

## Goodnight Mr Hitler! By Sid River

**Background** If you are doing WWI I as a topic, you will look at evacuees at some point. This depicts loony villagers debating whether to take evacuees from the big City into their homes. A bit like 12 angry men, the whole lot are eventually brought round by the lone voice of sanity, the billeting officer. Set at Christmas but could be used any time. Needs a solo singer to make it work well.

Parts	Description
Narrator 1 & 2	Pretty obvious!
Child 1	A few words. Must look like a pathetic urchin and be able to sing a solo song.
Child 2-6	More scruffy urchins with a few words each.
Mrs Pie	Cockney head-scarfed mother of urchins
BBC man (radio announcer)	Another one of these. I must stop putting them into scripts, but they're so useful and funny!
Mayor	Self important and loud. Bangs a hammer on the table a lot.
OAP 1 & 2	Grumpy and deaf, and quite comic. Should hobble on with sticks.
Parent 1 & 2	Concerned parents
Vicar	Scatty and not quite with it. Sometimes without it.
Lord Steppham	A bit of a bumbling idiot, and quite posh.
Lady Steppham	Snooty and self important. Simply too good for anyone else.
WI Lady	Her net curtains are cleaner than yours
Shopkeeper	Feh . . . Feh . . . fetch a cloth Granville!
Nurse	Swoons over anything Doctor Doodlebug (below) says
Doctor	More interested in golf than medicine. But has a heart after all.
Headmaster	Understanding but concerned about school resources
Teacher	Hassled, stressed and very hard working. Just like all teachers!
Farmer Crabbie	Do all farmers and pirates sound the same? This one's bad tempered
Billeting officer	A wonderful, caring concerned human being. The only voice of reason
Church warden	Another voice of reason — eventually!
Parent 3 & 4	A couple looking to save the day by offering refuge to a lone evacuee! Ahh!

### Notes

Set during WWI I at Christmas so you can use your imagination with the music! Uses very few props (Mop, bucket, headscarf, old radio, some air raid sound effects) but its fun to dress up in WWI I clothes for added realism.

Narrator 1: It's Christmas time. London 1941. Britain is at war with Germany. News of Bombings and gas attacks have got the whole country in a panic.

Narrator 2: Major cities like London and Birmingham are singled out as potential targets and their inhabitants are fearful but resolute. At number 21 Mornington Crescent, Mrs Hilda Pie is at war with the washing up.

*Scene is a terraced house front room. A lady washes up and several children are sitting around a table.*

Mrs Pie: Them Germans is not going to get the better of us my dears are they?

Child 1: No mum.

Mrs Pie: No. We'll soon send that silly Mr Hitler or whatever 'is name is packin'.

Child 2: Are there any more eggs mum?

Child 3: Do you think that Father Christmas is still going to come down our chimney this year mum?

Child 4: Or will it be that 'orrible Mr Hitler instead?

Child 5: With 'is 'orrible bombs and 'is orrible gas attacks?

Child 6: I think Norman's had a horrible gas attack Mum. He's eaten too many eggs.

Mrs Pie: Ahh, listen to my little cherubs. We're not going to let this nasty old war ruin our Christmas are we my dears. I'll put the wireless on and we can 'ave some lov-er-ly Christmas music.

*She turns on the radio. Wartime music plays but stops suddenly as a BBC reporter pops up behind it.*

BBC man: Here is a public announcement. The risk of gas and bomb attacks on London is now considered by the Prime Minister to be very serious indeed. In light of this, all citizens are advised to take appropriate safety precautions. You must ask yourself this question, (*points at Mrs Pie*) What are you doing about it?

Mrs Pie: Who me?

BBC man: Yes you Madam. What are you doing about it?

Mrs Pie: Er . . . Well . . . Er . . . Erm . . . (*Tries to adopt a posh accent but fails*) We have been practising our he-mergency procedure.

BBC man: Really?

Mrs Pie: Yes. Quick kids, under the table! *(All dive under the table)*

BBC man: *(wagging a finger)* No! No! No! That will not do!

Mrs Pie: Oh . . . Erm?

Child 1: What about an Anderson shelter Mum?

Mrs Pie: Good idea Nora! Quick my lover-lies, bring the spades out to the yard. *(They all get up and head off stage but the BBC man interrupts)*

BBC man: Yes, Good idea for you Madam, but what about those children! You need to get them to safety! Somewhere that Adolf's bombs can't touch them.

Mrs Pie: You mean . . . ?

BBC man: Yes!

All: Evacuation!

Narrator 3: All across Britain's major cities, children were packaged up in brown paper, clutching only a worn out teddy and a jam sandwich for comfort, and postmarked for the countryside.

*Children grab gear and march off to the tune of 'Keep right on to the end of the road', Mrs Pie exits crying. Scene changes to an empty village hall.*

Narrator 1: And all across Britain, unsuspecting villagers and rural types were going about their daily countryside business, milking cows, chewing wheat and saying 'Ooo arrr' with no knowledge of the invasion that was to soon come their way.

Narrator 2: In the little village of Steppham on the Toe, officials have announced the possibility that evacuated children may be arriving to upset the life of their small sleepy community.

Narrator 3: A meeting of the village council has been called to discuss whether Steppham on the Toe should open its doors to evacuees from the big city.

*Villages come on and take up their positions for a public meeting. They are arguing noisily. The Mayor bangs the table with a large root vegetable.*

Mayor: Order! Order! If you could just settle down everyone will get their say. Just be *seated* and be *quiet*!

OAP 1 (*Standing up and placing an ear trumpet to his ear*) What did he say?

OAP 2 (*Leaning on a walking stick*) There are some *sheep bleating* in the *choir*, I think.

OAP 1 (*Nods head knowingly*) Oh, that old problem again.

Parent 1: Come on Grandad, sit yourself down.

Mayor: Now then Ladies and Gentlemen, we are gathered here today...

Vicar: (*jumping up out of a daze*) . . . to join this man and this woman in holy mat . . .

Parent 2: No! Sit down Vicar. We're not in church now.

Vicar: Oh sorry, sorry!

Mayor: (*more calmly*) We are gathered here today to discuss a very important issue that is facing our village. That is, should we allow children from the big city to be evacuated here for the duration of the war. Could I just ask for a quick show of hands. All those in favour of having the little beasts. . . Erm I mean children, here in the village? (*3 hands go up*) And all those against? (*all other hands*) Well this shouldn't take long then. I feel that the first word in this debate should go to Lord and Lady Steppham who have kindly graced us with their presence here tonight. (*bows creepily*)

Lord S: (*bumbling*) Thank you. Now you all know that my family have owned this estate for hundreds of years. For *hundreds of years* we have lived in peace and tranquillity. For *hundreds of years* we have lived side by side with each other and even some of the . . . Erm . . . less desirable people. (*looks at the farmer*) For *hundreds of years* we have . . . Erm . . . we have . . . ? What was I saying?

Lady S: (*Sighing loudly and pulling him back to his seat. She stands up*) What my husband is trying to say is that we don't owe these city children anything. They're going to turn up here with their scruffy clothes and their dirty faces and trample all over our nice gardens and vandalise our beautiful houses. We all have children of our own to look after you know and *I myself* also have a *very* extensive social calendar to attend to.

Parent 2: Hear Hear! I've got three kids already. How am I going to fit another one into my house, it's hardly big enough now!

Lady from WI: And you can bet your top hat and tails that these urchins wont be clean. They'll all full of diseases and nits and goodness knows what. I imagine what they are going to look like at the next village fayre.

Shopkeeper: Hear Hear!

Nurse: Well I feel sorry for Doctor Doodlebug. All that extra work treating their illnesses. We not going to cope, are we Doctor.

Doctor: Well, Nurse Hodge, I have to say that I could see it being a strain on our resources. We could be facing a severe shortage of medicines and treatments. And I was rather hoping to take up golf after the Christmas break.

Farmer Huh Golf! I should be so lucky. What about my animals. They'll scare away my chickens! Whose going to compensate me for those when they've been chased halfway across the shire.

Parent 1: And will they be expected to go to school with our own children? Where will they sit. Will there be enough chalk boards?

Head: Well as head teacher of the village school, I can only say that we would do our best to give these poor unfortunates an education. Although it would not be easy as most of them have probably never seen the inside of a classroom ever before. Poor Mr Hackenbush here is rushed off his feet as it is.

Teacher: Rushed off my feet I am! What with all this AND the visit from the school inspector. *(mops brow)* I need a ginger biscuit and a lie down!

Shop keeper: *(ranting)* And I'm really worried about my shop. It's not as if the little devils are going to have any money to spend. It's going to take all my time to keep their thieving little fingers out of my sweet jars!

Farmer: *(Getting angry)* It's a disgrace!

Parent 1: We can't be expected to fork out good money for other peoples children!

Parent 2: Think of the crime rate!

WI lady: Think of the reputation of the village!

Doctor: Think of my golf lessons!

*Whole meeting descends into ranting and shouting and gesturing. The billeting officer stands up and walks to the middle.*

Billeting Of- ficer: Excuse me! Excuse me! *(shouts)* EXCUSE ME JUST ONE MOMENT!

*(Room goes quiet).*

Bill Off: Ladies and Gentlemen of Steppham on the Toe. As you may or may not know, I am the billeting officer for this area and as such I am responsible for trying to find homes for these "unfortunate little beasts" as you have so thoughtfully Christened them. I have sat here and listened to your points of view and quite frankly, I am appalled and ashamed at the kinds of things that I have been hearing.

All: *(sharp intake of breath)* Goodness me! My Giddy Aunt! etc

Bill Off: This country is at war and we must all do our bit to help. You cannot sit idly by and let these innocent children stay in a city where their houses might be bombed and their lives lost. It is your duty as British citizens and Christians to take them into your homes and into your hearts and help to protect them from the horrors of war. Surely Vicar, you must agree with me.

Vicar: Well . . . Erm . . . I . . . Erm . . . I have to say that . . . Erm . . . all things considered ... erm

Church Warden: I *think* what the Reverend is trying to say is that Mrs Officer is right. We should be ashamed of our selves. I sn't that correct Reverend?

Vicar: Why . . . Er . . . yes . . . ashamed of ourselves.

Church Warden: And that it is indeed our Christian duty to accept these poor children into our homes and put our petty excuses to one side. I sn't that right Vicar?

Vicar: Er ... why yes. *(suddenly enthusiastic)* Amen to that!

*They all look at each other guiltily*

Teacher: Well headmaster, I suppose that we could find room for a few more children in the schoolhouse. And I don't mind buying some extra chalks and slate boards if we're short.

Head: You know Hackenbush, I think you're right. It is our *duty* to educate *all* children after all, and the other pupils might like to make new friends with different experiences.

Nurse: What about you Farmer Crabbie, can't you change your mind and find room in your farmhouse for 1 more.

Farmer: Well . . . I could do with the extra help milking the cows and mucking out the pigs!

Vicar: That's the spirit. If Farmer Crabbie can find it in his heart to take in an evacuee, then surely all of us can.

Doctor: *(standing up with purpose)* On second thoughts, who needs to play golf anyway. I took an oath when I became a doctor to help treat the sick, whoever they may be. Let them come, one and all.

Nurse: *(Swooning with admiration)* Oh Doctor Doodlebug, you're such a hero!

Doctor: *(Looking modest)* I know, I know.

OAP 1: *(suddenly wakes)* What did he say?

OAP 2: He says he knows you're old!

OAP 1: *(Stands and shakes his stick)* Old! I'm not old, I'm only 92!

OAP 2: And very sprightly you are too. We could do with some new blood in the village. They could join us in the cricket team. I'd like to see how they could cope with your fast bowling!

*Everyone joins in with positive suggestions and the noise level grows again.*

Mayor: Order! Order! Ladies and Gentlemen!

*Group goes quiet*

Lady S: I think that my husband would like to say a few words to everyone.

Lord S: What? Oh . . . erm yes. I say. Well why don't we give these little chaps a chance, after all, my family have been giving peoples chances now for hundreds of years. And for hundreds of years they have . . .

WI Lady: *(Interrupting quickly)* Hear Hear! Three cheers for his Lordship! Hip—Hoorah (x3)

Billeting officer: That's settled then. I knew that you would see sense. I'll bring the children in. *(applause, shaking hands)*

*Children come in and all get chosen and taken except for 1. She stands bows head in sorrow and begins to sing silent night or other suitable sad song/carol*

Bill Off: *(Puts arm round child who is tearful)* Come on, lets go. *(both go to walk off)*

Parent 3: *(rushing in)* Are we too late? We got delayed in a snowdrift on the Lane from Town. Oh Dear, has the meeting finished.

Parent 4: We were so looking forward to helping in anyway that we could. Looks like it'll be just you and me this Christmas then dear.

Parent 3        Oh dear! And we went to all that trouble to decorate the tree and cook the goose for nothing. (*cries into a hankie*)

Parent 4:       Excuse me could you tell us how the meeting went. Did all the children find homes. It would mean a lot to us to know.

Bill off:        (*Sighing happily*) Mr and Mrs Goode, I can't *tell* you how pleased we are to see you! This could be your lucky day. Let me introduce you to someone very special . . .!

*All leave stage happily. Now sing a wartime Christmas song, if there is such a thing.*