

# SNAKEHIPS

by

KLAUS WITTING

Original screenplay based on the life of Ken "Snakehips"  
Johnson, the first black swing band leader in Britain

- EXTRACT -

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INT. KEN'S FLAT / LONDON EVENING

Condensation on the surface of a mirror. A white handkerchief wipes the steam off to reveal KEN JOHNSON'S smiling face.

Fats Waller BLASTS FROM THE RADIO.

KEN

(addressing the mirror)

And now, Ladies and Gentlemen, let me introduce you, to the hottest bunch in town. The West Indian Dance Orchestra under the baton of...

(he pauses to correct himself)

.... The West Indian Orchestra with me, Snakehips... No, no, no.

KEN is in the process of getting smartly dressed whilst practising introductory lines to a gig.

He suavely ties his bow tie. The photograph of a pretty black girl is wedged into one of the corners of the frame.

KEN (CONT'D)

Ladies and Gentlemen - Snakehips Johnson and his West Indians.

Enjoy!

(he addresses his own reflection)

What d'you reckon?

Having finished binding his tie, he slides into a white tuxedo jacket.

KEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I know what you mean, maybe a little too subtle? No need being too humble, I agree. Go for it, Snakes.

Ken stands up to look himself up and down in the mirror. He likes what he sees. Crisp black shirt, stiff bow tie, and the white trousers with tuxedo make for a striking contrast to his, smooth, dark skin. He winks at himself.

KEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

And now, ladies and gentlemen, the hottest, the coolest, the one and only, the greatest of them all - that's me, Snakehips Johnson with my West Indians!

He bows and rushes over to the bedside table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

That's it. That's it! That'll get them going. Thank you, and good night.

He slides an ivory conductor's baton into a specially tailored pocket inside the lining of his coat and leaves the flat.

CUT TO:

EXT. EARL'S COURT ROAD NIGHT

Ken Johnson steps onto the busy pavement. The street is dark. None of the street lights are alight for fear of enemy bombers. Houses and passing cars are also darkened.

Ken stops at a news stand to buy The Evening Standard. In contrast to the black-out, the mood of the people around him seems far from subdued. The animated chatter of passers-by suggests an exciting Saturday night ahead.

As there are no cabs in sight, Ken decides to take the bus. He crosses the road and jumps onto one heading for Piccadilly.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS NIGHT

Ken climbs to the top of the double decker bus. There are only a handful of other people on the top deck. Amongst them, four young Canadians, two boys and two girls in army uniforms.

The girls are wearing nursing staff uniform and the boys, both Lieutenants, are in navy uniforms. The names on their tags read HELEN STEVENS, THELMA STEWART, Lieut. JACK CLUNIE and Lieut. JACK WRIGHT. Ken passes them and sits down at the very front of the bus. The Canadians are in high spirits and therefore a little louder than anybody else, but nobody seems to mind. Ken starts to read his paper, while the chattering is going on a couple of seats behind him.

THELMA

Tonight's gonna be a ball, guys.  
Rosie is bringing all her friends  
from communications.

Helen, the other girl butts in.

HELEN

She told me her folks cabled her a  
whole load of money, for her twenty  
first...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THELMA

(interrupts)

... and... she also told me, she's gonna spend it all on us tonight.

HELEN

So better hang on to your pants, boys!

They laugh. Ken looks over his shoulder and smiles.

JACK WRIGHT

This place we're going to, what's it like?

THELMA

Splendid. It's called the Cafe de Paris. Real high time place, Jack. You boys are gonna love it.

HELEN

Negro boy by the name of Snakehips leads the band. He's real hot.

THELMA

You better believe it.

JACK

You girls fancy a bite to eat first?

Thelma and Helen in unison -

THELMA/HELEN

Yeah, please!

Ken smiles but does not turn around.

CUT TO:

EXT. WEST END STREET NIGHT

Piccadilly Circus is teeming with excited Saturday revellers. Many of them are in uniforms, both British and foreign.

There are no street lights on, but many people have small torches, some hand-operated, mechanical ones, which have a built in dynamo and are operated by the rhythmic squeezing and releasing of a small lever. The undulating drone these dynamo torches make, mixes with the general happy sounds of the crowd.

Ken jumps off his bus and continues on foot towards the 'Martinez Restaurant'.

EXT. MARTINEZ RESTAURANT NIGHT

GRAHAM, the doorman, sees Ken and opens the doors to the restaurant with a grand, inviting gesture.

GRAHAM

Good to see you again, Mr. Johnson,  
Sir.

(pointing towards the sky)  
Glad to say, no Jerries spoiling  
our fun tonight.

Ken smiles and looks up at the sky. The stars are out and a resplendent moon appears above the dark roof tops.

CUT TO:

EXT. SKY NIGHT

The full moon and millions of stars. The air is still. The CAMERA is hovering high up in the sky, somewhere above the North Sea.

SUDDENLY A LOW RUMBLE starts to eat into the silence. The resonant noise gradually grows into a GROWL, as we become aware of dozens of weakly glinting points, floating towards us, like plankton in a dark ocean. The light points grow fast, as does the wall of sound preceding them.

Within a few moments, a bomber squadron rumbles past, with eerie moonlight bouncing off dark fuselages. A long way down, below the planes, we can make out the shiny surface of a vast expanse of sea.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNKERS 88 COCKPIT NIGHT

A small yellow teddy bear is wedged between the throttle levers of the airplane.

Inside the gloomy flight-deck, barely lit by the dim instrument lights, are Peter, the pilot and Paul, his co-pilot. Paul is scanning through the frequencies on his radio. His hand stops as a terrestrial music broadcast crackles through their headsets. Paul, a bright eyed young man, just out of his teenage years, taps the steering column with his left thumb and index finger in unison with a percussion solo.

Peter stares at him in a mock-stern way, then looks at the moon, now at 11 o'clock ahead.

PETER

(in German)  
They're mad. Tonight of all  
nights...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Paul looks at him still beating the rhythm out on the steering column. His eyes are glazed over and his face distorted in his 'mad drummer' impersonation. He does not react to Peter's words.

Peter presses his intercom button and addresses the gunner who, tucked into the tail of the plane, is whistling to the tune.

PETER (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Herbert...

HERBERT (O.S.)  
Yes, captain.

PETER  
I think they've slipped us a monkey  
with the load, Herbert.

HERBERT in the gunner's position. He is slumped back in his seat and reading a musical revue magazine. He too is listening to the music over his headset.

HERBERT  
I beg your pardon, sir?

The cockpit. Peter presses the intercom button once again.

PETER  
The Copilot has lost his mind,  
crew.

Another voice, that of the bomb-master's joins in.

OSWALD (O.S.)  
Bomb-master here, boss. It's that  
Negro jungle music.

The bomb bay deep in the bowels of the large plane. OSWALD, a large man with piercing blue eyes and gaunt features is busy inspecting the bomb release mechanism. He looks like a man who takes a detached sort of pride in his machinery; he likes to keep it in perfect working order at all times.

OSWALD (CONT'D)  
(with a mad expression)  
It creeps up on you and then,  
before you can so much as fart, it  
got you by the balls. Gotto snatch  
while you still can.

He snarls like a hound and snaps at the air around him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Herbert, in the tale of the plane. He too snaps at the air jokingly, then peeks out into the semi- darkness behind the plane.

CUT TO:

EXT. NIGHT SKY

His POV reveals the rest of the squadron floating in tight formation behind them. Nearest to Herbert's porthole flies a Messerschmitt fighter, near enough, it seems, to touch. The pilot's features are well lit by the ghostly moon. The little plane rolls its wings.

CUT TO:

INT. JUNKERS 88

Herbert returns the salute with a smile and a thumbs-up. The MUSIC in his headset ends and is followed by an ENGLISH VOICE.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
Welcome, dear listeners, to a  
starry Saturday night on the BBC.  
And who else...

In the cockpit, Paul has given up playing the imaginary drum and returned to being a copilot. He is conscientiously going through a routine instrument check, while Peter is keeping the large plane on course.

The announcer's voice seeps through their headsets.

ANNOUNCER (V.O.)  
(continuing)  
... is better suited to hot it up  
for us than Snakehips Johnson and  
his West Indians. And here's 'Oh  
Johnny'. Enjoy!

A sudden, painful expression flashes across Peter's face. He withdraws his eyes from the infinite darkness ahead and glances over to his copilot.

Paul does not notice the captain's stare.

PETER  
(quietly, uncomfortably)  
Bloody hell... Ken Johnson...

The announcer's voice is followed by a heralding trumpet opening to the next piece.

Peter listens in seeming disbelief to the developing dance tune, his eyes staring at the little bear wedged between the throttle levers. After a few moments he presses the intercom switch and with a stony face addresses his copilot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PETER (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 That's enough now, lieutenant, back  
 to operations frequency, if you  
 don't mind.

Paul looks at him startled but duly commences to re-tune the radio.

The captain's stare shifts back to the darkness ahead.

CUT TO:

INT. MARTINEZ RESTAURANT FOYER NIGHT

Ken Johnson swiftly slides out of his large coat and hands it to the doorman, who in turn, passes it on to the CLOAKROOM GIRL. She is a tall, slender blond girl with flushed red cheeks. She has a radio under the counter which is tuned to the Forces Network. Snakehips's band is playing 'Oh Johnny'.

KEN  
 Nice to see you, Lucy. Mr. Cassel-  
 Gerard arrived yet?

The cloakroom girl seems to have a crush on him.

GIRL  
 Yes, Mr. Snakehips...

The cloakroom girl blushes.

LUCY  
 Splendid music, Mr. Johnson.

KEN  
 Then you must come to the Cafe de  
 Paris after you finish here and  
 hear it live. Just tell'em you're  
 my special guest.

Ken gives the girl a dazzling smile and enters the restaurant.

INT. MARTINEZ RESTAURANT

ROSS'S SPANISH BAND are playing a cumbia. The place is still half empty. A handsome man in his early fifties, enshrouded in a cloud of cigar smoke, waves from a corner table. Ken acknowledges the gesture.

As he passes the band stand, LESLIE THOMPSON, a black trumpet player in the band, about forty years old, and in the middle of a solo, winks at him. Ken gestures that he wants to have a word later. Leslie nods.

LEON CASSEL-GERARD rises and puts a jovial arm around Ken.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

LEON

Hi, Ken. Life treating you well?

They shake hands and sit down.

KEN

Mustn't complain. Got a bit of a cold, nothing serious though. Didn't get much sleep last night with Jerry making all that noise.

Leon snips his fingers at a passing WAITER and pulls a large cigar from his breast pocket. He offers it to Snakehips.

WAITER

Gentlemen...

LEON

What's on the menu tonight, Bill?

The waiter rolls his eyes.

WAITER

The chef's about to hang himself in the kitchen, sir. It's rabbit again.

(he sighs deeply)

The rationing, sir.

LEON

(lightheartedly)

Exquisite! That's what I'll have then. Scotch rabbit.

The waiter bows with another sigh.

WAITER

With cabbage and potatoes, sir?

KEN

(butts in smiling)

Marvellous.

The waiter looks puzzled.

LEON

(nods smiling)

Tres bon.

WAITER

(to Ken)

And for you, sir?

KEN

A bottle of champagne and two fresh glasses, or have they got round to rationing that as well?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WAITER

No, sir. There's still plenty of that, to keep spirits high.

The waiter glides away as the music draws to an end. LESLIE THOMPSON, the trumpet player stands up behind his note stand, and looks in the direction of Snakehips's table. His fingers nervously play with the valves of his trumpet. Taking a deep breath, he slides his trumpet onto its stand and starts to walk towards Snakehips's table.

KEN

Shouldn't be surprised if we had a record night at the Cafe, tonight, with this full moon and all...

LEON

No doubt about it. Do you know, Poulson had twenty-five-thousand bottles of champagne delivered, yesterday?

KEN

Twenty-five-thousand?!

LEON

Twenty-five-thousand.

The WAITER arrives with a bottle of champagne in an ice bucket and two glasses.

KEN

(addresses the waiter)

Tell me, my man, how many bottles of champagne have you got in stock tonight?

The waiter looks puzzled.

WAITER

I'm not entirely sure, Mr. Johnson.

KEN

Guess. Tell us roughly. How many bottles?

WAITER

I should think - if you count the Bollingers and the CHARLES IV - you're probably looking at, roughly, three hundred bottles, sir.

Snakehips looks incredulously at Leon. The waiter swiftly uncorks the champagne and pours out two glasses.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

WAITER (CONT'D)  
 (continuing)  
 Too much of a risk, storing any  
 great quantities at the moment.

LEON  
 Unless one operates from a  
 basement.

WAITER  
 I beg your pardon, sir?

Snakehips slaps his forehead.

KEN  
 A basement...  
 (he raises his glass)  
 Here's to the safest place in  
 town...

LEON  
 (raising his glass)  
 Ah... the Cafe de Paris!

They both take a sip while the waiter disappears discretely.

At the same time, Leslie Thompson appears at the table.

LESLIE  
 Ken...

He holds out his hand and Ken jumps up knocking his glass over  
 in the process.

KEN  
 Gosh - messy me. Nice to see you,  
 Leslie.

Somewhat flustered by his accident, he shakes Leslie's hand  
 while furtively dabbing a napkin onto the puddle of champagne  
 on the table. He gives up when an attentive waiter rushes to  
 his rescue.

LESLIE  
 And you, Ken, and you..

Ken gestures to an empty chair.

KEN  
 It's been a long time. Join us for  
 a few minutes, will you? Meet Leon  
 Cassel, my agent.

He pours Leslie a glass of champagne. The two men shake  
 hands. The situation has a somewhat edgy feel; Ken appears  
 to be trying a little too hard to be jovial while Leslie  
 appears friendly but guarded.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

LEON

Pleased to meet you, Mr. Thompson.

LESLIE

Pleasure's entirely mine, sir.

(he pushes the glass of  
champagne away)

Never during a gig, Ken.

(abruptly)

What can I do for you?

KEN

(lighting his cigar)

We have a proposition to make to  
you, Leslie. It was Leon's idea and  
I think it is dazzling.

LESLIE

Dazzling?

Ken gestures towards Cassel-Gerard as if to cue a band.

Leon waves his hand and smiles.

LEON

No, no, no. Just a thought. Joe  
Losey, a friend of mine from the  
Melody Maker mentioned that Ross

...

(he waves his thumb  
towards the band stand)

is talking about re-grouping his  
band, so I wondered whether you and  
Ken wouldn't want to get back  
together again.

Thompson leans back in his chair with a sly smile but Leon  
continues before he can say anything.

LEON (CONT'D)

(continuing)

At least for a season. I've got a  
hot offer from the Embassy and it  
includes profit share; Now that's  
no small fry.

KEN

You don't have to decide now, Les,  
think about it, take your time if  
you like,. I tell you though, I  
could definitely do with you  
running the band.

LESLIE

(bitter)

Your band?

(a beat, then in a  
friendly tone)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

I'm a trumpet player, Ken, I blow my horn and I get paid for it. I turn up on time, blow a little, than go back home and tend my tomatoes. That's how I like it. That's what I am. A trumpet player. No more, no less.

LEON

Surely you are being unfair on yourself, Mr. Thompson...

LESLIE

The world is unfair, sir, that I give you. Unfair to many. We are lucky. Still able to do what we like doing best with all this death and destruction going on around us. No, Mr. Cassel, I prefer to blow my humble trumpet and eat my home-grown tomatoes.

LEON

Will you at least consider it, Leslie? I am talking a lot of tomatoes.

LESLIE

(getting up)

Sorry chaps, must go. Very flattered to have been asked but I'm sure you don't need an old-timer to run your band. Good evening.

Thompson leaves abruptly.

Ken jumps up and follows him. He catches up on the empty dance floor and stops Leslie.

KEN

Look, I know this seems crazy Leslie, but the band needs you.

(he pauses)

I need you. I need you to come back and rehearse them again, Leslie, I need you back on board and as Leon says, we can make a lot of money out of the Embassy contract but we need to expand our repertoire. What do you say, Leslie, for old time's sake?

LESLIE

(with sudden outburst of anger)

You, young man, have a hell of bottle.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

LESLIE (CONT'D)

In your smart suit and fancy shoes,  
I suggest you crawl back under that  
banana tree you came from. I'm not  
your nanny anymore.

Leslie turns away and starts to walk towards the band stand.  
Ken rushes off after him.

KEN

There's no need for that, Les, I  
know I must have seemed ungrateful  
for the things you did for me...

LESLIE

(angry)

Ungrateful? You have behaved like  
a swine, Ken Johnson. And I'm not  
worried about what you did to me.  
It's what you did to Eve. She is my  
best friend's girl...

(he takes a deep breath to  
control his anger)

... it's what you did to Eve, Ken.

Leslie picks up his trumpet and sits down behind his music  
stand. His fingers play nervously with the valves on his  
trumpet.

KEN

She's gonna come to my gig tonight,  
Leslie, and I'm gonna ask her to  
marry me.

Their conversation is interrupted as Ross, the band leader,  
kicks off the next number. Leslie gives Snakehips an  
incredulous look before focusing on the sheet music in front  
of him.

After a few moments, Ken pulls himself together and stops the  
passing waiter.

KEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Tell me my man, have you got the  
time?

WAITER

It's a quarter to nine, sir. The  
cabaret will be starting in a few  
moments.

KEN

Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. PILOT'S ROOM DUXFORD AIRBASE NIGHT

A phone is persistently ringing, trying to make itself noticed. The atmosphere at the base is relaxed. Some pilots keep awake by reading, others are playing cards and some are listening to the radio and 'Oh Johnny' played by Ken Johnson and his WEST INDIAN DANCE ORCHESTRA.

A large clock above the door lazily ticks the seconds away. It is ten to ten. The room is smoke filled and noisy.

Flight lieutenant RODGERS, a young man, is sitting apart from the others and is fast asleep. His head is lent against the wall only inches from the ringing phone. Suddenly his head is struck by a flying hat. He almost falls off his chair as he comes to. The pilots around the card table look at him and laugh.

PILOT  
Morning lieutenant.

RODGERS, dazzled, jumps up and grabs the phone.

RODGERS  
Lieutenant Rodgers, hello.

INT. SWITCHBOARD ROOM

A row of switchboards manned by young women.

SWITCHBOARD OPERATOR  
(smiling)  
I've got a call for a 'captain'  
Rodgers.

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

RODGERS  
Flight lieutenant Rodgers...

SWITCHBOARD OP (O.S.)  
Putting her through, sir.

RODGERS  
Thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM/CAFE DE PARIS NIGHT

ANNIE BROOKE, a vivacious red head of about twenty three and stunning looks, is on the phone to flight lieutenant Rodgers. In the background, there are about a dozen other girls, cabaret dancers, of equally good looks, getting made up and dressed for the show.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE  
 (giggling)  
 Thank you? What for, captain?  
 There's nothing to thank me for.  
 Not yet.

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

Rodgers looks embarrassed as he sits down. There are some wolf-whistles from the card table. Rodgers turns away and continues in a soft voice.

RODGERS  
 Hello, Annie. Lieutenant, not  
 captain. Lieutenant - Annie.

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

ANNIE  
 (giggling)  
 Sorry, airman, lieutenant, sir.

INT. SWITCHBOARD ROOM

Two of the operator girls listen in to the conversation. They smile at each other.

RODGERS (O.S.)  
 How are you, Annie?

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

ANNIE  
 Never been better, Charlie. Listen,  
 when do you boys knock off for the  
 night?

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

RODGERS looks at the clock above the door, then he moves around to face the window. His gaze finds the moon which is about to climb clear of a line of distant tree tops.

RODGERS  
 In about ten minutes or so. It's  
 quiet tonight.

ANNIE (O.S.)  
 Perfect. I want you to come over as  
 soon as you can.

RODGERS  
 Where are you?



INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

ANNIE

Where am I? The same place you  
picked me up a few blue moons ago,  
ducky. The Cafe de Paris. Now  
listen, I'm on at quarter past ten.  
You'll catch the end of the show.  
It's a brand new one, Charlie.  
You've got to come.

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

RODGERS

Who's playing?

ANNIE

The West Indians. Do you want to  
know something else?

INT. SWITCHBOARD ROOM

RODGERS (O.S.)

What?

ANNIE (O.S.)

Poulsen had twenty five thousand  
bottles of champagne delivered  
today and the word is he's going to  
buy from ten o'clock onwards.

Thumbs up from the switchboard girls

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

ANNIE

It's confidential, captain, so  
don't go telling anyone I told you.

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

RODGERS

My lips are sealed.

INT. SWITCHBOARD ROOM

One of the operators makes the 'lips-sealed-gesture'. Her  
colleagues giggle.

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

ANNIE

Will you come?

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

RODGERS

Can I stay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANNIE (O.S.)  
If you play your cards right.

RODGERS does not reply. He seems temporarily distracted as his eyes linger on the giant moon.

ANNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Be there or be square, Charlie.

Suddenly there is the sound of howling silence on the base.

INT. SWITCHBOARD ROOM

SWITCHBOARD OP  
(cutting in)  
Sorry to interrupt, sir, we have  
enemy alarm.

INT. PILOT'S ROOM

Rodgers hangs up and joins all the other pilots rushing out of the room.

INT. ARTIST'S DRESSING ROOM

The line is dead. Annie bangs the cradle.

ANNIE  
Hello, Charlie, are you there?

VIOLET, an olive-skinned, dark beauty from the chorus line nudges Annie amiably.

ANNIE (CONT'D)  
(continuing)  
Damn.

VIOLET  
Ducky given you a rain check? Don't  
bother, plenty of sharks in the  
sea..

ANNIE  
Bloody Krauts are on their way  
again.

POULSEN, the manager comes past

POULSEN  
Annie, why do you look so worried?

VIOLET  
There's gonna be another air raid.

POULSEN  
How do you know?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIOLET

Her boyfriend's a pilot and they've just been scrambled.

POULSEN

(puts his arm around  
Annie)

Don't worry, darling, you're in the safest place in London... in a basement. No Jerry-bomb is big enough to harm us down here.

(he squeezes her  
reassuringly)

And now let's get on with the show.

He smiles and moves on, calling out to the stagehands...

POULSEN (CONT'D)

(continuing)

Anybody seen that boy Snakehips yet?

STAGEHAND

Still in his dressing room, shaving his legs, I suppose, sir.

Laughter all around.

POULSEN

Always late he is, got to have a word with the young man.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAFE DE PARIS NIGHT

An unlit cab pulls up. FRED the DOORMAN opens the door and the four young Canadians from the bus earlier, jump out.

FRED

Good evening ladies, good evening gentlemen.

One of them, JACK WRIGHT, decides to mock the DOORMAN for his operatic overcoat and cap.

JACK WRIGHT

Howdy, general. How's the enemy tonight?

He salutes in an over-the-top kind of way.

FRED

So far very cooperative, sir.

JACK CLUNIE, the other young man, thrusts a pound note into FRED'S hand to make up for his friend's indiscretion.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK CLUNIE

Make sure to keep a good look out  
for gate crashing Jerries, general.

FRED

Thank you, sir.

FRED is about to give the four a military salute when suddenly, the eerie howl of air raid sirens cuts through the air. Pedestrians start to run for shelter. Arriving guests hurry into the safety of the club. The Canadians step back to the curb and look up into the clear night sky.

THELMA

And here we were thinking we  
deserved a quiet night...

FRED

I don't know about quiet, madam,  
but you could hardly be in a safer  
place right now. The club is  
underground.

The powerful beams of searchlights start appearing in the sky as the Canadians enter the club and Poulson exits, making his way to Fred.

POULSON

(with Danish accent)

Evening, Fred. How are we doing  
tonight?

FRED

Filling up swiftly, Mr. Poulson.

POULSON

Good, good. Don't be too fussy  
tonight, Fred, I want the place  
bursting at the seams. I'm having a  
special between ten and midnight.  
Free champagne for all.

FRED

(with doggish reverence)

Always such cunning business ideas,  
Mr. Poulson, if I may say so, sir.

POULSON

(calling after him)

I'll have a bottle put aside for  
you, Fred, don't forget to pick it  
up before you go.

FRED

Thank you sir, thank you.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFE DE PARIS     NIGHT

The place is buzzing. A young girl is standing in the middle of the dance floor. She has a large ginger bread heart on a red ribbon around her neck with the name 'Rosie' and the number '21' written in icing sugar across it. She is wearing her boyfriend's tin hat over her full head of auburn hair. The audience is clapping and cheering as Ken jumps onto the small stage which is crowded by his orchestra. He is wearing a shiny army helmet on his head.

KEN

Ladies and Gentlemen - it's  
Snakehips Johnson and his West  
Indians. Enjoy!

He takes the tin hat off and flings it into the audience, then turns around and with an elegant sweep of his baton, launches the band into a redhot swing number. Immediately the floor turns into a bag of beans. More and more people crowd onto the dance floor.

ROSIE, the birthday girl, notices the four young Canadians at the top of the staircase and gesticulates wildly asking them to join her on the dance floor. They acknowledge her and start walking down the stairway.

Ken looks over his shoulder and grins broadly.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUXFORD AIRBASE TAXIWAY NIGHT

Charlie Rodgers is one among two dozen airmen running towards their waiting Spitfires.

The pilots scramble into their planes, then start taxiing to the runway, where other planes are already taking off.

Rodgers is giving the thumbs up to the ground crew before he pushes the throttle levers forward and lifts off into the moonlit night sky.

END OF EXTRACT