

**Excerpt from Splendid Productions' 'Poundtown'
By Ben Hales**

SCENE 1 – THE FUNERAL

There is a public gathering outside The Strawberry Patch. A banner has been put up outside it that reads 'Farewell Jimmy Strawberry'. A folding table stands outside the entrance with a shabby tablecloth over it. On the table sits a tiny cake.

Outside the Newsagent, the 'Manningford Courier' newsboard reads "FRIDAY SPECIAL: A TOWN MOURNS.

Offstage we hear the muted sound of a small congregation singing 'The Lord's My Shepherd'.

There are a few townspeople waiting around. One of them is TEDDY, a homeless man. Eccentric but well-known in the town, TEDDY is smelly and unkempt. He has lost an eye and is missing a finger. Around his neck he has a leather string that disappears beneath his jumper. He is carrying two extremely old and stained copies of a charity magazine. He is interested in the cake and regarded suspiciously by the BUTCHER who is standing in the doorway of his shop.

TEDDY (calling to no one in particular) Help the homeless!

COMA MOTHER and COMA FATHER come through. One of the bystanders is DEBORAH, who calls to them

DEBORAH Morning Gavin, morning Frances. Not coming to the funeral?

COMA MOTHER No, sorry, no... we're going up to the hospital...

DEBORAH Yes, of course. Has there been any change?

COMA MOTHER Not really, no.

DEBORAH But she knows you're there, looking over her.

COMA FATHER Who knows?

COMA MOTHER We think so.

DEBORAH Don't let me stop you, although you'll be missing a right old shindig here.

COMA MOTHER Will we...?

DEBORAH No, not really, this town can't even afford a decent-sized cake.

COMA FATHER We have to get on...

The IMMIGRANT FAMILY appear, nearly bumping into COMA MOTHER and FATHER as they leave. DEBORAH recognises the IMMIGRANT FAMILY.

DEBORAH Oh hello again! It's Comfort, isn't it?

IMMIGRANT MOTHER Yes, that's right. (Introducing her husband and son) This is my husband Adeboye, and this is Babatunde. (Introducing Deborah) This is Deborah. She has a shop just down there.

DEBORAH That's right, 'Nailed It', just down there. Closed today, though.

IMMIGRANT MOTHER Such a sad occasion.

DEBORAH Yes, he was a lovely man. Most people are closing today. Least we could do, really... Not that it makes much difference if we're open or shut these days.

TEDDY gets a bit too close to the cake. The BUTCHER intervenes.

BUTCHER Oi! Back off Teddy, that's not for you!

IMMIGRANT SON (to DEBORAH) Who was the man who died?

DEBORAH Well, you're a lucky young fella because you've got your own mummy and daddy, haven't you? The man who died was called Jimmy Strawberry, and he looked after lots of little children who didn't have mummies and daddys, right here in the middle of Manningford, for years and years and years.

IMMIGRANT SON (looking towards The Strawberry Patch) Who's looking after all the children who don't have mummies and daddys?

DEBORAH Don't worry, someone else is looking after them now....
(To IMMIGRANT MOTHER) He's a sweetie, isn't he! How are you settling in? Must be a bit of a change for you, compared to... where was it you come from?

IMMIGRANT MOTHER We came from Birmingham...

DEBORAH Oh...

IMMIGRANT MOTHER But we travelled from Nigeria.

TEDDY approaches the cake again.

BUTCHER I told you Teddy, back off!

Grumbling, TEDDY goes towards the BUTCHER, and whips off his eyepatch.

BUTCHER (unimpressed) Put it away, Teddy, we've all seen it before...

DEBORAH Yeah, that's what I meant. Bet you didn't expect England to be like this! You probably came here to make money!

IMMIGRANT MOTHER (diplomatically) It's very nice. We were very lucky...

TEDDY (approaching IMMIGRANT SON) This one hasn't seen it! Joo wanna see my socket?

TEDDY lurches towards IMMIGRANT SON, going for his eyepatch.

DEBORAH (stopping TEDDY) Show some respect, Teddy! Not today!

TEDDY (pulling at the string around his neck) Joo wanna see this then?

DEBORAH For God's sake!

On the end of the string is a shrivelled brown, leathery finger. TEDDY waves it in the face of the IMMIGRANT SON, who shrieks.

TEDDY Whoo! What do you think of that then, eh!

BUTCHER Teddy, put it away!

DEBORAH (to the FAMILY) I'm so sorry...

IMMIGRANT SON What is that?

TEDDY That's my finger, son! Lost it when I was as big as you are now! Bitten off by a badger! (TEDDY mimes a ferocious chewing badger) He got my eye too, hungry little bastard!

TEDDY puts his face close to the IMMIGRANT SON's and lifts his eyepatch. IMMIGRANT SON is horrified, but fascinated.

IMMIGRANT SON What's a badger?

BUTCHER (intervening) I've told you Teddy, it's not on!

BUTCHER bundles TEDDY out of the way.

DEBORAH What must you think of us? It's normally a lovely little town...