loves him. **WIN:** But Den doesn't trust me anymore. The day he was born the midwife stole him to show him off to her friends he was so beautiful. I loved him with everything that I have. And like a piece of luggage, I put him on a train and sent him to live with strangers. I even tied on a parcel tag. We got Rose back. She was clever enough to get herself back. But Den, he stayed. And then he got so sick. They sent him home to die with us. My poor boy. He's so thin, like one of those poor Jewish children from the camps. And now he's back home. And I'm so afraid. I'm so afraid all the time.



**NYE:** But he's back home now? Surely that's good? **WIN: (she starts to cry)** Everyone keeps telling me it's a miracle. He was so ill pneumonia – his lungs. It's been so hard to keep him warm, so hard to afford doctors. Chris has sold everything apart from the house. We thought at one point we'd have to. If we hadn't got those antibiotics from that soldier friend of Chris's- **NYE:** I'm so sorry. I know how hard it is when someone fights for every breath. More than you know. But the lad is better now? **WIN:** Yes, but you don't understand, he's not Den anymore. There's a boy called Den in our house. But I don't know him. He doesn't know me. When he was sick, he cried for Frieda, over and over. At first, when the children left, I wanted them home so much I thought I would die. But you don't die. You put one foot in front of another and somehow years pass. What happens if gets sick again? There's nothing left to sell.

**NYE:** Have you not heard of the plans for a National Health Service?

**WIN:** What? That pipe dream? How on earth can the country afford it? How will it work? My Chris says it's a lovely idea but can't see the Doctors going for it. People like us, we're not used to getting much help, are we? We're not important enough.

**NYE:** Everyone's important.

**WIN:** Oh, come on, you know that's not true. People in power don't care about someone like me.

**NYE: (slower)** Everyone's important.

**WIN:** I've got to go. Get back to them. I shouldn't have been out so long – just, I couldn't bear it. I couldn't breathe. I should be grateful. Just I'm so-

**NYE:** Angry?

**WIN:** I don't know what I am. But if another person tells me how lucky we are I will explode. Chris is alive. Rose is safe. Den is getting better. We got our children back. We got the medicine. Just I don't know what we do if he needs more. I'm worried about Chris – he cries sometimes in the night when he doesn't think I can hear.



Sorry Mr? it was very nice to meet you. I'm very sorry to have bothered you with my troubles.

**NYE:** Nye. And you have nothing to apologise for and neither do bloody I. But if that's what it takes, I'll say the words. I don't have to bloody mean them, do I? I don't know your name either.

**WIN:** It's Ada. I prefer Win, though.

**NYE:** Nice to meet you, Win.

**WIN:** You know, you look a lot like that Housing Minister. Has anyone ever told you that?

**NYE:** Once or twice.

**WIN:** My Chris expects a lot from him. Do you think he's up to the job?

**NYE:** Well, if Chris thinks that, then he'd better be. Thank you, Win.

**WIN:** For what?

**NYE:** For reminding me that the cause is always bigger than the man. Win?

**WIN:** Yes?

**NYE:** I don't know if this helps, but you are not a bad mother. In fact, I think, when faced with that impossible decision, you proved you are one of the bravest people I've met in a long time. You wanted him to be safe, so you sent him away. Nothing selfish about that. Far from it. You mustn't blame yourself for how bloody awful this world can be. Your son still breathes because of you. If he'd been here in Southend, who knows? Lots of people died here. Don't waste your chance to try again. While there's breath, there's always hope.

**Win stares at him, unsure. She looks like she might cry. She doesn't want to cry in front of him. She turns and starts walking up through the audience. Nye watches her. He turns and walks back to the boat.**

**NYE:** Thanks Mr Bernard. Sorry to have been so rude. Herbert, fair enough, I should never have called you the witchfinder general of the Labour Party. That was unforgiveable. **(Nye mutters to himself)** Even though it is accurate... **(Much louder)** Remember, we're not allowed to go back until we have sorted this out, Clement's orders. I'm happy to keep going all week – how about you?



## The Vote

Everyone is returned to the opening space together. As the crowd settles, COUNCILLOR MIDAS strides towards the podium again, sounds a BLAST on an AIR-HORN to get everyone's attention. OFFICER BOSWORTH is caught on the back foot and arrives out of breath.

**COUNCILLOR MIDAS:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome back to the Great Southend Sell-Off! Only joking! Of course, this is the Southend Alternative Authority Consultation on the future of Southend Pier and we're desperate to know what you think- But, really – are we? Why waste time? You've heard a load of stories and honestly, have you ever heard of this lot, Blade Education who **(makes air quotes with his fingers)** sound really dodgy to me. Where did they find all these stories? Sure, those men in WW2 were pretty brave but that was out on the mud! What, do you care about the past? It's the future we're all invested in if we can get there. **(As if just making up his mind)** I know what - let's just have a practice run... what if this was the actual auction to sell the pier? Why don't we admit defeat and accept that we can't afford to keep this platform built to bring in day-trippers, now known as Southend Pier, officially the longest pleasure pier in the world. What if I were to bid off this wonder of Victorian engineering? This community jewel, this saviour of Great Britain, this, this... **OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Councillor Midas! I really must protest! Everyone knows that Subsection B of the Constitution of Southend Alternative Authority means that you can't just sell of the Pier! **COUNCILLOR:** Everyone? I've never heard of Subsection B – anyone?

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** This Pier belongs to the people of Southend – there must be proper and full community consultation and we haven't finished the process which you agreed-

**COUNCILLOR :** Ah yes, the process, rules, blah blah blah. So deliberately confusing that only people like you understand them, funny that – because you have created a whole tribe of you! Who impose them on this the good people of Southend and get paid fairly well to do it. Why don't you tell the audience how much Southend Alternative Authority paid you last year, my dear?



Why don't we just cut through to reality? Who these days believes in the rules apart from people like you who's in charge of running them? **(Talking to the audience)** Do you believe in the process? Of course you do – as long as you get what you want out of it, right?

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Councillor Midas we must all believe in the rules and the process – they are so important! If you, the people don't believe that these rules matter, then who protects the most vulnerable in our society? Please, you must tell the Councillor that you want to vote. What you think matters, surely? This is your home; this is your town-

**COUNCILLOR:** City – see what does she know? She can't even call it by the right name-

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Oh, what does it matter what it's called? This is your community – your legacy-

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER:** Ah, now that's a surprise – I didn't expect a backbone and she doesn't even live in Southend! Mind you, I don't think she'll be long for this job. He doesn't seem terribly keen on her...

**COUNCILLOR:** (To the audience) So, do you want to vote or do you want me to decide? **(Far too fast)** Brilliant, I knew I could trust you Scrap for Southend is declared the-

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER stops time but it costs her. She is deflated, out of energy. She sinks to the floor. She hasn't got long.**

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER:** Is he right? People will always matter more than things like me. Perhaps you do need the money in your pockets more than an icon that makes no sense for you now.

Once I let go he can land that gavel and I'll walk away back into impossibility. You'll be free. It's beautiful out there in the sea. I'll become part of the tides, just another wreck under the surf. I'm ready – do whatever you think is best. I'm afraid, the truth is that something like me is only ever as ever strong as the people who take care of me – and just to make it crystal clear in case you've missed this point – that's all of you.



**Either the play ends here – her power breaks - the Cllr is happy, he and the ENTREPRENEUR SCRAP shake hands gleefully and the Spirit of the Pier starts walking away and we find a way to make her just seem to disappear.**

**COUNCILLOR:** Thanks to all of you for a great result. **OFFICER Bosworth** – I'll be seeing you in your office very soon. Well done, people of Southend!

**OR**

**The audience insists on voting.**

**COUNCILLOR:** Of course, I always knew this would happen you all know I was just having a laugh. Course it wasn't a real auction! And of course, as your representative I'm delighted to know that you are on board with the consultation. Let's be reminded of our 5 amazing and brilliant bids – although, let's be clear, only one makes a solid business case for it happening-

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** I will declare this process null and void if you continue to show preferential treatment-

**COUNCILLOR: (smiling broadly but covering a snarl)** Making the decision before the evidence is put before me? Never!

**(Eurovision style?)** For all of those who need a recap let's remember....

We have 5 bids –

***The RollerCoaster/ Scrapping the Pier/Retirement Home & Viking Burials/The Sushi Bar & The Cath-sea-dral/***

we have bid 1, (**ENTREPRENEUR #1 ROLLERCOASTER steps forward**)

**ENTREPRENEUR #1 :** Ride the waves on the world's fastest sea rollercoaster, screaming, dipping making the Pier part of a greater adventure! What could possibly go wrong?





**COUNCILLOR:** Indeed, what could possibly go wrong with that? So, let's give a big scream for Bid Number 1.

Ah, here we go – here is our most sensible and thoughtful bid – Scrap the Pier!

**ENTREPRENEUR #2:** I will promise faithfully to do everything we can to save the pier and not to turn it into a big pile of scrap metal that we sell for cash. After all we can recycle everything as stupidly large four-wheel drive vehicles!

**COUNCILLOR:** Love a four wheel drive, myself. So where were we, ah yes, bid number 3 – the most luxurious of Care Homes for the discerning septuagenarian or Octogenarian... **ENTREPRENEUR #3** (Butting in hand holding a poster showing a Viking funeral) I must tell you before you vote, that our residents, for a small fee, would qualify for the diamond standard interment package! Yes, for only 50% of your remaining assets, subject to a minimum contribution, you could have your very own Viking Burial At Sea! The Viking longship of your choice, the bard to honour your life, the archer to shoot the flaming arrow to seal your journey to the halls of Valhalla! This is your eternity, don't give it up for a cheap thrill, or an expensive slice of tuna! **COUNCILLOR:** Yes, thank you, again one or two people I could think of recommending for that treat, but moving on, ladies and gentlemen, boys, girls and of course those who identifies as the gender of their choice. Bidder 4, the longest sushi bar in the world.

**ENTREPRENEUR #4 SUSHI BAR:** Remember the Crown Prince Sushi Bar! Don't forget the benefits of healthy food, sea air, earth shattering backdrops for your selfie, tiktok, meme, reel or story! (Kneels down and holds hands as if in prayer) Think of the entitled young so easily parted from their money, I beg of you!

**COUNCILLOR:** Yes quite. (Turns to Bidder 4) 10% commission?

**ENTREPRENEUR #4 SUSHI BAR:** Ha, 20 more like!

**ENTREPRENEUR 5:** Bid 5 – let's all hear it for the Cath-sea-dral!

The Minecraft equivalent of Westminster Abbey with a unique address amongst the waves!



**ENTREPRENEUR #5:** Please vote for this greatest addition to the spiritual centre of our new city! **COUNCILLOR:** So, the time has come... **SPIRIT OF THE PIER:** Ahem. **COUNCILLOR:** (Sighs) Yes, what is it now? Where did you come from? **SoP:** Well I think you may have forgotten something. **COUNCILLOR:** (sarcastically) Well it's such a good job you're here then obviously! **SoP:** (Deadpan) You have no idea. Now, my final option to you is to keep our marvellous Pier pure and pristine, and for the public benefit. For everyone who lives in our great city or visits our never-ending shores they come for the Pier, they stay for the wonder that is Southend. I say we need to love the Pier as she is! **COUNCILLOR:** Fine! So, Bid 6 (**says the words while writing them down**) is to love the Pier as she is. (**COUNCILLOR sounds the air horn**) There is no more time for delay, the bids are closed, now its your turn to decide the fate of this grand symbol our of fair city! Our marshals are standing by to tally the votes. Our bidders are on *tenterhooks!* Without further ado:  
Those who want the biggest roller coaster in the world, raise both hands and scream now!



Those who you who would have the Pier scrapped, hold up your hand now.

For those who want a Retirement Home, please get someone, I said PLEASE GET SOMEONE TO RAISE YOUR HAND NOW. If you want the world's longest and most expensive sushi bar and selfie booth, raise your mobile phone now! If you want the Cath-sea-dral praying across the waves- And finally, if you would like Southend Pier to stay just the same – and make this whole exercise and 3 million pound consultation process entirely pointless – the clap your hands now! (The **COUNCILLOR**, marshals, bidders and spirit of the pier come together in a huddle and rhubarb for 20 seconds occasionally looking at the audience) **COUNCILLOR**: I would like to thank everyone who took part in today's proceedings, even those who weren't supposed to be here. Your vote today indicates that you were (**COUNCILLOR can choose from pretty confused, completely useless, absolutely brilliant etc**) Now the moment of truth arrives, and I can announce that Southend Pier - following a suitable cooling off period in line with consumer legislation – will be known as (**hands the SPIRIT OF THE PIER a hat or costume in line with the winner**) ...(insert winner) **SoP**: Oh great...here we go again – reinvention...

**OFFICER BOSWORTH: (blows horn and hustles to the podium)** No, no – this is not the only focus group that we are holding. We have carefully counted your votes and listened to your opinions. (**She holds up a huge file**) I will be delighted to compile a report for the Council which will be based on these focus groups. Thank you so much for joining us for the first ever People's Consultation. You will go down in history... **COUNCILLOR**: I doubt that very much (**picks up suitcase of money**) Time I was out of here...



**WINNING CONSULTANT:** I can't believe it – thank you so much. Thank you Mum, Dad for all those times that you had faith-

**OFFICER BOSWORTH:** Please give our winning bid a round of applause!

**Music, celebrating to a famous Southend song? Or to something upbeat.**

**SPIRIT OF THE PIER leaves quietly and unnoticed if possible.**

**BOWS.**

**END.**