

Intrepid!
by Connor Warden
(Fifth Draft: A good day to Draft Hard)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

The Good

Dr Ferguson - Archaeologist
Helena Carmichael - Socialite
Dr Hopkins - Paleontologist
Captain Anthony Strapping - Explorer Extraordinaire
Williams and Sullivan - Two other explorers

The Bad

Professor Nigel Hawcroft - Archaeologist, Tab
Victor Francoise - Ambiguously foreign villain
Their henchmen - Mary, Terri and Barry

The Others

Watson - Doctoral student, sick of daydreaming
Bertram - His friend and enthusiastic companion
Lord Carmichael - Mad old colonial eccentric
Spritzworthy - His manservant
Harriet Carmichael - The lord's younger daughter
Pip - A loveable orphan
Holliday and Burton - Two middle aged men looking for adventure
Dr Johnson - A man of medicine
Nathaniel and Hepburn - Would-be explorers
Yardess - Their long-suffering butler
Jack - A village simpleton
Goldilocks - No sense of right and wrong
The Genie - Mighty, powerful, ancient. Likes baking.
The pantomime ocelot - For which I will never apologise

Scene 1

Lord Carmichael's drawing room, day. The lord sits at his desk, shuffling papers. There is a knock at the door. His butler, Spritzworthy, answers the door.

SPRITZWORTHY: You may enter.

Ferguson enters sheepishly.

FERGUSON: You- you wanted to see me, your lordship?

CARMICHAEL: Ah, Dr Ferguson, so glad you could make it! Please, come, do take a seat. Can I offer you anything?

FERGUSON: I'm fine, thank you.

CARMICHAEL: Cup of tea? Coffee? Shot of absinthe?

FERGUSON: Really, I'm quite alright.

CARMICHAEL: A biscuit? Scone? Racy French photographs of questionable legality?

FERGUSON: Lord Carmichael, I was told you'd called me here for something important.

CARMICHAEL: And I have! I'm merely extending the most basic of pleasantries, old sport. Gosh, young people nowadays, no sense of civility. But yes, yes, I've asked you here because I have an interesting proposition for a man of your talents. Your reputation as a learned man precedes you, doctor.

FERGUSON: I'm really not one to blow my own trumpet, your lordship. But I'm an Oxford man, yes.

CARMICHAEL: Ah, Oxford... I'm afraid I was taught at the other great centre of learning in this country, the other great university, the other place... Teeside Polytechnic.

FERGUSON: Good man, good man.

CARMICHAEL: But to the point, Ferguson: you're an archaeologist, yes? Tell me, have you heard of the Tomb of Abzai?

FERGUSON: Abzai? He was meant to be an immensely wealthy ruler in ancient times. His tomb is meant to contain perhaps the most valuable treasure in the world - the Gem of Kukundu. It's a myth, as far as

I know. If it does exist, then its whereabouts were lost centuries ago.

CARMICHAEL: It is no more a myth than you or I, Dr Ferguson, and I believe I may have a clue to its location. A recent expedition I funded into the Congo brought back this map which could be incredibly important - take a look.

He hands Ferguson a map.

FERGUSON: Well, it certainly does look authentic... Are you sure it's reliable, though?

CARMICHAEL: Sure enough to want to fund an expedition to find the tomb, and I want you to lead it.

FERGUSON: Me, sir? But I have... well, no experience with field work. I'm more of the "this book is quite interesting, I'll read it" type of archaeologist. Reading a slightly-more-exciting-than-average academic paper gets me out of breath and I need to go take a lie-down.

CARMICHAEL: All the more reason for you to go, boy! Get some exercise, see the world!

FERGUSON: But- but Lord Carmichael, are you sure you want to mount this expedition? I mean, what if we come back with nothing to show for it?

CARMICHAEL: Ferguson, we live in a golden age. The British Empire is the largest the world has ever seen, a wise and benevolent queen sits upon the throne, and the moral standards of the upper class are in fact much looser than future generations will come to believe. I hold the great privilege of being part of the aristocracy of this empire. What I'm trying to say, doctor, is that I could literally piss my money away onto a bonfire and it wouldn't hurt me. I'm rich, bored and have a penchant for throwing money at overblown yet ultimately futile projects to increase my own standing.

FERGUSON: Well, when you put it like that...

CARMICHAEL: Excellent! Well, meet me at my business address at noon on Tuesday.

Ferguson attempts to protest, but Carmichael talks over him excitedly and closes him out of the door before he can wriggle out of it. Lord Carmichael walks back to his desk.

CARMICHAEL: (To Spritzworthy) Thank god people like me don't run the country.

Scene 2

A different office. Another expedition is gathering its members together. Enter Nigel and Victor. The latter is introducing the former to the henchmen.

VICTOR: And here we have our diggers - very diligent. You need a hole dug, these are your men.

TERRI: Er, women?

NIGEL: (Completely ignoring her) For buried objects and such?

VICTOR: That and burying other explorers. Depends on the kind of expedition, really.

NIGEL: I see... And this chap?

VICTOR: Ah, our load-bearer. Little more than a pack mule once we're out in the field, but they will keep all your equipment safe from the wet and dust of the ground.

NIGEL: Splendid, well it's nice to see him dedicated to his jobs.

VICTOR: He doesn't really have a choice. He's under strict instructions that whatever he's carrying is worth more than he is - that applies even when he's carrying nothing.

NIGEL: I say, do you treat all your colleagues this well?

VICTOR: Only the ones beneath me.

NIGEL: Well, quite. I must say, I don't think I quite caught your name and role in all this, sir.

VICTOR: I am Victor Francoise, leader of this band of expeditionary mercenaries. I'm tough enough to brave the jungle, cunning enough to find treasure before anyone else, and just ambiguously foreign enough that you know I'm the bad guy.

NIGEL: How do you do, Victor? I assume your party all has similar villainous credentials?

VICTOR: Yes - those two are the Walton sisters, two of the lowest scum the East End could throw up; and he is wanted for some unspecified

crime in every US state, most islands of the Carribean and Schelswig-Holstein.

NIGEL: Do they not have first names?

VICTOR: Yes, now that you mention it. Mary, Terri and Barry.

NIGEL: But those... those don't even rhyme! They half-rhyme. They sound like names a half-arsed writer came up with a couple of hours before the script was due in.

VICTOR: Stop that! There will be no meta-jokes on my expedition. We've done our homework on you as well, professor.

NIGEL: Well then, I may as well put it out there. I am Professor Nigel Hawcroft, historian at the most evil of universities...

HENCHMAN: Teeside Polytechnic?

NIGEL: No, Cambridge, you berk.

VICTOR: That much we know.

NIGEL: Now, moving back to the job at hand - finding the Tomb of Abzai. Do you think you can take me there?

VICTOR: For a price.

NIGEL: You'll have your money. Half now, half when we return to England with the gem.

Oxford University Light Entertainment Society

Scene 3

Burton waits in a room, looking at his watch repeatedly. Eventually, Holliday enters.

BURTON: And where, pray tell, have you been?

HOLLIDAY: Oh, erm... My bus was late. Yes.

BURTON: But you don't get a bus into town.

HOLLIDAY: Ah, well I do now. Public transportation, way of the future! Save the planet and all that.

BURTON: No, I mean you don't get a bus because you live two streets away from here.

HOLLIDAY: No I don't.

BURTON: Yes you do, I've been to your house.

HOLLIDAY: Oh, so you have. Well it's further away than you remember.

BURTON: Than I remember? My good man I was there two nights ago for supper with you and your wife.

HOLLIDAY: And evidently the lateness of the evening and the cool night air befuddled your brain and made you forget just how far away it was.

BURTON: If I step outside this building, I can see your house.

HOLLIDAY: No you can't.

(Burton walks over to the edge of the stage and looks off)

BURTON: Look, there it is!

HOLLIDAY: Oh, so it is. Who'd have thought it?

BURTON: I would! Now would you please explain why you were late to this meeting?

HOLLIDAY: I couldn't find my shoes.

BURTON: But you keep them in the hall.

HOLLIDAY: My son hid them.

BURTON: Your son?

HOLLIDAY: Aye. Kids, eh?

BURTON: You don't have a son.

HOLLIDAY: How dare you? Of course I do.

BURTON: Holliday, I've known you thirteen years. Our wives have been best friends since school. I would know if you had a son.

HOLLIDAY: We erm... we don't like to brag about him. Keep it quiet, you know?

BURTON: Look, as much as I appreciate the level of antagonising effort you're putting into this extended exercise of "things which are patently untrue", I feel we're best off just getting on with business. Now, I suppose you recall my words with you the other night about the maps and charts, yes?

HOLLIDAY: Yes, yes, I recall.

BURTON: Well, I've secured funding to mount our expedition out there! Finally, we can get back into the field and go scouring the globe.

HOLLIDAY: Why that's wonderful news! When do we leave?

BURTON: Meet me here at ten sharp in the morning and we'll travel together. We embark by the most sophisticated technology available to us in this great era of technological revolution: the mighty sea-train!

HOLLIDAY: I beg your pardon?

BURTON: A sea-train. A great vehicle powered by steam that will ferry us across the ocean waves.

HOLLIDAY: Do you mean a boat?

BURTON: No, not at all.

HOLLIDAY: Alright, it's just that what you're describing sounds incredibly similar to a boat.

BURTON: Don't be silly! Sea-trains are the way to travel nowadays. I mean, who's ever even heard of a "boat"?

HOLLIDAY: Plenty of people. Ask most people how they would cross water and they'd say a boat.

BURTON: Nonsense, sea-train. Or perhaps its older, wooden predecessor: the sea-wagon.

HOLLIDAY: I give up. Ten o'clock here, then?

They agree and depart.

Scene 4

Lord Carmichael's rooms. Helena, Harriet Williams and Sullivan stand watching as Hopkins has his immunisations administered by Dr Johnson.

DR J: Now, this may hurt. You'll feel a small prick.

HOPKINS: I'm not adverse to a small prick now and then, doc.

DR J: There we go, that should be all of them. With any luck, those will ward off most of the diseases out in the jungles.

HELENA: How was it, Hopkins?

HOPKINS: I've had bigger.

Lord Carmichael enters, leading Ferguson in.

CARMICHAEL: And here should be the rest of the little team I've assembled. They've been notified of your joining the expedition. This is Richard Hopkins, he's a geologist who'll be accompanying you. Messrs William and Sullivan, fresh returned from that trip to the Congo which produced our little treasure map. And this is my daughter Helena. I'm afraid I'm rather too old to be going gallivanting off to the far-flung corners of the globe nowadays, so she will go in my place to make sure that the Carmichael name is with you all the way. And this is my youngest daughter, Harriet - she's only small, so obviously she won't be coming along with you. Run along now, dear, there's a good girl.

Harriet leaves.

Hopkins and Helena approach Ferguson to greet him.

HOPKINS: How do you do, doctor? You may call me Hopkins.

HELENA: A pleasure, doctor. (She eyes him up and down once) You can call me anything you like.

FERGUSON: Yes, well, erm... quite, quite. How do you do, I'm Dr Ferguson. You may call me, er, Dr Ferguson.

HOPKINS: Oh behave yourself, Helena, you're making the poor lad go a lovely shade of red.

CARMICHAEL: And with that... no, wait a second. There's one too few here. The final piece in the puzzle is yet to arrive. He's a very good man, capable. Experienced. Yes, while you're to be the brains of the operation, Ferguson, I think he's your more worldly counterpart. I do warn you, though, he likes to think of himself as being a bit of the "strapping, fearless leader" type...

Enter Strapping

STRAPPING: Did someone say "strapping, fearless leader"?

CARMICHAEL: It was in air quotes, but yes. Assembled company, may I introduce your leader and guide for this trip, the renowned explorer-

STRAPPING: Captain Anthony Strapping, at your service. Thank you, Lord Carmichael, for inviting this prestigious company to have me in it... speaking of, you must be the delightful Helena. A true pleasure. Ah, Williams, Sullivan, how the devil are you, lads? Why, not seen you since the Amazon Basin in '86!

Hopkins pipes up to get the captain's attention.

HOPKINS: How do you do, Captain Strapping? Richard Hopkins. Big fan of your work, looking forward to working closely with you - oh my, what big hands you have!

STRAPPING: I'm sure. And that leaves... you must be Dr Ferguson, the archaeologist. So I lead you to the shiny stuff and you tell us all if it's the right kind of shiny, right?

FERGUSON: Well there's a bit more to it than that, but-

STRAPPING: Well look at you, doc, you're made of sticks. Bet those university-educated hands of yours have never had to clamber through thickets of plants no white man has ever seen.

FERGUSON: This is true.

STRAPPING: Bet those scrawny chicken legs of yours have never had to outrun a pack of rabid ocelots out to gnaw the flesh from your bones.

FERGUSON: I'm not familiar with-

STRAPPING: Bet that right arm of yours has never hauled your arse up a vertical cliff face all by its lonesome because your legs were broken

and your left arm was clinging to what remained of the last academic pretty boy who ventured too far into the jungle.

FERGUSON: I'm really not that-

STRAPPING: Ah, I'm just messing you, doc. Look forward to working with you. Have you had your shots yet? You'll need them if you don't want to catch those jungle fevers. Not everyone's natural endurance is as good as mine.

CARMICHAEL: And on that note, I will bid you all farewell. Your ship sails in an hour. Good luck to you all, and godspeed your return!

(THE HEROIC PARTY SETS OUT SONG)

Scene 5

Harriet and Pip

HARRIET: So my father's mounting a new expedition, eh? Sending out my older sister to see the world while I'm stuck in boring old England. I'll show him.

PIP: How do you mean, miss?

HARRIET: Well I'll go have my own adventure, prove that I'm twice the explorer my sister will ever be. What do you think, Pip?

PIP: I think you'd make a wonderful adventurer, miss.

HARRIET: Thank you. You know, you are the best play-mate in the whole wide world.

PIP: Why thank you.

HARRIET: You've always been there for me, Pip.

PIP: Ever since your father bought me from the local orphanage to be your live-in friend.

HARRIET: Happy days... Anyway, we're going to need to pack! Let's see, I'm going to need a torch and some binoculars and a pen-knife and my teddy bear...

(She bobs about the place, picking things up and stuffing them into a little bag)

PIP: You're going to need to be careful out there. The world can be big and scary sometimes.

HARRIET: It's OK, I'm prepared. And I have you by my side, my faithful travelling companion.

PIP: That you do, miss.

HARRIET: Good boy. Right, I'm packed, we'll leave at once and head for the East.

PIP: Down the garden, Miss Harriet?

HARRIET: No, Pip, out into the big wide world!

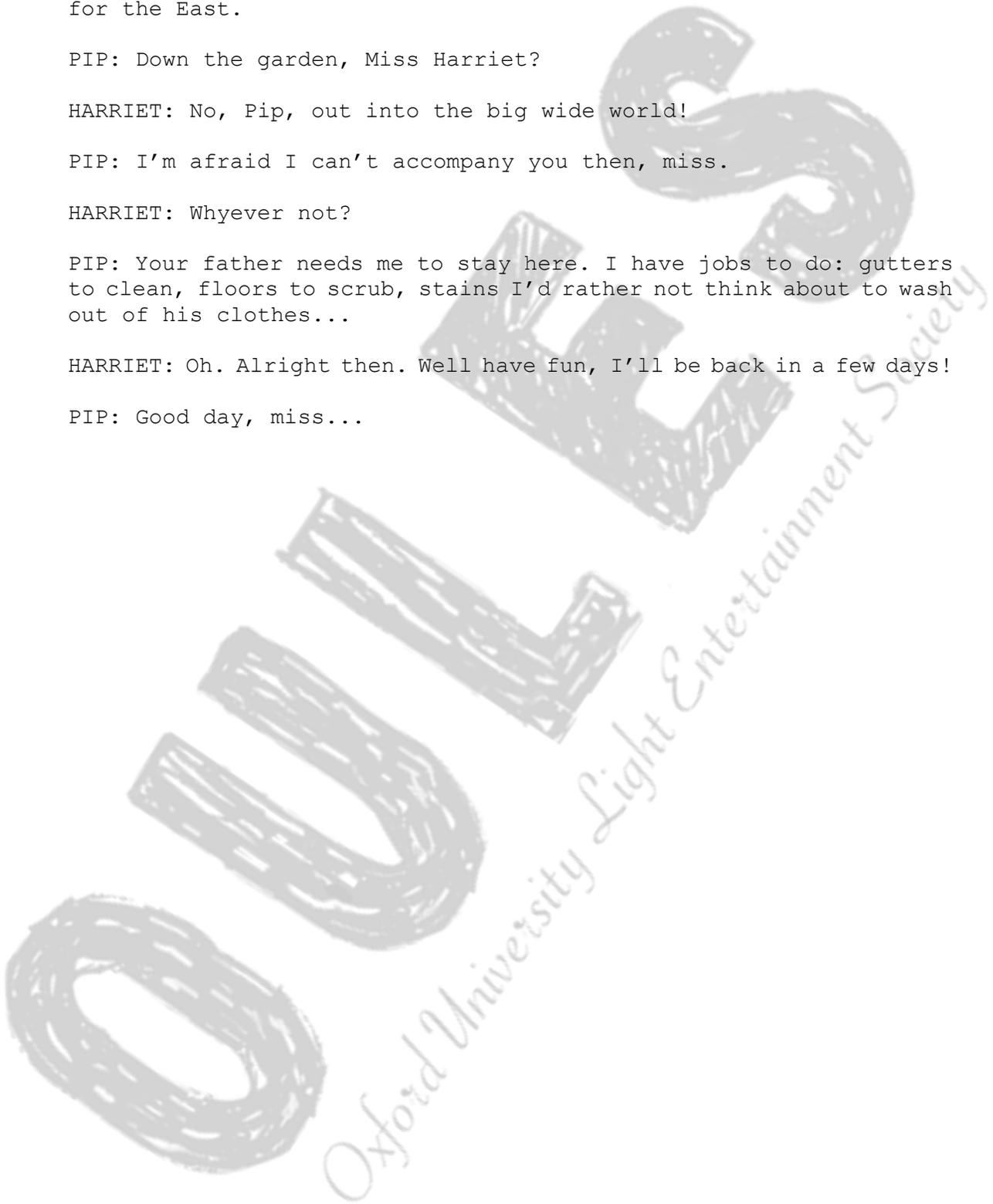
PIP: I'm afraid I can't accompany you then, miss.

HARRIET: Whyever not?

PIP: Your father needs me to stay here. I have jobs to do: gutters to clean, floors to scrub, stains I'd rather not think about to wash out of his clothes...

HARRIET: Oh. Alright then. Well have fun, I'll be back in a few days!

PIP: Good day, miss...



Scene 6

Watson sits at his desk. Enter Bertram, gleefully.

BERTRAM: (in a sing-song tone) Oh Watson...

WATSON: What?

BERTRAM: Do you know what time of year it is?

WATSON: I have the dreadful feeling you're about to tell me.

BERTRAM: It's nearly the end of term! You know what that means?

WATSON: Students endlessly drivelling on about their workloads, clubs putting on nonsensical and dangerously cheap promotions, and having to give a stern lecture to my undergrads about keeping their noses to the grindstone when in fact all I want to do is sleep?

BERTRAM: (refusing to shift from his expression of holiday cheer) Not quite, you silly goose. No, it's time for the Light Entertainment show! Pantomime, the greatest of all theatrical traditions!

WATSON: Ranked slightly lower in the entertainment standings than removing my own funny bone through paper-cuts from Entertainment Weekly while a tone-deaf drunkard hums Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer".

BERTRAM: Oh cheer up, sour-puss! You know what your problem is?

WATSON: A sense of grounding in reality?

BERTRAM: A lack of pantomime spirit! Come on, where's your sense of loveable heroes, dastardly villains and happy endings?

WATSON: I left it about two hundred years ago when that might have passed for comedy. Now look, Bertram, might I ask why you're bringing all this drivel up?

BERTRAM: Because, well, it's the pantomime next week and we're all heading off to see it. I figured you could use some light in your dour old life and was wondering if, maybe, you might like to come with me.

WATSON: I would rather die.

BERTRAM: Oh come on, Watson, old bean! Come get your spirits up!

WATSON: The only high spirits I need, my friend, currently reside in my liquor cabinet.

BERTRAM: I know what you need - an adventure! A rip-roaring yarn of your own to really get you into the pantomime mood!

WATSON: Look, Bertram, I don't know how you've made it to the age of twenty-seven without figuring this out, and I hate to be the one to break it to you, but real life doesn't work like a pantomime.

BERTRAM: Oh yes it does.

WATSON: No it doesn't.

BERTRAM: Oh yes it does.

WATSON: Look, I'm not going to engage with you if you're being like this.

BERTRAM: Come on, man, just a little jaunt out, see where the journey takes us.

WATSON: You know what? Fine. If it'll make you happy and stop you going on about sodding pantomime, I will go on an adventure with you.

(Bertram's face lights up and he extends his arm to link with Watson. After a scowl, Watson reluctantly links arms and passively-aggressively skips off with him)

Scene 7

Lord Carmichael's drawing room, day. Lord Carmichael sits in his chair with a glass of something suitably alcoholic. Spritzworthy stands attentively by.

CARMICHAEL: Sending those young bucks off into the big wide world fills me with pride, Spritzworthy! Seeing them head off bright-eyed and bushy-tailed into the great unknown in search of fame, fortune and - if I know my daughter - fornication fills me with... an envy, almost.

SPRITZ: An envy, sir?

CARMICHAEL: A jealousy, Spritzworthy. Reminds me of better days, better times.

SPRITZ: What do you mean?

CARMICHAEL: Why exploring of course! Takes me back to the good old days, with a jungle knife in one hand and a bullwhip in the other, trekking day and night to go where no man had gone before.

SPRITZ: Sir, I- (He keeps trying to get a word in edgeways)

CARMICHAEL: Lost tombs, ancient treasures, wonders beyond dreams! Oh, I was known back in those days, Spritzworthy! Jonathan Carmichael, Britain's hero!

SPRITZ: Sir, I just... I don't remember any of this.

CARMICHAEL: Pardon?

SPRITZ: I honestly don't remember you being an explorer.

CARMICHAEL: It must have been before you came into my service.

SPRITZ: I doubt that, sir. I have served your family man and boy for fifty years. From the moment I was old enough to walk, I was taught how to give you a sponge bath. For Christ's sake, we're the same age!

CARMICHAEL: It was... it was on my gap year.

SPRITZ: With all due respect, sir, I remember your gap year. You spent it with me in the Wheatsheaf, drinking heavily and pining over Florence McGinnley.

CARMICHAEL: Well she was with that buffoon James... no, that's beside the point! I was too an explorer!

SPRITZ: Very good, sir.

Scene 8

Dusk in the middle of jungle. The Carmichael party are trekking, worn down from a long slog.

STRAPPING: We should hold up here for the night, set up a camp and continue in the morning. You don't want to be moving through the jungle at night.

(The party all show signs of relief, and set about deploying their things to rest for the night. Most settle down to sleep, but Ferguson sits and speaks his words aloud as he writes them in his journal.)

FERGUSON: Day eight - we crossed the river today and have begun to push into the unknown rainforests. The ground is treacherous, the air sweet and thick, and I fear by tomorrow we'll be long gone from charted territory. Out here, it seems that everything wants to kill you: the animals want to eat you, the rivers want to sweep you away, the berries want you to eat them so they can poison you. I mean, what kind of plant does that? It doesn't help anyone, it's just harsh - seriously, that bush was a dick.

(Rustling as Helena rouses and comes to sit beside Ferguson.)

HELENA: What's up, doc?

FERGUSON: You've been waiting for an opportunity to say that all trip, haven't you?

HELENA: And what of it? Writing your field diary, then?

FERGUSON: Yes, yes, just keeping up to date so that when they eventually find our skeletons picked clean years from now, they'll know how it happened. What are you doing awake?

HELENA: Well, I couldn't sleep. Out in the unknown, all on my lonesome. Who knows what might happen? Maybe I could do with a strong pair of arms to hold me.

FERGUSON: Yes, well, erm... have you considered asking the captain?

HELENA: Oh please. Every time I've spoken to him since we hit the jungle on this expedition it's been "I know my way around a bush" or "Don't worry about the wild, I'm pretty wild myself". I mean, come on. The man's basically a double-entendre in a safari hat. Thank god he's asleep.

FERGUSON: And so say all of us.

HELENA: So how about it, then? Fancy keeping me safe from the big, bad jungle?

FERGUSON: Really, I have to be getting on with my journal. Need to keep everything up to date and precise.

HELENA: Have it your way. Just remember, my tent's right next door.

(She goes back to her place and lies down to sleep. Ferguson returns to writing his journal.)

FERGUSON: Helena is part of a strange and admittedly frightening species of woman. I swear, the animals aren't the only predators round here.

(He scribbles a few more notes, then lies down to sleep.)

(A short while passes, and Williams wakes up and starts pacing. Sullivan is woken by this, and goes to see what's keeping him up.)

SULLIVAN: Something on your mind?

WILLIAMS: I just can't shake the feeling that we might be... No, forget it.

SULLIVAN: Williams, what is it?

WILLIAMS: Well, we're deep in the Congo basin. Remember what clues we had leading us to the Fountain of Youth?

SULLIVAN: Yes... Gosh, it's meant to be in this same jungle. The thing we've been searching for for years, and we just happen to brush near it.

WILLIAMS: I know, I know, it's almost suspiciously convenient. But I want to look for it.

SULLIVAN: You do? But we have a job to do here.

WILLIAMS: It's not that far. It shouldn't be. We'll head in that direction for an hour or so, and if it's fruitless we come back and try again tomorrow night.

SULLIVAN: Well, that sounds feasible enough. And when you're right, you're right. Let's go for it.

WILLIAMS: After all, how big can a rainforest be?

They exit.

Scene 9

Watson and Bertram are onstage

BERTRAM: See, Watson, isn't this nice? The open air, the birds singing, the crisp Winter's day? A proper old explore, eh?

WATSON: Well, quite. It's nice, almost peaceful for once.

BERTRAM: Is it getting you in any sort of good mood? Maybe a dramatic one?

WATSON: For the last time, Bertram, pantomime is not my thing. I prefer realism, and life doesn't work like a panto.

Enter Jack, carrying treasure of some description under his arm

JACK: Good day, chaps! Lovely old stroll isn't it?

BERTRAM: That it is, friend.

JACK: Yep, a nice day to be walking along with these bags of riches... which I have.

BERTRAM: Well golly, that is quite a bundle you have there. What's your name, stranger?

JACK: Well my name's Jack, and I stole this here gold from a giant.

BERTRAM: Ooh, a giant you say? Hear that, Watson? That sounds a bit fantastic, eh?

JACK: Oh, that's not half of it! He lives way way up in the clouds, I had to climb a huge beanstalk to get up there.

(Bertram's face is turning more and more into an expression of childlike glee)

BERTRAM: Watson, you hear that? That sounds almost like something out of a...

WATSON: (Turning quickly to Jack, looking distinctly unimpressed) Giant beanstalk was it? Reached up to the clouds? How'd you come across that, then?

JACK: Well it's a long story.

(Bertram immediately sits down cross-legged for storytime)

WATSON: Well he's evidently not moving, so you've got my attention.

JACK: Well, it began a short while back... my mother and I were very poor. Could barely afford to keep the home. We'd pawned off our belongings and were burning the pawn receipts to keep warm.

WATSON: Ah, squalid poverty! You see, Bertram, life's not all a fairy tale.

JACK: And eventually it came to it that we had to sell our beloved pet cow, Daisy.

WATSON: What a creative name.

JACK: I had to go off to market to sell her. My mum never trusted me much, always said I got too distracted by things and had no reasonable sense of value, money or even the capacity to function within a barter system. But I were just a lad, so off I went.

WATSON: Did she not think to come with you and keep an eye on you?

JACK: Oh no. We'd had to sell the front door at that point, so she had to stay and watch no-one came into the house. Not that there'd be anything to rob. So anyhow, as I was taking Daisy down to market, this strange fellow came up to me and made me an offer: five magic beans for my beloved cow. And I thought "well, there's one of her and five of those, so I make a profit of four" and took the deal there and then. Ma wasn't best pleased with me, mind - she threw the beans out the window and sent me off to bed.

BERTRAM: Then what happened?

JACK: Well, the next morning I awoke to find a huge beanstalk had sprouted from those beans, reaching up into Heaven. At least, I thought it was Heaven, then it turned out to be full of angry giants, so maybe not. Anyway, long story short, I broke into a giant's house and took his gold. And now here I am.

BERTRAM: Wow, did you hear that, Watson?

WATSON: I was in fact standing right here listening, yes.

BERTRAM: It's a miracle!

WATSON: That's not a miracle. That's a set of increasingly poor life decisions taking place in a hideously consequence-free environment. This man is somehow even stupider than you, not to mention a thief - he couldn't be less deserving of a miracle if he'd dropkicked a box of orphaned puppies.

JACK: Well think what you want, I'm off back to market to have my <insert body part of your choice> studded with diamonds. (He exits)

BERTRAM: He seemed nice.

WATSON: Maybe you should go after him and make friends. I'm sure between the two of you you'll eventually forget to keep breathing.

BERTRAM: You spoilsport, you just aren't getting into the pantomime spirit!

(THE MAGIC OF PANTOMIME SONG)

Exeunt

Scene 10

Nathaniel and Hepburn are onstage, sitting at a desk and drafting a letter (as ever, narrating it as they write)

NATHANIEL: Dear Lord Carmichael, we heard you were thinking of putting together an expedition and was wondering if maybe you'd like us to come along with your group? Remember all the good times we had back in the old days off adventuring and such? We were great fun!

HEPBURN: All those nights sitting by the campfire singing Scout songs loudly into the small hours, how you'd always pretend you were trying to sleep and act as though you were annoyed with us for keeping you up. Good thing we knew it was a joke, though, you really did have us going.

NATHANIEL: Or that time we woke up to find you and the rest of the team gone, and we caught up to you later and you looked surprised to see us - as though you'd really left us to die in the middle of a desert! Oh, that was a good one.

HEPBURN: And you've always been so generous to us before! I mean, think back to those times when you used to let us eat your food: "Oh no," you'd say, "Go ahead and eat it. I insist. If you're really that hungry as to take it from me, then please go ahead and eat my only source of sustenance". Such a kind man, never asking for anything in return.

NATHANIEL: We're talented too! You should absolutely take us along! Why, my bagpipe-playing is getting better every day - I'll bring the set along and practice every night to keep up the morale of the expedition. It'll be lovely!

HEPBURN: And I have a whole host of new puns about all sorts of wild animals we might encounter - I know how much you adore puns!

BOTH TOGETHER: Sincerely, Nathaniel and Hepburn.

HEPBURN: Yardess, could you please take this across Lord Carmichael's London address?

(Enter their butler, Yardess)

YARDESS: Certainly, ma'am. (She hesitates in taking the letter)

HEPBURN: Is something wrong?

YARDESS: Oh no, ma'am, just... I'm just wondering, you see.

HEPBURN: Whatever about?

YARDESS: Well, maybe there was a reason you've not received direct contact about the expedition.

NATHANIEL: What do you mean, Yardess?

YARDESS: Well, sir, it just seems to me that maybe, possibly, Lord Carmichael might have... might have already found people. I think the expedition may have already left.

NATHANIEL: Nonsense! Poppycock and balderdash! I have no doubt that he's simply forgotten to invite us.

HEPBURN: Exactly! We're tonnes of fun, and two of the best people he could possibly send along. Do run along with that letter now, don't want Lord Carmichael to miss it.

YARDESS: Of course, ma'am.

Scene 11

Harriet enters a cave. Looking around, she spies all sorts of wondrous treasure (or whatever shiny tat the budget will stretch to). Happening upon an oil lamp or similar, she begins to polish it when the genie appears.

GENIE: Who disturbs my slumber?

HARRIET: Blimey, you're impressive.

GENIE: Of course I am! I'm a genie. The mighty genie of the lamp! Sealed away for untold eons, bound by forces no man can ever know, by sigiled runes of a race long forgotten, chants and incantations in a language no living man still knows.

HARRIET: Oh. Can I have a wish?

GENIE: Yeah, go on then.

HARRIET: Oh mighty genie, I wish for... (pauses and thinks about it for a while) Ten more wishes!

GENIE: Can't do that, I'm afraid. It's against the rules.

HARRIET: Makes sense I guess.

GENIE: I could make you a croissant?

HARRIET: Pardon?

GENIE: I could make you a croissant if you wanted. You know, for your wish.

HARRIET: No thanks, I'd rather wish for something bigger.

GENIE: Doesn't have to be a croissant. Pain au chocolat?

HARRIET: Hm... I wish I could fly!

GENIE: Erm... no can do, I'm afraid. That's kind of beyond my remit.

HARRIET: Oh. I wish for... a million pounds!

GENIE: I don't have that much, sorry. Sausage roll?

HARRIET: Mr Genie?

GENIE: Yes?

HARRIET: Are you actually a genie?

GENIE: Why yes, of course I am.

HARRIET: Alright, I believe you. It's just that someone, and I'm not saying me, in this situation might... well... they might think you weren't. They might think you were... a pastry chef pretending to be a genie.

GENIE: What? Me? No no no, I am a genie, mighty and powerful! I am... Look, I don't know where the genie is. He's gone. But's he's got to

be round here somewhere - he has to be. But until then, if anyone asks, I'm the genie. Got it?

HARRIET: OK, don't hurt me. Who are you, though?

GENIE: My name's Bill. I used to work for Gregg's.

HARRIET: How did you end up in that lamp?

GENIE: Well I was out exploring one day, as you do, and I found this cave of treasure. Amongst everything else, I found this lamp; I rubbed it and a genie popped out. Now I was pretty taken aback, for he was mighty grand and all, but we got talking.

HARRIET: Ooh, then what happened?

GENIE: He said he needed to pop to the shops, get some more genie-milk, and he asked if I could look after his lamp for a while. I said sure, and so he put me inside it and bobbed off, said he'd be back in ten minutes... That was a hundred and fifty years ago. Turns out genie-milk isn't even a thing. He's probably halfway around the world now, up to his glowing magical facial hair in hookers and blow.

HARRIET: Would you... would you like to come on an adventure with me?

GENIE: No thanks, I'm pretty happy here. It's not much, but I've tidied the place up a bit. I quite like it here now, being the pastry genie.

HARRIET: OK then. It's been nice meeting you. Bye!

GENIE: Before you go, would you like a doughnut?

((END OF ACT ONE))

Scene 11 (The one in act two)

SPRITZ: So when you were an "explorer", what did you actually do?

CARMICHAEL: Well I... explored things, of course!

SPRITZ: Like what?

CARMICHAEL: Well, there was the time I cut through the dense jungle of Garadeen...

SPRITZ: Do you mean the back garden? Because that sounds like the back garden.

CARMICHAEL: It wasn't! I trudged through the thick undergrowth-

SPRITZ: Trampled the flowerbed.

CARMICHAEL: Fought off vicious bugs, the likes of which no record exists-

SPRITZ: You saw a spider and screamed like a small girl.

CARMICHAEL: I was approached by a roaring lion-

SPRITZ: Next-door's cat...

CARMICHAEL: And in self-defence I shot it!

SPRITZ: That part's true. The neighbours were terribly upset. Your father had to fork out the vet's bill to have little tabby cleared out of buckshot.

(IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS SONG?)

CARMICHAEL: And that's how I got where I am today!

SPRITZ: And that's how you got where you are today. Oh, by the way, my lord, this letter arrived earlier today about the expedition you've just financed.

CARMICHAEL: Really? Who's it from?

SPRITZ: It's from... oh. Nathaniel and Hepburn, sir.

CARMICHAEL: Oh lord, not them again. They were always those friends who no-one wanted to invite to things, but everyone was too awkward to actually say anything; so we just let them come along. I was hoping they'd not heard about this trip.

SPRITZ: Shall I fob them off with a half-arsed reply, sir?

CARMICHAEL: And this is why I keep you around, Spritzworthy

SPRITZ: Very good, sir.

Meanwhile, in the evil camp.

VICTOR: How close do you think we are?

NIGEL: Well, according to the information I have, we should be a weeks' trek at most from the tomb. Do we have the supplies for that?

VICTOR: Oh yes, each of my men is carrying a few days' worth of rations on himself. If we run low on food, we simply abandon or kill one of them and take their supplies.

NIGEL: And when we're even shorter on food?

VICTOR: We eat the men. You seem tetchy about that fact.

NIGEL: I don't know, it all seems a bit... well, evil.

VICTOR: Because of course when you hired the guy in the all-black survival gear with an eyepatch and a machete, you expected the height of goodness and mercy.

NIGEL: You know what I mean. It just seems vulgar, brutal.

VICTOR: Brutal's my middle name, squire. It actually is. My parents didn't exactly expect great things of me even at birth.

NIGEL: If I paid you more, would we be able to pick up the pace and reach our destination before the cannibalism starts?

VICTOR: Hm... I'm willing to negotiate. What is it you said is in this tomb again?

NIGEL: Well, riches untold apparently, but the item I'm looking for in particular is the Gem of Kukundu.

VICTOR: I'll cut you a deal. When you sell that stone on, I want half of the proceeds in addition to my normal money. Does that work for you?

NIGEL: I'd really rather be inclined to not-

(Victor takes out his knife)

VICTOR: Let me rephrase that - that deal works for you. It means everyone goes home happy and with all their digits intact.

NIGEL: Point taken. But we have to hurry. There's likely to be another group heading for the tomb - there are two maps which lead to it, and I was only able to retrieve one.

VICTOR: We come across another expedition on our travels - well, I told you we had the diggers, right?

(They exit, and the henchmen poke their heads out from backstage, revealing they've been listening in - they enter, and thus begins scene 12A [because I am too lazy to renumber scenes at this point])

Scene 12A

The henchman cometh

TERRI: Did you hear that?

BARRY: He said he'd kill us!

MARY: He said he'd eat us if it came to it!

TERRI: No, I mean he referred to us collectively as "men". Do you know how marginalising that is?

BARRY: What?

TERRI: Well I mean he's literally erasing the workplace experiences of hench-women and other hench-marginalised-groups involved in evil exploring.

MARY: Terri does have a point. I signed up for crime, robbery and maybe violence against whoever got in my way, but not to be belittled and made to feel second-rate by my employer.

BARRY: Sorry, but I'm more concerned about the fact he would be happy to kill us.

MARY: Well of course you would say that. You're covered by the term "henchman". It assumes a male default.

BARRY: It's a generic term.

MARY: Oh sure, hide behind the excuse that just because society expects a man to be the evil accomplice, we shouldn't try and change the terminology. Come on, it's almost 1890, let's update the vocabulary a little bit!

BARRY: Shouldn't we be worried about the fact he wants to eat us? You know, maybe try and stop him?

TERRI: We could try unionising.

BARRY: A henchman's union! Of course!

TERRI: Ahem, "henchpeople's" union.

BARRY: Why are you so bothered about this?

TERRI: Because I'm sick of it. I'm tired of the glass ceiling in evil grave-robbing and treasure-hunting.

BARRY: What glass ceiling? Victor treats us all like dirt.

TERRI: Yeah, but you might one day rise up to be his right-hand man. You have that opportunity.

BARRY: It could just as easily be you. I have more meat on me, he might have eaten me by then.

TERRI: Yeah, but then we'd only be the exotic "Femme Fatale" rather than a normal second-in-command. We'd get promoted to top level for different reasons.

MARY: Alright, alright, we're getting off-topic here. As important as achieving gender equality in the workplace is, Barry makes a good point. I do quite like not being killed and eaten by my psychopathic employer.

BARRY: OK, shall we start drawing up a union charter?

(They walk off outlining their plan)

TERRI: We, the henchperson's union, do hereby stand to...

Exeunt

Scene 13

Lost in the middle of the jungle, and a few days later, we join Williams and Sullivan

WILLIAMS: I thought you knew the way back to camp!

SULLIVAN: Well I thought you knew the way back to camp!

WILLIAMS: I never claimed to. Besides, you were the one who said you had a system.

SULLIVAN: I did! I mean, I do! I've been leaving a trail of breadcrumbs since we left camp so we could follow them back.

WILLIAMS: Oh, you were leaving a trail of breadcrumbs, were you? Why, that's remarkable. Everyone give a big hand for Sullivan, the finest strategic mind in the entire British Empire, with his knack for not learning from the mistakes of others and not telling anyone until it's too late.

SULLIVAN: Well I don't see you coming up with anything better.

WILLIAMS: No, I don't really have any plans for this situation, I'm afraid. Maybe I should consult your reference guide? We could build a house out of sticks, or follow that old lady into a gingerbread house.

SULLIVAN: I'm only trying to help, there's no sense in being snarky with me.

WILLIAMS: I know, I know. I'm sorry, just exasperated... hang on a tick. If you've been leaving breadcrumbs... is that what's happened to our trail rations?

SULLIVAN: Maybe.

WILLIAMS: You bastard. You bloody bastard. We're going to starve because of you, you using all the bloody bread to leave your bloody trail.

SULLIVAN: I said I was sorry.

WILLIAMS: Oh you will be sorry. We're going to die out here. I hope you're happy.

SULLIVAN: Fine, be that way.

WILLIAMS: Come on, let's see if we can find the others.

(LOST IN THE JUNGLE SONG)

Scene 14

Watson and Bertram onstage

WATSON: ...Look, all I'm saying is that maybe Teeside isn't the great educational centre you seem to think it is. I just... oh hello, who's this then?

Enter Goldilocks

GOLDILOCKS: Hello there, gents.

BERTRAM: What ho, madam! What brings you out into these woods today?

GOLDILOCKS: I was just out for a morning stroll when suddenly I felt a tad hungry. All of a sudden, what should I smell but the faint scent of porridge on the wind...

WATSON: Oh god, here we go again.

GOLDILOCKS: So I followed the smell and eventually came to that small house over there (she gestures offstage). The door seems to be locked, but the window's open so I might climb inside and have something to eat.

WATSON: Excuse me?

GOLDILOCKS: Oh, just some of that porridge.

WATSON: You want to break and enter into someone's house, eat their food and then leave? And you see nothing morally wrong about this?

GOLDILOCKS: Oh, here we go, you're going to be just like my parents - "Goldilocks, don't stay up too late; Goldilocks, be back by nine; Goldilocks, don't commit low-level felonies". You're no fun.

BERTRAM: Yeah, Watson, you're no fun.

WATSON: Well I apologise for having a sense of right and wrong. Anyway, Goldy, the law's not going to be your biggest problem there.

GOLDILOCKS: What do you mean?

WATSON: Well, look at that house. The proportions of it. The larger-than-human sizes. The door that doesn't require opposable thumbs to open.

GOLDILOCKS: And?

WATSON: That's not a house for humans, dear. It's a house for bears.

GOLDILOCKS: So what? I'll deal with them when I come to it.

WATSON: Deal with..? I'm sorry, have you ever seen a bear?

GOLDILOCKS: Well no, but they can't be that tough.

WATSON: Right, peer through that window, into the bedroom. Right, you see that smaller bed on the end there? The one that could comfortably accommodate you with room to spare? That's their cub's bed.

GOLDILOCKS: That looks well comfy. I might have a nap in that.

WATSON: Are you listening? The other two are twelve feet tall. They will rend you limb from limb given half a chance.

GOLDILOCKS: Pfft, I'd like to see them try.

WATSON: You know what? Fine. You want to try and break into the house of some bears, be my guest. It's not my job to point out your bad ideas.

GOLDILOCKS: Later, loser (Exit towards the house)

BERTRAM: (To Watson) Can I go?

WATSON: (Looks at him with disbelief) No. No you can't.

Scene 15

Burton and Holliday are making their way through the jungle.

HOLLIDAY: I must say, it's good to be back in the field. Back amongst the trees and wildlife and actually out being active again.

BURTON: Oh yes, certainly. And that sea-train journey seemed to go rather splendidly.

(Holliday stops.)

HOLLIDAY: Do you hear that?

BURTON: What?

HOLLIDAY: That rustling sound.

BURTON: It's probably just the leaves beneath your feet. Come on, we should keep moving.

HOLLIDAY: Wait - look over there!

Enter the pantomime ocelot [NB - I genuinely apologise for nothing here]

HOLLIDAY: Alright, all we need to do is stay calm. If we stay perfectly still and let it pass, we should be fine...

BURTON: Oh my god it's so cute! It's an ocelot!

HOLLIDAY: Burton, what are you doing?

BURTON: It's so fluffy! I want to pet it.

HOLLIDAY: That's an apex predator. It will kill you.

BURTON: Nonsense. Look at him, he's just so adorable!

HOLLIDAY: Do you honestly not see those claws? Or those teeth?

BURTON: Holliday, how could I not see those teeth? They're amazing and white. Like he must... Oh god, Holliday.

HOLLIDAY: What?

BURTON: He must... floss a lot.

(The ocelot growls)

HOLLIDAY: Was that... was that a pun?

BURTON: Maybe.

HOLLIDAY: You're quite possibly staring death in the face and you came up with a pun about ocelots?

BURTON: It was only a small one. An ocelittle.

(The ocelot growls again)

HOLLIDAY: I'd stop making them if I were you, you're making that thing angrier.

BURTON: Might you say I'm making it... cross a lot?

(The ocelot begins advancing on them)

HOLLIDAY: No, no I wouldn't say that. This is your fault. You and your stupid puns have doomed us both.

BURTON: Well my apolog... apos... no, I don't have one for that.

HOLLIDAY: Stop talking, please. I don't want the last thing I hear before I'm mauled to death to be a pun about wildcats.

BURTON: Well I don't give a tosselot.

(The ocelot roars and goes for them.)

Exeunt, pursued by an ocelot.

Scene 16

(The Carmichael camp. Strapping is sitting in his tent with his equipment. He holds a tool in one hand and a rock in the other, making them talk to each other as though they're dolls. Yes, he puts on a higher voice for the "woman".)

STRAPPING:

"Oh, Captain Strapping, you're so rugged and manly! Thank you for saving me from the treacherous jungle!"

It's OK, ma'am, you're in safe hands now.

"Oh, I can see that. My, I feel so safe and secure with your biceps wrapped around me."

It's natural, darling. Hell, I don't even have to work out, I'm just naturally like this.

"Oh, Captain!"

Please, call me Ant.

"Oh, Ant, take that safari hat off and come over here."

No way, babe. Ain't never gonna do it without my safari hat on.

"Oh, Ant, I want to caress your manly chest hair!"

(He puts the two objects down and sighs.)

STRAPPING: But no, it's not like that, is it? She's sitting there, fawning over history boy there. Not that he'll ever do anything back, he just sits there and looks awkward and flustered about things. There are some things they just don't teach you in school, I guess. I mean, does she even know what she's missing? Am I being too subtle? Maybe I am. I mean, maybe when I asked her if she wanted to help polish my machete, she just didn't want to cut herself. That's probably it. God I could use a drink. I need a stiff one.

(Hopkins enters.)

HOPKINS: You called?

STRAPPING: Oh, it's you, Hopkins. How's life?

HOPKINS: Oh, it's all well. Or as well as it can be when you're stuck out in the back end of beyond.

STRAPPING: You'll get used to it eventually, man.

HOPKINS: I'm sure I will, Ant. It just makes a nice change from London, you know?

STRAPPING: Was never much of a city boy myself.

HOPKINS: There's all sorts of fascinating specimens out here, you see.

STRAPPING: Oh believe me, I know.

HOPKINS: It's opening up new areas of Geology I'd never considered before. New possibilities and formations, it's marvellous. Would you like to come and read my research notes sometime, perhaps?

STRAPPING: I'll give it a miss, Hopkins. I fear it'd be wasted on me.

HOPKINS: Oh no no no, you're a busy man, it's alright. I just get terribly excited about having so many solid samples to work with.

STRAPPING: I bet you do.

HOPKINS: Do appreciate a good hard one to cling onto for a bit. Makes for wonderful findings - the Royal Academy might have me at this rate.

STRAPPING: Well, we'll see what's what when we make it back to Blighty, eh? For the time being, we have about half a day's hike until we're at the tomb. Assuming the map's right.

HOPKINS: Perfect! I'll inform the others.

He leaves

Scene 17

Meanwhile, we return to the adventures of Williams and Sullivan.

WILLIAMS: I give up! I give in! We're lost, Sullivan, hopelessly lost!

SULLIVAN: I can't remember what it's like not to be hungry.

WILLIAMS: It's been days. Five, six days now since we left camp.

SULLIVAN: The others must be worried sick about us.

HELENA (OFF-STAGE): Oh hey, those two are missing.

STRAPPING (OFF-STAGE): Ah, they'll show up eventually. Hardly matters.

WILLIAMS: And we'll never see them again.

SULLIVAN: Never again will I experience Helena's kindness! Never again will I know Hopkins' vaguely camp charm! Never again will I see Captain Strapping's... wait, what is his redeeming feature? Oh, it doesn't matter!

WILLIAMS: Alas, Sullivan. This is the end. I am too tired, too weary to carry on. Please, Sullivan, find the others, find the tomb, find the Fountain. Go on without me.

SULLIVAN: Alright, will do.

WILLIAMS: Wait, you're just going to leave me here?

SULLIVAN: Well, you did ask me to. I'll give you a nice eulogy back home and all.

He goes to leave, but then comes back

SULLIVAN: Williams... could I please have the last of your water? Just, you know, if you're not going to drink it, what with dying and all?

WILLIAMS: Oh, by all means. If you're going to leave me to die, you may as well take the last of the clean water with you.

SULLIVAN: Cheers, mate, always knew you were good for it.

He goes to leave, but then comes back

SULLIVAN: Hey Wills, yeah, me again. Sorry, can I just be a bit cheeky and maybe, like, borrow your survival knife? I mean, mine's just rusty is all and if I'm gonna be the one who's leaving this jungle, it'd be kinda handy for me to have a good one.

WILLIAMS: Take it, take it and go. Just piss off.

SULLIVAN: OK, will do. Thanks again, man, really appreciate what you're doing for the team here.

He goes to leave, but then comes back

SULLIVAN: OK, really is the last time this time, mate, promise.

WILLIAMS: Go on...

SULLIVAN: Well, I'm just thinking, if you're gonna die out here anyway... could I, and this is just me putting it out there, don't want to be rude so if it's not alright just let me know... could I, possibly, hypothetically, maybe... eat you?

WILLIAMS: What? No. No, Sullivan, you cannot eat me.

SULLIVAN: Oh come on, mate, why not?

WILLIAMS: Because that's wrong and kind of creepy. And it's my body and I do not want you eating it.

SULLIVAN: Just a nibble?

WILLIAMS: No!

SULLIVAN: But I need to survive.

WILLIAMS: In fact, you know what? If this is how it's gonna be, I may as well keep going. If my death means nothing more to you than taking my stuff and eating my flesh, I will bally well suck it up and keep going.

SULLIVAN: You were just ready to give up the ghost.

WILLIAMS: Yes well I feel my case of hopelessness is clearing right up. Sorry, no leg of Williams for you today. Let's keep moving.

Scene 18

Outside the tomb. The evil party arrive Stage Left.

NIGEL: This must be it... the Tomb of Azbai. Yes, yes, I've read descriptions of it, this must be the eastern entrance.

VICTOR: What gives? Why won't the door open when I push?

NIGEL: It must be some sort of protective seal. Yes, this here - a set of dials and blocks set into the stone itself. The writings say that this place has doors that require a code be entered to get in. So I imagine that if I can figure out how to line these symbols up properly, this door will open.

BARRY: That sounds oddly complicated and complex for something so old.

NIGEL: The Kukundu people were notorious for having a lot of free time on their hands.

VICTOR: Well then, professor, you'd better get to work.

NIGEL: Certainly.

MARY: Have you not tried pushing the door harder? It might just be stuck.

VICTOR: Quiet, or you'll be the first meal on the way back.

MARY: I'm just saying.

SCENE 18A

(Around the other side of the tomb, the good party arrive Stage Right.)

FERGUSON: It's real... my god, it's real.

HELENA: Well then, what are we waiting for? Let's get inside.

HOPKINS: I've tried pushing the door, it won't budge.

FERGUSON: Well of course not, it's probably locked somehow. Yes, these hieroglyphs here probably form some kind of code. If I can work it out, maybe we can find a way in.

HOPKINS: Well then, hop to it, lad.

FERGUSON: I will do. This might take some time...

Time passes as he attempts to decipher the code

FERGUSON: But if that's... then that... but then... no, that doesn't work either. Damn it!

HOPKINS: Is it still not coming to you?

FERGUSON: Afraid not. You know what, this is really bloody stressful!

HELENA: Doctor, just think about me, I want you to succeed.

FERGUSON: That's not helping me concentrate, woman!

STRAPPING: You still fiddling about with those markings, doc?

FERGUSON: Yes, I'm rather afraid I am, and I could do with you not butting in.

STRAPPING: Oh right, well I got the door open.

FERGUSON: Wait, what, how?

STRAPPING: I tried pulling it.

ALL: Oh.

FERGUSON: Well then... Thanks, Ant -

STRAPPING: No need to thank me, let's get moving.

Scene 19

Inside the Tomb of Azbai, there stands a pedestal. On it is the Gem of Kukundu. The good party enters and finds it.

FERGUSON: It's real. It's all real. This is beyond words.

HELENA: The gem... it's beautiful. It's more than any description I've read.

HOPKINS: We did it, we found the lost tomb. We'll be famous!

STRAPPING: We'll be rich!

(The evil party enters.)

VICTOR: Not so fast. Hold it right there, Englishmen.

STRAPPING: Victor Franchoise.

VICTOR: Anthony Strapping, I should've known. You're the only man full enough of himself to lead an expedition to this place.

STRAPPING: Looks like you're just as arrogant.

VICTOR: No, I'm just that good. Now, as you'll note that you're currently surrounded by my men, I highly recommend that you chaps and the lady hand over the treasures to the professor here. Just like that, and no-one gets hurt... Good.

NIGEL: Terribly sorry to do this to you, Ferguson. It's just business, you realise.

HELENA: Ferguson, do something!

FERGUSON: Do what, exactly? It may have struck you that I'm not especially good with these things. I'm not good with jungles, I'm not good with women, and I'm especially not good with people pointing large knives at me.

HELENA: All you need is the love of a good woman.

FERGUSON: That doesn't pan out in the real world! And anyway, unless you're suggesting dropping your knickers and asking if our mugging can be postponed for a quickie-

VICTOR: Will you shut up!

STRAPPING: It would be a quickie with him, though, face it. He'd get one thrust and-

VICTOR: Will you please all shut up! This is a robbery, not a talking shop for tying up as-yet unresolved subplots. So if you'll excuse us, we'll be leaving with the treasure now. And to make sure you don't try to follow us, we've rigged this entire place with dynamite, to take you lot with it.

HELENA: You'll never get away with this!

VICTOR: Oh, just watch me:

(VILLAIN SONG)

VICTOR: And now that I've explained that, I must bid you all adieu.

STRAPPING: You're not leaving with those artefacts, Victor.

VICTOR: And why not?

STRAPPING: They belong in a museum!

VICTOR: You were just waiting for an excuse to say that, weren't you?

STRAPPING: What of it?

NIGEL: Now, if you'll excuse us, we want to get out of here before the cannibalism starts. Goodbye, Miss Carmichael. I will send your father your regards. And goodbye, Dr Ferguson. Seems that the best brain won after all.

FERGUSON: Being armed and having henchmen probably helped, though.

NIGEL: We don't talk about that part.

VICTOR: And now, Captain Strapping, I must really be going. See you all in Hell!

(Victor and Nigel back away slowly, weapons still raised at the heroes. All hope seems lost.)

WILLIAMS (OFF-STAGE): Not so fast!

VICTOR: Eh?

(Victor and Nigel are tackled to the ground by Williams and Sullivan, who have appeared behind them.)

SULLIVAN: Take that, you ambiguously-European bastard.

HOPKINS: Williams! Sullivan! You're back!

WILLIAMS: Well we couldn't have you missing us too much.

HELENA: (To Ferguson) What were their names again?

STRAPPING: How did you find us? And how was your timing so good?

WILLIAMS: We'd been wandering for a while when we heard a commotion nearby.

SULLIVAN: We rushed to see what was going on and found this.

WILLIAMS: So we did what seemed natural.

SULLIVAN: And became big damn heroes, captain.

STRAPPING: More importantly, where did you guys learn to fight like that?

WILLIAMS: I took joint honours at university: History and Mixed Martial Arts.

STRAPPING: Where in hell teaches that as a subject?

WILLIAMS: Teeside Polytechnic.

(Ferguson and Helena pick up the treasures from Victor and Nigel)

FERGUSON: These can come back with us, thank you.

HELENA: (To Ferguson) And you can come back with me if you want, doctor.

FERGUSON: Well, erm... ah, what the hell? Got to take risks sometimes. Even if they are sexy but terrifying risks.

(They embrace)

HOPKINS: Folks, I hate to be the one to break up these touching moments, but this place is going to collapse very soon thanks to those cads.

STRAPPING: The man makes a fair point. Archaeology team, assemble! Let's get moving.

(The heroes exit as the tomb starts to crumble. Nigel drags himself to his feet. He turns to try and revive Victor, but stops.)

NIGEL: I'm sorry, Victor, but for my own safety I'd rather not keep you in one piece.

(He flees)

VICTOR: (To the henchmen) I think that Englishman broke my legs! Men! Help me up!

BARRY: I'm sorry, we can't do that.

VICTOR: Excuse me?

MARY: We're on strike, you see.

VICTOR: Strike? What is this? I'll shoot the lot of you!

TERRI: We, the Henchperson's Union - representing hench-workers of all genders, races, sexual orientations, levels of mental and physical capability and preferences one way or the other regarding Marmite - have declared industrial action. We're blackballing you as an employer, Victor.

VICTOR: You mean you're leaving me to die?

MARY: (Shrugs) The violence inherent in the system, I guess?

(The henchmen leave)

Scene 20

We return to Watson and Bertram

BERTRAM: Oh come on, grumpy-guts, are you really telling me that you don't feel inspired? Alive? Filled with the spirit of pantomime?

WATSON: No! I feel shocked and appalled and filled with pretty raw contempt for my fellow men and women. All I've on this adventure is people making stupid decisions that should by all rights have killed them by now. Still, at the very least that girl should have had some sense knocked into her.

(Enter Goldilocks, skipping)

GOLDILOCKS: Oh hey, guys.

WATSON: You managed not to get eaten by bears, then?

GOLDILOCKS: Nah. They gave me a bit of a fright but I got out of there. And I got that porridge I wanted. Everything's coming up me today. Well, ciao!

(She skips off on her merry way. Watson is becoming visibly irritated.)

BERTRAM: Are you alright?

WATSON: No, no I'm not alright. She should have... they should... they were bears! Literally bears, Bertram! They didn't maul her, didn't scare her, didn't teach her a lesson. She just made some stupid and selfish decisions and somehow they worked out for her. I don't even know what the world is anymore.

BERTRAM: Maybe you'd feel better if you went to see a pantomime?

WATSON: No, Bertram! Enough about the bloody pantomime! I've had it up to here with all of it! I'm just going to go into this cave and shout until I calm down.

(The two of them enter the cave. There is an oil lamp in it.)

WATSON: Pantomime is ridiculous! Fairy tales are stupid! And happy endings only ever seem to come to those who've done nothing to deserve them!

(The genie appears out of the lamp)

GENIE: What's all this racket? I mean... (Deep booming voice) I mean who dares disturb the great genie of the lamp? I was trying to watch Bake-Off in peace!

BERTRAM: (in awe) Are you a genie?

WATSON: Of course he's not a sodding a genie, they don't exist! It's all made up! Magic and wishes and all of that aren't real!

BERTRAM: Prove it.

WATSON: Right, fine. Go on then genie, I wish for... I dunno, I wish for a bloody croissant!

(Watson turns to face Bertram. The genie disappears off.)

WATSON: You see, nothing's going to happen. It's not real. It's all just stupid little stories to keep people like you entertained.

(The genie comes back holding a fresh croissant. Watson doesn't notice.)

WATSON: There's no wishes being granted, no happy endings, there's no sodding spirit of pantomime!

GENIE: (coughs) Ahem.

Watson turns silently, angrily at first, but upon catching sight of the croissant his expression becomes one of disbelief. As his disbelief and confused rudiments of acceptance grow, so too does the big childish smirk returning to Bertram's face. The genie passes Watson the croissant, picks up the lamp and exits.

Watson stands holding the breakfast good with an expression of not wanting to admit that he was wrong. Bertram nudges him playfully.

BERTRAM: Say it.

WATSON: No.

BERTRAM: Come on, say it...

WATSON: ...Fine, Bertram. I'll come to the pantomime with you.

Bertram hugs him.

Scene 21

Back in merry old London town.
Enter Holliday and Burton.

BURTON: Well I'd say all in all, that was a rather successful little expedition we had there.

HOLLIDAY: You almost got us killed by a wild animal.

BURTON: Oh don't be so dour - we survived, didn't we?

HOLLIDAY: By the skin of our teeth. This is even worse than that time you tried to create a new sport. I almost got concussed with a hammer.

BURTON: Excuse me, but I think you'll find it was a mallet, Holliday - there's an important distinction!

HOLLIDAY: All I'm saying is I don't approve of your life choices.

BURTON: And I'm saying I don't care. (Shouting to off-stage) Come along, Flossy!

(The ocelot enters on a leash, which Burton holds as they walk off.)

BURTON: Anyway, I quite like my new pet.

(They all exit as Pip comes onstage, sweeping the floor. Harriet enters.)

HARRIET: Oh, Pip, I've had the most wonderful little adventure! I found a cave and I met a genie and he gave me baked goods and... my, Pip, whatever is the matter?

PIP: I have seen things no man should ever see.

HARRIET: Did you have your own adventure?

PIP: Only further into myself.

HARRIET: Oh, well I do hope you're feeling alright.

PIP: I've seen things you people wouldn't believe - I did things no eight-year-old should do to survive. The horrors I faced have been-

HARRIET: Well that's quite enough monologuing from you, Pip. Do put the kettle on, will you?

PIP: Of course, miss. Maybe some other time?

HARRIET: Maybe. (beat) Probably not.

(Pip leaves.)

(Hepburn, Nathaniel and Yardess enter, laden with bags)

(The good party of explorers re-enter triumphant from the other side of the stage.)

NATHANIEL: What ho, Ferguson! We've not missed the adventure, have we?

FERGUSON: (Faking joy) Oh look, it's... it's you! How wonderful! No, you've not missed a thing at all. We're all just waiting to board the ship... that one over there, in fact. How about you chaps pop aboard and we'll meet you on there soon?

HEPBURN: That sounds delightful! Come along, Yardess.

(The three unwanted guests leave)

HELENA: Who were they, then?

FERGUSON: Doesn't matter, I just think it's best we leave before they try to start a conversation with us.

HELENA: Ah... well, see you chaps later, then.

(Ferguson and Helena exit, leaving Strapping talking to Ferguson [and I assume Williams and Sullivan in the background])

STRAPPING: So, all's well that ends well, then. You did your surveying, Ferguson got his find, these two have each other and my ego is bigger than ever. And to top it all off, we'll be filthy stinking rich thanks to this here gem. A successful little venture if ever I saw one.

HOPKINS: What about Helena?

STRAPPING: She doesn't get a plotline, she's a woman!

(Backslaps and "Ha, Patriarchy" all round)

HOPKINS: That's all well and good, but what have we actually taken away from all this? I've not changed, Ferguson's desperately trying to make up for a lifetime's lack of human interaction with the base desires of Helena, and you still haven't conceded any ground in actually caring about anyone but yourself.

STRAPPING: Hopkins, my friend, I have learned literally nothing from this entire experience. But I'm OK with that, because if there's one thing life's taught me, it's that making short-sighted and selfish decisions can in no way negatively affect me.

HOPKINS: But that's not true - that's not the way things should work. That's just-

(Watson appears and puts his hand on Hopkins' shoulder.)

WATSON: Trust me mate, this isn't an argument you're going to win.

((END OF ACT TWO))