

## Architecture And Mortality

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*A street with three buildings - ROSE (an old pub, female), WILSON (a brutalist convention centre, male) and SWANNY (a young office block, female). Rose and Wilson are next to each other, with a gap between Wilson and Swanny.*

*All three are asleep. Swanny wakes up and looks around.*

**SWANNY**

Regal? Regal?

*She becomes distressed.*

**SWANNY**

Wilson! Wake up!

*Wilson wakes up, grumpily.*

**WILSON**

Eh? What?

**SWANNY**

Where's Regal gone?

**WILSON**

Knocked down.

**SWANNY**

How do you mean?

**WILSON**

Demolished. You saw the cranes come in, what did you think was happening?

**SWANNY**

I never seen 'em before.

**WILSON**

Well, you have now. The Regal Theatre has been demolished. Cleared for future buildings. Yet another office block I expect. No offence.

**SWANNY**

So where's he gone to? When's he back?

**WILSON**

I haven't got time for this, got a conference in the Callaghan Suite this morning. Ask Rose.

**SWANNY**

Does Rose know where he's gone then?

**WILSON**

Rose doesn't know where Rose has gone most days, but better her than me having to tell you. Rose! You daft old pub, wake up!

*He nudges her.*

**ROSE**

Is that you, Baker?

**WILSON**

*(to Swanny)* I've only been here fifty years, you might think she'd remember me by now. No dear, it's The Wilson Convention Centre, the bakery collapsed in the 1920s didn't it?

**ROSE**

Ooh, the smell of buns in the morning!

**SWANNY**

Rose, where's Regal?

**ROSE**

Who's that then?

**WILSON**

The Regal Theatre dear, next door to me.

**ROSE**

Oh, the moving picture palace?

**WILSON** *(with a massive sigh)* Yes, a long long time ago he was a cinema, then he was a bingo hall -

**ROSE** Too much shouting.

**WILSON** ...and then he was a concert venue.

**ROSE** Oh I liked that, all those young people around. What's the matter with him then?

**SWANNY** Wilson says he's been knocked down.

**ROSE** Has he? Well, he had a good run didn't he? Seventy years more or less, not bad these days.

**WILSON** Not bad at all.

**SWANNY** Is that why all them people were shouting?

**ROSE** What's that then?

**WILSON** They had a sit in, old customers. Didn't want it knocking down.

**ROSE** No, well, people are like that. They think it's their youth getting knocked down don't they? Don't want to make way for someone else's.

**SWANNY** So is he gone forever then? Do we all have to go? Do I?

**WILSON** Jesus H Chrysler Building, are you thick or something?

**ROSE** Leave her alone, she doesn't know. Don't be sad little'un. There was a whole row of shops on your plot before you came along, if they hadn't been knocked down we wouldn't have had you would we?

**SWANNY** There were buildings here before me?

**ROSE** Dear me, course there were love. And before them - all the way back to the old farm, before there was even a street. Course, that was when I was very young. I'm the third oldest pub in London you know.

**WILSON** We know.

**ROSE** There's that trollop over Whitechapel way says she is, but I remember. All the way back to the great fire I go.

**SWANNY** Great fire?

**WILSON** Don't -

**ROSE** Wiped out most all the buildings there was round here. They come along every so often these fires, keeps us all on our toes. Wilson was after one of them weren't you?

**WILSON** No, I think you'll find that I was built as part of a drive to modernity and functionality in a time of forward thinking social architecture.

**ROSE** I thought it were the Luftwaffe, flattened half of Soho.

**SWANNY** The what waffe?

**ROSE** Aeroplanes, they said, felt like a fire to me. It's always a fire, be it bombs or arson or a new idea about how to live, comes for us all in the end. All you can do is make the most of the time you're here.

**WILSON** Easy for her to say - she's listed.

**SWANNY** Listed?

**ROSE** I'm the third oldest pub in London, I am.

**WILSON** We know.

**ROSE** Whatever that trollop in Whitechapel says. Wilson's listed too now, aren't you love?

**WILSON** Not listed as such. "Special Architectural Interest". It's my air conditioning system, nothing else like it in Europe you know.

**ROSE** We know.

**SWANNY** Does that mean you and Wilson'll live forever then?

**ROSE** Goodness me no.

**WILSON** "Accidents" happen. Or "Developers" as they call them now

**ROSE** Fires don't check who's listed.

**SWANNY** So we're all going to die?

**ROSE** Yes love, we're all going to die. But we're all going to live first aren't we?

**WILSON** Fact is young lady, if London didn't change all the time, well...  
*Rose and Wilson look at each other.*

**ROSE** We'd be Paris.  
*They all shudder.*

**ROSE** Anyway, don't worry yourself, you're new, you've got plenty of time.

**WILSON** She's right - brand new block like you, who knows? Maybe one day you'll be a prime example of an architectural school, like I am.

**SWANNY** Yes. Maybe I could be. My windows are nice, everyone says so.

**WILSON** For an office block.

**ROSE** That's the spirit. Feeling better now?

**SWANNY** I think so.

**ROSE** And next time, anything you want to know, just ask your Auntie Rosie, all right?

**SWANNY** Well, there is one other thing.

**ROSE** What's that?

**SWANNY** Some bloke came by with some leaflets yesterday. I just wondered -

**WILSON** Yes?

**SWANNY** What's Crossrail?