

June 1917...

Have you ever had a moment of madness, the consequence of which has had you wishing you could turn back time and erase that error of judgement? If so then you may feel some pity toward Sid Jones. Sid and his assistant, Herbert Dye, are fish merchants from Lowestoft, who regularly travel to Brandon and lodge with Mary Malt on London Road when they stay overnight. Twenty-two year old Dye is very popular in Brandon, due mainly to the fact he has coped with having just one leg since he was a boy.

Tonight Sid is back in town and is approaching Mary Malt's home. Dye is absent and Mary's son questions why this is so. Sid replies, "*There has been an air raid at Lowestoft and Herbert Dye has had his other leg blown off!*" This is of course total nonsense and Sid is merely joking with the boy. However the boy is so upset he runs off to tell his mother. Mary appears and asks Sid if it is true what her son is telling her. Will Sid own up to lying to her son? He could put the record straight right now, but then will she think bad of him? It's only a small lie, a joke, what harm could it do? Perhaps he could catch Mary out with the joke too? Mary gasps as Sid confirms the story. He then adds, "*There are over a thousand casualties!*" A few passers-by hear the claim and gather around Sid to hear more.

It escalates when Reverend Mensink appears on the scene and Mary tells him of the apparent tragedy that has befallen poor Dye. Sid keeps up the pretence and informs the Reverend it is true, after all he cannot tell a man of God that he is lying. The Reverend believes he can see tears in Sid's eyes, so it must be true, immediately he heads off toward the Police Station to inform Inspector Frederick Mobbs about poor Dye. It is not long before the whole town is retelling the tale of poor Herbert Dye. Hedley Mills and Herbert Field hear the story. Field is most concerned, so he makes off to the railway station where Dye is due to arrive on the 9pm train, despite some questioning how a man with no legs will travel by train!

Sid's 'joke' starts unravelling when Inspector Mobbs makes further enquiries with the military and is told there has been no air raid in Lowestoft. The following day Mobbs catches up with Sid and challenges the man about the gossip he has been spreading. Sid admits he was merely joking, surely no harm has been done, but then he is informed the military authorities have taken a keen interest in him and his story. Sid is mortified and promptly commits to going round town correcting his story.