

Radioplay: Whoppers! The Zaratan

CHARACTERS

On the Beach:

COLONEL DIGBY.....a 704-year-old whopper-
THROCKMORTON.....teller
CONSTABLE BINSLEY.....a failed policeman

In the Story:

ENID.....a pretty girl with a
talking lobster
A TALKING LOBSTER.....a lobster who talks
HENRY OOKS.....a boy as strong as a lion
TRISHA FISHER.....the most beautiful girl
in the world
CHERYL POTTS.....even more beautiful than
that
THE HEAD.....a nameless head
OLD OOKS.....Henry's great-grandfather
WILHELMINA PHLOX.....Old Ooks's old flame
THE ZARATAN.....a beast with Paradisical
intent
BLUG-NUG-WUGUG.....a Stone Age man

Also:

A WAITRESS
A BUS DRIVER
A BUS CONDUCTOR
A DOLPHIN

SCENE 1

Ext. Beach

GRAMS

PLAY IN WITH 'I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE'

FX

FADE THIS QUICKLY. A MOMENT'S SINISTER SILENCE, BRINGING UP FARAWAY CRIES OF PEOPLE PLAYING ON A BEACH, GULLS SCREAMING NEAR AND FAR, THEN: THE SLOW AND HEAVY FOOTSTEPS OF A POLICEMAN WALKING ON PEBBLES

THROCKMORTON:

(HUMS 'I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE')

SPOT

THE CONSTABLE'S CRUNCHING APPROACH, DURING THIS SCENE HE IS FOREVER SHIFTING HIS PLOD'S FEET, CRUNCHING THE PEBBLES. THE RHYTHMICAL COLLAPSE AND SUCK OF WAVES.

CONSTABLE BINSLEY: Excuse me, sir.

THROCKMORTON: Uh?

CONST. BINSLEY: May I, in the line of duty you understand, ask you what is amiss?

THROCKMORTON: A Miss, in my experience, is an unmarried woman.

CONST. BINSLEY: It's just that this being the hottest day for years and you sat sitting there on this here pebbly beach with all them coats and hats and medals on.

THROCKMORTON: (IRRITATED) Are you one of my nephews?

CONST. BINSLEY: I'm a policeman. Constable Binsley.

THROCKMORTON: So you're no-one's nephew?

CONST. BINSLEY: (THINKING HARD) I have an Uncle Frank in Southend.

THROCKMORTON: Say hello to him for me, next time you see him.

CONST. BINSLEY: You know him, do you, sir?

THROCKMORTON: Good God, no! Dreadful man!

CONST. BINSLEY: (TURNING SLOWLY NASTY) I'll have you know, sir, that there's a law against confusing a policeman.

THROCKMORTON: (SUDDENLY ANNOUNCING HIMSELF) Colonel Digby Throckmorton.

CONST. BINSLEY: (TAKING OUT NOTEBOOK, LICKING PENCIL) I'll make a note of that, sir. Is that twelve Ks in Throckmorton? Or four Ss?

THROCKMORTON: Fifteen Ys and a Q. Would you like to hear a story?

CONST. BINSLEY: (EXCITED IN HIS DULL WAY) Erm, confessions, is it, sir? To a murder? To a string of unsolved murders going way back to 1962, the solving of which would obtain me the promotion I so richly deserve?

THROCKMORTON: Of course not! It's a story, a proper story! About this beach and this little fishing village, a long time ago. I'm 704-years-old, you know. I've seen a thing or two. I taught Edward III to play cards.

CONST. BINSLEY: Well, ordinarily, sir, I'd be happy to hear your story, but I'm in pursuit of a lost dog wot bit the local pork butcher this morning.

THROCKMORTON: Never mind that, man! Sit down, undo your shoelaces, let me tell you about...the Zaratan.

CONST. BINSLEY: (TEMPTED) Monster, is it, sir?

THROCKMORTON: Of a sort.

CONST. BINSLEY: (SORELY TEMPTED) Very interesting things, sir, monsters, to a policeman like myself. I may have to arrest one one day. (SITTING ON THE CRUNCHY PEBBLES, SHYLY)...And, as it happens, I have been feeling a little depressed lately. My sergeant hates me, you know. Mebbees a little monstrous story might cheer me up. Do you mind if I take notes....

THROCKMORTON: Give that stupid thing here!

FX/SPOT A SNATCH, THE PLOP OF THE NOTEBOOK INTO THE WAVES

CONST. BINSLEY: There's a law against throwing policemen's notebooks into the sea.....

THROCKMORTON'S VOICE BROUGHT UP CLOSE, OVER THE COMPLAINING POLICEMAN IN BACKGROUND, HE ADDRESSES US DIRECTLY....

THROCKMORTON: This is the story of one of my nieces, Enid Throckmorton, who lived in this village, Catfish-on-Sea, nearly 500 years ago. Enid was a very fortunate girl. She has something nobody else had: a talking lobster.

CONST. BINSLEY: Would you swear to this in a court of law?

THROCKMORTON: Oh, it did, honestly. It was a talking lobster. It sang songs too. Unfortunately, it only talked to her. It never said a word to anyone else.

CONST. BINSLEY: (WITH A POLICEMAN'S UNDERSTANDING) One of those talking lobsters, eh?

THROCKMORTON: Did you know someone who had one?

CONST. BINSLEY: (PROTESTING TOO MUCH) Not me, no.

THROCKMORTON: When you were a lad.

CONST. BINSLEY: No. No. (AN EMBARRASSED POLICEMAN'S NOISE)
No. No.

THROCKMORTON: You didn't perhaps have one yourself?

CONST. BINSLEY: No.

THROCKMORTON: Are you sure?

CONST. BINSLEY: (GRUNTS POLICEMANISHLY WITH A "YES" LOST IN THE GRUNT)

THROCKMORTON: What was that?

CONST. BINSLEY: (ADMITS SHAMEDLY) I did. I had a talking lobster. It was him who advised me to join the police force.

THROCKMORTON: (SLAPS HIM ON THE BACK IN DELIGHT)
Excellent! Excellent! You'll understand exactly how my niece Enid felt when the other children of the village wouldn't believe that her lobster talked.

CONST. BINSLEY: (WEEPS) They wouldn't believe me either! They wouldn't!

THROCKMORTON: They wouldn't believe her either! They teased her most dreadfully!

SCENE 2 Ext. Beach

FX CHILDREN SPLASHING IN WATER

HENRY: Hey, Enid! Where's yer lobster?

**ALL CHILDREN
TOGETHER:** Lobster! Lobster! Talking Lobster!!!!

ENID: Shut up about my lobster, you lot!

ALL CHILDREN: LET'S HEAR A SNIPPIT OF HIS CONVERSATION
THEN!!! MEBBEES HE'LL READ THE LESSON IN
CHURCH ON SUNDAY!!!!!!

ENID: (STOMPING OFF ACROSS THE PEBBLY BEACH) He's
much more interesting to talk to than you
stinkers!!! And he speaks French!!!!

TRISHA FISHER: (SPLASHING, WITH HILARITY) He speaks
French! A talking lobster! Wheeeeeee-ha-
haaaa!

CHERYL: (LAUGHING HUGEY) Je suis une lobster!!!
Whaaaaa-haaaa-haaaaa!!!!!! I'd marry him if
I were you!

TRISHA FISHER: You can live on the bottom of the sea and
bring up a family of prawns!!!!

ALL CHILDREN: LOBSTER!!! LOBSTER!!! TALKING LOBSTER!!!

ENID: (RUNNING AWAY IN TEARS; FROM FURTHER AWAY
IN THE WATER, ACROSS PEBBLES) You're
horrible! All horrible!

THE OTHER CHILDREN LAUGH AS SHE GOES

SCENE 3

Int. Room

(INTERIOR ACOUSTIC)

ENID: (SNUFFLING)

THROCKMORTON: (CLOSE) Poor girl. How alone she felt! But she wasn't alone, her lobster was there. She kept it in a bucket under the bed.

FX/SPOT THE LOBSTER SCRATCHES INSIDE THE BUCKET WITH HIS LEGS, SPLASHES AND CLICKS HIS CLAWS. HE CLICKS THESE CLAWS WHENEVER HE IS PRESENT IN A SCENE

TALKING LOBSTER: What's wrong with you this time?

ENID: (SUDDENLY FIERCE THROUGH HER TEARS) THIS TIME!!! THIS TIME!!! SAME AS EVERY TIME!!!! IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT!!!!

LOBSTER: My fault? I'm a lobster. How can it be my fault?

ENID: You're not a lobster, you're a talking lobster. Please, why can't you talk to someone else, just once? That would shut them up! I've no friends. And it's all your fault! Read the lesson in church on Sunday, would you, please, eh, huh?

LOBSTER: Ooooh, naw. Naw. Couldn't. He'd be furious with me.

ENID: (WIPING AWAY HER TEARS) Who would? God?

LOBSTER: Not God. HIM. HE would.

ENID: Who's he?

LOBSTER: HIM. Paradise is coming. He will bring it for you, for me, for everybody.

ENID: (BREAKS INTO A NEW FIT OF SOBBING)

LOBSTER: Don't cry my little prawn. I'm sorry. But I can't speak to no-one but you. He told me not to. I was sent just for you. Just for you. Because you're one of his special people...you will help him make his Paradise, the Paradise that is to come.

ENID: (GROANS) I suppose if you've got yourself a talking lobster, it's bound to talk nonsense. (ANOTHER SOB)

LOBSTER: (WITH BORN-AGAIN CHEERFULNESS) When HE comes, everything'll be hunky-dory, honest.

ENID: (FURIOUS, HAMMERING THE WOODEN FLOOR WITH HER FEET) WHEN WHO COMES??????

LOBSTER: HIM! HIM! HIM that was here once before and will be here again.

ENID: WHO'S "HIM" WHEN HE'S AT HOME???!!!

LOBSTER: I'm not allowed to say.

ENID: (THROUGH HER TEETH) You salty crabby-eyed hors d'oeuvre, you!

LOBSTER: HUH! (PAUSE) HUH!!!

(A PAUSE WHILE THE AIR CLEARS)

LOBSTER: Enid?

ENID: (VEXED) What?

LOBSTER: Can I hold your nose in my pincers like I did last night?

ENID: No.

LOBSTER: Go on!

ENID: All right, then. Not too hard. OOOOHCH!

LOBSTER: Sorry. That better?

ENID: (THROUGH A BLOCKED NOSE) Yeah.

LOBSTER: (HIGHLY AMUSED) Sing 'Greensleeves'. Just for me, sing 'Greensleeves was my heart of gold....'

ENID: (SINGS 'GREENSLEEVES')

(THE LOBSTER IS WILD WITH HILARITY)

ENID: (THROUGH BLOCKED NOSE) Easily amused, lobsters are.

SCENE 4 Ext. Beach

GRAMS PERCY GRAINGER'S 'MOLLY ON THE SHORE' PLAYS
IN BACKGROUND

THROCKMORTON NARRATES WHILE RUNNING ALONG
THE BEACH, AGAINST THE WIND, CONSTABLE
BINSLEY FOLLOWS

FX MUSIC AND WIND ARE LOUD, THROCKMORTON
SHOUTS TO MAKE HIMSELF HEARD

THROCKMORTON: The other youngsters of Catfish-on-Sea were always teasing my poor niece. Sometimes they made her cry. Sometimes she just got angry. And when she was angry.....SHE RAN!!!! RAN on her little legs like the wind.....

ENID: Look at me! I am running like the wind!
Wheeeeeeee!

THROCKMORTON: How she loved to run! Her bare feet on the pebbles! Her bare feet on the sand! Running into the water and her tongue out to taste the salt sea air!

CONST. BINSLEY: Wait for me, my shoelace is undone!

THROCKMORTON STOPS, GETTING HIS BREATH BACK

THROCKMORTON: (PANTING) And whenever she went running, the talking lobster would follow on a bicycle.

FX/SPOT THE CREAK AND PEDAL OF A LOBSTER-DRIVEN BICYCLE

CONST. BINSLEY: Did they have bicycles in them days?

THROCKMORTON: (ALMOST CAUGHT OUT) Erm.....this one didn't have wheels.

BRING MUSIC AND WIND DOWN

LOBSTER: (CALLING) Don't run so fast, girl. This bicycle doesn't have no wheels, you know!!!

ENID: Hurry, you maniac lobster! There's something in the water. Out there. I thought it was a Christmas Pudding at first, but on closer squinting I think it's...a man's head.

FX CLUNK AND TINKLE OF THE LOBSTER ARRIVING AND GETTING OFF THE BICYCLE. GULLS CRY DISCREETLY

LOBSTER: Where's this, then?

ENID: There! There! Is it HIM?

LOBSTER: Who?

ENID: HIM!!! HIM!!! HIM that was here once before and will be again.

LOBSTER: Naw, he's much bigger than that. He's half as big as Norfolk, HE is! You're right, though. It is a man's head. Better throw me out to it.

FX/SPOT SKITTER OF CLAWS AS SHE PICKS HIM UP

Careful with that leg, it's loose....arrrrrrrrrrhhhhhhh.....

FX WHOOSH OF THE LOBSTER BEING THROWN THROUGH THE AIR. WE WAIT A LITTLE TOO LONG FOR THE SPLASH. HE SPLASHES

SCENE 5 Ext. Beach

ENID: (MUMBLING ON THE SHORE) Where is that stupid lobster?

LOBSTER: Here I am!

IN THE BACKGROUND WE HEAR A SORE COMPLAINING MUMBLE, AS OF A MAN WHO HAS A LOBSTER PULLING HIS NOSE

ENID: You've been hours!

LOBSTER: I've been dragging this thing all the way along the sea's-bottom and I had to explain what it is to every whelk and limpet along the way....

THE HEAD: (THROUGH A BLOCKED NOSE) Excuse me, please, young lady. Could you perhaps get this lobster off my nose.

ENID: It is a head, isn't it?

LOBSTER: It's wot you'd normally see under a hat if a hat were on a head.

ENID: Looks like a head. Just a head all by itself. Didn't it say something just then?

THE HEAD: (LIKE NOËL COWARD WITH A BLOCKED NOSE) I can't say my piece with that claw pinching my nose.

ENID: Let him go, you daft lobster.

LOBSTER: (SLYLY) I'll let him go if he sings 'Greensleeves'.

THE HEAD: Don't know 'Greensleeves'.

ENID: Course you do... (SINGS IT FOR HIM)
... 'Greensleeves was all my
joy... Greensleeves was my delight...
Greensleeves was my heart of gold...'

THE HEAD JOINS IN, ITS NOSE SEVERELY
PINCHED. THE LOBSTER IS WILD WITH HILARITY.
IT LAUGHS SO MUCH IT LETS GO OF THE NOSE.
THE HEAD MOANS ITS SORE NOSE BACK INTO
WORKING ORDER

ENID: Please excuse him, Mr. Head... Lobsters are easily amused. Do you live in the sea? Just floating about like a bottle with a message in it?

THE HEAD: Actually I do have a message. From HIM. HE sent me.

ENID: HE did?

LOBSTER: (AWESTRUCK) It's from HIM. A message from him!!!

THE HEAD: HIM, yes. You are Miss Enid Throckmorton, of 5 Fisherman's Cottages, Catfish-on-Sea.

ENID: I suppose I am.

THE HEAD: HE wants you.

ENID: HE?

THE HEAD: HE'll be there, off the headland, on Sunday morning, bright and early. Don't be late, will you?

ENID: What's HE want me for?

THE HEAD: HE hath need of you, to help make his Paradise.

LOBSTER: (EXCITED) Told you!!! Told you!!!

ENID: What's HIS name, then?

THE HEAD: Ooooooh, I'm not allowed to say.

ENID: Tell me his name or I'll kick you out to sea!

THE HEAD: Would you, I'd be so grateful. I'm terribly afraid of sheep, you know....and there's one coming this way.

FX THE THREATENING BAA OF A SHEEP

ENID: All right. I will!

THE HEAD: Don't forget. Sunday. Bright and...

SHE DOES A LITTLE RUN UP. THE KICKING CONTACT OF HER FOOT ON THE HEAD IS LIKE A THUDDING PENALTY KICK THAT MISSES THE GOAL AND ZOOMS OUT OF THE STADIUM WITH A WINDY WHISTLE

THE HEAD: (WAILING INTO THE DISTANCE)....
AAAAAArrrrrrrgggggHHHHHHHHHHHHhhhhh-
ggggggnnnnnnnngggggggghhhhhhhhhhh!!!!!!!

SCENE 6 Ext. Beach

FX A GENTLE LAP OF WAVES

TRISHA FISHER: (SWEETLY) Henry.....

FX SPLISH-PLIP-PLISH OF SKIMMING STONES

HENRY: See that! I skimmed it six times!

TRISHA FISHER: (PRETTILY) Stop skimming stones, Henry
Ooks! (LIKE A SERGEANT-MAJOR) Come here!

HENRY: Wot you want, Trisha?

TRISHA FISHER: (THE CHARM OF ALL THE ANGELS) Henry.....

HENRY: Uh!

TRISHA FISHER: Who is the prettymostest, me or Cheryl?

HENRY: Ooooooh, couldn't say!

TRISHA FISHER: If you say me I'll let you kiss me on the
end of my nose.

HENRY: I don't want to kiss you on the end of your
nose.

TRISHA FISHER: Of course you do.

HENRY: Don't.

TRISHA FISHER: (SHOUTS) DO!!!

HENRY: All right, then. (SHYLY) You are the most splendiferous...

TRISHA FISHER: (CORRECTING) Prettymostest....

HENRY: Prettymostest...girl in all the village.

TRISHA FISHER: In all Norfolk?

HENRY: In all Norfolk.

TRISHA FISHER: Prettymoster than Cheryl.

HENRY: By miles.

TRISHA FISHER: And her wots got the talking lobster or says she has?

HENRY: (PIG SICK OF THIS) You're the prettymostest girl wot ever I laid eyes on.

TRISHA FISHER: (VERY SATISFIED) You can kiss my nose now.

SPOT THE SOUND OF HIM KISSING IT, SHE SNEEZES

TRISHA FISHER: Errr, that was horrible! You made me sneeze.

CHERYL: (HURRYING UP TO THEM) Wot you doing, Henry Oaks?

HENRY: Nuffink, Cheryl! Nuffink! Honest!

CHERYL: I seen ya! You was kissing old Halibut Face on the end of her nose....

HENRY: Wasn't not!

TRISHA FISHER: Wot you call me??

CHERYL: Halibut Face!

TRISHA FISHER: (SWEETLY) Henry says I'm the prettiest girl in all Norfolk. Better than you.

CHERYL: Like fish you are! I've been wearing this daisy-chain in my hair all summer and it hasn't died one bit. That's because I'm 50 times more pretty than anyone. Come here, Henry...kiss me on the end of my nose and then tell us both, cross-your-heart-and-hope-to-die, which kiss made you tingle the most.

HENRY: (WORRIED NOW) I...I...I'd better not!

CHERYL: Go on, lad!

SPOT HE KISSES, CHERYL SNEEZES

TRISHA FISHER: (TO CHERYL) Horrible, wasn't it?

CHERYL: He made me sneeze.

TRISHA FISHER: He made me sneeze too. Let's beat him up.

CHERYL: Yes, let's.

SPOT THE SCUFFLE ON THE PEBBLES AS THE GIRLS ATTACK HIM, LOUD "OW"S AND "HELP"S FROM HENRY

THE GIRLS LAUGH TRIUMPHANTLY

TRISHA FISHER: (TO CHERYL) My punches are much prettier than yours.

CHERYL: A lady doesn't punch, she SLAPS.

SPOT A HUGE SLAP

HENRY: OWYA!!!!

FADE HIS CRIES

SCENE 7

Ext. Dunes

FX FADE UP CRIES OF SEAGULLS

ENID: (SOFTLY) That you, Henry Oaks?

HENRY: (SNIFFING BACK TEARS) Go away!

ENID: What you doing way out here on the dunes?

HENRY: Thinking! Thinking about LIFE!!!

ENID: I'd never have found you, but a guillemot saw you and told my talking lobster...and he told me.

HENRY: You're barmy, you are.

ENID: Listen, Henry. You're the strongest lad in the village.

HENRY: (PUTTING HIS MALE EGO BACK ON) Strong as a lion, me. Strong, I am. Stronger than Trisha Fisher, whatever she told you.

ENID: Will you row me out to the headland, first thing Sunday morning?

HENRY: Suppose so. Why?

ENID: HE'll be there.

HENRY: Who?

ENID: HIM that was here once and will be again.

HENRY: Who's that then?

ENID: My lobster will tell you...he understands it better than me.

LOBSTER: I don't never speak in front of no one 'cepting you.

HENRY: (UTTERLY AMAZED) Hey, that lobster said something, I's sure!

SCENE 8 Int. Room

THROCKMORTON: (NARRATING, CLOSE) If you wait long enough it is always Sunday. Next Sunday morning Enid said goodbye to her friend the lobster.

ENID: Ain't you coming with me, then?

LOBSTER: Naw. I don't want to go back.

ENID: Back where?

LOBSTER: You'll see. It's where I'm from. But I'm not allowed to talk there and I like to talk.

ENID: But if I'm not here you've nobody to talk to.

LOBSTER: I can talk to myself, can't I?

ENID: (ON HER WAY) Byesie-bye, then.

LOBSTER: Byesie-bye!

SCENE 9 Ext. House

FX/SINGING

EARLY-MORNING GULLS CRY. ENID MUTTERS 'BOBBY SHAF'TOE', SKIPPING ALONG IN BACKGROUND AS THROCKMORTON SPEAKS TO US

THROCKMORTON:

(NARRATING, CLOSE) Off she went past all the tiny white cottages where fisher-folk were just waking up and forgetting their dreams, her eyes looking at the huge yellow sun that splashed its dawn across the summer-blue sea, making yellow glints on the wavetops as if God was skimming bananas towards the shore. And there was the headland, where a thin blue mist hung around the cliffs. Maybe HE was there already, smoking a cigar while he waited. Enid knocked on the door of an upturned boat where Henry lived with his great-grandfather, a man with fingers like knotted rope and a face wrinkled like a scribbled-on page.

SPOT

ENID'S KNOCK, A PROPER KNOCKING-ON-DOOR KNOCK. OLD FISHERMAN OOKS ANSWERS, COUGHING AND SPLUTTERING

OLD OOKS:

(THE VOICE OF SOMEONE WHO ATE LONG JOHN SILVER, ANXIOUS) Wilhelmina? That you, gal? Come back at last!?

ENID:

(HAPPY AS CAN BE) Morning, Old Fisherman Ooks. My, ain't your nose a red'un, s'morning! Been singing 'Greensleeves' have we?

OLD OOKS:

Eh?

ENID:

Private joke, sorry.

OLD OOKS:

Wot be you doing here at this early hour, little girl?

ENID:

I come for Henry.

OLD OOKS: Henry don't like no little girls. You'll just go and break his black little heart the way Wilhelmina broke mine. You're very pretty though. Even prettier than she was.

ENID: Thanks, I'm sure. Where's the lad?

HENRY: (THROWING ON HIS CLOTHES, MOUTH FULL OF BREAKFAST, HURRYING PAST HIS GREAT-GRANDAD) Here I am! All ready and strong as a lion!

OLD OOKS: Where be you off to in this strangely peaceful dawn?

HENRY: Bye, Pops! We're off to see HIM!

OLD OOKS: (ALERTED) HIM! HIMMMMM!!!

HENRY: HIM that was here once before and will be again! Bye!

OLD OOKS: (HOBBLING AFTER, CREAKING, HE GRABS HENRY ROUGHLY) HIM!!! HIM, THEE SAYED, LADDIE!!! YOU'RE OFF TO SEE HIMMMMM!!!

ENID: It's all right, you silly old fool. We're just rowing around to the headland.

OLD OOKS: HIM!!! HIM!!! Back after all these years!

ENID: HE wants to see me. I don't know what for but I'm going anyway.

OLD OOKS: (HIS VOICE CRACKING WITH EMOTION) HIM!!! HIM, back again, him wot took my beloved girl, Wilhelmina Phlox, wot I loved wif all my bones and was gwan ter marry someday.

HENRY: Let me go! Will you?

OLD OOKS: (WEAK AND BROKEN) Sorry, lad. But ye mustn't go. It's him...the Zaratan. Back again. He travels the world in search of people for his evil designs. When I was your age, he came then. He's not a man, he's not a beast, he's an island, an island wot floats. All over the globe he goes, collecting younguns.

HENRY: (SCORNS) Who told you this, her talking lobster?

OLD OOKS: Talking lobster? She got a talking LOBSTER!!! You got a talking lobster, my pretty?

ENID: I have. I do.

OLD OOKS: Wilhelmina had a talking lobster. They all work for HIM. HE sends them, to talk to you, to butter you up so's you'll go. I'll bet he's told you about the Paradise his master will make.

ENID: He has, yes. He's quite a bore on the subject, actually.

OLD OOKS: Off the headland, thee says. I'll pop in and get my nocuteleleariters. (HE CREAKS HOBBLISOMELY AWAY)

HENRY: (WHISPERS) Come on, Enid....let's push off. HE'll be waiting!!!!

ENID: (ALREADY ON HER WAY) Yeah! Mustn't be late.

SPOT THEIR RUNNING FOOTSTEPS ON PAVES, THEN ON PEBBLES

OLD OOKS:

(SHOUTING AFTER) HERE! HERE! DON'T GO!
HENRY, LAD!!! ENID, MY PRETTY!!!!!! ONCE
HE'S GOT YOU HE'LL NEVER LET'S YER GO!!!!
YOU'LL NEVER SEE YER HOMES AGAIN!!!! (HE
GIVES UP SHOUTING AND COUGHS INSTEAD, THEN
DESPERATELY, AS THE SCENE FADES:) If you
sees Wilhelmina tell her I still loves her!
(HE SOBS)

SCENE 10

Ext. Beach/Sea

ENID:

Thought you said you was strong!

HENRY:

This boat weighs tons! Help me push!

FX

THE ROWBOAT BEING PUSHED DOWN THE BEACH,
THEIR GROANS

HENRY:

(OUT OF PUFF) Oh, no - it's them.

FX

GIRLISH FEET RUNNING OVER PEBBLES

TRISHA FISHER:

Hey, where you off to with the lobster
woman?

HENRY:

Nowhere.

CHERYL:

Trisha and I wanna come too.

ENID:

You can't come! HE doesn't want to see you!
Just ME!!!

TRISHA FISHER:

Who's this "HE", then?

FX

SPLASH OF BOAT IN WATER

HENRY:

All on board, whoever's coming!!!

FX/SPOT

SOUND OF THE THREE GIRLS CLAMBERING IN

TRISHA FISHER: Lobster Woman!!!!

ENID: Halibut Face!

CHERYL: Girls, please, let's be ladies!

FX THE STEADY PULL OF HENRY'S OARS IN THE WATER WHILE THE GIRLS BICKER

TRISHA FISHER: (TO CHERYL) She call me something under her breath?

CHERYL: (PLEASED) She called you Halibut Face, what else!

TRISHA FISHER: She called you Trout Gob!

CHERYL: Never did. She's my friend. Aren't you my friend, Enid, sweetie?

ENID: Trout Gob!

CHERYL: Lobster Woman!!!!

FX THE THUD OF WAVES ON THE BOAT'S PROW

HENRY: Hey, it's getting a bit choppy.

ENID: Yeah, and there's a nasty cloud up ahead. Coming around the headland.

CHERYL: Looks more like an island to me.

ENID: An island, Cheryl, you're right.

CHERYL: (WHISPERS, TO TRISHA FISHER) See, she's my friend. She called me Cheryl.

FX A BIG SPLASH FOLLOWED BY A BIGGER SPLASH

GRAMS C-CAT TRANCE'S 'SHAKE THE MIND' BEGINS LOW IN BACKGROUND.

FX THE SONG OF WHALES, THE CLICK OF DOLPHINS.
THE WIND SLOWLY RISING DURING
THROCKMORTON'S SPEECH

THROCKMORTON: (SHOUTING ABOVE THE SPLASHING, NARRATES)
The sea began to boil like a pan of water.
Henry rowed with all his strength, till he
fell in the bottom of the boat exhausted.
(WE HEAR HIM MOANINGLY DO THIS) Trisha
Fisher and Cheryl Potts took the oars. Enid
combed back her dripping hair with her
fingers and watched the dark shape of the
Zaratan get larger and larger. Just a grey
hump in the water to begin with, covered in
barnacles, and seaweed like a scraggly
beard. Then they could count its leafless
trees, its ruined church with what looked
like a huge eye where the round window
should have been.

TRISHA FISHER: We're sinking! Bail out, Henry!

HENRY: It's too late! Too late!

CHERYL: We're going under! It's over my knees!

ENID: Keep rowing! Harder! Harder!

FX WILD SPLASHING, BOILING AND BUBBLING OF
WATER. WHALE SONG ALL AROUND THEM. THE
MUSIC DOUBLING OVER ON ITSELF. GULLS CRY.
DUCKS QUACK. THE YOUNGSTERS SHOUT FOR HELP

THROCKMORTON: (SHOUTING ABOVE THE STORM) A million fish
were leaping out of the water all around
them, slapping them in the face (WE HEAR
THE SOUND OF THIS). Dolphins clicked
warnings.

A DOLPHIN: (WITH JAPANESE ACCENT) Click-clikk-kkk...GO
BACK! Go BACK!!!!

THROCKMORTON: They rowed to where the Zaratan's shadow made the sea as black as boiling ink.

A DOLPHIN: Go back! Go back!!!!

TRISHA FISHER: We're all going to drown! Drown!!!

THROCKMORTON: They were sinking...or were they already underwater?...they couldn't tell!

ENID: (SCREAM) Henry! Where's Henry...

CHERYL: A wave! It snatched him away! A wave! A huge wave! But not nearly as huge as that one. Arrhhhh!!!

FX A HUGE THUDDING WAVE. THEY ALL SCREAM. THE ROWBOAT BREAKS UP WITH CRACKLES AND SPLINTERS

CUT SUDDENLY. SILENCE

SCENE 11 Int. Zaratan

FX ACOUSTIC OF A CAVE. A HEART BEATING: THIS BEATS DISCREETLY THROUGHOUT THEIR TIME INSIDE THE ZARATAN. SLOW PLOONKITY DRIPPING OF WATER. THE YOUNGSTERS MOAN AS THEY AWAKE

HENRY: That you, Cheryl?

CHERYL: (MOANS) Am I still pretty when I'm as wet as this?

HENRY: I should say. But not as pretty as Enid, though.

CHERYL: (HIGHLY DISAPPOINTED) Oh.

HENRY: Enid?

ENID: Here I am. Can't find Trisha nowhere. Must have drowned.

CHERYL: (RATHER PLEASED) What a pity.

TRISHA FISHER: I didn't drown. I'm under this seaweed.

FX/SPOT A WET SCHLOOKING SOUND AS TRISHA FISHER FREES HERSELF FROM THE SEAWEED

TRISHA FISHER: Where are we?

WILHELMINA PHLOX: (THE SEXY VOICE OF A DUCHESS PAST HER PRIME) You are inside the Zaratan, little fishes. Some turtles swam in with you, right through HIS mouth. He spat them out, of course. This is HIS brain, by the way.

ENID: His brain!

WILHELMINA: Oh, he's mostly brain. (CHUCKLES TO HERSELF) We're quite safe now. He's awake. But we'd better hurry. If he falls asleep this chamber will be full of his dreams. I'm Wilhelmina Phlox, by the way.

HENRY: Wilhelmina Phlox? That's my great-grandad's old girlfriend.

CHERYL: But she's beautiful.

TRISHA FISHER: Not a day over twelve.

WILHELMINA: I'm 103, if you don't mind!

ENID: You've kept your looks, I must say.

WILHELMINA: It's the penguins wot does it, dear. I never eats anything else. Quick, he's falling asleep. Run, run.

SPOT THEY ALL RUN, ACROSS A WET SPRINGY FLOOR

WILHELMINA: We'll never make it! Come here, hide inside this telephone box.

HENRY: What's a telephone box?

WILHELMINA: I don't know. They haven't been invented yet. He dreamed it last night and the penguins haven't taken it upstairs yet.

THEY ARE SQUASHING PAINFULLY INTO THE TELEPHONE BOX

WILHELMINA: Yes, he dreams his dreams, you see, then the penguins drag all the bits of the dream away and put them upstairs. It's such a junk shop up there! He's making Paradise, you see.

ENID: Yeah, I heard that.

WILHELMINA: But he hasn't got everything he needs yet. He needs oodles more things. And People! PEOPLE! He can't dream people properly, you see. They come out all sappy and they don't know what to do with themselves. The penguins drown them in the kitchens. Still, he's got you lot now. I dare say he's a twitch nearer Paradise now. He'll take root, I expect, stop all this floating from ocean to ocean. Penguins taste dreadful, dearie, but they're good for your complexion.

HENRY: Miss Phlox?

WILHELMINA: Oh, he's dreaming about orchestras again.

GRAMS THE DISTANT SOUND OF AN ORCHESTRA TUNING UP

WILHELMINA: Can't tell you how many bassoons I've got in my bathroom!

HENRY: Miss Phlox?

WILHELMINA: Yes, dear.

HENRY: My great-grandad, he never stopped loving you. He told me to say so.

WILHELMINA: (TEARFUL) After all this time! Is he still the same handsome young man, strong as a lion?

HENRY: Erm...what would you say, Enid?

ENID: (WITH EVE ARDEN SHARPNESS) I'd say he hasn't eaten enough penguins.

WILHELMINA: Oh, you must try some.

FX THE SUDDEN RINGING OF THE TELEPHONE

CHERYL: I've a terrible ringing in my ears.

WILHELMINA: No, dearie, it's the telephone box's telephone. Can't be for me. (TO ENID) You dear, you answer it....

ENID: Me....

WILHELMINA: Pick up its thing and say "Hello" three times.

SPOT SOUND OF ENID LIFTING RECEIVER. IT SOUNDS LIKE SHE'S GOT A HEAVY BREATHER...

ENID: Hello? Hello?.....Hello?

ZARATAN: (DOWN THE LINE, THE THIN VOICE OF AN ABSENT-MINDED BISHOP) Hello.....Zaratan here. Is that Enid Throckmorton of 5 Fisherman's Cottages, Catfish-on-Sea?

ENID: Speaking, yes. (RASPINGLY WHISPERS TO THE OTHERS) It's HIM!!!

WILHELMINA: You are honoured!

ENID: (INTO PHONE) Yes?

FX/SPOT SOUND OF MONEY BEING FRANTICALLY PUSHED IN AT ZARATAN'S END OF THE PHONE LINE

ZARATAN: It's all right, I've plenty of sixpences.

ENID: (WITH THE OVEREMPHATIC STRESS OF SOMEONE UNUSED TO TELEPHONES) Where exactly are you speaking from?

ZARATAN: I'm not sure. My mind keeps wandering. You haven't seen it, have you?

ENID: Does it look like a penguin?

ZARATAN: No.

ENID: I haven't seen it then.

ZARATAN: I thought I should ring to welcome you aboard. I hope you'll be very happy here.

ENID: It's been a lovely visit, yes, but I think we'd all like to go home now. If you could dream up a boat for us, please.

ZARATAN: Ooooooh, no. No. You can't go. Not ever. I need you here. To help make Paradise with. Yes, yes. It's going to be simply zaratanabibblious, you'll see.

ENID: Our village is paradise enough, thank you. We want to go back there.

ZARATAN: No you don't.

ENID: We do.

ZARATAN: Say that again and I shall hang up!

ENID: I think you're being monstrous!

FX DIAL TONE. HE HAS HUNG UP.

ENID: (DEJECTED, TO THE OTHERS) He's hunged up.

WILHELMINA: He's just dreamed a rather nifty little cake shop. Shall we have some tea before the penguins take it away?

SCENE 12 Int. Teashop

SPOT THE CAKE SHOP, CHINKING OF PLATES, THE SOUNDS OF ENTHUSIASTIC EATING

WILHELMINA: Where is that dopey waitress? (CALLING)
Five more slices of penguin cake, please!

SPOT WAITRESS CLINKING TOWARDS THEM WITH TROLLEY

WAITRESS: Who am I? Where'd I come from?

WILHELMINA: Never mind that. Cake!

HENRY: Yeah, hurry up, Missis.

SPOT SOUNDS OF THE DOLING OUT OF CAKE

CHERYL: I don't like this pengiun cake. It squeaks after you've swallowed it.

WILHELMINA: But it's quite tasteless, dearie, without the squeak!

ENID: Lookere, Miss Phlox...

WILHELMINA: "Wilhelmina", please.

ENID: What exactly did this Zaratan personage bring us here for? Perhaps if we did it he'd let us go.

WILHELMINA: Actually, dearie, he only really wants you. You are obviously a very special young woman, with the sort of qualities he's looking for.

TRISHA FISHER: Can the rest of us go home then?

HENRY: We can't go and leave Enid behind by herself!

CHERYL: Yes we can!

WILHELMINA: Nobody's going anywhere, dears! He'll never allow it!

ENID: What exactly are these qualities I'm supposed to have?

WILHELMINA: Ooooh, you'd better ask him.

ENID: He's barmy.

WILHELMINA: He's under a lot of strain.

HENRY: (IN BACKGROUND, CALLS) Here, you got any cake wot don't have penguins in it?

WAITRESS: (PUSHING THE TROLLEY, IN BACKGROUND) Who am I?

WILHELMINA: Making Paradise is a slow business, you know. It takes a lot of thinking, to get the details right. But one night he'll dream the right dream and next morning, hey presto, there it'll be! Can't be long now. Any day.

FX/SPOT

THE NATTERING OF PENGUINS. FURNITURE BEING
SHIFTED

WILHELMINA:

Oh, dear, they're taking it away already. And I've only had 19 slices! Still, we'd better get a move on and plug your friends into the wall.

FX/SPOT

THEY GET UP. THE SHIFTING OF CHAIRS

TRISHA FISHER:

What wall's this, then?

WILHELMINA:

(WHISPERS, TO ENID) We don't want to listen to their silly chatter till Paradise comes, do we? It'll be much nicer with just you and me. (A SINISTER LAUGH)

SCENE 13

Int. Zaratan

THROCKMORTON:

(NARRATING, CLOSE) Wilhelmina Phlox, who looked no older than the rest of them but was 103, took Enid, Henry, Trisha Fisher and Cheryl Potts on a walk around the insides of the Zaratan.

WILHELMINA:

Which way was it, now?

THROCKMORTON:

They walked through huge halls full of the pieces of the creature's dreams. Staircases that went nowhere. Piles of books with printing on just a page or two, here and there. Footballers in a daze. The foyer of an hotel in Singapore. And they walked down a corridor where a horse race was taking place, but just as the horses reached the finishing line they suddenly disappeared and the race started again.

FX THE SOUND OF A HORSE RACE, THE STARTER SAYS "AND THEY'RE OFF!". A BRIEFNESS OF HOOFBEATS, THEN HE SAYS "AND THEY'RE OFF!" AGAIN

HENRY: (LAUGHING) This is great! I like it here! Can I keep this Viking helmet?

ENID: Henry Ooks, you look stupid!

TRISHA FISHER: (IN SUDDEN EXCITEMENT) Hey, Cheryl, look....swanky dresses! Hundreds of them!

CHERYL: Cor!

FX/SPOT THE SOUND OF TAFFETA BEING FONDLED, ZIPS BEING PULLED, THE TWO GIRLS GETTING INTO DRESSES

TRISHA FISHER: Get into one yourself, Enid, go on.

ENID: No thanks.

CHERYL: Ain't I a double-helping of Princess?!

TRISHA FISHER: I'm prettier in mine!

CHERYL: Never are! Look at these ribbons. I'm so happy I could cry! (SHE DOES JUST THAT)

TRISHA FISHER: So could I! (SHE FOLLOWS SUIT)

ENID: Don't they look stupid, Henry?

HENRY: (SIGHS ADMIRINGLY) Pretty stupid, yeah.

WILHELMINA: (CALLING TO THEM FROM DOWN THE CORRIDOR) Hurry up dearies....I simply must plug you in or he'll start rumbling.

FX A RUMBLE

TRISHA FISHER: Henry won't let you! Will you, Henry?

HENRY: Erm, no...certainly not.

ENID: I should think not. I never heard such nonsense, not even from my talking lobster.

FX THE TRUNDLE AND PING OF AN APPROACHING BUS

WILHELMINA: Watch out everyone, there's a bus coming!

ENID: A what?

WILHELMINA: They go around and around here all day!

FX WHIZ OF BUS DOORS OPENING

BUS DRIVER: Fancy a ride, yous lot?

ENID: (IN SUDDEN PASSION) HURRY! ALL ON BOARD!

SPOT THEIR FEET RUNNING ONTO BUS

WILHELMINA: Wait! Enid, please, I must plug in your friends or I'll get in the most awful bother.....

SCENE 15

Int. Bus & Nose

FX THE CHUGGING OF A BUS'S ENGINE

BUS CONDUCTOR: (PERSON WITH A COLD) Where to, please?

ENID: Five to the nose, please.

FX BUS CONDUCTOR CHURNS OFF THEIR TICKETS

BUS CONDUCTOR: A million pounds, please.

WILHELMINA: (RUSTLING IN HER BAG) I think I've some money somewhere. (A CRACKLE OF WHITE FIVERS) This enough?

HENRY: (WHISPERS, TO ENID) Enid? What are we going to the nose for?

ENID: You'll see.

BUS DRIVER: (OVER INTERCOM) THE NOSE! WE HAS ARRIVED AT THE NOSE.

BUS CONDUCTOR: (HURRYING ALONG THE AISLE) All off, please! All off the bus, please!

SPOT CLOSE, THE ZARATAN IS ABOUT TO SNEEZE. "Ah! Ah! Ah!" HE GOES, SNIFFING VERY SNOTTILY. DURING THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE, HIS STRUGGLE NOT TO SNEEZE IS BRAVELY FOUGHT....

WILHELMINA: What is that disgusting sound?

ENID: He's going to sneeze!

WILHELMINA: Oh, dear!

ENID: Hold on tight!

SPOT A HUGE, WET, SNOTTY SNEEZE: THE HUGEST IN THE HISTORY OF RADIO. HENRY AND THE GIRLS SCREAM

FX THE WHIZZING SOUND OF A BUS ZOOMING TEN MILES THROUGH THE AIR, ITS BELLS GOING, THE TICKET-MACHINE CHURNING

FX THE TERRIBLE CRASH OF A BUS THAT HAS BEEN SNEEZED TEN MILES THROUGH THE AIR. BOINGS! PLINKS! SPLASHES! THE DYING HISS OF THE DOORS IS THE LAST THING WE HEAR BEFORE SILENCE

SCENE 16

Ext. Dunes

SPOT THE ENSEMBLE WAKING UP, KNOCKING OVER TINNY OBJECTS, DELICATE BOINGING, TINKLES OF DRIPPING GLASS

ENID: Lucky we landed in a sand dune.

WILHELMINA: Where's the Zaratan got to?

(IN THE BACKGROUND THE BUS CONDUCTOR IS CONTINUALLY SAYING "Oh, dear me!")

ENID: Sneezed himself way out to sea, I expect.

WILHELMINA: Poor dear!

TRISHA FISHER: My dress isn't even slightly torn!

CHERYL: Yes, it is.

SPOT THE SOUND OF THREE-INCHES WORTH OF TEAR

TRISHA FISHER: Cheryl Potts, that was you!

SPOT THEY ARE FIGHTING, MORE TEARING

CHERYL: Wasn't!

TRISHA FISHER: Was!

OLD OOKS: (APPROACHING UP DUNE) Hello! Hello! Anyone alive in there? I saw the whole thing! It flew through the air, it did!

WILHELMINA: Who is that hideous old man?

HENRY: It's my great-grandad.

WILHELMINA: (SUDDENLY PASSIONATE) Oliver!

OLD OOKS: Wilhelmina!

WILHELMINA: (IN A PROFOUND PASSION) You haven't changed a bit, dearie!

OLD OOKS: Nor you, my pumpkin.

WILHELMINA: But do you perchance have a few penguins in your refrigerator?

OLD OOKS: What in my what?

WILHELMINA: Oh, they're very good for you, truly.

(ENID, TRISHA FISHER, CHERYL AND HENRY ALL LAUGH)

SCENE 17 Ext. Beach

FX THE SOUND OF THE WAVES, PEOPLE FAR AWAY PLAYING BEACH GAMES, AN ICE-CREAM VAN DISTANTLY PLAYING 'I DO LIKE TO BE BESIDE THE SEASIDE'

CONST. BINSLEY: (SOBBING WITH DELIGHT) A wonderful story, Colonel Throckmorton. Wonderful. Especially that end bit. I don't have a girlfriend myself, you see.

THROCKMORTON: (SINCERE) I'm glad you enjoyed it.

CONST. BINSLEY: I did. I did. (SNIFFING AWAY HIS TEARS, MORE POLICEMANLY) It made me remember lots of things my talking lobster said to me about Paradise and all that. He was still talking about it when my father cooked him. (WEEPS) You won't tell my sergeant I cried, will you, sir?

THROCKMORTON: Course not, old chap.

CONST. BINSLEY: This Zaratan thingmy, it appeared just off the headland there?

THROCKMORTON: Just there, yes.

CONST. BINSLEY: Where that dark blue island is now?

THROCKMORTON: Which dark blue island?

CONST. BINSLEY: There, see! The one wot's moving about a bit! It's not... (SAID EXTRA QUICKLY) HIM-that-was-here-once-and-will-be-again! Couldn't be, could it?

THROCKMORTON: Must be! What else?

CONST. BINSLEY: (GETTING UP, CRUNCHING PEBBLES) Excuse me, sir, but do you think they'll need any policemen in Paradise?

THROCKMORTON: To start with, I suppose.

CONST. BINSLEY: But can I swim it?

THROCKMORTON: With those feet, I should coco!

CONST. BINSLEY: (RUNNING DOWN PEBBLY BEACH, SHOUTING AS HE GOES) Good bye, sir!
Byeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!

THROCKMORTON: (CALLING) Toodle-pip!!!!!!!

FX/SPOT THE SOUND OF A HALF-DRESSED POLICEMAN DIVING INTO THE WAVES, THE SPLASH OF HIS FIRST STROKES

SCENE 18 Int. Zaratan

FX THE RINGING OF A TELEPHONE, THE RECEIVER BEING LIFTED

CONST. BINSLEY: Constable Binsley, speaking.

ZARATAN: (DOWN THE PHONE LINE) Zaratan here.
Paradise won't be long. Any day now! If I think very hard I'm sure I can get everything just perfect. Do you think I'll manage? Hello? Hello? There's something wrong with this phone.

GRAMS

PLAY OUT WITH 'TRIUMPHAL MARCH' FROM AIDA,
PLAYED AT DOUBLE SPEED....

END

[Home](#)

[Radio](#)

If you have any comments or questions please email me:
author@www.swalks.com