



Thank you for downloading this script from the Great War Theatre project.

The project team has undertaken a significant amount of work to identify the copyright status of the plays made available on the website and strives to indicate as clearly as possible what others are able to with it within the boundaries of the law. For more information on this please read the **Copyright and Reuse Guidelines on the website**. If you have any questions about how you can use the script please contact greatwartheatre@kent.ac.uk.

Anonymous, *Deliver the Goods*, 1917

Citing this script.

If you wish to use the script, or cite from it, please reference it in the following way.

A. Neil Lyons, *A Bit of a Lad*, British Library, Lord Chamberlain's Collection of Plays 1917/4, Add MS. 66159 H. Licensed for performance on 15 February 1917. Great War Theatre Project database, (www.greatwartheatre.org.uk, accessed *insert date*)

Subsequent citations to the same manuscript (consulted at the same time) could use a shortened form, such as:

Lyons, *Bit of a Lad*, GWT, LCP1917/4

Copyright Status: Public Domain

This play has been identified by the project as being in the **Public Domain**. This indicates that the project team have researched the author's date of death and have determined that the copyright in the work has expired. Although we cannot guarantee that our research is 100% accurate and that no one will have a claim to the work, we can confirm that we have carried out a due diligence search and believe that the risk of using the work is low. Even though the material may be free from copyright restrictions we ask that you always provide a citation or reference back to the Great War Theatre project as the source and that you treat the material respectfully.

Script Source: Transcription

This script is a transcription from a manuscript which is part of their Lord Chamberlain's collection at the British Library. The script has been transcribed by a volunteer on the Great War Theatre project and we are grateful for the time and effort they have given to make this text available.

A BIT OF A LAD
A Duologue
By
A. Neil Lyons

Date of License
13th February 1917

A Bit of a Lad

CHARACTERS

Hookey Walker.....Miss Mabel Russell

The Lad.....Mr Gerald du Maurier

SCENE

Small shop in Paddington. Counter set diagonally as in sketch. Door behind counter, back L. Shop door back R. Chair down R. front. Period, the present. Time 5 pm, any evening.

AT RISE OF CURTAIN. Hookey is standing behind the counter, dusting her stock, which consists of cheap sweets in jars. Cheap cigars in boxes. Cheap packets of chocolate and cigarettes, bottled mineral water, etc.

HOOKEY is a good looking girl of twenty, in be-ribboned hair and a showy blouse. Wears a number of brooches made from regimental badges.

HOOK.

(Touching jar and shouting off) Mrs Blood: What's to be done about these rock-cakes? There lastin longer than the war. Eh? Oh all right. Coming! (EXIT Hookey behind counter. L.)

ENTRE GEORGE. He is a young soldier, newly arrived from the trenches on shore leave. He carries his rifle, a bulging haversack, and one or two packages, tied to his finger with string and straps. (Query fur waist-coat?) He talks with an educated accent and a slight stammer.

GEORGE, having looked about him, advances to counter and examines stock, particularly the jar of rock-cakes. He then taps on counter.

VOICE.

(OFF) Shop!

HOOK. (OFF) All right! All Right!

RE-ENTER HOOKEY

HOOK. If anyone was to cut their selves into a million pieces, I dare say some people might be satisfied.

GEO. Good evening.

HOOK. Ow...Good evening. What do you want? luck to yer.

GEO. You I think. Is your name Miss Walker?

HOOK. Bull's Eye! What about it?

GEO. My name is George.

HOOK. The same as Mr Robey and our King. Well George; 'ow are you?

GEO. Ni - Ni - Nicely thanks. Perhaps you've heard of me?

HOOK. Can't say I've George. But don't let that up set you. There's some people ain't heard of Robey.

GEO. You exaggerate now. Do you happen to know a lad named Charlie Dodds?

HOOK. Not 'arf! I'm as was useder be nicknamed Mr Chaplin. Do you know 'im?

GEO. Every well he saved my life.

HOOK. Go on!

GEO. Do you also happen to know a lad named Alfred Gubbins?

HOOK. Alf? Him as we nick-named Dan Leno? Of course I know him 'im. Do you?

GEO. Rather! He saved my life.

HOOK. Fancy that! You seem to know a lot of soldiers.

GEO. Well, yes. You see I - I - M - mix with them.

HOOK. Ow! Per'aps you've 'eard o' little Fatty Morgan. A Welsh soldier. 'Im as we christened Lloyd George.

GEO. Think I jolly well did know Fatty Morgan. He saved my life.

HOOK. What again! Pardon me, Sport, but are you a bloody¹ cat?

GEO. No, but a bit of a dog. Look here: I've been deputed by these chaps -- Gubbins, Morgan and Dodd -- to come here and cheer you up..

HOOK. Me?

GEO. Yes (Producing shell-case) Here's a souvenir from Alfred to begin with. (Puts shell-case on counter.)

HOOK. Willie sent me on o' these a week ago. And Freddy Cooper, he sent me one the week before that. Are they friends o' yours, too. Willie Parsons and Freddy Cooper?

GEO. You bet, why, they saved - - -

HOOK. I know Cocky; Meeow! Meeow!

GEO. H - How do you happen to know all these chaps?

HOOK. Know em? Why I'm engaged to 'em.

GEO. I s-s-see. Well, here's another s-s-ouvenir. (Producing duplicate shell-case and placing it on counter.)
Charlie Chaplin sends you this.

HOOK. Ain't you engaged to nobody?

GEO. Not exactly engaged.

HOOK. Where's the hitch come in?

GEO. Her aunt. She says I'm too young.

HOOK. So y'are...Young lady live in London?

GEO. No. She lives in Leamington.

HOOK. That's the sea-side, aint it? What she do there?

1 "Bloody" was scored out with pencil on the original text. This was noted in the comments from the Lord Chamberlain's office adding: 'word "bloody" was marked for deletion which was very much my view'.

GEO. Well I believe that at present she's driving a motor lorry.

HOOK. Pip! Pip!

GEO. War work you know.

HOOK. I know. Trousers! What you do for a livin?

GEO. Oh; muck about. I'm a soldier just now.

HOOK. Go on! I thought from yar uniform ya might be a bishop. What d'ya do in civil?

GEO. Oh, I write p-poems and essays.

HOOK. What - - a Nauthor! My word, this war has put some funny people into khaki. Why did the Oo ther fellars sed you along?

GEO. To cheer you up. To take you out. A bit of dinner, don't you know and a show.

HOOK. What - - - the Pictures.

GEO. Yes. Unless you prefer a play.

HOOK. You mean a piece? Like that piece with the Italian lady in it. What do you call it now?

GEO. Do you mean "ROMANCE"?

HOOK. R! That's the piece. I don't like it. Taint my style.

GEO. Wh - Wat's wrong with it?

HOOK. Nothin doin', me lad. That's what's wrong with it. When she wants to click, e' don't; and when e' wants to click, she won't. In the end, they don't click 'arf at all. So they've both sold. A rotten play!

GEO. Well, choose some other play. By the way, here's another souvenir, from Morgan, this one. (Produces shell case)

HOOK. Thanks stand it with the others. Well if I'm choosing, what about the hopera?

GEO. By all means I'm fond of opera.

HOOK. Rights! Lets see 'Arry Lauder in "Three Cheers".

GEO. Oh! You wouldn't prefer Paglacci?

HOOK. 'Awy Archie? 'Oo's 'e?

GEO. Never mind, make it Lauder. Get your hat on.

HOOK. Hat on! Now?

GEO. Yea, why not?

HOOK. Why not? You aint even 'eld me 'and yet!

GEO. (Extending his hand) P-Put it there, old thing.

HOOK. (Taking his hand) You are a lad aint ya?

GEO. (Confused) Wh-wh-Why?

HOOK. Blast if I know. You've led a wild past. I spose. Well, I'll ask my old woman for the night off. Now mind if you see 'er, you've my uncle.

GEO. Oh I say. Make it b-b-brother.

HOOK. No fear! Me brother called 'ere last week. (EXIT)

GEO. (Looks after her, eases his puck, takes off cap and fans himself)

HOOK. (Coming back. Sticks her hand round door behind door behind counter L.) You can unload the rest of the sooveneers while I'm gorn. And - -eve - - I say - - 'ave a rock cake. 'Ave it with me.

(EXIT)

GEO. (Produces two more shell cases. Deposits them on counter where they form a neat row in combination with their predecessors. He then lifts lid of rock-cake jar, takes out a rock-cake and sits sedately on chair down R., facing counter. He munches rock-cake.)

HOOKEY again appears at door L. She has let down her hair and her mouth is full of pins.

HOOK. Its alright, Oswald. The old girl's turned agreeable and I can come.

(EXIT HOOKY. L.)

(GEORGE remains seated, steadily munching his rock-cake. At a certain stage, however it defeats him. With some difficulty he breaks the remaining portion of cake into small pieces and throws them, one by one at the "souvenirs" on the Counter.

RE-ENTRE HOOKEY. She now wears a hat and coat.

HOOK. (Coming round counter into centre of shop) What: Have you eaten your rock-cake!

GEO. Well - Ah -yes.

HOOK. My word! You are a lad. Where are we goin'?

GEO. Oh I don't know what's wrong with the g-good old Berkeley?

HOOK. Never 'eard o' the place. Let's go somewhere classy. Let's go to the corner 'Ouse.

GEO. Oh - - if you'd rather.

HOOK. It needn't cost a lot o' money; Not if we keep to sandwiches.

GEO. (Smiling) Oh, per-per-perhaps it'll run to a steak.

HOOK. I dare say you fancies a steak. You don't get em very orflen in the trenches. Eh?

GEO. No O-O-Only on al-al-alternate days.

HOOK. Never on a week day? Pore boy! Well you 'are a steak then - - see? And I'll interfere with a sossidge. And, 'ere - - I say - - take this. (she comes close and fumbles at his hand)

GEO. Whatever is - - -

HOOK. (Interrupting) It's a ten-bob note, kid. See? I kin spare it easy; And - and - I know the Army!

GEO. The d-d-deuce you do! Well look here old thing: I'm most fearfully obliged and all that, but..but..I happen to have cashed a cheque and so I..I..but I'm most fearfully obliged.

HOOK. I know. The Army's proud. It always was. But you put that away - - in case. I can spear it Sport!

GEO. Naturally. Of course. B-But don't you see - -

HOOK. I see the colour of your coat, Sport. That's all about it.

GEO. Oh I-I-Is it? Very well then. (Stuffs note into upper pocket of his tunic)

HOOK. Ya see, Sport, I ain't the kind to sponge on Khaki. Better be getting along now, hadn't we?

GEO. Righto! Wonder if I can get a taxi here.

HOOK. Taxi! You are a lad! Why a taxi'll cost a bob to the corner 'Ouse, Aint a bus good enough?

GEO. Yes; If you prefer it.

HOOK. Well I prefer to act in reason. There's no sense bein rash. Besides....our busses are nice an' full, so we can sit familiar jest as well as in a taxi.

GEO. What a cherry little sort you are!

HOOK. Not at all. I got a big 'eart for soldiers. That's all about it.

GEO. All! It's a lot. Do you know, You're a very respectable person.

HOOK. What do you mean?

GEO. What I say

HOOK. 'Ere: Don't you insult a girl. I'll slap yar face - - or whatever it is - - in a minute!

GEO. Oh, p-please don't be offended. What I said was qu- quite sincere.

HOOK. Perhaps it was. You got a sincere sort o' mug on you. (Coming closer looking up.) Well. If you mind

GEO. (Quite stationary and unenterprising) I b-beg your pardon.

HOOK. (With irony) Oh thanks! Shall we get along now?

GEO. (Stammering badly) Y-Yes.

HOOK. Aint ya gointer harm me?

GEO. Certainly not. I wouldn't harm a fly.

HOOK. Silly Billy you! I don't mean harm: I mean harm. (Pulls out her arm.)

GEO. (Taking it gingerly) How slow I am !

HOOK. Well you aint no bloomin' Fire-engine. (Looking up at him) Is this your idea O' harmin a girl?

GEO. Er - Er - Yes.

HOOK. Don't make me laugh, Ere - - Come cover! (She takes his arm and puts it round her neck, clasping her arm round his waist. Business ad, lib.) This is our style in Paddington.

GEO. Well, Well! (He looks down at her, thoughtfully. Then, very deliberately, he lifts her chin and kisses her A long kiss)

HOOK. (At last, after regaining her breath.) Oh, so are a soldier arter ull!

GEO. Oh yes. (kisses her again)

HOOK. (Looking up at him slyly) Didn't I tell you, you was a bit of a lad?

CURTAIN