

Meat Man Ah! Bisto!

Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance No 1 ('Land of Hope and Glory') fills the market.

Now I'm going to give you two lovely bits of fillet steak. I have these with two eggs on Christmas morning. Look at them. Beautiful. You want to give these – listen – you want to give them about three or four minutes on each side. You don't want to burn them, and you don't want them all bloody.

The market begins to take an interest.

Have you got any carrots? We can get you carrots. I like to steam the veg. When you boil it you lose all the goodness. Just chop them up. We can get you a steamer. I know where you can get a steamer. The man by the bookmaker's has got steamers, he's got griddle pans, he's got stockpots, the lot. So you steam your carrots and you get a little frying pan, the one your mum does your eggs in when you have your fry-up, and you get a knob of your butter, and a sprinkle of your brown sugar and a touch of honey. Honey from the bee. And you get your steamed carrots and you put them in the pan for a couple of minutes and glaze them. Glaze them –

Boy What about – ?

Meat Man I know what you're thinking – what about me chips? Well, there's more to a potato than chopping it into chips. We don't know vegetables in this country. They know vegetables in France, in Italy, I'll give them that. They know vegetables. Look at this marrow. Look at the cauliflower. The spinach. Do you think Popeye would have had muscles if his mother had boiled his spinach? Look at the cherry, the beautiful cherry. So pure, so ripe, so innocent! Look at that tomato, a beef tomato, a stick of celery and a beetroot. Where would a ploughman's lunch be without two slices of beetroot and a lump of cheese? There's more to cheese than Cheddar. There's your soft cheeses, your hard cheeses, your blue cheese, your strong cheeses, your Lancashire Crumbly and your Red Leicester. You can get it all on this market, son. Look at the

candle man! He's got more silver and brass than Harrods! Look at the furniture man – whoever thought there would be antiques on Romford Market! Look at the haberdasher – he's not earning ten pence a reel any more, he's got tablecloths, he's got napkins, cotton, silk and every colour and pattern you can imagine! The jeweller, you can get rings with your initials and sovereigns on a chain and all at the best prices. The Hoover man, I know the Hoover man, he's a miserable bastard, he always had three Hoovers, now he's got ten you can choose from. And the towel man. You've got your severe towel for your guest, you've got your fluffy towel that you like to wrap right around you after you get home from the market and you get out the bath, you've got your orange towel, your blue towel, for the beach, for the swimming pool, for your holiday.

The Boy and the Meat Man are up on the shoulders of the whole market now.

Meat Man You get on your holidays and your bags are packed and in the hold. Everything you need, it's here. Your suntan lotion, your flip-flops, your fly-pitcher has got your sunglasses, your book man has got your books, your underwear lady has got your bikini for your girlfriend. You take her away, and when you're on the beach and you're looking at the sea and you see the Spaniard walk by you and look you in the eye, you just remember, he might know how to cook a vegetable but he's looking at you with all smart gear and that smile on your face, and he'll know you're an Englishman. We're not on the back foot any more, son. We're standing proud. Look at my trailer. Look at it shine. We're never going back. Look at it gleaming. We're on the up, son, we're on the up. We've turned it round and it's all here in the market! They said the markets are a dying game, but they were wrong. It's 1988, boy. It's going to be the best year yet. Everything's in front of us. Thank Christ for Maggie, thank Christ! God bless her, son! God bless Margaret!

Whole Market God bless Margaret!

'Land of Hope and Glory' climaxes and the whole market sings. The Boy looks for the Girl and pulls her from the singing crowd towards the