

The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca

**by
Maxine Peake**

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The Guildhall, Hull.

Music can be heard through the windows. Music mingled with polite laughing and chatting.

Lilian Bilocca appears

Lil, addresses the crowd.

Lil: Evening, evening Ladies and gents, come on through, hurry up I want to get a good look at you. (To individuals) How do...How do? ...Come squeeze through. Good God! you're a rum looking bunch.... (Single someone out) What you gawping at? I don't bite. Come on, come on let's be having you. I don't know about you lot, but I haven't got all night.

(Lil moves up the stairs)

I know what you're thinking, not bad for a big lass, eh? Not that my weight is anyone's business!

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.

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. Don't worry about me. Stand where ever your like. You rule the roost here tonight...Go on there's plenty of room.... Looking smart...some of you! (To an audience member) Did she not tell you you were leaving the house to night?... Only pulling your leg! There's standards to maintain this evening. Folk to impress. However, you've chosen to present yourselves.

Lil: (Signaling to the Boss Men) There's some that think they are better than they are.

INSIDE BALLROOM

Brinsley: Come on! We're late! We are always bloody late! Why have to call your bloody Mother just as we're about to leave the house? (Mimicking) She's not well. There's nothing wrong with her. Only affliction she's suffering from is verbal diarrhea...must be bloody hereditary.

Brinsley: Just go in and sit down. Jesus!

Lil: Are we settled in my friends? Friends? I can call you friends? Can I?... Well, maybe at least for now.

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.

Brinsley enters snaps at his wife.

He moves past Lil.

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

Go on take a closer look at them. How much do you reckon that chain cost hanging round his neck? I've seen healthier fur on dock rats. Look at them all full of fine wine and fondue?

But it wouldn't DO for me. It would stick in my throat. It would make me choke.

Their gain, Hesse Rd's pain. We should know better, pet but we don't, the feudal system still reigns here in Hesse Rd and year after year we let them get away with murder.

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.

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 Hesse 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 Hesse 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 Palance... 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, gold, perfume 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. Mid night 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 head scarf removed, the beehive revealed, she's brimming with shoney, sweet smelling, full and ready to burst. The Three-Day Millionaires. Money behind the bar is money in my pocket...Life would be pretty dull without them. Out and party, drink, drunk and sex...

All Three-Day Millionaires Enter through main door

Music – Lonesome Cowboy

Intro

Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy

Ahh

Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy

Ahh

I'm a poor lonesome cowboy
I'm a long long way from home
And this poor lonesome cowboy,
has gotta long long way to roam
Over mountains over prairies
From dawn till day is done
My horse and me keep riding
Into the Setting Sun

Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy

Ahh

Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy

Ahh

You've a long long way to roam

There are guys who just figure
Have a problem with a gun
And a finger on a trigger
Can be dangerous, hurt someone
But problems solve much better
By keeping calm and true
My horse and me keep riding
I ain't nobody's fool

Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy
Ahh
You're a long long way from home
Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy
You've a long long way to roam

Violin section

I'm a poor lonesome cowboy
But it doesn't bother me
Cause this poor Lonesome cowboy
Prefers a horse for company
Got nothing against Women
But I wave them all goodbye
My horse and me keep riding
We don't like being tied

Lonesome Cowboy, lonesome Cowboy
You're a long long way from home
Lonesome Cowboy, Lonesome Cowboy
You've a long long way to roam

Bob returns from the bar with two drinks. He stands.

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

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: 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.

Scene moves to Terry & Christine

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.
Every night thinking of you...all night long, pining.
The sea pounding the side of the boat while I was lay on me
bunk 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.

Into the room enters Billy King... He is the cock of the trawlermen. The smartest suit. He can have any woman he wants, and he knows it.

Billy: Evening Clarice.

Clarice: Billy... now I want no trouble. (She's playful)

Billy: Oh come Clarice, what do you take me for?

Clarice: A bloody home wrecker, that's what.

Billy: Not my fault if the men ain't got what it takes to keep their wives faithful. I'm just fulfilling my potential.

Clarice: Ey, and these lot are filling me coffers, so no fighting tonight eh? I've just had me hair set and this (pointing to her beehive) was no mean feat.

Billy: You look good enough to eat Clarice.

Clarice: Bigger off! I've been round the block to many times, to fall for your patter.

Billy: You ain't be round it with me though.

Clarice: I'm about the only bloody Hessle Rd woman who hasn't!

Billy: I see Christine Smallbone here, she'll do for me.

Clarice: Well, looks like she's back on with Terry, so-

Billy: Not for long, if I can help it.

Billy looks over in Christine's direction. He catches her eye.

Clarice: Now can you put your big frozen fishy fingers together ...
Easy, filthy minds! for Hessle Rds. very own Diana Dors...
let's give a big warm Riders welcome to our very own
Yvonne Blenkinsop... it's the gorgeous, it's the talented
it's the Golden Girl with the Golden Voice...

Music Track - Save the last Dance for Me

Yvonne: You can dance
Every dance with the guy
Who gave you the eye
Let him hold you tight

You can smile
Every smile for the man
Who held your hand
'Neath the pale moonlight

But don't forget who's taking you home
And in whose arms you're gonna be
So darlin'
Save the last dance for me, mmm

Oh I know
That the music is fine

Like sparkling wine
Go and have your fun

Laugh and sing
But while we're apart
Don't give your heart
To anyone

But don't forget who's taking you home
And in whose arms you're gonna be
So darlin'
Save the last dance for me, mmm

Baby don't you know I love you so?
Can't you feel it when we touch?
I will never, never let you go
I love you oh so much

You can dance
Go and carry on
Till the night is gone
And it's time to go

If he asks
If you're all alone
Can he take you home
You must tell him no

'Cause don't forget who's taking you home
And in whose arms you're gonna be
So darlin'
Save the last dance for me

'Cause don't forget who's taking you home
And in whose arms you're gonna be
So darlin'
Save the last dance for me, mmm

Save the last dance for me, mmm
Save the last dance for me

The dancing slows and becomes more intimate.

Everyone's up now dancing.

Christine and Terry are dancing alongside Mary and Bob.

Terry spots Billy.

Terry: I see Billy King's here.

Christine: I know, I've just seen him.

Terry: He thinks he's Billy bloody Fury.

Christine: Forget about him.

Terry: Hang on? What do you mean you've seen him?
Where you looking at him?

Christine: You what?

Terry: Waiting for him to come in, were you?

Christine: What are you on about?

He grabs her by the arm.

Terry: That's it, we're going home...

He knocks into Mary. Mary intervenes.

Christine: Why? Terry!

Terry drags Christine into Mary.

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)

Back at the bar.

Billy: (Rubbing his hands together) Oh sorry Clarice, can't resist!
Hold on to your hair! Here we go.

Billy takes off his jacket hands it to Clarice and gets stuck in as all hell breaks loose.

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!

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.

Clarice: Oi you, that's you and all. You should know better. you're not a trawlerman.

John: No but I'm a carpenter.

John: 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. Thank you.

Yvonne looks after him

Clarice appears. To John.

Lil: Are we all met? Are we all ready? You do know we really shouldn't be in here? Big trouble if they find us but Lil's got the keys...And I'm ready to do as I please, so I hope you've got the front to join me... (Looks down at her chest) I know what you're thinking, I have! See these places are not for the likes of us, but this building, this city is ours, built with our sweat and fret. It's seeped into the brick work. Tears and fears are the cement that holds this place up. So, let's make the most of it. and take our place in this *our* space. So if you're woman enough, come and join me...

Green wristbands through that door
(to the left if facing main entrance double doors)

Pink wristbands through that door.
(to the right if facing main entrance double doors)

The audience are then led along the corridors to the next room

SECTION TWO – COUNCIL CHAMBER.

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

There's a woman in a apron. She is washing clothes. . She is unaware of the audience and goes about her business, scrubbing. A young girl, runs in up to the table. She tries to stick her hands in the water. 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. A dog barking.

This continues under with snippets of dialogue.

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. It's bad luck.

It's bad luck for Daddy. You'll whistle up the wind to take him away.

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

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.

The woman is plunging the washing.

**The woman stops washing.
She places her hands on the table and looks ahead.**

The woman sits still for a moment or two then she gets up.

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. Where are you?
All I want is to smell you again... you are holding me strong.
On your return my head buried in your broad chest.
A lingering smell of the trawl...

No body to caress once more. To bathe you from head
to toe. Your naked 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, paralysing ache. To touch your skin, to make it final, to say goodbye.... 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 that stole you away.

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 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 can't see you ...Where are you?

My arms and legs feel weak. 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, 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.

But it isn't sweat, that much I know, it's her, your
mistress the sea, she's taunting me because she now
possesses and caresses my man....
And I hate her, 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..... 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 audience are signaled
to leave. The woman goes on sitting and waiting.**

The audience are then led along the corridors to the next room

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.

Clarice:

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 have 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 Smallbone. 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 semidetached 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. Hesse 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, bobbars, 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 removed from above the boilers.

An extra life raft.

Hospital ships in and around fishing grounds.

Firefighting drills before every trip.

Training for 15-year old's 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 Yvonne in the face.

The audience are then led along the corridors to the next room

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? Eh, what do women a deep sea divers have in common...they both bloody rarely come up for air! One of me own that! I'm wasted here. Right, I know you can all see this thing of beauty next to me. No not the wife, obviously. 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 Mrs. 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 year's presentation with the recent events. 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? There he is... Wasn't I Barry? When the news of one of his trawler's going down came in. We were on the Golf course, 18th hole, he was just about to tee off when the club house secretary came running over the green, like a headless chicken...putting Barry right off his stroke...Bad news or not I still gave him a bollocking, you've got to concentrate man, mucking up the game. I paid for because once he'd taken the call, back he waddled picked up his club and delivered a hole in! My backside right royally whooped! So silver linings Baz, eh? Anyway, I digress. Back to the job in hand. So, I am proud to announce, that this year's winner of The Silver Cod with a

whopping 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. There's no rush. 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, fiancées, 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. And you sit here swilling and filling your guts, while men are gutted 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.

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.

Women: We will fight you till our last breath, till you see that we matter, our men matter, our lives matter.... (repeat) X 2

our men matter, our lives matter X 3

Brinsley is furious. He is speechless.

Brinsley: Enough!
 A whistling woman and a crowing hen
 May bring the devil out of his den....!

The rest of the Silver Coddors 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...

The women start to chant Ha Ha Ha ha

Brinsley storms out of the room with guests.

FOR A MAN MAY WHISTLE (#4)

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

Oh, for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

For we are strong
And we are brave
Our men insist we must behave
Our power a gift from nature
Earth and tide
Crowned her ancient ruler
To she we must abide

Your nets cannot ensnare us
We know we conjure dread
Cast spells when in your bed
We have the gifts to wash you away
Cos woman she is sea
We nurture, we protect
Yet we must be free

You men are her servants
Her serfs upon the surf

She leads you to the catch and back
But if you dare to cross her
She'll swallow you in the swell
Lost souls upon the seabed
A watery version of hell

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

Oh for a man may whistle
And a man may sing
For a man may do
A thousand things
But a whistling woman
And a crowing hen
May bring the devil out of his den

HA HA Ha HA Ha HA etc

-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.

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: Let's give a big Strathclyde University Labour club welcome to Hull's very own revolutionary Lillian Bilocca.

Lily: The men would find it difficult to organize a strike.

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.

Lil:

The Sea is a Woman

I stand on the dock and I wait.
I wait for her to come to me.
And she whispers, quietly she whispers
A warning, caught like a net in her waves
She's angry, so angry she says.

She pounds the dock with her rage,
I stand my ground, hold my space.
The salt as sharp as her tongue.
The brine on my lips and face

But from the deep I sense a yearning
A heart that beats like mine.
It's a warning of my own future,
From under the tide that's turning.

Alone she says alone,
The ebb and the flow carry all she knows
And she knows my fate.
A fate I will go in to battle with,
Hate I hear her waves repeat,
Hate... hate...hate

Come to me she says
All will be well
Surrender yourself to me in the brine, the swell.
My future as dark as the ocean
My soul beats out of tune
The rythmn of the tide,
A dance around the moon.

A nickname is the heaviest stone,
The devil can throw at a man.
And I can take what they chose to throw
I can,..I can,... I can...
For my name is Lilian.

(This last bit is to be spoken by Lil right at the end)

I lick my lips but this time,
I taste not brine but blood.
I look down to see
They have cut off my tail
Directionless, lost,
For ever to remember the cost.
I call out to the sea to take me,
My blood and tears the ocean fill
They have finally silenced me
Gutted me of my will.

THE FAREWELL SHANTY
(Mervyn Vincent)

It is time to go now.
Haul away your anchor.
Haul away your anchor.
'Tis our sailing time.

Repeats ad lib...