

# Radioplay: Whoppers! A Mammoth Whopper

## CHARACTERS

In the High Street:

COLONEL DIGBY.....a 704-year-old whopper-  
THROCKMORTON.....teller  
OLD MRS. BINSLEY.....an old dear fond of  
elephants  
JULIUS K. BINSLEY.....a ruined bookie

In Mother Russia:

ANATOLY THROCKMORTONOVITCH-ON-.....a Russian youth  
THE-MINSK.....  
LEONID MELNIKOV.....Anatoly's burly pal  
MAJOR IKFETT.....a toothless old man  
BORIS CROW.....a crow  
GRANFATHER THROCK'VITCH-ON-THE-.....who was once Stalin's  
MINSK.....barber  
VLADIMIR GOMEL.....a grim official  
I.B. GROZNYI.....a man with a weak bladder  
BORIS SHANKDAGZ.....a lovesick official  
CHAIRMAN-GENERAL.....a very great but sleepy  
LUSHNUTKO.....man  
PROKHOBRA.....an official of the gas  
company  
YURI KROBOTKIN.....another gas company man

SVETLANA.....the second-ugliest woman  
in Siberia

Also:

348 MAMMOTHS

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**SCENE 1**     Ext. Street

FX/GRAMS                     PLAY IN WITH A JAUNTY 1950s TUNE. PEEP OF TRAFFIC, THE CLIP-CLOP OF THROCKMORTONG WALKING JAUNTILY ALONG A HIGH STREET, HE SINGS 'UNDERNEATH THE MANGO TREE' TO HIMSELF

**THROCKMORTON:**         (TO PASSERS-BY, ENORMOUSLY HALE AND HEARTY)  
Good morning! Morning! Lovely day! Morning!

**PEOPLE IN STREET:**             'Morning!' 'Morning, Colonel!' 'Super day, what!'

SPOT                             THROCKMORTON'S FOOTSTEPS SEEM TO BE DANCING, HE TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND SIGHS WITH SATISFACTION

**THROCKMORTON:**         What a wonderful morning! It reminds me of August the twelfth, 1703.

SPOT                             THE SHAKING OF A COLLECTING-TIN, MILDLY, THEN AGGRESSIVELY

**OLD MRS BINSLEY:**             (A SWEET, WELL-MEANING OLD DEAR) Excuse me, sir, but would you care to give to the elephants?

**THROCKMORTON:**         Elephants?

**OLD MRS BINSLEY:**             I'm collectiong for the elephants.

**THROCKMORTON:**         I can't see any elephants.

**OLD MRS** (A LITTLE THROWN) They're not here.  
**BINSLEY:**  
**THROCKMORTON:** Why not?

**OLD MRS** Because...  
**BINSLEY:**  
**THROCKMORTON:** Because what?

**OLD MRS** (DITHERINGLY THINKING OF A REASON) Because...  
**BINSLEY:** because...

**THROCKMORTON:** Spit it out, woman!

**OLD MRS** (ALMOST TEARFUL) Because they're being shot at  
**BINSLEY:** in Africa.

**THROCKMORTON:** Good for them. Sounds much more fun.

**OLD MRS** But it's not! Really it's not! I need money to  
**BINSLEY:** save them.

**BINSLEY:** (COMING UP IN A MOOD, TO THROCKMORTON) Are you  
upsetting my mother?

**THROCKMORTON:** I do hope not.

**BINSLEY:** Why don't you give the poor old dear something  
for the elephants? You can see she's beside  
herself.

**THROCKMORTON:** Money for elephants. I don't see why not. (A  
JANGLE IN HIS POCKETS) Erm, how about one of  
these self-multiplying 50-pence coins of mine.  
Just put it in a drawer overnight and next  
morning the drawer will be full of 50-pence  
coins.

**OLD MRS** Oh, thank you, thank you, kind sir. I thank  
**BINSLEY:** you. My little boy thanks you. The elephants  
thank you.

FX SHE MAKES A WEIRD TRUMPETING ELEPHANT-ISH SOUND

**THROCKMORTON:** Is she quite all right?

**BINSLEY:** (AGGRESSIVELY) She's much better. Don't listen to what they say! (IN A SLY TONE) Here, let's have a butcher's at that 50-pence.

SPOT A TWANGING AS BINSLEY FLICKS THE COIN IN THE AIR, BITES IT AND TAPS IT

**BINSLEY:** Self-multiplying, you say?

SPOT IN BACKGROUND, SHAKING HER TIN, OLD MRS BINSLEY MAKES MORE TRUMPETING NOISES

**OLD MRS BINSLEY:** (IN BACKGROUND) Give generously to the elephants!

**THROCKMORTON:** Yes, yes... self-multiplying.

**BINSLEY:** You sure?

**THROCKMORTON:** I, young sir...

**BINSLEY:** I'm not young. I'm 47.

**THROCKMORTON:** I, young sir...am 704-years-old and haven't been unsure of anything since I was 302. Speaking of elephants reminds me of...more elephants. Mammoths, actually. You'll be fascinated by this, a story about mammoths... you can tell your mother when she's even more better.

FX OLD MRS BINSLEY TRUMPETS IN BACKGROUND

**THROCKMORTON:** This was a year or two ago, in Russia... my grandmother's aunt was married to Ivan the Terrible, you know, and he was.

**BINSLEY:** Was what?

**THROCKMORTON:** Terrible. (LOSES HIS PLACE) Erm, I was telling you about artichokes, was I?

**OLD MRS BINSLEY:** (IN BACKGROUND, RATTLING HER TIN) Elephants! Elephants!

**THROCKMORTON:** Of course, elephants. Mammoths, anyway, a very elephanty sort of beast on the whole. Tusks, trunk, all the necessary. You're not going anywhere, are you?

**BINSLEY:** I was going to the doctor's to have my bottom X-rayed.

**THROCKMORTON:** Nonsense. You're perfectly healthy.

**BINSLEY:** Am I?

**THROCKMORTON:** This story concerns one of my nephews, on the Russian side of the family, you understand, Anatoly Throckmortonovitch-on-the- Minsk. A year or so ago he was terribly worried.

**BINSLEY:** His bottom?

**THROCKMORTON:** Worse. He was about to be called up to fight in the Russian army against the Afghanistanis. He lived in Moscow with his grandfather and a pet crow called...I forget its name. His best friend was an enormous youth called Leonid Melnikov. He was going to be called up too, and could hardly wait. He had a pet crow as well, but it was dead.

**BINSLEY:** Starved?

**THROCKMORTON:** So am I. Have an egg sandwich.

GRAMS BRING UP THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL DIRGE IN BACKGROUND

**THROCKMORTON:** (CONTINUES SPEAKING WHILE CHEWING AN EGG SANDWICH) Anatoly and Leonid met every day in a café in Gom, the big shopping centre in Moscow. They served up the most horrible buns in the world in this particular café. An autumn day in Moscow. There was a red sky over Red Square and all the snowflakes looked pink, like flakes of salmon floating towards Lenin's tomb.

**BINSLEY:** Where does the mammoths come into it?

**THROCKMORTON:** Be patient, man!!!

## **SCENE 2**     Int. Café

FX/GRAMS                     THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL DIRGE CONTINUES, CLINK OF SPOONS AND PLATES, HUMM OF DINERS

**LEONID:** Why don't they ever play another record?

**ANATOLY:** They've only got one record.

**LEONID:** Why don't they play the other side?

**ANATOLY:** This is the other side. It's the same on both sides.

**TOOTHLESS OLD**     You finished with that bun?

**MAN:**

**ANATOLY:** Not quite...hey!

SPOT                             A RETREATING CACKLE AS THE OLD MAN RUNS OFF

**ANATOLY:** He pinched my bun!

**LEONID:** Have mine, it's the horriblemst bun in the world. Even horribler than the five others I've just eaten.

**ANATOLY:** (BITES HORRIBLE BUN) When we're in the army in Afghanistan we'll dream of buns like these.

**LEONID:** Can't wait!

**ANATOLY:** You must be mad.

**LEONID:** You won't say that when I'm a General.

**ANATOLY:** When you're a General you'll be mad for sure. All Generals are mad or they wouldn't be Generals. They'd be something sensible...

**LEONID:** Like what?

**ANATOLY:** (WHISPERS) Leonid.

**LEONID:** Uh?

**ANATOLY:** (WHISPERS) He's back.

**LEONID:** Who is?

**ANATOLY:** The bun pincher.

**TOOTHLESS OLD MAN:** You finished with that bun?

**ANATOLY:** BUZZ OFF!!!

**LEONID:** He's an old soldier. Show some respect. Give him your bun.

**ANATOLY:** Won't.

**LEONID:** Give it him!

**ANATOLY:** His pockets are bulging with buns! Look at him! He sells them back to the café.

**SPOT** SCUFFLE AND CHINK AS LEONID TAKES THE BUN

**LEONID:** Here, little father, a bun for your collection.  
Compliments of Leonid Melnikov and Anatoly  
Throckmortonovitch-on-the-Minsk.

**TOOTHLESS OLD  
MAN:** (CACKLES, EATING BUN AS HE RETREATS INTO  
HISTORY)

**ANATOLY:** We'll both end up like him if we go to  
Afghanistan.

**LEONID:** Not me.

**ANATOLY:** Yes you will, after you've had nothing to eat  
but hamsters for five years.

**LEONID:** (VERY WORRIED) What hamsters is this?

**ANATOLY:** In the desert there's nothing to eat but  
hamsters. And you have to catch them yourself.  
My girlfriend's new boyfriend has a cousin who  
was telling him about a friend of his who came  
home on leave and was still chasing the  
hamsters in his sleep.

**LEONID:** Urrr, you've put me right off going now.  
(SHIVERS WITH DISGUST) Hamsters!

**ANATOLY:** Talking of sleep gives me an idea. YES. That's  
what I'll do, I'll wake my grandfather up.  
He'll fix things up for us with one of his  
brilliant suggestions.

SPOT HE GETS UP, RATTLING THE TABLE, HE WALKS  
BRISKLY AWAY INTO THE SHOPPING CROWDS. THE  
HOLLOW ACOUSTIC OF GOM

**SCENE 3** Int. Shop

**LEONID:** (CHASING) Anatoly! Anatoly! Wait! (CATCHING UP)  
You can't wake your grandfather. He's been  
asleep for three years. He might die if he  
wakes up!

**ANATOLY:** It's his own fault for staying asleep for so  
long. He'll know what to do, I'm sure he will.  
He's a brilliant man my grandfather.

**LEONID:** If he's so brilliant, how come he's living on  
the 43rd floor of the most miserable block of  
flats in Moscow? How come he's not head of the  
KGB?

**ANATOLY:** I'll tell you how brilliant he is. In the bad  
old days...

**LEONID:** These are the bad old days.

**ANATOLY:** In the badder older days, when President Stalin  
was trying to have my grandfather executed, he  
disguised himself as Stalin's own mother for  
eleven years and was never found out.

SPOT THEY ARE WALKING AWAY FROM US, INTO CROWDS

**LEONID:** Yeah, that is pretty brilliant, I suppose.

**ANATOLY:** I should coco.

GRAMS FAST BALALAIKA MUSIC.....

## **SCENE 4** Ext: Street

GRAMS FADE BALALAIKA MUSIC



SPOT THEY BURST IN, GOING 'BRRRRR' FROM THE COLD

**LEONID:** It's colder in here than it is outside.

FX THE SLOW CAW OF A CROW

**ANATOLY:** Hiya, Boris! Had a nice day?

FX A SLOW MISERABLE-ISH CAW

**LEONID:** He looks hungry.

**ANATOLY:** You feed him some ballbearings while I wake up my grandfather.

FX EXCITED CAWING

**LEONID:** Shut up! I'm coming!

FX A CLINKING OF BALLBEARINGS

## **SCENE 6** Int: Flat

A HUSHED, CLOSE ROOM

FX THE LOW SNORE OF AN OCTOGENARIAN

**ANATOLY:** (WHILE SHAKING HIM, LOUDER WITH EACH SHAKE)  
Grandfather. Grandpapa. Grandpappy. Wake up,  
you old nit!

THE SLOW GROAN OF A MAN WITH A LAWNMOWER STUCK  
IN HIS THROAT

**ANATOLY:** (EXCITED AT HAVING HIM AWAKE) Grandad! You're  
awake!

**GRANDFATHER** Who's an old nit?

**THROCK:**

**ANATOLY:** Sorry, Grandfather.

**GRANDFATHER** How many years have I been asleep?  
**THROCK:**  
**ANATOLY:** Three years, Grandfather.

**GRANDFATHER** Only three? You sure?  
**THROCK:**  
**ANATOLY:** Three years and two months, Grandfather.

**GRANDFATHER** (SATISFIED THAT HE WAS RIGHT) Ah!  
**THROCK:**  
**LEONID:** (PUSHING OPEN DOOR, IN A LOUD WHISPER) I've given this crow of yours eleven ballbearings and he still wants more!

**GRANDFATHER** Who's that? KGB?  
**THROCK:**  
**ANATOLY:** That's my friend Leonid Melnikov, Grandfather. We're both of us in a spot of bother. That's why I've woken you up. To ask your advice.

**GRANDFATHER** Approach the bed, Leonid Melnikov.  
**THROCK:**  
SPOT/FX LEONID'S FLOORBOARD-CREAKING APPROACH

**LEONID:** Yes, sir.

**GRANDFATHER** You have woken me up to ask my advice?  
**THROCK:**  
**LEONID:** Yes, sir.

**GRANDFATHER** Never give a crow more than eleven  
**THROCK:** ballbearings. Goodnight. (HE IS IMMEDIATELY SNORING)

**ANATOLY:** (SHAKING HIM ROUGHLY) Grandfather! Grandpappy!

**GRANDFATHER** (WAKING UP) Ugh? Ugh?  
**THROCK:**  
**ANATOLY:** That's not the advice we want. It's about the war.

**GRANDFATHER** War? War?  
**THROCK:**

**ANATOLY:** The war that's in Afghanistan. It hadn't started when you went to sleep.

**GRANDFATHER** Afghanistan? Where's that?  
**THROCK:**

**ANATOLY:** Down there somewhere.

**GRANDFATHER** Down there?  
**THROCK:**

**ANATOLY:** Leonid and I will be old enough to be in the army in a few weeks' time. They will send us to Aghanistan where we shall be killed for sure.

**LEONID:** (VERY WORRIED) It's the hamsters that does it. Their fur clogs up your guts.

**ANATOLY:** He's right.

**GRANDFATHER** (DREAMILY) I was having a dream about Bibcoff.  
**THROCK:**

**LEONID:** Who's...

**ANATOLY:** (INTERRUPTS WITH A RASP) Don't ask him who is Bibcoff!!!!

**LEONID:** Who's...

**ANATOLY:** (A MORE EARNEST RASP) Don't ask him who is Bibcoff!

**LEONID:** (WITH ANGELIC INNOCENCE) Who is Bibcoff?

**GRANDFATHER** (SCREAMS IN FURY) Bibcoff! BIBCOFF!!!!  
**THROCK:** BIBCOFF!!! (THEN WITH LOVING NOSTALGIA) Ahhhh, my poor Bibcoff! My dearest friend. I was Stalin's barber, you know.

**ANATOLY:** He knows.

**LEONID:** I know.

**GRANDFATHER  
THROCK:** I cut Stalin's hair for him. And Bibcoff, he cut Stalin's moustache for him. One day Stalin jumped from his chair screaming: "It's a plot! My barbers are trying to kill me!". Poor Bibcoff was never seen again. But I... I... (HE GIGGLES)

**ANATOLY:** Afghanistan, Grandfather. What can we do?

**GRANDFATHER  
THROCK:** (BORED WITH THE SUBJECT) Oh, I'll write you a note for Chairman-General Lushnutko. Pen! Paper! (THE BRIEFEST FUSS WILE THIS IS PROVIDED. HIS PEN SCRATCHES LIKE A MONK'S) I cut Lushnutko's hair right until the time he went completely bald. He will give an exemption for you and your friend. He is a good man. (FALLING ASLEEP) Take him some chocolates... and dancing-girls, lots of dancing-girls.

**LEONID:** Dancing-girls?

**ANATOLY:** I think he was starting a dream.

**BORIS THE CROW:** I want another ballbearing! Another ballbearing.

**LEONID:** Who said that?

GRAMS FAST BALALAIKA MUSIC

## **SCENE 7** Int: Hall

A HUGE HOLLOW RECEPTION HALL. HUM OF THE MANY PEOPLE WAITING TO IN THE BACKGROUND

**ANATOLY:** Excuse me, we've come to see Chairman-General Lushnutko.

**GRIM OFFICIAL  
(GOMEL):** You mean Chairman-General Aliev. And get that filthy crow out of here!

**LEONID:** (WHISPERS, TO ANATOLY) Stick it up your jumper.

FX SOUND OF A CROW BEING RELUCTANTLY STUCK UP  
ANATOLY'S JUMPER

**VISITOR**  
**(GROZNYI):** (A SMALL SAD VOICE) When will the Chairman-General be able to see me? I'm frightened to go to the toilet in case I miss my turn and I've been waiting five days.

**GRIM OFFICIAL:** Chairman-General Aliev is a very busy man.

**ANATOLY:** We're not here to see Chairman-General Aliev. We're here to see Chairman-General Lushnutko.

**GRIM OFFICIAL:** Chairman-General Lushnutko was Chairman-General Aliev's predecessor. He's been dead for years.

**LOVESICK**  
**OFFICIAL**  
**(SHANKDAGZ):** He's not dead. No. He's still in his office. Asleep. I went looking for my secretary in there last week and there he was, snoring away.

**GRIM OFFICIAL:** I don't believe it.

**LOVESICK**  
**OFFICIAL:** I would have told you. But you're always so busy. Come on, you laddies, I'll show you where he is.

SPOT/FX THE CLIP-CLOP OF FOOTSTEPS IN A LONG CORRIDOR

**LOVESICK**  
**OFFICIAL:** I can't find my secretary anywhere. She's very beautiful, you know. This is a picture of her putting the shot.

**LEONID:** Very pretty.

FX MUFFLED CAWS OF THE CROW

**ANATOLY:** Shhhh, Boris! Daft crow!

**LOVESICK**  
**OFFICIAL:** Here we are.

SPOT/FX

HUGE CREAK OF DOOR, THE SNAPPING OF COBWEBS.  
THEY ENTER WITH SLOW FOOTSTEPS, THE DISTANT  
PLAYING OF A ROMANTIC BALALAIKA. CLOSER: HEAVY  
PIGGISH SNORING

**ANATOLY:**

(WHISPERS) How long's he been asleep?

**LOVESICK  
OFFICIAL:**

Ooooh... (UNDER HIS BREATH, A QUICK  
CALCULATION) I'm 43, my secretary's 22,  
Chairman-General Aliev weighs 8 stone 6  
pounds... (ANNOUNCES IN NORMAL VOICE) ...since  
1957, I think.

**LEONID:**

Your grandfather was right. He hasn't a hair on  
his head.

**ANATOLY:**

Plenty up his nose though.

FX/SPOT

THE CLAWING ESCAPE OF BORIS THE CROW, FLAP OF  
HIS WINGS, HUGE CAWS!!! CAWS THAT COME TOWARDS  
US!!! A CAW IN OUR FACES!!! THEN CAWS AND  
FLAPPING CIRCLING THE ROOM, LEFT TO RIGHT,  
RIGHT TO LEFT

**LUSHNUTKO:**

(WAKING UP, HIS SNORING PUTTERING OUT LIKE A  
MOTOR-BOAT OUT OF PETROL) Ugh! Ugh! What is it?  
A blasted crow disturbing my little snooze!  
I'll give you what I gave the Germans at the  
siege of Leningrad!!!!

FX

HE SHOOTS AT THE CROW FIVE TIMES, LAUGHING WITH  
SATISFACTION

**ANATOLY:**

(INTERRUPTING HIS ATTACK) Excuse me, Chairman-  
General. Sir. Excuse me.

FX

MORE SHOOTING

**LUSHNUTKO:**

(INFURIATED) He's catching my bullets in his  
teeth. He's chewing them! What cheek!

FX

MORE SHOTS, IN QUICK SUCCESSION

**ANATOLY:** Excuse me, sir. I am Anatoly Throckmortonovitch-on-the-Minsk, the grandson of the Throckmortonovitch-on-the-Minsk who used to cut your hair when you had hair. Here's a note introducing us...and some chocolates.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Ummm...no toffees, I hope.

**LEONID:** (PIPING IN) I had the toffees.

**LUSHNUTKO:** What's this say? ... (MUTTERS THROUGH THE NOTE, SCREWS IT UP AND THROWS IT AWAY) Nonsense. (CONTINUES SHOOTING) Throckmortonovitch is far too young to have grandchildren.

**ANATOLY:** He's 74, sir.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Ooo, how long have I been asleep?

**ANATOLY:** Three hundred years, we think.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Oh dear! Is there still anyone waiting to see me?

**LOVESICK** I'll go and look, Chairman-General.

**OFFICIAL:**

FX BORIS THE CROW CONTINUES FLYING ABOUT, CAWING

**ANATOLY:** My grandfather said you would sign an exemption for me and my friend Leonid Melnikov....

**LEONID:** That's me.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Good afternoon.

**ANATOLY:** ...so that we don't have to go to fight in the war in Afghanistan.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Afghanistan?

**ANATOLY:** It's down there.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Well, yes, of course, dreadful business, I'm sure.

SPOT CLINK OF OPENING INKWELL

**LUSHNUTKO:** This ink's dry.

**ANATOLY:** (POPPING HIS BALLPOINT TO LIFE) Borrow my pen, sir.

**LUSHNUTKO:** Thankyou, lad. (THE SOUND OF HIS SCRAWLING ON PAPER) Anything for old Throckmortonovitch-on-the-Minsk. (AFTER A YAWN) Still dressed as Stalin's mother, is he?

**ANATOLY:** Actually, he doesn't wear anything at all these days. He's in bed asleep.

**LUSHNUTKO:** (SLEEPILY) Asleep. Asleep. There you are then (GETING QUIETER AS HE DOZES OFF) Show that at the recruiting office and they'll let you off the army. Of course, you'll have to go to Siberia instead.

**LEONID:** What did he say?

**ANATOLY:** I didn't catch it.

**BORIS THE CROW:** (SHOUTING FROM HIS PERCH) He said you have to go to Siberia instead and serve your country like good Russians. You'll work for the Siberian Gas Board and get paid ten roubles a month and eat nothing but yak butter. Stupid fools!

**LEONID:** Who said that?

## **SCENE 8** Narration

**BINSLEY:** You said there'd be mammoths!

**THROCKMORTON:** Be patient! There'll be plenty mammoths in a tick. The story goes to Siberia next and that's where you get mammoths.

**BINSLEY:** I want mammoths!

**THROCKMORTON:** SIBERIA!!!!

FX THE WIND WHISTLES, ICE RATTLES IN A BUCKET

**THROCKMORTON:** My nephew Anatoly and his friend Leonid Melnikov...

**LEONID:** That's me!

**THROCKMORTON:** ...were appointed officials of the Siberian Gas Board and sent to look after a stretch of the gas pipeline near the Arctic circle. The snowy foresty wastes! Silver birch and pine trees! Silence...just the sound of the ice cracking on the lake in the long twilight hours.

**BINSLEY:** And mammoths.

**THROCKMORTON:** Not yet!

## **SCENE 9** Ext: Snow/Int: Shed

SPOT/FX THEY ARE TRAMPING THROUGH DEEP SNOW

**LEONID:** My eyes have frozen!

**ANATOLY:** Keep blinking! Brrrrr.

**LEONID:** I wish I was in Afghanistan being shot at and eating hamsters. (HE SNEEZES)

FX/SPOT THE SOUND OF A CROW'S BEAK CHATTERING

**ANATOLY:** Shhhh, Boris. We're nearly at the gas substation.

**PROKHOBRA:** (A DEEP CRUEL VOICE) Hurry up, you two! We're nearly there.

**FX** THE WHISTLE OF ICY WIND

**SPOT/FX** PROKHOBRA FORCES THE DOOR, BREAKING ICICLES. HE SLAPS HIMSELF WARM AND STAMPS SNOW OFF HIS SHOES

THE BOYS COME INSIDE AND DO LIKEWISE

**FX** IN THE BACKGROUND IS A CLUNK-BUR-WHISSS OF THE GAS PUMPING THROUGH THE MACHINE, ALSO A SOUND LIKE A BEAR SPITTING MICE INTO A TIN

**PROKHOBRA:** Listen, you two, I'll say this only once.

**ANATOLY/LEONID:** Yes, Comrade Prokhobra.

**PROKHOBRA:** This is your chair, here. And you, big lugs, this is your chair. This is where you sit.

**LEONID:** We sit in those chairs. (HE SNEEZES)

**PROKHOBRA:** (ANGRY) That's what I said! You sit and watch.

**ANATOLY:** Watch?

**PROKHOBRA:** Watch.

**LEONID:** Watch for what?

**PROKHOBRA:** Just watch.

**ANATOLY:** But what does this machine do?

**PROKHOBRA:** Nothing.

**LEONID:** So why watch it? (HE ALMOST SNEEZES)

**PROKHOBRA:** Somebody has to watch it! If anything happens, which it won't, you can call me on that green phone, not that green phone, that's the ordinary green phone, but that green phone.

**LEONID:** This green phone here.

**PROKHOBRA:** NO, THAT ONE THERE! If the snow has brought the wire down and the green phone, this green phone, doesn't work, you can telephone Plopoff in Novosibirsk (LEONID SNEEZES IN BACKGROUND) on the other green phone, this green phone. But if that line is down too, and it always is, you must come and fetch me in my substation.

**LEONID:** Where's that exactly?

**PROKHOBRA:** It's on the map! You can't miss it. Just follow the pipeline North. Not South, or you'll come to Krobotkin's substation and he doesn't know you so he'll shoot you for sure. Just follow the pipeline North and you'll find my substation. It's the same as this, only bigger. Svetlana and I have chairs just like these. We sit and watch.

**ANATOLY:** (WHISPERS, TO LEONID) Don't ask him about Svetlana.

**LEONID:** Ermmmm... one thing...

**ANATOLY:** Not Svetlana! Don't ask him about Svetlana!

**LEONID:** (WITH ANGELIC INNOCENCE) Who's Svetlana?

**PROKHOBRA:** (SCREAMS) SVETLANA!!!! SVETLANA!!!! She's big!!! BIG!!! But she's beautiful, ooooooo, so beautiful. AND BIG!!! She's a BIG WOMAN!!! They've told you, haven't they? They're all jealous, they want her for themselves, but she's MINE!!! MINE!!! (A QUIETER CONFIDENCE) Do you know, she's so beautiful that I daren't look her straight in the face. I cover my eyes with a rasher of bacon, or I'd drop dead. Ooooh, Svetlana! Did I say she was big?

**ANATOLY/LEONID:** (GRUNT IN THE AFFIRMATIVE)

**PROKHOBRA:** (BARKS MADLY) YOU CAN'T HAVE HER!!!! SHE'S MINE!!! IF YOU TRY TO CHAT HER UP I'LL TWIST YOUR HEADS OFF!!!

**LEONID:** I don't want her, I promise.

**ANATOLY:** He doesn't want her. Honest. Me neither.

**PROKHOBRA:** That's all right then. Come outside so I can show you the valves.

(ON THEIR WAY ALREADY)

**LEONID:** The valves?

FX OUTSIDE, THE WHISTLE OF ICY WIND

**PROKHOBRA:** (YELLING ABOVE THE WIND) See this red valve. Not that one, this one. Keep your eyes on it. Don't let anyone touch it.

**ANATOLY:** But there's no-one for thousands of miles.

**PROKHOBRA:** There's me.

**LEONID:** And Svetlana.

**PROKHOBRA:** (RASPS) Svetlana!!!

**LEONID:** She's very beautiful...and big too, big.

**PROKHOBRA:** (WITH LOVESICK SIGHS) She is! She is!

**ANATOLY:** But you wouldn't, would you, and neither would she.

**PROKHOBRA:** Wouldn't what?

**ANATOLY:** Touch the red valve.

**PROKHOBRA:** If anybody touches that red valve we'll all get blown sky high... you, me, him, Svetlana, Krobotkin, everybody. Got it?

**ANATOLY/LEONID:** Yes, Comrade Prokhobra.

**PROKHOBRA:** I'd better be off. There's yak's feet for supper and Svetlana will eat them all if I don't hurry back.

**LEONID:** Yes, I was meaning to ask. Food?

**PROKHOBRA:** (CALLING BACK, ON HIS WAY) There's some yak's cheese, some yak butter, and sixty-one yak's feet in the cupboard. And under the bed you'll find some buns that I have sent in on the Moscow train. A real treat, those buns. They only make them in one café in Moscow.

**LEONID:** (MISERABLY) I'll bet I know which one. (HE CHUCKLES)

(ANATOLY LAUGHS, LEONID'S LAUGHTER GROWS)

**PROKHOBRA:** (SHOUTING BACK, FROM DISTANCE) SHE'S MINE!!! ALL MINE!!!

**LEONID:** Come on, let's have a yak's foot and a bun each. I'm starved.

**PROKHOBRA:** (HURRYING BACK) I forgot to tell you about the mammoths.

**BINSLEY:** (CLOSE, INTERRUPTS) At last! Mammoths!

**PROKHOBRA:** I'll come back next week, or maybe the week after. (HURRYING AWAY AGAIN) I'll tell you then.

## **SCENE 10** Int: Shed/Ext: Snow

**THROCKMORTON:** (CLOSE, NARRATING) Days passed. Cold, boring, dark-and-dismal days. The snow fell and was bright but the sky was dull like a sick dog's nose. Anatoly and Leonid sat in their chairs and watched the machine that did nothing. (WE HEAR THEM YAWNING) Boris the crow watched with them... (A DISCREET CAW) ...his eyes twitching like tadpoles about to hatch. The gas pumped through the pipeline.....

FX SOUND OF PUMPING GAS; MUFFLED CLANKS, HISSES

**THROCKMORTON:** ...it pumped and pumped, pumped and pumped... and they watched...nothing happened and they watched...and they watched and watched...and they ate yak's feet and horrible buns...and at night they lay on their hard beds and dreamed of girls in Moscow. Then late one night...

FX THE UNMISTAKABLE SOUND OF A MAMMOTH SNUFFLING IN CRUSTY SNOW. LOW CLANKS OF ITS TRUNK BANGING ON THE SUBSTATION WALL

**ANATOLY:** WHAT WAS THAT?

FX THE CROW CAWS CREAKINGLY

**LEONID:** (SLEEPILY) It's just that daft crow again.

FX

MORE NOISE FROM THE MAMMOTH

**ANATOLY:** It's coming from outside.

**LEONID:** (IN A SUDDEN PANIC, JUMPING OUT OF BED) It'll be someone fiddling with the red valve!!! (HE CLATTERS THROUGH THE ROOM, FLINGS OPEN DOOR, WHINE OF WIND) Don't you dare touch that red valve, whoever you are!!!! (SCREAMS IN FRIGHT) ARRRRRRRHHHHH!!! (RUNS BACK INSIDE, SLAMS THE DOOR, PANTING)

**ANATOLY:** Who is it? Old Prokhobra playing tricks on us, I'll bet.

**LEONID:** (CAN'T GET THE WORD OUT) It's a Mm...

**ANATOLY:** A what?

**LEONID:** A Mmm...

**ANATOLY:** A Mmm?

**LEONID:** (FORCES IT OUT) A Mmm...thhhh. (HE SNEEZES)

**ANATOLY:** A Mmm...thhhh? (HE SNEEZES ALSO, THEN THE PENNY DROPS) A MAMMOTH????

**LEONID:** (FINDING HIS VOICE) It's out there! A whopping great Mmmm...mmm...mammoth!!! It looks drunk.

FX THE PAINFUL TRUMPET OF A SICK MAMMOTH, METALLIC BANGING OF A MAMMOTH'S TRUNK ON THE SIDE OF THE SUBSTATION

**LEONID:** It's come to eat us!

**ANATOLY:** Nonsense. They only eat giraffes. Nothing but giraffes.

**LEONID:** Positive?

FX MORE BANGINGS

**ANATOLY:** (SUDDENLY TEARFUL WITH FRIGHT) NO!!!

FX THE SAD EXPIRING GRUNT OF THE MAMMOTH, CRUNCH OF SNOW, IT FALLS TO ITS KNEES SOUNDING LIKE A LORRY DUMPING A LOAD OF FUR COATS AND BROKEN BISCUITS

FX/SPOT THE BOYS SHRIEK WITH FEAR!!! BORIS THE CROW SQUARKS LIKE A SHOT PARROT

(SILENCE)

FX THEN, JUST THE SLOW DYING BREATHS OF THE MAMMOTH

**ANATOLY:** It's keeled over.

**LEONID:** Never has.

**ANATOLY:** Cummon, let's look.

**LEONID:** It's a trick. It'll jump up and eat us.

FX CREAKING OF THE DOOR AS ANATOLY OPENS IT. WHISTLE OF WIND. WE HEAR THE MAMMOTH'S DEATH-RATTLE MORE CLEARLY

**ANATOLY:** (AWESTRUCK AND SAD) Corrrr! It's on its knees. Listen to its breathing. It's dying.

**LEONID:** Uh-oh! Errr, Anatoly...erm.

**ANATOLY:** It must have been on its way to an elephants' graveyard in the forest, but it was too sick to go on.

**LEONID:** (NERVOUSLY TRYING TO POINT SOMETHING OUT) Anatoly...that tusk.

**ANATOLY:** Ginormous, isn't it!

**LEONID:** Not that tusk there, THAT TUSK THERE!!! It's stuck right through the red valve.

**ANATOLY:** Red valve!!! (SEES IT) Ohgh!!!

**LEONID:** When the beast keels over good-and-proper, it'll turn the valve good-and-proper...then you, me, Prokhobra, Svetlana and what was that other comrade's name?

**ANATOLY:** Krobotkin.

**LEONID:** And Krobotkin will all... (IN SUDDEN HUGE PANIC) GET BLOWN SKY HIGH!!!!!!

FX A WEAK SNORT FROM THE MAMMOTH. IT SIGHS AND SHIFTS. ANATOLY AND LEONID NATTER IN FRIGHT!!!

**BORIS THE CROW:** That's it! I'm off to where the crow flies. They're not turning me into black feathers floating down onto the snow. (HE CAWS INTO THE DISTANCE)

**LEONID:** Who said that?

**ANATOLY:** I'll tell you what we'll do...

**LEONID:** What-What???

**ANATOLY:** We'll telephone Prokhobra.

**LEONID:** Check!

FX LEONID RUSHES INSIDE THE SUBSTATION. WE GO WITH HIM, SOUND OF MAMMOTH HEARD ONLY FAINTLY FROM IN THERE

**LEONID:** Now was it this green phone, or this green phone? (HE PICKS ONE UP, THE TONE IS A LOW RASPBERRY) Hello! Hello! Comrade Prokhobra! SVETLANA!!! HELLO!!! HELLO!!! (DROPS THE PHONE WITH A PING-DING, RUNS OUTSIDE AGAIN, SHOUTING BREATHLESSLY OVER THE MAMMOTH SIGHS AND WIND) They're busted. Lines must be down.

**ANATOLY:** (TAKING CHARGE) Right-okay-yes... RIGHT ... I'll stay here and sing the mammoth a song or something to keep it awake. You run along the pipeline and fetch Prokhobra.

**LEONID:** (ON HIS WAY) No sooner said... (THE CRUNCH OF HIS FEET IN SNOW)

**ANATOLY:** (SHOUTING AFTER) Not that way! That's South! To Krobotkin's! You want North! To Prokhobra's!!!

**LEONID:** (HURRYING BACK AND PAST) So sorry, won't happen again.

FX SICKLY SOUNDS FROM THE MAMMOTH, A METALLIC TWISTING OF THE VALVE

**ANATOLY:** (FREEZING AND TERRIFIED) Good mammoth, there's a good mammoth...don't die ...please don't die ... cos if you do you'll take me with you, and I don't want to die. Only a few minutes ago I was dreaming about the life I'll have one day. I'll be rich, with a swanky flat in Leningrad overlooking the Neva and a girl called Natasha to sing sweet songs to me... would you like to hear one of the songs she'll sing?

FX A SICKLY BUT AFFIRMATIVE GRUNT FROM THE MAMMOTH

**ANATOLY:** (SINGS NERVOUSLY) "Nellie the Elephant packed her trunk and said goodbye to the circus..."

FX                                    A HORRIBLE CHOKING SOUND FROM THE MAMMOTH. IT COLLAPSES. THE CREAK OF THE RED VALVE, A SHARP METALLIC SNAP

**ANATOLY:**                            No! No! GRANDFATHER!!!!

FX                                    THE BIGGEST EXPLOSION SINCE KRAKATOA

    (A SILENCE THAT GOES ON JUST A LITTLE TOO LONG...)

**LEONID:**                            (IN A TIZZY) Comrade Prokhobra... Comrade Prokhobra... at last I've found you... and Svetlana...cor!!! (SVETLANA, IT SEEMS, IS INDEED BEAUTIFUL) I'm Leonid Melnikov, don't you recognize me? The explosion, you must have heard the explosion. Come, we must go back and see if Anatoly... we grew up together, you know... and the mammoth... there was a mammoth, you see...

**PROKHOBRA:**                        (A NEW DREAMY TONE IN HIS VOICE) Oh, we heard the explosion, didn't we Svetlana?

**SVETLANA:**                        Only just, Sasha. Then we were dead.

**LEONID:**                            Dead?

**PROKHOBRA:**                        Svetlana and I were killed in the explosion. Now we shall wander the snowy wastes together...forever. Look, here comes Krobotkin. (SHOUTS TO DISTANCE) Yuri!!! Yuri!!! Are you dead?

**KROBOTKIN:**                        (CHEERFULLY, FROM DISTANCE) I'm dead!

**LEONID:**                            You're all dead?

**SVETLANA:**                        So are you, dear boy. Come, let me cuddle you. Prokhobra won't mind.

**PROKHOBRA:**                        I won't mind.

**LEONID:** I'M NOT DEAD!!!! I'M NOT!!!

**PROKHOBRA:** Of course you are.

**LEONID:** I'm not. The blast just knocked me face down in the snow. I'm all right, I tell you. But Anatoly!

**SVETLANA:** You're dead!

**PROKHOBRA:** You're both dead!

**LEONID:** (RUNNING MADLY AWAY FROM US THROUGH THE SNOW)  
Anatoly!!! Anatoly!!! Anatolyyyyyyyyyyyyyy!!!

(MEANWHILE, KROBOTKIN TRUDGES UP)

**KROBOTKIN:** Helloooo, there!!!!!!

**PROKHOBRA:** Yuri Tomasovitch Krobotkin, may I present Svetlana Borisovna Pinski. She's very big and very beautiful, isn't she?

**KROBOTKIN:** If you like that sort of thing. What's up with that peculiar boy?

**PROKHOBRA:** (HIGHLY AMUSED) Says he's not dead.

ALL THREE LAUGH, GHOSTLY CACKLESOME LAUGHTER.  
FADE LAUGHTER AND LOSE IT IN THE SIBERIAN WIND

## **SCENE 11** Ext: Snow

**THROCKMORTON:** (CLOSE, NARRATING) Leonid Melnikov was right. He wasn't dead. He was running through the snow towards a fire in the trees, a fire surrounded by a pool of melting snow where mice swam in circles. But where was my nephew Anatoly?

**BINSLEY:** Blown to bits, was he?

**THROCKMORTON:** Blown up, yes, high into the air, with clumps of mammoth hair that looked like wigs in flight from every bald head in the world. He landed miles away up a tree in a forest....

FX BANG ON THE END OF THROCKMORTON'S SPEECH: THE WHUMP OF ANATOLY LANDING IN THE SNOWY BRANCHES OF A TREE

HIS SEMI-CONSCIOUS GROANS

**BORIS THE CROW:** You all right?

**ANATOLY:** Ooooh-urrrrrr-oooooo.

**BORIS THE CROW:** You all right?

**ANATOLY:** I'm all right, I think. Where am I?

**BORIS THE CROW:** Miles away.

**ANATOLY:** Miles away from where?

**BORIS THE CROW:** From nowhere in particular. Coo, look down there!

FX THE SNORTING AND SNUFFLING OF 347 MAMMOTHS

**ANATOLY:** (ALMOST FALLING, KNOCKING DOWN CLUMPS OF SNOW)  
Mammoths! A whole herd! Hundreds of them!

**BORIS THE CROW:** 346, to be accurate. No, 347. (CAWS LOUDLY)

**ANATOLY:** Shhh your cawing, you're upsetting them. Hey, you don't think they blame me for what happened to the other one?

**BORIS THE CROW:** (CAWS SOME MORE)

**ANATOLY:** Shhhhhhhhhh!

FX THE MAMMOTHS SHIFT AND STAMP. MILD BUT TROUBLED TRUMPETING NEAR AND FAR

**ANATOLY:** Help me down this tree, will you?

**BORIS THE CROW:** Why should I?

**ANATOLY:** You're my friend.

**BORIS THE CROW:** I'm a bird. Just a bird. (SLYLY) Got any ballbearings?

**ANATOLY:** I'm up a tree in the middle of Siberia with a herd of cross-looking mammoths surrounding me and you ask for ballbearings!!!!

**BORIS THE CROW:** (SPITEFULLY) If you won't give me ballbearings, I'll go find someone who will! (HE FLIES OFF, CAWING)

**ANATOLY:** (CALLS AFTER) Boris!!! (MUTTERS AS HE BEGINS TO CLIMB DOWN) I'll fall and break my neck, or be impaled on mammoths' tusks, for sure. Oh, how I wish I was in Afghanistan chasing hamsters across the hot sand!

FX THE CRACKING OF BRANCHES, THE FALLING OF CLUMPS OF SNOW FROM BRANCHES. THE SNORTING OF MAMMOTHS SOUNDING NEARER AS HE DESCENDS

**ANATOLY:** (EXHAUSTED FROM THE EFFORT) Nearly there.... if I can just reach that sticky-out branch without knocking that huge clump of snow on my head... yes... yes...

FX THE SUDDEN CRACK OF THE BRANCH, THE WHUMP OF THE CLUMP OF SNOW HITTING ANATOLY, HIS SNOW-MUFFLED CRY. HE FALLS. SNAPPING OF BRANCHES, KA-WHUMP INTO SNOW

FX A HUGE AGITATION AMONG THE MAMMOTHS. ONE TRUMPETS AT THE BACK. OTHERS ANSWER, THEY ARE ABOUT TO CHARGE

**ANATOLY:** (GETTING TO HIS FEET) Nice mammoths, nice kind peaceful elephanty things! Good boys!

FX THEY CHARGE

**ANATOLY:** (EXCLAIMS) Krushchev!!!!!!

FX HE RUNS THROUGH THE FOREST, PANTING AND CRYING. THE MAMMOTHS CHASE, TRUMPETING LOUDLY. THEIR CHARGE IS THUNDEROUS, A THUNDER WITH TUBAS BEING CHUCKED OUT OF IT INTO VATS OF PORRIDGE. TREES BREAK IN THEIR PATH.

**SCENE 12** Ext: Snow

SUDDENLY WE ARE FURTHER AWAY. ANATOLY SEEMS TO BE CLIMBING UP A SLOPE

**LEONID:** (YELLS DELIGHTEDLY) Anatoly!!! Anatoly!!! You're alive!!!

**ANATOLY:** (EXHAUSTED) They're after me!!!!

**LEONID:** Who are?

**ANATOLY:** THEM!!!!!!!!!!

FX THE MAMMOTH CHARGE COMES AROUND A BEND AND IS CLOSER

**LEONID:** Arrrrrhhhh!

THEY RUN FOR THEIR LIVES

**ANATOLY:** Run, Leonid!!!! Run for your life!!!

**LEONID:** I am! I am!

**ANATOLY:** If we keep going we should reach the Himalayas in a week or two.

**LEONID:** A week or two?

**ANATOLY:** If they don't catch us out with snowballs. They make them in their trunks. Rotten shots, though. There was one.

FX THE SOUND OF A SNOWBALL HITTING LEONID

**LEONID:** Oooch!!! How far are these Himalayas anyway?

**BORIS THE CROW:** (ON A SUDDEN FLAP-PAST) About three thousand miles as the crow flies.

**LEONID:** Who said that?

FX THEIR SNOW-CRUNCHING RUNNING

FX IT BECOMES LOST IN THE MAMMOTHS' TRUMPETING CHARGE, WHICH DESCENDS INTO A CACOPHANY, LIKE ALL PREHISTORY SCREAMING FOR A TAXI

FX FADE THIS AND BRING UP THE DISCREET TWEETING OF ENGLISH BIRDSONG

## **SCENE 13** Ext: Street

**BINSLEY:** They got squashed by the mammoths, did they?

**THROCKMORTON:** Goodness, no. The mammoths chased Anatoly and Leonid all the way to the Himalayas. Quite exhausting for all concerned, but especially for the mammoths. When they arrived in the foothills they just lay down with their tongues out, like beagles on a hot day. Anatoly and Leonid tied them up, knotting their trunks together in one big snaggity knot...

**BINSLEY:** Get away!

**THROCKMORTON:** Oh, yes. Oh, yes, yes, yes...and led them to Tashkent where they took the railway to Moscow where they sold the whole lot to the Moscow Circus for an enormous amount of money. My nephew Anatoly now lives in Leningrad in a charming flat overlooking the Neva. Oh, they didn't sell them all to the circus...they sent some of them to me for my birthday. 16 of them. They look very nice in my garden.

**BINSLEY:** Whoppers! Big whoppers, you tell! Nothing but whoppers! (ROUGHLY SNATCHING HIS MOTHER)  
Cummon, mother.

**OLD MRS** (SINGS VAGUELY AND MADLY) "Nellie the Elephant  
**BINSLEY:** packed her trunk and said goodbye to the circus..."

**BINSLEY:** (SHOUTING AS HE GOES) Whoppers!

## **SCENE 14** Int: House

FX A DOORBELL IS PRESSED, ANGRILY, OVER AND OVER.  
THE DOOR IS ALSO FRAPPED AND THE KNOCKER  
KNOCKED

FX THROCKMORTON OPENS THE DOOR

**THROCKMORTON:** Good afternoon.

**BINSLEY:** (IN A VEXED TIZZY) Remember me, do you?

**THROCKMORTON:** Erm, were you in the Napoleonic wars by any chance?

**BINSLEY:** In the High Street, the other day. You told me about the mammoths.

**THROCKMORTON:** Ah, yes. Mr Binsley, isn't it? How is your dear Mama?

**BINSLEY:** (STOMPING IN) Where are they, then? Cummon!

**THROCKMORTON:** (FOLLOWING HIM THROUGH THE HOUSE) Where are whom?

FX BINSLEY IS OPENING AND SHUTTING DOORS LIKE A WRONGED HUSBAND

**BINSLEY:** Them mammoths.

**THROCKMORTON:** (FOLLOWING) Oh, they're sleeping. I couldn't possibly have them disturbed.

**BINSLEY:** Whoppers! Big fat rotten whoppers!

**THROCKMORTON:** Very well. Come this way.

SPOT/FX THEY WALK THROUGH THE HOUSE, ON CARPET, THEN STONE, THEN CARPET AGAIN, THIS HAPPENS VERY QUICKLY...

**THROCKMORTON:** Did the self-multiplying 50-pence piece work all right?

**BINSLEY:** (WITH VEXED RELUCTANCE) Yes thank you.

FX THEY WALK INTO THE GARDEN

**THROCKMORTON:** Delightful garden, isn't it?

**BINSLEY:** (GRUNTS IN THE AFFIRMATIVE)

**THROCKMORTON:** (UNLATCHING A BARN DOOR) Here we are...

FX THE SOUND OF SIXTEEN SNORING MAMMOTHS, DREAMING ABOUT A MERRIE WORLD BEFORE MANKIND

**BINSLEY:** (A GASP)

**THROCKMORTON:** What, my dear fellow, would your limited knowledge of palaeontology say that these beasts are?

**BINSLEY:** (SCREAMS AS HE RUNS AWAY)  
Mammmmmmmmmmmmothhhssssssssssss!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

**THROCKMORTON:** (TO MAMMOTHS) Any of you chaps care for an egg sandwich?

FX A HORRIBLE SLEEPY SNORT FROM SEVERAL OF THEM

**THROCKMORTON:** Be like that, then!

**BORIS THE CROW:** I'll have one if you put 12 ballbearings in it.

**THROCKMORTON:** I would never in any circumstances feed a crow more than 11 ballbearings.

**BORIS THE CROW:** 12.

**THROCKMORTON:** 11.

**BORIS THE CROW:** 12.

GRAMS PLAY OUT WITH 'THE VOLGA BOATMEN'. THROCKMORTON AND BORIS CONTINUE THEIR ARGUMENT THROUGH THE CREDITS, FINISHING WITH A DISTANT CAW FROM BORIS

**END**