

HELTER SKELTER

By

Jackson Decamot

**INT - ST HOLMBURY'S VILLAGE HALL - AFTERNOON**

ST HOLMBURY'S VILLAGE COMMITTEE are meeting to discuss the annual village fair. COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE is chairing the meeting. He is sitting at the head of a large trestle table. Seated around the table are 8 WOMEN and 11 MEN, all aged between about 40 and 75. Amongst them are: the VICAR, MARJORIE the Vicar's wife, MRS ORMSKIRK, EDWARD MASTERS, MARY JONES, and BARBARA DAVIS. There is also EMMA FORD, a 15 year old girl who represents the youth of the village. MARJORIE is taking the minutes.

Everyone has in front of them a notepad and pen, and a cup of tea. Across the middle of the table are strewn several empty plates, a plate containing a few sandwiches, and another containing a few slices of cake.

EMMA FORD

Why don't we get Peter Piper to open the fair?

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE

I'm sorry, my dear, but I've never heard of him, outside the nursery rhyme that is. Who or what is Peter Piper?

EMMA FORD

He's a DJ on Radio Active. Most people at school think he'll be the next Chris Evans. He's huge with students. And I think he may live near St Holmbury.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE

Oh, I see.

The Colonel offers the last plate of the sandwiches around the table.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE cont

I must defer to your greater knowledge of these matters, young Emma. All those in favour of Emma approaching Mr Piper, please raise your hand.

All 20 people sitting round the table raise their hands.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE

Motion carried ... and if we can rely on Mrs Ormskirk, as ever, to supply the ornamental flourishes...?

The COLONEL looks over to a plump little woman of about 50.

MRS ORMSKIRK  
(not looking particularly enthusiastic)  
Of course, Colonel.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE  
In that case, we are now onto any other  
business. Is there any?

Emma raises her hand.

EMMA FORD  
Err, I have one.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE  
(sounding slightly surprised)  
Really? OK, go ahead Emma.

EMMA FORD  
Why don't we ask Mr Henderson to put up  
his Helter Skelter for the fair?

No one says anything. Several people around the table  
exchange glances.

EMMA FORD cont  
My parents told me how great it was in  
the old days.

Emma looks around the table. Some of the committee members  
avoid eye contact; some even look down at their empty  
plates.

EMMA FORD cont  
(sounding less confident now)  
My American cousin, Jed, is coming over  
to visit soon ... he mentioned sliding  
down the Helter Skelter as a kid ... and  
I just thought it'd be kinda nice to ...

There is an uncomfortable silence for a few moments. The  
Colonel leans forward in his chair.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE  
(talking quietly)  
Frankly, Emma, nothing would give us  
greater pleasure than to have Mr  
Henderson participate again. But since  
the tragedy of 40 years ago, he has shut  
himself away and is very rarely to be  
seen out and about. My wife has tried  
many times to shake him out of his  
crippling despair but nothing seems to  
work.

EMMA FORD

Perhaps rebuilding the Helter Skelter would take his mind off his problems.

EDWARD MASTERS

Emma does have a point. Working on Henderson's Helter Skelter could be therapeutic.

MARY JONES

That's very true. And pride of place in our village fair always used to be the fifty-foot multicoloured marvel that was Henderson's Helter Skelter.

EDWARD MASTERS

Put St Holmbury's Village Fair on the map. Made us a nationally renowned event. We even used to stock a postcard of it in the village shop. Hugely popular with tourists.

BARABARA DAVIS

But what about the tragedy? We can hardly overlook that now can we?

EMMA FORD

What happened? I know it had something to do with Mrs Henderson and their son, but I don't know what.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE

It was in the evening of Saturday 27th April 1968, the eve of the annual fair. Sally Henderson and her five year old son Mark were crossing the road from the shop to the village green. They were going along to watch the final preparations of the Helter Skelter - Mark was looking forward to his first ever slide down it the next day.

Suddenly a little white BMW came hurtling round the corner. He hit Mrs Henderson and young Mark - they both died on the way to hospital. The driver, whose own six-month-old son was a passenger in a carrycot in the back of the car, was later convicted of manslaughter, served six months imprisonment, and was banned from driving for two years.

Max Henderson saw everything from the top of the Helter Skelter. Devastated the poor man. The entire village turned out for the funeral of Mrs Henderson and young Mark three days later. Their graves have been tended by a grief stricken Max Henderson ever since.

That was the last time that any of us has seen the Helter Skelter. As far as I know, it remains packed away in Mr Henderson's garage.

Grief's a personal thing, and we should respect his privacy.

EDWARD MASTERS

(looking directly at the Colonel)

Oh come Percy! Grief's one thing, but his has been going on for years.

The Colonel looks affronted at the usage of his first name and goes to say something but is cut off:

MARY JONES

Perhaps we'd be better neighbours to Max if we stopped pussyfooting around and helped him to confront his loss and perhaps he'd be able to move on. I think we'd be doing him a favour.

Several people around the table start nodding.

EMMA FORD

So can I do it? Can I go talk to Mr Henderson?

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE

(less enthusiastically than before)

All those in favour of Emma trying to persuade Mr Henderson to bring the Helter Skelter out of retirement, please raise your hand.

13 people sitting round the table raise their hands. The Colonel is not one of them.

COLONEL WORTHINGTON-SMYTHE cont

Well it's close, but ... the motion is carried.

**INT - THE FORD'S KITCHEN - EVENING**

EMMA FORD, MR FORD, and MRS FORD are sitting round their kitchen table discussing Emma's meeting with the committee.

MRS FORD  
So how'd it go?

EMMA  
Alright I s'pose. I was the youngest person there of course - everyone else was ancient.

MRS FORD  
Did you agree to do anything for the fair?

EMMA  
I suggested we get Peter Piper to open the fair. Lots of kids would come to the fair just to see him. I volunteered to ask him.

MR FORD  
How are you going to do that?

EMMA  
I thought I'd ask him live on air. I also suggested we get the Helter Skelter back in fair.

MR FORD  
Old man Henderson's Helter Skelter?

EMMA  
Yeah. I offered to persuade him to put it up again.

MR FORD  
That's more of an ask isn't it?

EMMA  
I know. I kinda wish I hadn't now.

MRS FORD  
How're you going to persuade him?

EMMA  
Dunno. I've got to think of an excuse for talking to him first.

MR FORD  
How about bob-a-job?

EMMA

Bob-a-what?

MRS FORD

Your dad's talking about what the cubs used to do back when he was a boy: They'd go round to their neighbours and offer to do a job for a bob - that's like a five pence now, but worth more like a fiver in today's money. The money would go to charity I think. I don't think they do that kind of thing anymore love.

EMMA

I'm a bit old for cubs - and I'm not a boy!

MRS FORD

How about D of E? You're doing that at school aren't you?

EMMA

That's hiking and camping - how's that going to help?

MRS FORD

But don't you also need to do community service of some sort to get a D of E Award?

EMMA

Oh yeah, doing good deeds for old fogeys! Mr Henderson could be my old fogey.

**EXT - MR HENDERSON'S DRIVEWAY**

Emma is standing outside MR HENDERSON'S house. It's pouring with rain and she's only just keeping under cover by standing in the porch. She rings on the door bell and waits. A few minutes later the door opens.

EMMA

Mr Henderson?

MR HENDERSON

Whatever you're selling, I'm not interested.

EMMA

I'm not selling anything, I'm here for...

MR HENDERSON

(interrupting Emma)

Whatever it is, I'm not interested.

Mr Henderson goes to close the door.

EMMA

(blurting out very quickly)

Bob-a-job?

MR HENDERSON

You're a bit old for that aren't you?

EMMA

Yes - and I'm not a boy. I just wanted to stop you closing the door.

MR HENDERSON

OK - what do you want?

EMMA

Community service.

MR HENDERSON

Community service? You're a young criminal are you?

EMMA

It's nothing like that - it's part of my D of E - doing good deeds for old ... I mean, for senior citizens.

MR HENDERSON

D of E? Duke of Edinburgh award?



EMMA

Yeah, my school's really big on it -  
"forms a part of a holistic education"  
or something like that.

MR HENDERSON

Well that's all very well, but there's  
nothing I need doing.

EMMA

There must be something I could do for  
you - mow your lawn, wash your car...

MR HENDERSON

In this weather?

Mr Henderson goes again to shut the door, but then stops.

MR HENDERSON

Actually, there is one thing you can  
help me with.

EMMA

Yes?

MR HENDERSON

I've got some silverware in the attic  
I've been meaning to get rid of a while  
- perhaps you can help me shine it up  
and then take it down to the antique  
shop in the village for me.

EMMA

(brightening)

Love to.

MR HENDERSON

I guess you'd better come inside.

**EXT - MR HENDERSON'S HALLWAY**

EMMA is standing in MR HENDERSON's hallway. Mr Henderson is not present. Emma is looking round. It's a very large space, bigger than most people's living rooms. There is a hat stand near the door, a large oak table under the window, a cupboard, and several bookshelves.

In one corner there is a piano. Emma approaches it. The lid over the keyboard is closed. There is a small booklet of sheet music on the stand. Emma takes a look at the page to which the booklet is opened and smiles.

Emma looks over her shoulder - there is no sign of Mr Henderson.

EMMA

Mr Henderson?

There's no response. Emma hesitates - she seems drawn to the piano. At last she sits down on the piano stool and opens the lid of the piano to reveal the keyboard. She starts playing the right hand part of the piece very quietly.

We hear Beethoven's FÜR ELISE. Emma plays a little tentatively at first, but increasing in confidence, and getting louder as she progresses through the piece.

Emma stops then goes back to the beginning, this time playing both the left and right hand parts together. As she reaches the bottom of the page, she turns the page over and continues. She suddenly stops and turns round.

Mr Henderson is standing in the doorway holding a large cardboard box filled with assorted silverware. He has a tear rolling down his cheek. Emma leaps to her feet.

EMMA

I'm really sorry, I shouldn't've done that. I just couldn't ... I'm so sorry.

MR HENDERSON

Don't be.

EMMA

Thing is, I just saw the piece open on the piano and ... well it's something I've learned recently ... and it...

MR HENDERSON

And it needs finishing.

EMMA

What?

MR HENDERSON

It needs finishing. You've got about 20 bars to go. Why don't take it from the low A with the left hand, just before the 4-bar flourish with the right hand, and take it to the end.

Emma sits back down on the piano stool. She hesitates for a few minutes, then starts playing again. Mr Henderson is still standing in the doorway holding the box. Finally Emma finishes the piece. She lays her hands in her lap and looks downwards. She's too embarrassed to turn to face Mr Henderson.

MR HENDERSON

That was very good, but it could sound better.

EMMA

I know; I'm not very good, I've not been playing very long.

MR HENDERSON

Not you. The piano could sound better. The E-flat is too flat, and the notes around middle-C are all a little strained. The top-end keys sound a little clicky. And I can see you working the sustain pedal, but it's not releasing fully enough, so the notes are running on for a little too long. But these things are easily fixable.

Mr Henderson's whole demeanour has lightened. He puts the box down on the oak table and walks over to the cupboard next to the front door. He opens the cupboard door and carefully removes a large tool box. He places it next to the cardboard box on the table and opens it out.

Inside are a huge array of pliers and small screwdrivers. There are also rolls of piano wire of different thicknesses, off-cuts of felt, some small lengths of wood, several round wooden pegs, a large tube of super glue, a small oil can, and several tuning forks.

EMMA

Are you a piano tuner?

MR HENDERSON

Used to be. Or should I say, piano tuning's one of the things I used to do. In fact that's how I met Sally, my late wife.

EMMA

Really?

MR HENDERSON

She was 18 at the time, and still living at home. This home in fact - she inherited it a few years later when her father died.

She was playing when I got here; her father let me in. I waited just here and listened until she'd got to the end of the piece before getting started with the tuning.

Mr Henderson selects two pairs of pliers. He walks around to the back of the piano and removes the panel protecting the strings.

EMMA

What was she playing?

MR HENDERSON

It was another Beethoven piece: Moonlight Sonata; very calming, very dreamy.

EMMA

I know that one. Mum's got it on CD.

MR HENDERSON

You can't beat hearing it in person. Now, play a scale with 2 flats in it for me. Just the right hand.

Emma does so.

MR HENDERSON

Could you hear that? B-flat was fine, but the E-flat not quite so.

EMMA

I think so.

Mr Henderson uses the pliers to make some adjustments to one of the strings.

MR HENDERSON

And again please.

Emma plays the same notes again. Mr Henderson makes another small adjustment, then tightens two other strings.

MR HENDERSON

One more time please.

Emma plays the notes again.

MR HENDERSON

Much better. Now let's see what we can do with that pedal. Play the first 8 bars, pressing the sustain pedal as you're playing the left hand triplets, and releasing as the right hand takes over each time.

Emma plays the first 8 bars while Mr Henderson bends low and looks long the line of strings. He then walks round to the front of the piano and crouches down into the foot well.

MR HENDERSON

First 8 bars again please.

Emma plays the first 8 bars again.

MR HENDERSON

Got it.

Mr Henderson hurries over to the toolbox, selects a screwdriver and picks up the small oil can, and hurries back. He crouches into the foot well again, removes one of the levers and squeezes a few drops of oil onto it. He then replaces the lever.

MR HENDERSON

One last time with the 8 bars.

Emma plays the first 8 bars for a third time.

MR HENDERSON

Much better. Can you hear the difference?

EMMA

I think so. The sustained notes stop much more quickly now when I lift the pedal.

MR HENDERSON

Exactly. Now let's hear the whole thing, but without the repeats.

Emma plays the whole piece through without stopping. Her playing is much more confident now, and she makes no errors. When she gets to the bottom of each sheet, she deftly turns the page with her right hand and smoothly continues.

The whole time Emma is playing, Mr Henderson watches from the doorway as he had before, but this time he is smiling broadly. When Emma gets to the end, he claps.

MR HENDERSON

Much better.

**INT - MR HENDERSON'S KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

EMMA and MR HENDERSON are sitting at the kitchen table. Both are polishing silver plates. In the middle of the table are a stack of plates that have been polished to a high sheen. On the side is the cardboard box that MR Henderson had been holding earlier; it is now empty.

EMMA

So what did you do apart from piano turning?

MR HENDERSON

General wood working: cabinet making and boat building.

EMMA

Boat building? But we're miles from the coast.

MR HENDERSON

True. But we do have 36 miles of canals in the Cotswolds, 60 odd miles of the Thames not far off. Lichfield's not far away and there's miles of canal that way too. I've had plenty of work over the years.

EMMA

(hesitating as she speaks)

Is that er.... Is that how you came to build the Helter Skelter? Being the master wood worker in the village?

MR HENDERSON

You know about the Helter Skelter?

EMMA

Yeah. My parents mentioned it, and I've seen a postcard it was on.

MR HENDERSON

I don't remember whose idea it was, but yes, that's why I was asked to build it. We put it up each year for 10 years, until...

Mr Henderson falls silent. He stares down at the plate he's been polishing and sighs, but doesn't continue.

EMMA  
(very quietly)  
... until the car crash?

MR HENDERSON  
Yes. Yes the car crash.

EMMA  
(almost under her breath)  
It must have been terrible.

MR HENDERSON  
It was. I was depressed for the longest time. The next year, I couldn't face rebuilding the Helter Skelter. Nor the next year; nor the next. In the end the village committee stopped asking me, and I shut myself away more and more.

Emma walks over to the dresser. There are several photographs in frames, including one of a YOUNG WOMAN and a SMALL BOY. The woman is surprisingly similar to Emma - she has the same long, thick, near black hair, pale skin and green eyes. Also like Emma, she looks quite slim without being skinny. She could almost be Emma's older sister.

EMMA FORD  
Is this them?

MR HENDERSON  
Yes. That was taken on Mark's third birthday.

EMMA FORD  
He's a real cutie.

MR HENDERSON  
Yes he *was*.

EMMA FORD  
Yes of course, *was*. Sorry.

MR HENDERSON  
Don't be. To be honest, I'm sick of people treading on eggshells around me. It was sweet at first, and I'm sure they all meant well, but it's got to the point where I don't feel I can walk around the village anymore. It's nice to be able to talk about them with someone.

Emma and Mr Henderson are silent for a few minutes. Emma returns to the table and finishes polishing the final silver plate.

EMMA

Do you still have the Helter Skelter?

MR HENDERSON

Yes - I could never quite bring myself to get rid of it. It's taking up half of my garage - it's probably not up to much anymore. Do you want to see it?

EMMA

I'd love to.

**INT - MR HENDERSON'S GARAGE**

EMMA and MR HENDERSON are in the garage, one of which is taken up with several large humps covered with dust sheets. Mr Henderson removes the dust sheets one by one.

MR HENDERSON

This is it: Henderson's Helter Skelter. Those long straight panels make up the bulk of the ride. That pile of struts make up the framework. Those curved pieces make up the slide. And that last pile makes up the turret.

EMMA

Wow - all the pieces look in pretty good nick.

MR HENDERSON

This garage is completely weatherproof - so there's been no water damage or anything like that.

EMMA

Do you think it could be put up again?

MR HENDERSON

I should think so - there might be the odd strut that needs replacing, and the panels need a good repainting, but I think it could.

EMMA

Would you be prepared to build it one last time? For the fair this year?

MR HENDERSON

No I don't think so.

EMMA

What! Why not?



MR HENDERSON

Who'd be interested in a Helter Skelter these days?

EMMA

Loads of people would.

MR HENDERSON

It was old fashioned when I first made it - that was nearly 50 years ago. Kids like theme parks nowadays - my Helter Skelter is somewhat tame.

EMMA

But it's famous.

Mr Henderson scratches his head and looks over the various piles tutting all the while. Eventually he says:

MR HENDERSON

No! It'll be a lot of effort, and I really don't think it's worth it.

EMMA

Why did you keep it all these years if you had no intention of ever putting it back up?

MR HENDERSON

It's like everything else round here, Sally ... err sorry, Emma; it's just one more thing that I've been meaning to get rid of, but just could quite get round to.

EMMA

How about giving it one last go? Then you can get rid of it for good.

Mr Henderson sighs. He says nothing for a while. He walks over to the pile of panels. He picks up a panel and leans it against the side wall of the garage. He takes a few steps backwards to look at it. The paint is flaking, but the words "Henderson's Helter Skelter" are still visible.

MR HENDERSON

Oh what the hell - why not. Although I think I'll need some help to put it up - I'm not as young as I used to be.

EMMA

Oh thanks Mr Henderson.

Emma throws her arms around Mr Henderson's neck and kisses him gently on the cheek.

**INT - RADIO ACTIVE'S STUDIO B**

PETER PIPER is sitting at the control desk. He is holding several sheets of paper and is reading from the top one. He is wearing headphones and is talking into a microphone. JO NICKS is in the mixing studio watching him through the soundproof glass and listening in through her own headphones.

PETER PIPER

That was *The Long and Winding* road by the Beatles. And now we have our Friday Request. Who do we have lined up Jo?

JO NICKS

On line one, we have an Emma Ford from St Holmbury - that's your neck of the woods isn't it?

PETER PIPER

That's right; I'm just a few miles down the road. Hi Emma, what's your request?

EMMA (O.S.)

I've got a request, but it's not musical.

PETER PIPER

This is Friday's song request slot, Emma. No exceptions, sorry.

JO NICKS

I think you could at least listen to Emma's request, Peter.

PETER PIPER

Oh go on then - what did you have in mind Emma?

EMMA (O.S.)

Will you come open the St Holmbury's Fair?

PETER PIPER

I'm afraid that really is something that I can't...

EMMA (O.S.)

(cutting across PETER and gabbling slightly)

We're re-opening the Helter Skelter.

JO NICKS

You mean the one and only Henderson's Helter Skelter?

EMMA (O.S.)

That's right.

JO NICKS

I remember hearing about that. It's been out of action for years hasn't it?

EMMA (O.S.)

That's right, but Mr Henderson himself has agreed to put it up again.

JO NICKS

Wow. Didn't realise he was still alive. This is truly historic Peter - you don't really want to miss out on this one do you?

PETER PIPER

Well it's err ... well not really the sort of thing that I'd, err normally do. But I ... err. Henderson's Helter Skelter eh?!

(beat)

You know what - I think I might make an exception on this occasion.

EMMA (O.S.)

Thanks Peter, you're sick.

PETER PIPER

Err thanks, I think; Emma, stay on the line and let Jo take your details while I play some more music ... and in the circumstances, this seems quite appropriate: Robbie Williams, *Let Me Entertain You!*

**EXT - VILLAGE GREEN - EARLY EVENING**

Posters festoon the neighbourhood. They are on every tree, every lamppost, in most of the shop windows, several are pinned onto the doors of the village church, and there's even one attached to the door of the police station. On each poster in large block capitals are the words:

ST HOLMBURY'S ANNUAL FAIR

TO BE OPENED BY RADIO ACTIVE'S PETER PIPER

FEATURING HENDERSON'S HELTER SKELTER

EMMA and JED are sitting in the middle of the village green admiring the famous Helter Skelter.

EMMA

Did you enjoy your week in Oxford?

JED

Sure did. Brought it all back - don't think the city's changed in 40 odd years.

EMMA

Where did you go?

JED

All the usual touristy places: the colleges, bookshops, took a punt along the river, and did a real cool Alice in Wonderland tour.

EMMA

Sounds like fun.

JED

Sure was. And now here's that old Helter Skelter - exactly as I remember it.

EMMA

Mr Henderson's done a great job hasn't he?

JED

Sure has. Where's he got to now?

EMMA

Think he went off to the pub for a well-earned rest.

JED

Cool. So shall we have quick go on the slide while no one's around?

EMMA

Absolutely not - the first person to go down it has to be Peter Piper?

JED

Why?

EMMA

Village tradition - whoever opens the fair has the first ride on the slide. That's how they always used to do it.

JED

Shame. Look, I picked up this vintage, pre-digital camera on my travels. It would have been the latest thing when I was last here in England.

Jed removes a camera from his rucksack and shows it to Emma. It's an old SLR 35mm camera about 4 times the size of a digital camera and made of sturdy black plastic. On its upper side it has a huge flash.

JED cont

It's a Nikon F, made in 1960. You even have to load it with film and get someone to develop it for you - something you've never had to worry about!

EMMA

Hmm very nice, but what's it got to do with the Helter Skelter.

JED

Well, look at this bit here.

Jed points to a small lever on top of the camera's casing.

JED cont

That's the timer control - it's the only gimmick that the camera's got. You get a delay of about 15 seconds - so you have to set up the shot, set the camera, run round to the other side, and then ... BOOM, you can take a shot of yourself.

EMMA

Still not seeing where you're going with this.

JED

I just thought it would be a bit of fun to give it a whirl in the old-fashioned way. I thought I could set up the camera at the bottom of the Helter Skelter near the landing area; we could run up the inside and get caught on camera as we land. Then get the film developed, have several weeks anticipation without knowing how well it will turn out, you know, the whole 60s thing.

EMMA

Sounds like fun - I'm up for it. But why can't this wait 'til tomorrow?

JED

Well, in the heat of the moment would we really get a chance to set up the camera? People will be too keen to clamber up the famous Helter Skelter to wait for us messing around. Do it now and we can take as long as we like setting up the shot. Maybe you can be waiting at the top of the slide already, so only one of us has to run up to the top.

EMMA

You do have a point I s'pose.

JED

So shall we go for it then? No one will know.

EMMA

Yeah, go on then!

Emma climbs to the top of the helter skelter while Jed sets up the camera on a box, and activates the timer by pushing the silver lever. He then rushes up the winding inside staircase. At the top, they both squeeze on to the same mat and come swirling down the slide, barely able to contain their excitement. As they land the camera flashes. Several seconds later the camera flashes a second time.

JED

Brilliant. Not sure why it flashed again, but I'm fairly sure we were spot on with the first flash. Thank you so much - I'll send you a copy of the photo when I get back to the States.

#### **EXT - VILLAGE GREEN - MORNING**

The village is swarming with people eagerly awaiting the opening of the annual fair. A crew from the local TV station has set up cameras and are filming the event.

About 5000 people have squeezed on to the village square. On the centre of the green is the giant helter skelter towering over the crowd. The woodwork is shiny and looks well polished, the paintwork on the lettering on the side of the helter skelter has been newly done, and the entire structure is covered in red, white and blue bunting. There is a ribbon tied across the riders' entrance to the helter skelter.

In the centre of the crowd are the VICAR and his wife MAJORIE. Next to them is the local MAYOR dressed in his ceremonial gown topped off with the chains of office. On the

other side of the VICAR dressed in a very smart suit is PETER PIPER and next to him, a smartly dressed MAX HENDERSON.

The final person in the small group is dressed as an old-fashioned town crier. In one hand he is holding a hand bell and in the other an oversized pair of scissors. The TOWN CRIER starts to ring the bell and the crowd fall silent.

TOWN CRIER

Oh yeah! Oh Yeah! People of St Holmbury  
- welcome to our annual fair. Please  
show your appreciation for Mr Peter  
Piper.

The crowd cheers. The town crier hands the oversized scissors to PETER PIPER. PETER cuts the ribbon. PETER turns to wave at the crowd who cheer even louder. He then disappears inside the Helter Skelter. After a few moments, he emerges at the top of the slide holding a large coconut hair mat.

After riding the Helter Skelter without mishap, Peter Piper takes the microphone to declare the Annual St Holmbury's Fair open.

PETER PIPER

You can probably guess that Peter Piper is only my professional name. My real family name would have been known for the very worst of reasons to any of you who were living in the village 40 years ago - it was my father's car that caused a fatal accident near this very village green. I was a passenger in that car. He had been drinking and we took the bend much too fast.

Of course, I was far too young to know anything about it at the time but, as a young reporter, I read the cuttings and knew what devastation it had caused Max Henderson and his family. I have never been able to drive through this lovely village without feeling the shame of what my father had done. Emma Ford somehow found all this out and introduced me to Max.

Today, thanks to the marvellous generosity of spirit shown to me by Max Henderson, I have been able to atone. Sir, I will be eternally grateful to you; and I believe that today we have both achieved closure.

The two men embrace in front of 5000 cheering people, tears filling both their eyes.

**INT - EMMA'S LOUNGE - AFTERNOON SEVERAL WEEKS LATER**

EMMA is sitting on the sofa. There is a pile of letters on the coffee table in front of her.

On the top of the pile is an airmail package with a US postage stamp. Emma opens the letter and empties the contents onto the table in front of her. There is a letter and a small envelop. She unfolds and reads the letter.

She then opens the envelope and removes two photographs. She looks at the first one. It shows Emma and Jed tumbling on to the landing mat together at the bottom of the Henderson's Helter Skelter grinning like Cheshire cats.

She then picks up and looks at the second photograph. She gasps and drops it onto the coffee table face up. It contains two people: a YOUNG WOMAN and a SMALL BOY. We've seen them before in a picture on Mr Henderson's mantelpiece: They are Mrs Sally Henderson and her five-year-old son Mark. Both are sliding down Henderson's Helter Skelter and both are waving and smiling at the camera.

**FADE OUT**

**CLOSING CREDITS**