The Last Ballad of Lillian Bilocca.

SECTION ONE – PRAM RACE

**We are outside The Guildhall, Hull.**

**The bells play out “Save The last Dance” The Drifters…**

**The audience gathers outside. Music can be heard through the windows. Big band music mingled with polite laughing and chatting.**

**The audience waits as The Pram Race hurtles past, straight down the middle of the road. Excitement. Women with prams laughing and joking as they hurry by. Young kids following behind, some being dragged by their arms to keep up, some sprinting ahead.… Round the corner they go and disappear.**

**They return around the corner. This time Lil is at the head of the race. She stops and approaches the audience the pram race continues.**

**Lil, catching her breath, addresses the crowd.**

 Lil: I know what you’re thinking, not bad for a big lass, eh?

 Not that my weight is anyone’s business. 17 stone?…Pah!

 **She opens the grand doors.**

 Lil: Stop gawping. Come on, let’s be having you. I don’t know

 about you but I haven’t got all night.

**The Audience are admitted. They walk up the stairs. Laughter can be heard and a good raucous night out. It intercuts with a more sedate affair. Rising and falling.**

**Silence**

**They head along the corridor. Men in ruffled shirts and bow ties stand around, smoking cigars and swilling brandy. Talking, scheming, rich and business. They stop and stare as Lil and the audience pass.**

Lil: (Signalling to the Boss Men) Here’s some that think they are

 better than they are.

 **She heads towards to the Ballroom.**

 Lil: In you go. Don’t be shy!

**The room is still and dimly lit.**

**It’s an evening set for a grander affair. Empty, deserted. It feels as if any life or energy has been sucked from it. A disco ball spins. Two couples dressed elegantly in black tie dance. The woman is wearing a fur stole. The band play quietly, trancelike. The couples are refined, yet broken. They seem stuck in some robotic routine.**

**This is The Silver Cod Ball. The trawler owners.**

**Lil stands in the door way.**

 Lil: In you go. Get yourself seated. Don’t worry about me. Sit where ever

 your like. You rule the roost here tonight…Go on there’s plenty of

 room….. Are we settled in my friends? Friends? I can

 call you friends? Can I?… Well, maybe at least for now.

 Looking smart…some of you!(To an audience member) Did she not

 tell you you were leaving the house tonight?…. Only pulling your

 leg! There’s standards to maintain this evening. Folk to impress.

 However you’ve chosen to present yourselves, welcome one and all

 to The Silver Cod Ball. The big bosses, big night out. The trawlers

 owners giant slap on back, after we have received a thousand slaps

 in the face for their profit… Their profit and our loss. Loss of life

 of fathers, brothers, son’s and lovers. Are you sitting

 comfortably, because none of this sits comfortably with me. So, I’ll

 be watching from a distance. We all know when we’re

 not wanted, when our face don’t fit…..When your turn of

 phrase…….offends.

 Ooo! smell that, that’s Eau de cologne is that, aftershave to you and

 me. Expensive is that, I’d say a trawler man and a half. A kiddie

 never growing up to know their daddy. A mother eternally struggling

 to make ends meet. Another delivery for the orphanage.

 I mean would you look at this pair of bobby dazzlers!

 Emotions frozen like the deck of a marked trawler.

 You can hack it and smash it but you’ll never get the better of it

 and it will drag you down, down to the bottom.

 Go on take a closer look at them. How much do you reckon that

 chain of death cost hanging round her neck? I’ve seen healthier fur

 on dock rats. Stole? A stolen more like. Look at them all full of

 fine wine and haute cuisine. Prawn cocktails and fondue? But it

 wouldn’t DO for me. It would stick in my throat. It would make me

 choke. Quaffing and scoffing while we all doffing…

 Their gain, Hessle Rd’s pain. We should know better, pet but we

 don’t, the feudal system still reigns here in Hessle Rd and year after

 year we let them get away with murder.

**A wind machine starts up. The sound of a ship at sea crashing through the waves, builds Landing gear winding. Shouting. It becomes loud, almost deafening. Radio signals breaking up.**

**‘May Day!’ ‘May Day!’**

**Lights up. From behind the bar Clarice Mack appears, The landlady of Rayners bar. She strikes the bell. As she does so the room is swamped with our Three Day Millionaires. Smart in their tailor made suits. The women in Fur and gold. Movie stars and cowboys for the night. The music becomes louder band more animated. The atmosphere changes. The heat rising and faster.**

**The men and women are split off to either side of the room. Desperate to get their hands on each other.**

 Clarice: Evening to you all. How d’you do? My name is Clarice Mack and I’m

 the landlady of Rayners, the best drinking establishment on the

 Hessle Rd but then again I would say that I am biased. I don’t just run

 this place, I police it, nurse it fix it up and send it home to waiting

 loved ones. They’re hard this lot but luckily, I’m harder.

**The men and woman split off to each side of the room. The atmosphere is tangible. They are desperate to get their hands on each other.**

 Clarice: Aren’t they dapper our Hessle Rd Romeo’s? Suits and

 boots, shawl collars, pleated backs, Spanish waist, 30 inch

 bottoms, all tailor made to measure, in pale blue, silver grey

 and fawn and the women fawn over their men because these

 are men, they measure up in more ways than one.You can

 taste the testosterone ,you can smell it ,feel it. It kicks like a

 mule and these women feel it in their hearts and their parts.

 **(She winks)**

 These are our cowboys returned from their watery frontier, back

 from the merciless wet and Wild West. Our Movie stars, we

 don’t need no John Wayne or Jack Pallance... Up to 3 weeks

 away fishing for their lives and wives. Home for 3 days back to

 bairns, girlfriend’s and Mrs, that they’re missing them so badly it

 hurts. And they they’re not afraid to show it. So it’s flowers,

 chocolates and fur for her, an animal of prey, as she’s prayed

 and prayed for his return. Now she feels like a princess,

 Cinderella at the ball. Midnight her carriage awaits, a taxi hired

 all weekend to whisk her home and like her husband always on

 a meter.

 Time is as short as her skirt and she’s as high as her hair, the

 headscarf removed, the beehive revealed, she’s brimming with

 honey, sweet smelling, full and ready to burst.

 The Three Day Millionaires, the Three Way Millionaires. Out and

 party, drink, drunk and sex... Money behind the bar is money in

 my pocket…Life would be pretty dull without them.

**Clarice rings the bell again and the men and women fly at each other. Kissing and hugging.**

**Laughing and dancing. Joy and life to the extreme.**

 **Bunches of flowers swamp the stage as do chocolates and fur coats they are passed round like a chain then disappear.**

**At a table…Terry and Christine. The sexual tension is palpable. He grabs her. He drags her on his knee.**

Terry: So, have you missed me?

Christine: Maybe….

Terry: Maybe?

Christine: (a little anxious but determined to stand her ground)

 Yeah, maybe…

Terry: Oh, I see… so weren’t you just a little sad while I was

 away. Missed me just a little bit?

Christine: A little….yeah.

Terry: Right…(He watches her)

**A beat.**

Terry: I missed *you.*

Christine: Did you?

Terry: Oh yeah badly, really I couldn’t sleep. Lay on me bunk,

 Every night thinking of you...all night long, pining.

 The sea pounding the side of the boat while I was pounding

 Me-…

**Christine gasps and hits him playfully…**

Christine: You filthy thing…

**He grabs her and whisks her off her feet. Christine squeals with delight…**

Terry: Come on, come and dance with me. I’ll behave, I promise.

**He shows her his fingers are crossed!**

**He leads her off she’s beaming.**

**Another table…..Mary and Bob.**

**Bob returns from the bar. He stands.**

Bob: Look at my Queen…just been looking at from the bar. Cut

 above you, you Know?

Mary: Cut above what?

Bob: These lot…look at ‘em. Common, cheap but you, you’re like..

 royalty.

Mary: Are you drunk already…you soft sod? Put them down before

 you spill them…and them are my friends you are talking about.

Bob: Arrh, come on…you know it. You’re special. You stand out.

 You make me proud.

Mary: (Doubtful) Do I ?

Bob: Out of all them I got the best catch. You can keep your

 Silver Cod…the best prize belongs to me.

**He snuggles up to her, she looks at him. They stare at each other.**

**Beat. He gets down on one knee.**

Bob: Marry me Mary….

Mary: What?... Get up! People are watching!

Bob: I mean it..

Mary: So do I, come on you’re drunk.

Bob: That as maybe...but I love you, Mary and I want you to be my

 wife. You do love me don’t you?

Mary: Of course I do! You know I do.

Bob: Then marry me. Make me the happiest man in Hull.

Mary: …..ok…but get up off the floor!

Bob: Really?

**Beat.**

Mary: Yes, really.

Bob: She said yes! She said yes!

Mary: Stop it! (she pulls him down into the chair) You stupid bugger!

**He grabs her and kisses her.**

Bob: Come and dance with me...Mrs Denness.

**As this dialogue ends. Yvonne gets up to sing with the band. The music slows tempo as Yvonne begins. ’Running Scared’. Roy Orbison.**

**The dancing slows and becomes more intimate.**

**Everyone’s up now dancing.**

**Christine and Terry are dancing alongside Mary and Bob.**

Terry: You looking at him?

Christine: You what?

Terry: You I saw you, giving him the glad eye!

Christine: What are you on about?

**He grabs her by the arm.**

Terry: We’re going home…

**He knocks into Mary. Mary intervenes.**

Mary: Now, now let’s just hold on a minute...

Terry: You keep your nose out, you stuck up bitch!

Bob: What did you just say to my wife?

Mary: Wife? I’ve only just said yes!

Bob: Button it.

Mary: What?!

Terry: You heard him.

Bob: You- (Bob throws a punch and from nowhere all hell breaks

 lose)

**It’s fierce and dangerous. Things are thrown, everyone scatters. Yvonne tries to keep singing. the fight spills on to the stage. The band members push them off. Adrian is very handy! The girls though are handier!**

**Clarice rings the bell loudly.**

Clarice: Time gentleman, please! That’s enough!

**The fighting continues.**

**Clarice wades in.**

Clarice: Enough! Out! All of you, Are you deaf as well as stupid!

**She starts to pull men apart.**

Clarice: I said enough. Right out you go! Go on, sling your hooks.

**The fighting subsides. The men are dragged out by their women they go**

**reluctantly.**

**Yvonne is packing up her things. She has a small PA with her.**

**John moves towards her as she’s leaving.**

John: Do you need a hand?

Yvonne: Sorry?

John: With your things?

Yvonne: No. Thank you.

John: Alright then, if I can’t help you can I take you for a drink?

Yvonne: No, I don’t think so.

John: Oh…playing hard to get I like it.

Yvonne: I’m not playing anything. If you’ll excuse me..

John: So why can’t I?

Yvonne: What?

John: Take you for a drink?

**Yvonne stops and looks at him.**

Yvonne: Do I know you?

John: Not yet but you will do.

**She looks at him again and a smile creeps across her face.**

John: (Smiling) Where you on tomorrow?

Yvonne: Ryders.

John: Great, I’ll see you there, then…John.

Yvonne: Yvonne.

John: I know

**Yvonne looks after him**

**Clarice appears. To John.**

Clarice: Come you out, you’re not a trawlerman so you should know

 better... Out!

John: No but I’m a carpenter and I’ll give you a hand fixing all them

 chairs.

Clarice: Would you? It’s like the Ok Coral in here…again!

 (To the audience) Right I won’t tell you lot again, out! Out or

 else you’re barred!

Lil: Come on you rabble, follow me this way.

**SECTION TWO – COUNCIL CHAMBER.**

**A full working kitchen, Washing is piled up in the basket.**

**There’s a woman in a apron beating some eggs in a bowl. She is unaware the audience and goes about her business of making a cake. A young girl , runs in up to the table. She tries to stick her fingers in the bowl. Her Mother shoo’s her away. The girl goes to a pile of coins on the table and starts to count them.**

 **On sound.**

**We hear the sound of a house full of life. Kids running around getting ready for school. A loud kettle boiling on a stove. The sound of the milk float arriving and milk being delivered. Doors slamming. Washing machines spinning. Laughing and arguing. This is the sound of a family house.**

**This continues under with snippets of dialogue.**

Woman : Can’t you have this next trip off? Just this one .

 She’s at a difficult age. She misses her Dad.

 She behaves for you , good as gold, and I’m not saying

 she’s a bad kid, she’s not, she’s just needs…

 She just needs two parents around every now and again.

**The thrum of the ships engine room...Fog horn sounds. Country and western music fades through.**

**A child crying. A child laughing. A child trying to whistle.**

A Woman’s Voice: (Barely audible) Don’t whistle, you musn’t whistle.It’s not

 ladylike and It’s bad luck. It’s bad luck for Daddy. You’ll

 whistle up the wind and it’ll take him away.

**Child cries…**

**The trawler sets sail we hear it slice through the sea. Men’s voices. Winding gear. Wind.**

GPO Radio: Hello,hello Mrs..this is Wick radio, will you take a call from

 a Hull trawler?

Woman : Yes, of course. Yes, Yes I’ll take the call…. Hello! Hello love. Is

 everything alright?

**A man’s voice muffled and inaudible.**

Woman: I can’t hear. Sorry my love, I can’t hear….

GPO Radio: Could you please change frequencies?

**The man’s voice again in audible. The line goes dead**.

Woman : Hello, hello?…The lines dead, Hello could you please try

 again?

GPO Radio: Please hold……I’m sorry but there’s no response.

**A girl’s voice humming.**

**The deafening sound of crashing waves, a boat creaking and over turning. Mayday,mayday! The constant sound of the radio frequency plays under.**

**A woman enters in a headscarf and overcoat. Behind her a man dressed in dark colours and a dog collar. It’s the Chaplain.**

**The woman stops baking. She sees the Chaplain. The woman in the**

**headscarf takes the young girl out of the room. The girl is resistant. The woman in the head scarf touches the woman’s shoulder as she passes.**

**They are left alone. she sits in the chair. Her hands held out before her still covered in flour. She places her hands on the table and looks ahead.**

**The Chaplain sits beside her.**

**After a moment the Chaplain leaves.**

 **The woman sits still for a moment or two then she gets up. She washes her hands.**

 **The girl returns in her school uniform. Passes through and leaves.**

**The woman starts to work her way through the washing. She finds a shirt, she picks it out and smells it. Long and hard.**

**The sound of the world outside returns.**

**Woman speaks.**

Woman: I can’t smell you. Why can’t I smell you….Where are you?

 All I want is to smell you again… you holding me strong and

 sure.

 I can’t smell you. I could always smell you. On your return my

 head buried in your broad chest. A lingering smell of the

 trawl…

 And no body to caress once more. To bathe you from head

 To toe. Your naked strength before me.

 To dress you and make you fit to set sail on your final

 Voyage.

 I’m left with only an ache, this crippling all consuming,

 paralysing ache. To touch your skin, to make it final, to say

 goodbye….. I never got to say goodbye. To you. To you my

 man. She took you from me, the sea, she took you from me,

 Like a thief. She seduced you then she wrapped herself

 around you and dragged you down, down, down, down… to

 her bed….

 Where you now lie, my love.

 Was it me? Did I give her permission? Did I taunt her with our

 last goodbye?

 That last wave as you walked away, unthinking, and you

 waved back ,your smile so full of love and.. life….

 and then she sent her wave, her wave that stole you away.

**Waves are projected on the walls.**

**The Woman is still. Reflecting.**

 Woman Do you sleep well, my love, in her coral bed as she holds you

 gently in your eternal sleep.

 Do you find solace in her arms as she rocks you amongst the

 fishes?

 I find no peace in our bed now, no rest. Without you there to

 anchor me I set sail every night on a voyage to find you,

 to save you, to win you back….

 I’m diving to the bottom of a dark ocean. It’s so black and cold

 I can’t see but I can taste the salt, rough and strong.

 In my mouth, burning my skin.

 I’m Pulling and pulling myself down to find you, bring you

 home, but I don’t know where you are…

 I must find you…I can’t see you ...Where are you? Why won’t

 she tell me?

 Why is she hiding you from me?…..

 My arms and legs feel week. My chest is tight and heavy.

 My lungs ache.

 I call your name, again and again. But no sound. I cry louder

 and louder desperate and wild, still no sound, I can’t breathe,

 I can’t breathe the sea is stealing my words,

 she is stealing voice, she is stealing my breath, my life….

 As she has stolen my love!…….

 Then I wake...It’s as if your name is being ripped from chest ,

 stripped from my lungs. I am soaked though to my skin,

 always. But it isn’t sweat, that much I know, it’s her, your

 mistress the sea, taunting, she’s taunting me because she

 now possesses and caresses my man….

 And I hate her, I hate her, I HATE YOU!!

**Woman pauses, broken. She looks directly to the audience.**

 Woman: Everyday, I sit and I wait..… I wait for her to return

 you to me.

**She sits in silence. Lights a cigarette and smokes it slowly.**

**The radio static interference is overwhelming. We hear a male voice through the noise.**

Man: ‘Hello, hello….’

**The audience sit in silence. The doors open and women signal to them to leave. The woman goes on sitting and waiting.**

**Outside the women are waiting for the audience with their petitions.**

**They interact with the audience to get them to sign them.**

**SECTION THREE – COMMITTEE ROOM**

**The audience enter. They are the meeting.**

**The soundscape is a loud cacophony of women’s voices, children and babies. Even the odd barking dog… Chaos.**

Yvonne. My name’s Yvonne Blenkinsop. I mean I know most you so..

 You know who I am...and you’ll also know too I lost my

 Dad four years ago out at sea. A trawlerman, obviously. I,erm

 so well I know how that loss of a loved one affects us all.

 I lost my first husband when I was only 19, I’m 28 now. He

 wasn’t a trawler man, it was an illness, that

 took him…left me alone with three kiddies to bring up I was

 widow and still a kid myself, really.

 I work the clubs now as a singer, again most of you

 know….The Golden girl with the Golden voice, all round the

 pubs and clubs of Hull, the East riding so I know this

 community. I work in it. I’m part of it. I’ll always be part of it.

 I’ve married again. John he’s a carpenter, I don’t know

 whether I could of married a trawlerman you know. Too much

 heartache. I think you lasses are brave.

 I have sleepless nights as it is, worrying about them at sea.

 I lie there, worry bubbling away in the pit of me stomach.

 I’ve been getting up in the middle of the night, writing lists of

 demands for us to take to the trawler owners.

 I mean what if another trawlers lost? More men dead for us to

 deal with? I don’t think we can take anymore loss of life.

 I know I can’t.

 I bet them Trawler owners sleep soundly at night tucked up in

 their big beds in their… even bigger houses. When are they

 going to stop sending our men to their deaths? And when are

 we going to stand up and fight to get things changed? If the

 men are not going to do it…then we have to. Us lasses.

 …we have to stand up and say no more, tell them loud and

 clear that safety has to be improved on them boats

 because…I don’t want another generation of kids growing up

 without a Daddy. It was hard enough for me at 24 losing my

 Dad. 48 he were, my Dad…no age. My Mam left with 5 young

 ‘uns to bring up, alone.

 And it were just too much. Sat in her chair for months on end

 … frozen, lifeless and lost in her grief.

 (She starts to get emotional)…

 Sorry…It’s not pleasant… not pleasant watching your

 Mam…..Or anyone suffering, suffering when they didn’t have

 to…We can’t bring back the dead but we *can* stop the dying!

 Christine: Christine Jensen. Trawler man’s wife and Skippers sister.

 Phil Gay, my brother out on the Ross Cleveland. Out now at

 this moment…. And the waiting is crippling.

 Yvonne talks about loss. That’s something we know all too

 well here on the Hessle Rd. It’s touched everyone one of us.

 Shattered us in some way. See, we don’t talk about the

 waiting, the not knowing. The anxiety that sits with us day

 after day.

 Like a fog hanging over you. We ignore it, we bury it and

 get on wi’ it. We don’t speak about it. So we breathe in the

 fog, hold our breath tight, frightened to let it out. Well I’m here

 to say I’m not frightened anymore, I’m …. letting it out now

 because…I have to. I can feel it clogging my insides.

 It feels like poison seeping through my blood stream.

 So… I’ve started now …… who’s going to join me?!

 Who’ll speak out with me?

 Eh?

 (Silence)

 Oh, I know us lasses are not supposed to have a voice,

 an opinion. And you know why? Because our men are

 scared. They are frightened of what we might say and who we

 might say it to.

 They talk about being free at sea but they are still under the

 rule of their trawler owners. They are little more than

 servants to their masters.

 I don’t know

 about you but I can’t bottle that up anymore. It’s too much.

 There’ll be trouble I know that. This isn’t going to make things

 easy for me... for us. But we’re used it being hard, eh?

 Lasses?

 We’re used to the grind, the pain, the waiting, the of loss.

 We didn’t have a choice. But we do now, we do have a

 choice. A choice to take back some control, to save our

 sanity.

Mary: Good Evening. My names Mary Denness…. I’m a Hessle Road

 lass through and through. Oh, now don’t let the accent fool you.

 These vowels are nothing more than self preservation.

 I was born and bred here. Five trawler men brothers and a

 work shy father! We did move away, once, when I

 was a kid but my Mam brought us straight back, she couldn’t bare

 to be away the pull of the Road ,eh?

 It’s under your skin and in your blood. I know it’s in mine.

 A skipper’s wife I maybe, but I still know…. I may live in a semi

 detached but *I’m* not.

 If the ships going down, it’s all who sail in her.

 The sea’s not particular. She’s cruel, she’s harsh. But we couldn’t

 live without her. She gives and takes in equal measure.

 We have to join together as a community. No pecking orders,

 no hierarchy put our prejudices aside. Look at the bigger picture

 and that picture is our survival. Hessle Road’s survival.

 Unity is strength. We need to mobilise and organise.

 We need to be clear, concise and unwavering in our conviction.

 We need facts, we need figures, we need to be bullet proof but we

 also need passion, support and solidarity.

 **Lil steps up…**

 Lil: So here it is. Our delegation. To march on Westminster to

 make a stand to save our men’s lives. Over 6 thousand

 signatures herein my hand collected by lasses

 who walked the streets in their own time.

 There’s every occupation on these petitions you can think

 of, Schoolmasters, managers, labourers, bobbers, salesmen,

 office workers and printers.

 These will be our main points for the change in the safety

 legislation.

 No sailing without radio operators on any trawler.

 Fully trained crews.

 Life rafts to be taken from above the boilers.

 An extra life raft.

 Hospital ships in and around fishing grounds.

 Fire fighting drills before every trip.

 Training for 15 year olds on special ships.

 Life belts fitted to bunks.

 Ships to be inspected from top to bottom every trip.

 No contact from a trawler in 12 hours, a search operation is to be

 put into action immediately.

 We need to make sure that the owners who coining all this money

 from our men are willing to plough their profits back into the

 men’s safety!!

 Do we agree?

**Faint response from the crowd.**

 I said do we agree?

**Loud response.**

 Shall we show them we are not to be messed with?

**The crowd roar.**

**Lil turns to the other women.**

Lil: March on the dock? (to the audience) March on the dock?

**The crowd and the women take up the chant. ‘March on the Dock!!”**

**Getting the audience to join in. ‘March on the dock!’ They leave striding through the room continuing their chant. Out of nowhere a man punches in the face.**

**SECTION 4 - THE SILVER COD BALL**

**This is the Silver Cod ball. Everyone dressed in black tie and cocktail frocks.**

**There is an air of arrogance and superiority. Sat at each table is a different trawler company.**

**The band play softly. We are coming to the end of the raffle. Wine, Chocolates…Fish!**

**As the last winner sits down……**

**Up to the mike strides Brinsley Cocklethwaite. He’s big and brash. Cigar in his fat sausage hands. Two men carry The Silver Cod trophy that is set down on a table next to Brinsley.**

Brinsley: Now then, Can I have your attention please? Ladies and

 Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentleman! can we have some hush

 please?….(silence descends) That’s better….(A woman at the

 back is whispering) Sssh! Now love, please…They don’t know

 when to stop do they? Allus say women would make good

 deep sea divers as they very rarely come up for bloody air!

 Right, I know you can all see this thing of beauty next to me..

 so we all know that we have reached the part of the night

 you’ve all been waiting for…well maybe not quite as much as

 when the wife falls asleep! But here we are to present this

 prestigious award, The Silver Cod Trophy to the Skipper of the

 vessel with the biggest annual catch.

 Now as you all know we have had the dampners put on this

 years presentation with the recent events. I know some of you

 here will be feeling the loss deeply. A lost ship is a dear

 do...and excuse the pun put it can knock the wind out of your

 sails or the diesel out your engine. As long as there is big

 money to be made and my friends we are making it, we have

 to brush ourselves down and push ourselves on. As the old

 saying goes…there’s plenty more fish in the sea.

 I was with Barry Gammon, where is he? Wasn’t I Barry? When

 the news of one of his going down came in. We were on the

 Golf course, he was just about to tee off when the club house

 secretary came running over the green…putting Barry off his

 stroke…Bad news or not I still gave him a bollocking, which I

 paid for because once he’d taken the call back he came to a

 delivering a hole in one and right royally whooping my

 backside.

 Anyway I digress. Back to the job in hand.

 So this year’s winner with 348 days at sea, 40844 kits and a

 catch value of £181761.00 is...wait for it…

**Lights fuse and flicker ever so slightly….**

Lil: Oh we’ll wait, don’t you worry. We Hessle Rd women are good

 at waiting, topnotch. We spend our whole lives waiting. Waiting

 for our men to return from the sea, waiting to see if we still

 have a family left. Waiting to see if it’s time to mourn, if our

 lives are still worth living. If our community can continue to

 survive but most of all we are waiting for you. For you to take

 responsibility, responsibility for your actions. To open your

 eyes

 and see what damage your profit is inflicting. Admit that you

 are sending our men to their sea salty graves. There’s no

 profit here.

 Romance, machismo. A heighten sense of living as death is

 just a tide or two away. This doesn’t last, it doesn’t hold. It

 turns the intoxicated air, that once made us drunk and giddy to

 a stifling, invisible mist, that seeps into your lungs and scrapes

 it’s way under your skin. Paralysing.

 You want the real statistics, the real statistics of your big fat

 ugly profit. Your blood stained gain. The loss of Three trawlers,

 Fifty eight of Hulls finest trawler men. Fifty eight fathers,

 brothers, grandfathers, nephews, uncles, cousins, fiancees,

 boyfriends, pals. Tens of kiddies left without a Daddy,

 a Daddy who will never see them grow, who they never got to

 say goodbye to because they were set sail to their death

 by you. Wives widowed, families ripped apart.

 Communities smashed and broken. And you sit here swilling

 and filling your guts, while men are gutted like fish. The sea

 and your pockets filled with the stench of death. Of loss. Of

 hearts yearning and churning. For fish!

 Your hearts as cold as the fish stores. As cold as the sea bed

 where our men find their final resting place. But there’s no rest

 here. Only suffering that sticks in the heart like shards of

 frozen ice. That whips us like the wind off the sea, that stings

 and burns and slices and dices.

 We are the ones that suffer the most because our pain is

 eternal, our souls never rest, never find peace at the bottom

 of the sea to lie with the fishes.

 We wrap ourselves up in our headscarves against the

 heartbreak. This flimsy nylon armour is all I have

 to enter into battle with you but enter I must.

 We will fight you till our last breath, till you see that we matter,

 our men matter, our lives matter.

**The women , a chorus, repeat the last line. They put on headscarves as if they we’re donning armour.**

Women: We will fight you till our last breath, till you see that we matter,

 our men matter, our lives matter….(repeat)

**The women remove their scarves and dance into a frenzy. Waving them in the air.**

**Brinsley is furious. He is speechless, the women chase him out. They seize the**

**silver cod trophy and gut it.**

Brinsley: A whistling woman and a crowing hen

 May bring the devil out of his den….!

**The rest of the Silver Codders leave. The women chase them out.**

Lil: But the women who whistle

 And the hens that doth crow

 Go far in life

 Wherever they go…

**SONG.**

**The women take over the space. Wild and out of control The men start to disengage. One by one they take their women from the room. Some violent ,some not, each telling a different story.**

**Eventually Lil realises she is on her own. The band stops abruptly. The room falls into darkness.**

 **Bright spotlight on Lil.**

**The Eammon Andrews show tune plays.**

**We hear a voice.**

Eammon: And what do the Trawlermen do when they are not at sea Lily?

Lil: (blinded by the light) The married ones come home and take out

 their wives, then go to the pub. The single uns go wi their tarts….

**A Gasp!**

**Canned laughter…**

**Huge Cheers….**

**Rowdy. The Strathclyde University’s labour club.**

Voice; Do you want a strike Lily?

Lily: Well, that would be difficult to organise for the men.

Voice: Do you not think you fishwives could persuade their fella’s to

 strike, if you know what I Mean?

Lily: I suppose there are examples in history where women won the

 day, if we don’t get what we are seeking, then we will perform.

**Huge cheers.**

**The cheers fade out the wind starts up. It is a cold lonely wind.**

**Lil walks to the microphone.**

Lil: (reciting from memory the hate mail she received) Madam, why don’t the

 people of Hull kidnap you, tie some bricks round your neck and drop you in

 the Humber, you big fat, greasy Maltese whore.

 You must be the commonest cow in Hull.

 You are going to give the employers the length of your tongue? Perhaps

 they will give you the length of theirs? They should cut it out.

 Trawler owners hate you, trawler men hate you.

**She pauses….**

Lil: Dear Mrs Bilocca,

 As we have not heard from you for the past three weeks, we can only

 assume therefore that you have left our employment. We enclose your

 National Insurance card and P45,herewith and a small wage packet awaits

 your collection…

 Dear Mrs Bilocca,

 Since your interview on 16th june 1970, the position regarding our vacancies

 and applicants has been reviewed and I regret we cannot now accommodate

 you in the job for which you were interviewed…….

**Lil can’t find any more words. She is beaten.**

**Song: Lilian’s Lament.**

**‘SHIP’S CORRIDOR’**

About

About the same

Aboard the ship

Above

A very slight accident

Accident

Address letters to

Advise me the best to do

Admitted to hospital

Admitted to infirmary

Advise me

All is quite well here

Are you quite well

All send their best love

And

Also

Any fresh news

All the best for a good trip

All my love

All

As soon as possible

Arrange

Any change

Ask

After

Likely to get done this trip

Myself

Me

Let

Made

Make

Mail

Married

Maternity

Matter

May

May have an extra day in dock

Medical attention

Message received OK thanks

Message was mutilated

Mr

Mrs

Miss

My

Mistake

Morning

Morning tide

Missing you my darling

Missing

More

Maybe

National health insurance

Name

Number

Necessary

Next

Next trip

Next time

No

Now

Not

Never

New

Night

Night tide

Nothing

Nothing to be alarmed at

Now look in spelling table

Now look in code again

News of

New ship

Not going back

Mined

Look after yourself darling

Out

Of

Offer