

THE ZORON

A play

by

MARK BILLEN

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

THE ZORON

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CAST LIST

Jonquil Smuglee	
Maria)
Henrietta)
Clarissa)
Leonora)
Cuthbert Smuglee	
Potter	
Claire	
Sir Giles Smuglee	
Lady Violet Smuglee	
Leader	
Sludge	
Trunks	
Blackeye	
Morbid	
Slipper	
News Reader	
Sally Spender	
Chief Inspector Gorse	
Camera Technician	
Policeman 1	
Policeman 2	
Professor Spyke	
The Alien	

Jonquil's friends

The action of the play takes place in the luxurious home of the Smuglee family and in the impoverished headquarters of a gang of crooks.

PRODUCTION NOTES

This is a slightly unusual play as it can seem to be taking place in two places at once. During the first two television interviews the gang sit motionless in their den, watching the television that is showing what is happening elsewhere. This can be achieved by having the Smuglee home at the back of the set and the Leader's Den to the front. A drab curtain can then be drawn across for the scenes in the den and opened as appropriate.

The parts of the Newsreader and Sally Spender can be either male or female depending on the cast available. 'Stafford Spender' might be a suitable alternative name.

Effects can add a great deal to the success of the play. Good sound and lighting for the spaceship make it seem all the more convincing. The Zoron voice has to be hollow, amplified and unearthly. For the computer and television dummies, their screens being suitable coloured gels with lighting inside controlled by dimmers are very effective. At the end of the play the appearance of the alien can be very effective if fluorescent paint and an ultra-violet light are used. The Zoron figure, in fact a character in motorcycle gear, needs to be big and on first appearance is only seen under gloomy lighting conditions so that no-one, including the audience, is really sure what they are seeing!

Mark Billen

THE ZORON

by MARK BILLEN

A play about a computer game causing confusion.

ACT ONE

The Smuglee home.

(Impressive classical music builds to a climax, there is a moment's silence and then the sound of loud party music. JONQUIL and her friends HENRIETTA, CLARISSA, LEONORA and MARIA are having a party. The dance finishes. A computer is a prominent feature of the set. At the back of the stage are French windows covered by luxuriant drapes. There is a settee and other seats including a large 'bean - bag' type cushion.)

Maria: That was great.

Jonquil: Let's sit down and have a chat.

(They all flop down.)

Henrietta: Where's your brother, Jonquil?

Jonquil: That little beast. I don't know and I don't care.

Henrietta: Is he so awful.

Jonquil: Awful! He's insufferable. All he wants to talk about is computer games and how he's better at them than anyone else.

Clarissa: That must be ghastly.

Jonquil: The way he goes on about them you'd think he actually believes in them.

Leonora: What do you mean?

Jonquil: He seems to think that all the space games he is forever playing are of vital importance and that we should be glad he's doing it all.

Clarissa: What do your parents say about it all? Don't they care?

(There is the sound of a telephone ringing which continues during the next

few speeches.)

Jonquil: They think he's absolutely wonderful just because he's mastered something that they can't understand. They keep saying he's a genius.

Maria: Is he a genius?

Jonquil: Of course not. All he's learnt is how to play a few computer games and how to wiggle a computer mouse so that it does all that he wants it to.

Leonora: Don't your parents understand that sort of thing?

Jonquil: Mummy's frightened of anything electrical and Daddy says he pays people to use computers so why should he bother with them.

Henrietta: So what happens?

Jonquil: Cuthbert rules the roost of course and he's even starting to think he's a genius.

Clarissa: He rules the roost. How?

Jonquil: Everything must be exactly as my darling brother wishes. When he wants to 'Save the Planet' from an invasion of aliens then that is what must happen.

(Suddenly the door bursts open and CUTHBERT bursts in and heads for the computer. He does not notice any one else. He switches on the computer begins to play and the sound of the computer game is clearly heard. The GIRLS sit in stunned silence.)

Cuthbert: And the Zorons are martialling their forces but they don't know that they face the might of Captain Cuthbert Smuglee. Now here comes a wave in close formation. Captain Smuglee seizes his controls and with a deft semi-circular sweep of his deadly devastating firepower... Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! Pow! ... obliterates the first attack.

(JONQUIL is furious she gets up and storms across to CUTHBERT.)

Jonquil: *(Loudly.)* What do you want, pig?

Cuthbert: Oh you lot are here are you? Well you'll just have to clear off because the genius must get to work.

Jonquil: Go back to your sty you little pig. This is my party and you're in

the way.

Cuthbert: Don't be stupid Bossyboots. The computer's in here and I need to use it.

Jonquil: Rubbish. Anything you need to do on the computer could wait until the next century and it wouldn't make a scrap of difference.

Cuthbert: I've just had some terrible news and I simply have to use the computer so you lot can all clear off.

Henrietta: Don't be bossed about Jonquil. We've been here for ages.

Jonquil: Clear off little brother. All you want to play is a mindless game.

Cuthbert: Hard luck. I'm playing. I've got to play. Peterson has just phoned to tell me that he's beaten my record. I've got to set a new record.

(CUTHBERT turns up the sound and the noise of a space computer game fills the room with explosions and whistles.)

Jonquil: *(Shouting over the noise of the computer game.)* This is too much. We'll just have to go upstairs.

(JONQUIL signals what to do and with their hands over their ears the GIRLS depart. CUTHBERT studiously plays his game and is totally absorbed. He does not notice SIR GILES, and LADY VIOLET enter. They sit down and read, jumping in response to each explosion from the computer game. Eventually the noise becomes too much for them.)

Sir Giles: *(Shouting.)* Turn it down!

(CUTHBERT turns down the volume of the computer game but continues to play making the sound effects for himself and announcing his score.)

Cuthbert: Pe...ow! Boom! Three seventy!

Potter and Claire: *(Outside the window at the back of the room.)* Benny! Benny! Benny! Benneeee!

Cuthbert: Pe...ow! Three seventy-one! Mmmmmmm. Pow! Three seventy-two..ooooo ... Pe ..ow! Three seventy-three! But here comes another one! Can it be intercepted? Mmmmmmm.. And

there's two more. A triple pronged attack. Will ace inter - galactic fighter Captain Cuthbert Smuglee save the planet? Pe..ow! Pe..ow! Boom! Yes! Yes! Yes!

Lady Violet: What time were you thinking of going to bed?

Cuthbert: The invasion continues apace, but Captain Smuglee is alert and he's ready.

Lady Violet: Oh good, you are ready to go to bed.

Cuthbert: Bed? Who said anything about going to bed.

Lady Violet: I think you should go soon. It's nearly nine o'clock.

Cuthbert: But I haven't finished this game.

(JONQUIL enters and looks at the computer. She gives a sigh of exasperation.)

Sir Giles: Has your party finished then Jonquil?

Jonquil: My dear brother drove my friends away. He ruined my party.

Lady Violet: Oh I'm sure your dear brother wouldn't do that.

Cuthbert: Here comes another... Pow! That's three seventy-seven! I'm trying to beat my record score.

Sir Giles: Exactly what is your record score?

Cuthbert: Two thousand and seventeen.

Sir Giles: *(Proudly.)* Pretty impressive.

Jonquil: It's just a total waste of time. *(She flops down on a big cushion on the opposite side of the room from the computer.)*

Cuthbert: You don't understand it. That's why you say that. Here comes another..... Pow!

Jonquil: What's the point of it all?

Lady Violet: We'll have some drinks. *(Calling.)* Potter. Potter.

Cuthbert: Mmmmm.... Pow! Zeeeeeeee..... Pow! The whole point is to beat your record.

Jonquil: Brilliant. *(She gives another loud sigh of exasperation.)*

Cuthbert: Zeee...ow Boom! Three seventy-nine. And then you aim for a new record.

Jonquil: *(In a cutting tone.)* Astounding.

Cuthbert: Peterson's nearly caught me up. I've got to get ahead. Meeeee.....ow! Boom!

Sir Giles: *(Going over to CUTHBERT and watching him play.)* How long do these games usually take?

Cuthbert: Hush... I'm doing something important.

Sir Giles: I do beg your pardon.

Cuthbert: There, I've missed one.

Jonquil: So what!

Cuthbert: Pe...ow! Pee..ow! Boom! Three eighty-two. That's better!

Lady Violet: Are you coming Potter?

(CLAIRE enters in a rather flustered state.)

Claire: I'm sorry Lady Smuglee. He was just attending to the cat. He won't come in however hard I call for him.

Lady Violet: Who? Potter?

Claire: No your ladyship, the cat. Potter is outside trying to make the cat come in.

Cuthbert: Pe..ow! Mmmmm ... Pe..ow!.....Boom! Three eighty-five!

Lady Violet: What's wrong?

Claire: *(Looking across at CUTHBERT and the computer.)* I don't think there anything wrong with Master Cuthbert, He's just playing one of his computer whatsits.

Lady Violet: Don't be silly, what is wrong with the cat?

Claire: Well, I tried to call him but he wouldn't come. I called and...

called. *(Calling.)* Benny! Benny! Benneeeeeey! } *(Together*

Cuthbert: Peeee...ow! Pee..ow! Meeee.....ow! Boom! } *loudly.)*

Claire: Benny!

Lady Violet: Yes. I understand.

Claire: And he just wouldn't come.

Cuthbert: Boom! Pe...ow! Boom! Three ninety!

Jonquil: Brilliant.

Sir Giles: Only another one thousand six hundred and twenty seven to go!

You're really on top form!

Cuthbert: Boom! Boom!

Jonquil: Is Benny in now? Poor little thing, out on a night like this.

Claire: No Miss Jonquil, that's why Potter went out to fetch him in and he's still out.

Sir Giles: I'm sure Potter thinks more of that cat's welfare than he does of ours. He should be here; we called for him to take care of us not to look after cats.

Potter: *(Off stage behind the windows.)* Benny! Benny! Benneeeee! Where

are you?

(ALL turn and look in the direction of the windows.)

Lady Violet: Well, we still need drinks.

Sir Giles: Yes drinks. I can't settle without a nice cup of hot chocolate. It settles my nerves.

Cuthbert: Three ninety-nine! This is brilliant. This is great. I'm going to do it. Peterson doesn't stand a chance! Pow! *(Loudly.)* Four hundred! Four hundred! Four hundred!

Sir Giles: Make mine a big choccy *(Softly.)* and put a drop of something in it. I need it!

Claire: Right Sir Giles. What would you like Miss Jonquil?

Jonquil: Peace and quiet, But instead I'll make do with a hot chocolate.

Lady Violet: I'll have the same.

Claire: What will Master Cuthbert be having?

Lady Violet: Hot chocolate Cuthbert darling?

Cuthbert: Not for me I'm too busy. Four hundred and six!

Lady Violet: But you've got to have a drink.

Cuthbert: *I'm too busy.*

Sir Giles: But you need a drink.

Cuthbert: If I must. Pow! Four hundred and seven. Whisky and soda.

Sir Giles: No you don't.

Cuthbert: I need it to keep my senses... Beroom! Four hundred and eight... alert!

Sir Giles: *(Understanding.)* Of course!

Lady Violet: I think it would be better if....

Cuthbert: Don't argue with me mother, you know you never win.

Lady Violet: *(She sighs.)* There we are Claire, three hot chocolates and a whisky and soda.

Claire: Very good your ladyship. *(She leaves.)*

Sir Giles: You are spoiling that boy.

Lady Violet: Oh I don't think so. He seems to know what he's doing.

Sir Giles: I'm glad he does, because I'm blowed if I can understand him.

Jonquil: He's just a spoilt little beast.

Cuthbert: Four twenty! Great, superb!

Lady Violet: *(Crossly.)* You shouldn't say that about Cuthbert. He's your brother.

Jonquil: I can and I will. (*Louder.*) He's just a spoilt little beast. Look at the way he controls you.

Lady Violet: Oh, he doesn't.

Sir Giles: Certainly not.

Lady Violet: We wouldn't let him.

Sir Giles: The same as we don't let you control us.

Cuthbert: Four hundred and fifty. Four hundred and fifty!

Jonquil: Well he's certainly not controlling me. Why do we have that wretched computer down here at all?

Sir Giles: (*Placidly, soothingly.*) We have to be together in the evenings. Enjoying a happy family life.

Lady Violet: If it was upstairs poor Cuthbert would be on his own and we'd never see him.

Jonquil: (*Softly.*) Oh what bliss.

(*POTTER and CLAIRE enter, Potter carrying a tray of drinks.*)

Potter: Here are your drinks. (*To SIR GILES.*) Whisky and soda for you, sir.

Sir Giles: Not for me.

Claire: Here's yours, sir. (*She passes a large mug.*) Just as you requested.

Lady Violet: What's the news about Benny?

Potter: Most peculiar; he normally comes quickly when I call.

Sir Giles: Quicker than you come to us.

Potter: But tonight I called and called.

Claire: So did I.

Potter and Claire: We both called.

Jonquil: We heard you.

Potter: Indeed Miss Jonquil. And Benny would not come. Then as I stood under the tree he just dropped into my arms.

Lady Violet: Oh the poor dear thing. Was he hurt?

Potter: Not at all your ladyship. He seemed surprised - so was I. But all is well now and I don't think we shall ...

Cuthbert: (*Shouting.*) Five hundred. Five hundred! Five hundred Zorons!

Potter: What is happening here?

Jonquil: (*Bored.*) Cuthbert is using all the intelligence he can muster to shatter the world record for blowing up Zorons.

Claire: Oh he is so clever. Saving us from an attack of the Zorgons.

Sir Giles: I wouldn't put it quite like that.

Claire: What is one of these er...Zorgons?

Cuthbert: (*Shouting.*) Zorons. Zorons!

Jonquil: (*Sarcastically.*) Creatures with big heads full of nothing.
(*Indicating Cuthbert.*) A bit like my dear brother.

Claire: Ooh, I say.

Jonquil: Only their heads are black and shiny.

Claire: I hope I don't meet one. They don't sound very nice. Are they aliens from space?

Jonquil: Of course they're meant to be aliens

Claire: I'd better look out for them then. Here's your drink Master Cuthbert.

Cuthbert: I can't stop now. Pow! Five hundred and twenty!

Claire: Fancy that. You saving us from the Zorons.

Cuthbert: They're coming thick and fast.

Lady Violet: He must have his drink or he'll lose concentration.

Sir Giles: And then he'll have to start all over again.

Mother: I know, fetch a straw please Potter.

(*POTTER exits.*)

Sir Giles: A straw, whatever for?

Lady Violet: So that he can have his drink but not lose his concentration.

Jonquil: (*Exasperated.*) That's ridiculous!

Lady Violet: Just you see.

Sir Giles: Anything to stop him having to start again.

Cuthbert: Pow! Five hundred and twenty nine.

(*POTTER returns.*)

Potter: Here we are.

(*The straw is put in the drink and it is held for CUTHBERT as he continues to play.*)

Lady Violet: There darling, how's that?

Cuthbert: Five hundred and forty! (*He drinks.*) Five forty one. (*He drinks.*) Five forty two. (*He drinks.*) Yes! Yes! Yes! (*He drinks.*)

Jonquil: And you say he doesn't control you.

Claire: I think he's so clever saving us from those Zoron aliens.

Jonquil: This is mad.

Claire: (*Thoughtfully, to herself.*) Thinking about it I'm sure I saw one in Tesco's the other day. Big bulbous heads you say? Mmmm.. I'm sure that it was buying rice pudding.

Potter: Is that all? Is there anything else that anyone needs?

Cuthbert: Pow! Five hundred and forty nine! Food, I must have some food... Five hundred and fifty! ... to keep me going. This is crucial.

Potter: Very good Master Cuthbert.

Claire: I know, I'll get one of his favourite chocolate éclairs. (*She exits.*)

Jonquil: How will he eat it?

Lady Violet: We'll just have to help him.

Cuthbert: Five sixty! Wow!

Jonquil: This is crazy - everything is geared up to what Cuthbert likes, what Cuthbert needs, what Cuthbert says he must have.

Lady Violet: And why not? The boy is a genius.

(*CLAIRE returns with a large chocolate éclair.*)

Sir Giles: A genius. He kills the Zorons faster than anyone else.

Claire: Well, I think we should all be on our guard.

Potter: An éclair.

Cuthbert: I can't stop. Five sixty-seven.

Lady Violet: We'll have to feed it to him.

Jonquil: (*Softly to herself.*) Mmmm... Yes...

Sir Giles: That's going a bit too far. He may be a genius but surely he can feed himself?

Cuthbert: I can't stop to feed.... Five sixty-three... but I need the food for energy.

Lady Violet: He's right; we'll just have to feed him.

Claire: Ooooh yes, or he won't save us from the terrible Zorons. (*To herself.*) Maybe it was Rice Krispies that one was buying.

Sir Giles: I still say feeding him is going too far. He should do it himself.

Cuthbert: Five seventy-seven. Pow! Pow!

Jonquil: (*Speaking softly but with a hint of menace.*) I'll feed him.

Lady Violet: You Jonquil? That's good of you.

(JONQUIL calmly takes the éclair and begins to feed it to CUTHBERT.)

Cuthbert: *(Speaking between bites.)* Five nine eight... Five nine nine.... Six hundred!

Jonquil: *(Sweetly.)* Have some more!

Cuthbert: I'm going to break my record. I'm on top form! I'm going to do it.

Jonquil: *(Ramming the remainder of the éclair into CUTHBERT'S mouth.)* Oh no you're not!

(JONQUIL forces all of the éclair on to CUTHBERT'S face and pushes his head back and causing his hand to leave the controls. SIR GILES, LADY VIOLET and POTTER pull her away but she escapes their clutches and attacks CUTHBERT again with the éclair. He shouts loudly and flails his arms in protest. Eventually JONQUIL pulled away. CUTHBERT has lost control of the game and the ZORONS are heard to gain the upper hand. There is a multitude of firing, space noises and explosions then the sound of a disembodied voice.)

Zoron voice: You have failed. The Zorons cannot be defeated. We shall return and fight again!

(There is the amplified sound of a space ship leaving.)

Claire: *(Who is cowering under a table.)* I don't like the sound of that.

Cuthbert: *(Ranting.)* See what you've made me do! Just when I was on top form! I'd have broken my record! I'd have broken the world record!

Claire: *(Quaking.)* They're going to come back too.

Lady Violet: *(Turning JONQUIL to her.)* That really was rather silly Jonquil.

Jonquil: I'm just sick of him. He dominates us.

Sir Giles: *(Turning JONQUIL to him.)* But don't you see, he's a genius?

Lady Violet: *(Turning JONQUIL to her.)* We must do all that we can for him.

Jonquil: Don't you see how he controls you?

Sir Giles: (*Turning JONQUIL to him.*) He's going to be famous soon.

Cuthbert: Now I'll have to begin all over again.

Claire: I expect there will be more of them next time.

Potter: I'm sure everything will be all right.

Cuthbert: All right! All right? You've simply no idea what all this is about.
This isn't just a game. This is deadly. This is serious.

Claire: Deadly serious. I should say so if they've started shopping at Tesco's.

Cuthbert: It's not just a case of starting again. The Zorons are so sophisticated that every time you're in action their strategy is different. If you don't spot the strategy you're finished.

Jonquil: That would be wonderful.

Cuthbert: This time I'd spotted the strategy and I was winning.

Sir Giles: }He was winning. See what you've done.

Lady Violet: }He was winning. See what you've done.

Cuthbert: It could be weeks before I do that again. (*Melodramatically.*)
You've ruined me, ruined me, ruined me!

Potter: (*Calmly, as if nothing peculiar had happened.*) Breakfast as usual in the morning.

Sir Giles: Yes please. I'll have two eggs please.

Lady Violet: Make the coffee strong.

Jonquil: I'll have my breakfast in bed.

Potter: Very good. (*He exits with the drinks tray.*)

Cuthbert: How can you think of breakfast at a crucial time like this?

Jonquil: Quite easily.

Cuthbert: (*Sitting at the computer.*) I must begin again. Now!

Sir Giles: Oh no you won't.

Lady Violet: That's quite enough excitement for one night. You need a rest.

Cuthbert: (*As if in a trance.*) I must surprise them. Just when they think they've won they'll be least prepared.

Claire: You need to watch out Master Cuthbert. These Zorons seem to be everywhere.

Cuthbert: I can't go to bed now.

Lady Violet: Yes you can. Now come on.

Sir Giles: I'm switching this thing off. (*He switches the computer off.*) The Zorons will still be there in the morning.

Jonquil: Good night everyone.

Cuthbert: I hate you. The Zorons will come and take you away!

Jonquil: Ha, ha! It's you they'll want. *(She leaves.)*

Cuthbert: I'll beat them. I'll beat them - they'll not defeat me. *(He is suddenly exhausted.)*

Lady Violet: He's worn out. Now he will have to go to bed. Come on Cuthbert. Bedtime.

Sir Giles: Come on Cuthbert, up to bed. You'll be famous soon.

(They escort him, trance like from the room.)

Claire: *(Clearly serious in what she says.)* Fancy that now. A Zoron buying rice pudding and Rice Krispies in Tesco's.

(CLAIRE tidies up the room, pulls back the curtains so that the moonlight outside shines into the room, puts the light out and leaves. A clock ticks otherwise all is quiet. Suddenly the door slowly opens and CUTHBERT enters in a trance.)

Cuthbert: I must defeat the Zorons..... Catch them when they least expect it..... Defeat them... *(He switches on the computer; the light from the screen illuminates his face. He begins to play again.)* Nothing can stop me

now. Here we go.. Pow! One Boom!! Two... And the Zorons are martialling their forces but they don't know that they face the might of Captain Cuthbert Smuglee. Now here comes a wave in close formation. Captain Smuglee seizes his controls and with a deft semicircular sweep of his deadly devastating fire power... Pe..ow! Pe...ow! Boom! Boom!! Pe...ow! ... obliterates the first attack.

Now a new formation of Zorons approaches. A double V with reserves in the rear! Will this be too much for Space Ace Smuglee? He hastily summarises his position then lets rip with double speed fire, sweeping from the left to the right. Peka.. Peka.. Peka... Peka... Peka... Peka... Then from right to left.. Peka.. Peka.. Peka... Peka... Peka... Peka... Peka... Two Zorons are still left and they're closing in... Pow! Swee ...eep! Pow! And they're finished. Ker Boom! They are not up to the might of

Captain Smuglee who has already scored five three two in this latest attack by the dreaded Zorons.

(During the above a ZORON type figure, in fact SLIPPER dressed in black and with a motor-cycle crash helmet on his head, enters silently through the window. He stands and watches CUTHBERT taking all in. He produces a scarf and is just about to gag CUTHBERT when he swings round.)

Cuthbert: Who are you? What are you? What do you want?

Slipper: *(Ominously.)* Cuthbert Smuglee?

Cuthbert: *(Gasping.)* Yes! Yes!

Slipper: Then you are now in my power.

Cuthbert: *(Softly.)* It's a Zoron.

Slipper: And I am taking you to our mighty leader.

(CLAIRE suddenly enters but does not see the shape of the figure in the gloom.)

Claire: I've heard everything. You are not taking master Cuthbert away.

(The computer screen glows brighter and the ZORON shape is visible.)

Claire: Ah! Ah! The Zorons are coming, they're here. *(She stands transfixed and continues to moan.)* Oooh! Ooooh!

Slipper: That's too much, we must leave.

Cuthbert: I am in your power.

Slipper: That's right you are in my power.

Cuthbert: I am in your power. *(He lets go of the computer controls.)*

Slipper: Hurry then, through the window.

(SLIPPER gags CUTHBERT and they exit hurriedly. The computer left to its own devices suddenly bursts in to another round of explosions and space noises reaching a deafening crescendo. CLAIRE stands shaking.)

Zoron voice: *(Booming out.)* You have failed. The Zorons cannot be defeated. We shall return and fight again!

(Again there is the sound of a space ship leaving. At the same time lights flash outside sweeping over the window. All this is too much for CLAIRE who faints. There is the sound of a motorbike starting up and departing then the clock ticks.)

Claire: *(Recovering but still very flustered.)* Ooooh! Ooooh! What was that? It was terrible! It was one of them Zoron things Master Cuthbert was trying to save us from. I knew they were about when I saw that one at Tesco's. I'm going to Sainsbury's next time. Now where's Cuthbert? *(She looks at the computer.)* Ah! He's gone! *(She turns to the window.)* The window's open! It's the Zorons! They've taken Cuthbert. Help! Help! The Zorons! The Zorons! *(She faints again as the scene changes.)*

The Leader's den.

(LEADER, SLUDGE, TRUNKS, BLACKEYE AND MORBID are gathered and there is a great deal of argumentative noise.)

Leader: Settle down now. Settle down. *(The arguing continues.)* Quiet. *(There is no difference.)* I'll tell the police! *(There is silence.)* Now then my little group of devoted followers. I have summoned this meeting because we have a very serious situation.

Sludge: I should say we have.

Others: Yes! Yes!

Sludge: There's been no fizzy pop for two days.

Leader: You poor little man. Our situation is more serious than that.

Trunks: Yeah. And I haven't had a boiled egg for breakfast for three days.

Leader: Another poor little man. But our problem is bigger than a boiled egg.

Blackeye: Worse than that worse than that.....

Leader: What is worse than that?

Blackeye: Mmmmm... I've forgotten. *(TRUNKS hit him.)*

Leader: Then it must have been something of vital importance. Now are we all assembled? *(He looks around.)* Morbid, call the register.

Morbid: *(Checking his register and ticking off names at each reply.)*
Sludge.

Sludge: Here.

Morbid: Trunks.

Trunks: Here.

Morbid: Morbid. *(He looks about.)*

Others: You're here.

Morbid: So I am. *(He makes a very deliberate tick by his name.)* Blackeye.

Blackeye: What do you want?

Leader: Morbid is asking if you are here with us.

Blackeye: Well, let me have a think.

Leader: Do not strain yourself. I'll answer for you. Blackeye is here.

Morbid: Slipper. *(There is silence.)* Where is Slipper?

(BLACKEYE and SLUDGE search, looking behind curtains, in cupboards and even in a drawer but cannot find him.)

Blackeye and Sludge: We can't find him so he can't be here.

Leader: This is most worrying. Where is Slipper? I summon you, *(Sarcastically.)* my little brain boxes, to an important meeting and Slipper is not with us.

Morbid: It's not like him to miss the register.

Leader: Very well, he shall be punished. I shall keep him in at lunchtime tomorrow.

Others: That's fair. that's fair.

Leader: But we have a more serious problem my superb little brain boxes. All is not well with our highly powered super refined team.

Sludge: What's the matter? All seems right enough to me.

Leader: Then my highly skilled intelligence-gathering expert you are not very observant. Can you not see that there is something missing this evening from this meeting of our greatly feared, highly powered, super refined team?

Trunks: Yeah.. Slipper's not here.

Leader: Very good, but I think we have all noticed that Slipper is not here. But there is also a serious absence.

(They all search about.)

Leader: Come now, my highly observant ones, how can you miss it?

(They search again.)

Morbid: What is it?

Blackeye: Who is it?

All: We give up.

Sludge: That's a tough one chief.

Leader: *(Exploding.)* There is no tea and no choccy biccies!

Others: No tea! No choccy biccies!

Leader: Yes, that is the seriousness of the situation.

Blackeye: Whose turn was it to make the tea? *(He pretends to pour.)*

Trunks: Who should have put the biccies on the plate? *(He mimes the action.)*

Morbid: With a nice little paper doily.

Leader: Oh my brain boxes, do you not see that our situation is highly serious?

Others: *(Indignant.)* Yeah, yeah. No tea and choccy biccies.

Morbid: Why haven't we got tea and choccy biccies?

Leader: *(Exploding again.)* Because our greatly feared, high powered, super refined team of master criminals has failed.

Others: *(Shocked into silence at first then exclaiming together.)* Failed!

Leader: Yes! Failed! We have no money.

Others: *(Shocked into silence again then exclaiming together.)* No money!

Leader: Yes, and no money means no tea and no biccies. Our recent impeccably planned, carefully crafted, split second precise operations ...

Others: *(Very attentive.)* Yes. Yes.

Leader: ...have all failed. we have precisely 23p and two shiny buttons left
In our piggy bank.

Trunks: What has gone wrong oh mighty one?

Leader: What has gone wrong? You dare to ask me what has gone wrong.
Our last operation was meant to include me making a discreet
getaway in a refuse disposal lorry..

Sludge: Uh?

Morbid: He means a dustcart.

Leader: ...that was returning empty, I repeat empty, to the depot. *(LEADER now acts out his story.)* When it reached its destination I was to

crawl out and slyly slip softly, silently and surreptitiously in to the surroundings.

Morbid: Well the refuse lorry came along.

Leader: It did indeed.

Morbid: And stopped at the right place 'cos Sludge and I 'broke down' in our van in the right place and blocked the road.

Leader: You did indeed.

Blackeye: And me and Trunks gently picked up an extra large reinforced rubbish sack with you safely stowed inside and slid you in to the back of the lorry.

Leader: You did indeed.

Morbid: Well what went wrong then?

Leader: What you failed to take into account was that the lorry had not completed its work for the day. Once inside I broke free from the sack ready to make my daring, dynamic, deft escape.

Others: Very good.

Leader: However the lorry stopped another thirty one times and another one hundred and ninety-three sacks were thrown aboard. They were filled with things that I prefer not to remember... but I am afraid that I shall for the rest of my days. When I emerged from this ordeal, having been rudely tipped out at the refuse landfill site I smelt like a rose bed that has just had copious quantities of finest fertile farmyard manure spread upon it.

(The GANG are all trembling violently and cowering before the LEADER'S wrath.)

Sludge: *(Bravely putting a shaking hand in the air.)* Chief, chief...

Leader: Yes, my little brain box. What vital piece of information do you wish to impart to your honoured leader?

Sludge: Eh? What do you mean?

Leader: What is it?

Sludge: It's nearly ten o'clock. Time for the news.

Leader: Then you are indeed a brain box tonight, Sludge. You know that I always like to watch the news...

Sludge: *(Smiling in self-satisfaction.)* Yes Chief.

Leader: ... just in case there is some vital piece of information that will be useful to our greatly feared, high powered, super refined team of

master criminals. Switch the television on now Trunks.

(TRUNKS switches on, at first there is no response so he hits it, immediately it begins to glow and they all sit glued to the set. No one moves at all whilst the television is on.)

Leader: Silence. Any one who speaks will be sent outside.

(The light of the television shines on to the faces of the GANG and suitable news bulletin music is heard.)

News Reader's Voice: *(Amplified.)*

Tonight's headlines ...

Aliens suspected of kidnap ...

Agriculture minister in farmyard slip up ...

Gorilla escapes from London Zoo.

Reports are coming in of aliens kidnapping an eleven-year-old child. The incident happened in a normally quiet area of *(Local name)*. Over now to Sally Spender who is at the scene.

(The curtains open to reveal the SMUGLEE home now with CHIEF INSPECTOR GORSE and POLICE conducting an investigation. Television reporter SALLY SPENDER is interviewing accompanied by a television team.)

Sally: This really is most extraordinary. It seems that eleven-year-old Cuthbert Smuglee, the son of Sir Giles and Lady Smuglee, was having a late night session on his computer when an alien appeared through the window and, even calling him by name, kidnapped the innocent child.

Reader: Did any one witness this?

Sally: Indeed. I have the one witness here. She is Claire Constant who is one of the staff in the Smuglee home. Tell us exactly what you saw, please Claire.

Claire: *(Rather stuck to be on television she very much acts to the*

camera.) I heard young Cuthbert playing on his computer when he should have gone to bed so I came in to this room to find out what was going on. And then I saw him.

(SALLY tries to maintain her authority but CLAIRE tends to dominate the camera position elbowing her way into place to SALLY'S dismay.)

Sally: Saw what?

Claire: The alien thing. All black it was with a bulbous shiny head. I've seen them before, lots of times.

Sally: *(Astonished.)* You've seen them before? Where?

Claire: Shopping at Tesco's.

Sally: You've seen them shopping? Why didn't you do anything?

Claire: I didn't realise who they were. It was only as this alien was leaving through the window that I heard its voice. And that's what made me realise...

Sally: What did it sound like?

Claire: Like no other voice. It certainly wasn't human. There was also a flashing light just as they left. That must have been from the spacecraft.

Sally: Did you see this spacecraft?

Claire: No I fainted.

Sally: Cuthbert's family are also here. *(Turning to SIR GILES and LADY VIOLET.)* This is a great shock for you.

Lady Violet: *(Holding a handkerchief to her eyes.)* We thought Cuthbert was in bed.

Sir Giles: We didn't know any thing was happening.

Sally: Have there been any other incidents like this?

Sir Giles: *(Clearly thinking the question is ridiculous.)* You mean has he been kidnapped by aliens before? Not that we know of. We're just astonished by it all. The first we knew of this was when we heard Claire screaming. We dashed in but the alien had gone taking our precious boy with it.

Sally: How would you describe you son?

Lady Violet: *(Sobbing.)* He's so loving and considerate. He obeys us in everything.

Sir Giles: He's a wonderful boy. I'll do any thing to have him back.

Sally: Are you offering a reward?

Sir Giles: Naturally, and a pretty substantial reward too.

Sally: Your son means a great deal to you.

Lady Violet: He's such a dear boy.

Sir Giles: We have decided to offer £100 000 as a reward to any one who can return our dear son to us.

Sally: But isn't it rather odd to offer aliens a reward. What would they do with the money?

Claire: (*Excitedly barging in between SALLY and SIR GILES.*) I saw them shopping in Tesco's.

Sir Giles: It's not the aliens that will get the reward. It's any one who can return my son.

Sally: Leading the investigation is Detective Chief Inspector Gorse of (*Name of local police force.*) C.I.D. What do you make of all this Chief Inspector?

Chief Inspector: (*Speaking with a lisp throughout and putting strong emphasis on words when he has a particular point to make.*) It's a most unusual case. Obviously it's too early to make any predictions but we are eager to trace these aliens. Remember the description; all black with bulbous heads. I have a computer-generated impression of one of the aliens here. (*He holds up a picture of a ZORON type figure.*) Any piece of information could be of vital importance.

Policeman: (*Coming in through the window.*) Sir, I've just found some footprints in the flowerbed.

(*ALL react with interest.*)

Sally: (*Speaking to the camera.*) Even as we are on the air we have another development.

Chief Inspector: Anything of significance?

Policeman: They're from wide shoes, about size eleven.

Sally: What do you make of that Chief Inspector?

Chief Inspector: Well, here we have a cunning type of alien. They've adopted human footwear to keep us off their tracks. But it also will give us a vital clue.

Sally: What's that?

Chief Inspector: They have rather large feet and as well as shopping at a local supermarket at least one of them has been to a shoe shop.

Sally: Anything else?

Chief Inspector: I am anxious to obtain any information, however small, however trivial. I'm especially interested in the following; any shoe shop that's sold size eleven shoes to unusual looking customers and any one who has spotted an abnormal vehicle in this area.

Sally: How would it be abnormal?

Chief Inspector: Not the usual sort of shape.

Sally: And with more than the regular number of lights?

Chief Inspector: That's right. We'd also like to talk to anyone else who has seen these aliens.

Sally: And what about the aliens themselves?

Chief Inspector: Well, course I am anxious to interview the aliens and find out what they have to say. If they'd like to get in touch at any police station we'd be pleased to hear from them. Alternatively the aliens could phone me on 0800 457754. It's freephone number so they won't have to worry about money.

Sally: Thank you Chief Inspector. That seems to be all for the moment. This is Sally Spender returning you to the newsroom.

Reader: Thank you Sally. Let us know if there are any further developments.

And now on with the rest of today's news. During a visit to a dairy farm, Richard Tiddley, the Agriculture Minister, made an unfortunate slip from which he will take some time to recover. He was just passing through the farmyard when he had the

(During the NEWS READER's speech the curtains close so that only the den is visible.)

Leader: Put it off Trunks.

Blackeye: I want to, it's my turn.

Trunks: No it's not, it's mine!

(An argument involving all of the GANG starts to develop.)

Leader: *(Sharply.)* Put it off! *(He is immediately obeyed.)* Don't you see

the significance of this news?

Blackeye: (*Fearfully.*) Yes, we'd better stay in doors. They might kidnap us.

Leader: No my clever brain box, there is something more important than that.

Morbid: Go on chief, tell us.

Leader: Here is our chance to gain some money with the least amount of work.

Sludge: Sounds good to me. (*He smiles.*)

Leader: And we'll have tea and choccy biccies again.

Others: That's good.

Sludge: And fizzy pop?

Leader: And fizzy pop.

Trunks: And boiled eggy?

Leader: More than that. Much more than that.

Others: Yes! Hurray!

Morbid: But how?

Others: Yes how?

(The LEADER paces among the GANG as he explains his plan and they follow him with their eyes..)

Leader: The reward for the missing Cuthbert Smuglee is £100 000?

Others: Yes!

Leader: We claim that we have rescued this boy from the aliens.

Blackeye: I don't want anything to do with aliens. (*He shivers.*) I'm scared of aliens.

Leader: Be quiet! We won't have anything to do with them. We claim we have rescued the boy, but we need payment in two parts. £50 000 before we return the boy and £50 000 when the boy is delivered.

Sludge: But we haven't got the boy.

Leader: No we have not. And that is where my plan is so cunning. We claim we have the boy, gain £50 000, arrange to return the boy the next day and in the mean time we disappear with all the lovely, lovely money.

Others: (*There is a shocked silence.*) Wow!

(The GANG applauds and the LEADER takes a bow and smiles.)

Sludge: Superb.

Morbid: Brilliant.

Trunks: Splendid.

Blackeye: (*Slowly.*) Can we just go through all that again?

Leader: (*With a big sigh.*) Tell him what we're going to do.

Others: (*All surrounding BLACKEYE speaking at once very slowly.*) We claim we have rescued the boy, but we need payment in two parts. £50 000 before we return the boy and £50 000 when the boy is delivered. We gain £50 000, arrange to return the boy the next day and in the mean time we disappear with all the lovely, lovely money. (*They all smile at the audience.*)

Blackeye: (*Still feeling unsure.*) And we don't meet any nasty black space alien things with big heads?

Others: No.

Blackeye: That's all right then.

Leader: Is it agreed?

Others: It is agreed.

Leader: Then swear.

Blackeye: Knickers!

Gang: (*Deeply shocked.*) Aaaaah!

Leader: Not like that. Like this. Repeat after me.

(The GANG stand in formal pose.)

We solemnly swear...

Others: We solemnly swear...

Leader: To follow our instructions....

Others: To follow our instructions....

Leader: To do exactly as we are told...

Others: To do exactly as we are told...

Leader: To do nothing naughty...

Others: To do nothing naughty...

Leader: And to obey all the commands of our noble leader...

Others: And to obey all the commands of our noble aaaah!

(Suddenly the door bursts open and the ZORON figure is there in the midst of the

gang. It remains completely motionless.)

All: *(Terrified, panicking.)* It's the aliens! They've come for us!

(The ZORON nods its head. BLACKEYE faints and the others stand quivering. The LEADER sits calmly.)

ACT TWO

The Leader's Den. A few moments later.

Sludge: The aliens have come for us.

Blackeye: *(Quivering and not really listening.)* Come for us.

Trunks: Help me Mummy.

Blackeye: Help me Mummy.

Morbid: We'll be taken away.

Blackeye: Taken away!

Sludge: We'll be taken up in to space.

Blackeye: Up in to space!

Trunks: On an alien space ship.

Blackeye: On an alien spaceship.

Morbid: To a different planet.

Blackeye: To the Isle of Thanet.

Sludge: To a different time.

Blackeye: On the District Line.

(The ZORON very slowly raises its hands to its head.)

Trunks: *(Aghast.)* Look at his hands.

Blackeye: *(Shaking)* Do I have to?

Morbid: He's putting his hands up to his head.

Blackeye: I can't bear it.

Sludge: He's taking his head off.

Blackeye: I can't bear it. An alien who travels on the District Line from the Isle of Thanet and who can take his head off.

All: He's lifting his head right off!

(SLIPPER removes his helmet. ALL gasp then hold their breath as he does so.)

Slipper: Hello fellows. What's going on?

All: Slipper! *(They back away from him.)*

(The LEADER who has kept quiet in all of the above begins to laugh.)

Trunks: Help! Help! Slipper's an alien!

Slipper: No I'm not.

Morbid: *(Pointing at the television.)* But there's been an alien just like you on the television.

Slipper: No there hasn't.

Blackeye: Yes there has, we've seen it.

Slipper: You balmy brainless halfwits.

Blackeye: *(Offended.)* I'm not a half wit.

Slipper: Don't you understand?

All: What?

Slipper: I am the alien.

Trunks: There he's said it, Slipper is an alien. And we've been working with him all this time and never knew.

(The LEADER is laughing more and more.)

Blackeye: Well, you could have told us.

Slipper: Told you what?

Blackeye: That you are an alien.

Morbid: Like the one that's been on the telly.

Trunks: What size are your feet? *(Pointing at SLIPPER's shoes.)*

Slipper: What have my feet got to do with it?

Morbid: Just tell us...

All: *(Loudly and all pointing at SLIPPER.)* What size are your feet?

Slipper: *(He checks his shoes.)* Size eleven.

(ALL are aghast and shrink back. The LEADER keeps laughing.)

Morbid: *(Bravely coming forward.)* There that proves it.

Slipper: *(Totally mystified.)* Proves what?

Morbid: (*Stepping out from the others.*) That you are an alien just like the one on the news. His feet were size eleven too. (*He shrinks back again.*)

Slipper: How many times do I have to tell you, I am not an alien?

(*All shake their heads in disbelief.*)

I do not come from space.

Morbid: (*Stepping out again.*) Or a distant planet?

Slipper: (*Exasperated.*) Or a distant planet.

Blackeye: Or the Isle of Thanet?

Leader: (*Unable to control his laughter any longer.*) Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha, Ha! All very good Slipper. Very good. But I have one more serious question for you.

Slipper: Yes Chief, what's that?

Leader: Where is the boy?

Others: Boy, what boy?

Leader: The boy that Slipper has kidnapped of course. Cuthbert Smuglee.

Sludge: Slipper hasn't kidnapped that boy; he was taken away by an alien. We saw it on the news.

Blackeye: It will be in the papers tomorrow and then we'll know that it's true.

Leader: Oh my little brain boxes, do you not yet understand, Slipper put on all this gear so that he would not be recognised?

Slipper: That's right.

Leader: And in the poor light he was mistaken for an alien. He kidnapped this boy, Cuthbert, who has incredibly wealthy parents.

Trunks: But what about the space ship and the flashing lights?

Sludge: We heard about them too. The maid saw flashing lights.

Slipper: Probably because there was an ambulance parked nearby. There was also a cat that kept coming on the scene. It was all rather useful in adding to the confusion.

Leader: All very good Slipper, but where is the boy?

Slipper: Don't panic chief, he's just here.

Leader: He's safe and sound?

Slipper: Of course chief, you know I always follow the rules.

Leader: Then bring him in.

(CUTHBERT is brought in bound with a long rope and gagged but clearly unhurt. He struggles a little.)

Trunks: I don't understand all this.

Leader: You will. Let's have a nice little chat with him. Untie him.

(CUTHBERT is spun round as the rope is removed from him and he is eventually untied and his gag is removed.)

Cuthbert: *(Loudly and fiercely.)* Who are you? Why are you here? Where is the Zoron? *(He sees the helmet.)* There's his head. What have you done to him?

Slipper: I am the Zoron.

Cuthbert: *(Looking up and down at SLIPPER.)* Oh, how dull. I was looking forward to meeting some aliens. I thought I'd been kidnapped by a Zoron. If you're just an ordinary human being you can take me home.

Leader: No, no. Not so simple.

Cuthbert: Who are you?

Leader: Let me introduce us. *(Proudly.)* We are a famous greatly feared, high powered, super refined team of master criminals generally known as the Iron Hard Gang.

Cuthbert: Gosh, how exciting. I've been kidnapped by the most frightening gang in Britain. *(To the audience.)* Now I'll really have something to talk about at school.

Leader: We have an undeserved reputation...

Cuthbert: You mean you are not famous greatly feared, high powered, Super refined team of master criminals?

Leader: No, I mean that it is our policy to never harm any one.

Cuthbert: Oh, how boring.

Leader: And I am Freddy Mouseman, otherwise known as *(He pulls himself up to maximum height.)* The Leader.

Cuthbert: I'm not surprised. I'd sooner be called the leader than Freddy Mouseman. I mean it's not very frightening is it? *(Mockingly.)* Freddy Mouseman is scarcely a name to send shivers down the spine.

Leader: *(Irritated.)* Enough!

Cuthbert: And when are you going to take me home?

Leader: You are a very valuable young man; there is a reward for you.

Cuthbert: Well then?

Leader: So we intend to hold you for a few days...

Cuthbert: (*Laughing.*) Do you think I won't be found?

Gang: Of course.

Trunks: We'll keep you well hidden.

Morbid: But nice and cosy.

Sludge: In our luxurious little den here.

Cuthbert: That's ridiculous. There's police searching for me even now.

You'll never get the reward. All you'll get is a few years in prison.

Gang: Oh no! Not prison!

Cuthbert: I am from a famous family.

(GANG gather round CUTHBERT as they each respond to his comments.)

Leader: That's why you're here.

Cuthbert: A wealthy family.

Leader and Morbid: That's why you're here.

Cuthbert: My father is famous.

Leader, Morbid, Trunks: That's why you're here.

Cuthbert: And he'll do anything to get me back.

Leader, Morbid, Trunks, Sludge: That's why you're here.

Cuthbert: He'll offer a huge reward.

Leader, Morbid, Trunks, Sludge, Blackeye: That's why you're here.

Cuthbert: And your little scheme will soon be discovered.

All: That's why you're here.

Slipper: How will we be found out? Everyone thinks I am an alien.

Trunks: I'm still not too sure about you Slipper.

(Suddenly there is a fearsome knocking and GANG all begin to shake.)

All: What's that?

Police: Open up. Police! Open up!

All: (*Whispering and staring at the audience.*) Help! Police.

Leader: Stay quiet, they'll go away.

(Total silence, then again the fearsome knocking. The GANG all quiver.)

Cuthbert: *(Softly.)* Gosh, this is exciting.

Morbid: *(Softly.)* It may be for you.

Police: *(Loudly.)* Open up!

Cuthbert: *(Softly.)* Hide me!

Leader: *(Softly.)* What?

Cuthbert: *(Softly.)* Hide me, quickly, then let them in. I have a plan.

Slipper: *(Softly.)* Where? How can we hide you in here?

Cuthbert: *(Softly.)* In this chair. I can hide in the corner.

Leader: *(Softly to the audience.)* Here indeed is a brain box

(CUTHBERT hides as flat as possible in the chair and they cover him with their coats and some odd cloths that are about.)

Leader: Are you safe?

Cuthbert: Fine, just don't sit on me.

(There is another ferocious knocking.)

Police: Open up! Open up or we're coming in!

Leader: *(Shouting.)* We're on our way! *(Softly.)* Morbid, go and open the door please. Now everybody sing.

Blackeye: What shall we sing?

Leader: Sing 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?'

(MORBID goes to open the door the GANG bursts in to 'What shall we do with the drunken sailor?' with exaggerated singing style and suitable actions whilst the LEADER conducts with flowery movements.)

Gang: What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
What shall we do with the drunken sailor?
Early in the morning!

(During the above CUTHBERT's foot is seen and heard tapping vigorously in time to the song until BLACKEYE, who standing near, spots it and kicks the foot back under the covers.)

Hooray and up she rises!
Hooray and up she rises!
Hooray and up she rises!
Early in the morning!

Put him in the longboat till he's sober...

*(MORBID opens the door to CHIEF INSPECTOR GORSE and two
POLICEMEN who burst in to the room.)*

Morbid: *(Speaking very politely over the singing.)* Good evening officer.

Chief Inspector: I'm Chief Inspector Gorse.

Gang: *(Continuing to sing until they come to the end of the verse.)*

Hooray and up she rises!
Early in the morning!

*(At the end of the chorus the LEADER frantically signals for them to stop
but they hold the note.)*

Leader: *(Bellowing.)* Stop!

Chief Inspector: I'm Chief Inspector Gorse of *(Local
force.)* Police. What's all this?

Leader: *(In a put on exaggerated posh voice.)* Practice night for our
singing group. *(To the 'choir'.)* That's not bad fellows but Charles
you were a bit flat at the end.

*(All of the GANG speak in 'posh' voices whilst the police are
present.)*

Slipper: Sorry Edgar, I've had a bit of a cold.

Leader: And Clarence, try not to be quite so loud - you do tend to
dominate.

Blackeye: So sorry Edgar.

Leader: Can we now try that nice chorus from 'Rigoletto'?

Sludge: Is that the one from Act One or Act Two?

Leader: *(Raising his arms ready to conduct.)* The Act Two chorus if you
please. Is everyone ready?

Gang: Yes Edgar.

Chief Inspector: Just a minute what is all this?

Leader: Choir practice officer and it really is awfully inconvenient to be disturbed by this.

Chief Inspector: Who are you?

Gang: Singers!

Chief Inspector: (*To LEADER.*) And who are you?

Leader: Edgar Gilbert and these are my singers.

Gang: (*Almost singing.*) We're The Edgar Gilbert Singers.

Trunks: (*Softly.*) Are we?

Sludge: (*Who is next to him, softly.*) That's what we are today.

Chief Inspector: All very impressive. You won't mind then if we search these premises?

Slipper: Might one enquire why?

Policeman 1: Have you seen the news on television tonight?

Morbid: Yes.

Policeman 2: Then you know about the child that's been kidnapped by a space alien.

Gang: Yes.

Policeman 1: And an alien fitting that description was reported entering these premises.

Gang: (*In a questioning tone.*) An alien?

Chief Inspector: Yes an alien?

Policeman 2: Have you seen him?

Leader: No, we don't get many aliens round here.

Policeman 1: Have none of you seen an alien?

Gang: (*Except TRUNKS.*) No!

Trunks: Yes!

Rest of the Gang: (*Aghast.*) Yes! (*They shake their heads slowly and meaningfully and hold their breath.*)

Chief Inspector: (*Excited.*) Where did you see this alien? (*To the POLICEMEN.*) Listen carefully you two, this information could be vital.

(*The LEADER is standing behind GORSE and the POLICEMEN and gesticulates at the television attempting to signal to TRUNKS.*)

Trunks: (*Eventually grasping the meaning of the signals.*) I saw it on the television.

Gang: *(Letting breath out.)* Oh yes, we saw one on the television.

Chief Inspector: *(Exasperated.)* Never - the- less an alien was seen entering these premises. What have you got to say about that?

Policemen: What have you got to say about that?

Leader: Do any of us look like space aliens?

(CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN inspect the GANG who do their best to remain calm except BLACKEYE who cannot stop shaking.)

Trunks: *(Hissing.)* Keep still!

Blackeye: *(Whispering.)* I can't help it!

Trunks: Move against the wall.

(BLACKEYE does as he is told and TRUNKS moves up close to him and jams him against the wall so that he is rigid. The inspection continues.)

Blackeye: *(Gasping.)* I can't move.

Trunks: *(Softly.)* Good!

Chief Inspector: I must admit that none of you do look like space aliens. But we'll still have a little search of your premises if you don't mind.

Leader: We are only too delighted to be of assistance, aren't we everyone?

Gang: *(With fatuous grins.)* Delighted.

Leader: Whilst you search may we carry on with our rehearsal?

Chief Inspector: If you must.

(The CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN begin their search.)

Leader: Right everyone. I think we'll switch to 'Oh Soldier, Soldier.'

Sludge: That's my favourite.

Leader: *(Preparing to conduct.)* Is everyone ready?

Gang: *(Tuning up variously.)* Meeee..... La..... Meeee..... Me - meeee..... etc.

Trunks: *(In falsetto voice and acting up the part.)*

Oh Soldier, Soldier won't you marry me

With your musket fife and drum?

Sludge: *(In contrasting voice.)*

Oh no sweet maid, I cannot marry you
For I have no boots to put on.

Gang: *(With great gusto.)*

So up she went to her grand father's chest
And got him a pair of the very, very best
And the soldier put them on. *(Ending in style.)*

Trunks: *(As before.)* Oh Soldier, Soldier won't you marry me
With your musket fife and drum?

Sludge: *(As before.)* Oh no sweet maid, I cannot marry you
For I have no coat to put on.

(CUTHBERT's hand emerges from the heap with a coat but BLACKEYE is on the alert and pushes coat and hand out of sight.)

Gang: *(With great gusto.)*

So up she went to her grand father's chest
And got him a coat of the very, very best
And the soldier put it on. *(Ending with a flourish.)*

Trunks: *(As before.)* Oh Soldier, Soldier won't you marry me
With your musket fife and drum?

Sludge: *(As before.)* Oh no sweet maid, I cannot marry you
For I have no belt to put on.

(CUTHBERT's hand emerges from the heap with a belt but BLACKEYE is on the alert again.)

Gang: *(With great gusto.)*

So up she went to her grand father's chest
And got him a belt of the very,.....

Policeman 1: *(Interrupting.)* Sir, what's this? *(He has found SLIPPER'S helmet.)*

Gang: *(Continuing and fading.)* very best

Morbid: *(Continuing fortissimo.)* And the soldier put it on.

Others: Sshhhh.... *(They then hold their breath.)*

Policeman 1: *(Holding the helmet out for all to see.)* Sir, what's this?

Trunks: It's a.... *(A hand is clapped over his mouth by SLIPPER.)*

Slipper: Nothing to get excited about.

Chief Inspector: Of course not, it's only a motorcycle crash helmet.

Policeman 1: I thought it might be an alien's head.

Trunks: That's what it (*SLIPPER again claps a hand over his mouth.*)

Chief Inspector: Don't be silly. How could that be mistaken for anything to do with an alien?

Policeman 1: Sorry sir.

Chief Inspector: We'll be leaving you now then. Thank you for your help.

Leader: A pleasure, Chief Inspector, it has been a pleasure to meet you.

Chief Inspector: Enjoy the rest of your practice.....

Leader: We will.

Chief Inspector: although I must admit I have heard better singing.

Leader: (*Seeming to take offence.*) Please remember, Chief Inspector that you have only heard a practice.

Chief Inspector: Fair enough, well good night gentlemen.

Gang: Good night!

Leader: Right every one, from the beginning of verse three, if you please.

(*CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN leave still looking about as they go.*)

Trunks: (*As before.*) Oh Soldier, Soldier won't you marry me
With your musket fife and drum?

Sludge: (*As before.*) Oh no sweet maid,..... (*He holds the note.*)

Chief Inspector: (*Re - entering.*) You will let us know if you do see any of
These space aliens won't you?

Leader: Certainly.

Sludge:maid.....

Gang: Certainly!

Chief Inspector: Thank you! (*He leaves.*)

Sludge: I cannot marry you

(*Big gasp.*)

For I have no belt to put on.

Gang: (*Again with great gusto.*)

So up she went to her grandfather's chest

(*They start to fade.*)

And got him a belt of the very,.....

(*They pause and there is a moment's silence.*)

Phew!

(SLUDGE collapses in to the arms of the others. The curtains close on the den.)

The Smuglee home.

(A few days later. SALLY SPENDER is ready to interview the SMUGLEE family, CLAIRE, CHIEF INSPECTOR GORSE and PROFESSOR SPYKE.)

(The sound of news music.)

Newsreader: Tonight's headlines.

Alien captive still not found

Further alien sightings

Chancellor in tax scandal

Gorilla seen near Houses of Parliament.

Isle of Wight declares independence.

After three days there has been no clue of the whereabouts of - year old Cuthbert Smuglee who is believed to have been captured by aliens. In addition there have been further alien sightings in the _____ area. Over now to the place where it all began - the home of Sir Giles and Lady Smuglee.

Our reporter Sally Spender is at the scene. What's the latest Sally?

Sally: Sir Giles Smuglee has today increased the reward to half a million pounds. Sir Giles, why have you done this?

Sir Giles: Well, it's simple, we miss our boy.

Mother: It's so quiet without him.

Sally: And do you think the aliens will be content with half a million pounds?

Sir Giles: *(Cross.)* I've already explained that this reward is not for any space aliens, it's for information leading to the return of our dear son.

Sally: And when will you make the payment?

Sir Giles: The moment our dear son is safely home again.

Sally: Also here is Chief Inspector Gorse who is investigating this mysterious case. What do you make of all this Chief Inspector?

Chief Inspector: I hope that the reward will help, we've not had any real clues for two days now.

Sally: What about the further alien sightings?

Chief Inspector: It just shows that we must all be on our guard,

Sally: Are they linked in any way?

Chief Inspector: The appearance is always the same - big feet, bulbous heads – I have an updated computer impression of one here. Everyone should study it carefully. *(He holds up another picture of a ZORON.)*

Sally: They certainly are frightening. They seem to have a rather anonymous character. What do you make of the bulbous head?

Chief Inspector: We're obviously dealing with a highly intelligent group; judging from the size of their heads their brains must be immense.

Sally: And speech; what about speech. has anyone heard them speak? Can they communicate with us?

Chief Inspector: Only one witness has heard any speech; that was the cook for Sir Giles and Lady Smuglee; Claire Constant.

Sally: Claire, how did they speak?

Claire: *(Flustered.)* I was so overcome I could hardly tell but somehow I understood.

Sally: Was it clear speech?

Claire: Clear, but only short words.

Sally: So Chief Inspector, Claire's evidence suggests that these space aliens have learnt English since they arrived. Do you really have no other evidence?

Chief Inspector: This is a very unusual case. In fact we have had to call in expert help. Professor Magnus Spyke, from the Department of Alien Life Forms at the University of Carlisle. He's here at the moment searching for clues.

Sally: Thank you Chief Inspector. Professor, what can you tell us about these aliens?

Professor: *(Throughout he speaks in an exaggerated and eccentric style.)* Well, they're obviously highly intelligent beings.

Sally: What makes you say that?

Professor: They've clearly been here for some time and know their way about.

Sally: And yet they've hardly been noticed.

Professor: They merge. They blend in.

Sally: I'd hardly say that shopping in Tesco's is blending in.

Professor: Yes, that was a bold move on their part but again the cunning of the beings is all too evident.

Sally: Cunning?

Professor: Yes, the alien spotted shopping was in the store concerned when it was crowded. Although different he was noticed by only one person, he made a few purchases and soon left.

Sally: Do you have any message to reassure the public?

Professor: (*Excited, gesticulating.*) Keep calm. Be aware.

Sally: (*Doubtfully.*) I hope that reassures the public. Is there anything else professor?

Professor: (*Secretively.*) Food. (*He seems to check that no space alien is listening.*) Do not feed any aliens if you happen to meet them. Any form of rice should be kept locked away.

Sally: (*Loudly.*) Why is that?

Professor: Shhhh! (*He continues to speak in a secretive manner.*) If they cannot obtain supplies we may be able to starve them into submission.

Sally: (*Catching the mood and speaking more softly.*) Is that your plan?

Professor: It's the first stage. I appeal not only for vigilance but also for the public to be aware of rice. Shops should hide their stocks and secure them.

Sally: So no rice for us for a while.

Professor: Not whilst these aliens are about.

Sally: (*Turning to the INSPECTOR.*) Chief Inspector, about these other sitings?

Chief Inspector: All of a local nature, the aliens seem to be concentrating on this area.

Sally: Why haven't you been able to follow them then?

Chief Inspector: As soon as one is spotted we naturally follow it.

Sally: And then what happens?

Chief Inspector: It simply disappears.

Sally: Before your eyes?

Chief Inspector: Almost, the moment it is out of our view, for even a couple of seconds, it disappears.

Professor: (*Bursting in excitedly.*) Another example of their supreme

intelligence. Let's face it, they've learnt our words, they know what food they want, they can evaporate in seconds. Here is a very sophisticated life form.

Sally: If there's several of them why are they never seen in groups.

Professor: They never need to meet. They are clearly a life form with transmitted communication.

Sally: What does that mean?

Professor: When one of these aliens knows something he transmits the information to others.

Sally: In this modern age is that such an advantage?

Professor: Of course it is, if one of them finds some rice pudding the others know about it at once.

Sally: Thank you professor. One person not considered in all this is Cuthbert's sister Jonquil. Jonquil, how do you think Cuthbert is coping?

Jonquil: He'll be fine. He's always been fascinated by aliens. I often think he's an alien himself.

Sally: And are you missing him?

Jonquil: You could say that.

Sally: That's not a very clear answer.

Jonquil: (*Meaningfully.*) It's very quiet without him.

Sir Giles and Lady Violet: (*Shocked.*) Jonquil!

Lady Violet: Of course she's missing her dear brother. She just wants him back at home.

Jonquil: (*Aside.*) Preferably in about ten year's time.

Lady Violet: They get on so well.

Jonquil: (*Aside.*) When he's away at boarding school. (*Aloud.*) We get on really well most of the time and I do miss him to cheer me up Mummy and Daddy are letting me have a little party soon.

Lady Violet: That's right. And she'll be so glad to have him back.

Jonquil: (*Aside.*) So that I can murder him for causing all this fuss.

Mother: They're always in each other's company.

Sally: So is your daughter putting a brave face on this difficult situation Lady Smuglee?

Lady Violet: Of course she is, she's a brave girl.

Sir Giles: Both of my children are brave. My son is highly intelligent. He'll outwit these aliens. Why he's probably controlling them even now.

Sally: So the Smuglee family are not downhearted. On that hopeful note I

return you to _____ in the studio.

Newsreader: And now the rest of the news.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer today admitted that he had forgotten to fill in his tax return and explained that this was a simple mistake that anyone with a potential tax bill of £200 000 could make. He apologised...

(The curtains close on the Smuglee home.)

The Leader's Den

Leader: Enough, we've heard the important news. Your plan is working master Cuthbert.

Cuthbert: Well done everyone. People believe in the aliens. They think they're all round the area.

Leader: It was lucky for us, Slipper, that you selected this wonderful young man to help our cause.

Morbid and Sludge: Thanks Cuthbert.

Cuthbert: It's a pleasure. But just remember appearances must be brief if they are to be effective. The next part of my plan will be more complicated.

Leader: So listen carefully.

Cuthbert: We need a flashing light.

Trunks: I can fix that up.

Cuthbert: Well done, Trunks, battery operated mind you.

Trunks: It will be.

Cuthbert: And you all need to tidy up.

(They do so with much fuss.)

Cuthbert: Get your tie straight Sludge.

Sludge: Sorry Cuthbert.

Leader: I trust that I meet with your requirements.

Cuthbert: When you've given your shoes a clean.

Leader: Sorry Cuthbert, they are a bit grubby.

(LEADER snaps his fingers, BLACKEYE kneels down and MORBID polishes the LEADER'S shoes on MORBID'S back..)

Cuthbert: And we need lots of white smoke.
Trunks: That's easily arranged.
Cuthbert: We also need some sound effects.
Gang: Sound effects?
Cuthbert: Yes, sound effects.
Morbid: What sort of sound effects?
Cuthbert: A space ship of course.
Others: A space ship?
Leader: Just what are you planning?
Cuthbert: To make you rich. To make you famous.
Leader: Rich and famous.
Others: Rich and famous!
Cuthbert: Yes, just do as I say and you'll be heroes.
Others: We'll be heroes! (*They begin dancing round.*) We'll be heroes!
Blackeye: (*When they have calmed down.*) I always wanted to be a hero.
Cuthbert: You'll have an amazing story to tell.
Others: A story?
Cuthbert: Yes. You'll be in the papers.
Others: Ooooh!
Cuthbert: Cuthbert, you could even be on the television.
Others: Ooooh!
Morbid: We'll be in the History books.
Others: Ooooh!
Sludge: There'll be statues made of us.
Blackeye: And there'll be a film made about us.
Leader: And I shall be the star.
Others: Ooooh, film.
Leader: Tell me one thing Cuthbert. Why are you doing all this?
Cuthbert: Think how famous you'll be and how rich you'll become. If you just gave me back it would all be forgotten in a few days. You'll be famous for saving me and better still, I'll be famous for being the boy who was kidnapped by aliens! But... But... there's one thing you have to first.
Others: What's that?
Cuthbert: Now follow me and I'll tell you. No one ... No one must hear.

(The GANG clusters round, CUTHBERT leads them off and the lights

fade.)

The Smuglee Home

(The sound of loud disco music as JONQUIL and her friends party. They are in high spirits. They finish dancing and flop down.)

Maria: This is great Jonquil.

Henrietta: Lovely party.

Clarissa: But what's it for?

Maria: It can't be for your birthday, that was last week.

Jonquil: No it's for something better than that.

Others: What?

Leonora: I know, your dad's won a big prize on the lottery.

Jonquil: No, he doesn't bother with the lottery.

Maria: He doesn't need to.

Henrietta: What's it for then.

Jonquil: I'm celebrating.

Others: *(Impatiently.)* What?

Jonquil: Keep guessing.

(EVERYONE thinks for a few moments.)

Henrietta: Your Mum's taking you to Harrods and giving you a thousand Pounds to spend on any clothes you fancy.

Jonquil: Keep guessing, you've no idea what the answer is.

(They all think for a moment.)

Maria: You've been told you can have your own puppy.

Clarissa: I know, you're going on a world cruise to lots of exotic places.

Jonquil: Even better than that.

Clarissa: What could be better than that?

Jonquil: Haven't you noticed something different today?

Others: What? What's different?

Jonquil: Has any one spoilt any thing for us?

Others: No.

Jonquil: Has anyone interrupted us?

Others: No.

Jonquil: That's why we're celebrating. My dear brother, Cuthbert has been taken away by the space aliens and it's wonderful! Let's celebrate!

Others: Hurray! No more Cuthbert. No more Cuthbert!

Leonora: You really mean it; he's not coming back!

Jonquil: Well, he's been away a week now and there's been no news of him. The police think that he really has been kidnapped by aliens.

Others: Gosh!

Henrietta: Aren't you lucky!

Clarissa: I wish aliens would come and kidnap my brother. They'd be doing the whole country a service.

Maria: But can you be sure aliens have taken him?

Jonquil: How can I be sure? But as each day passes the signs are more and more hopeful. Cuthbert's taken away!

Others: Cuthbert's taken away!

Jonquil: I'm feeling happy as Cuthbert's taken away.

Henrietta: That's like a song.

Jonquil: So it is! Why don't we sing it?

Others: Together.

Jonquil: Together!

All: (*Laughing.*) Cuthbert's taken away!

Cuthbert's taken away!

We're feeling happy as Cuthbert's taken away!

Maria: Again more!

Jonquil: Cuthbert's up in space!

Others: Cuthbert's up in space!

We're feeling happy as Cuthbert's up in space!

Henrietta: Another verse. More!

Jonquil: He's never coming back!

Others: He's never coming back!

We're feeling happy he's never coming back!

Jonquil: Let's sing it again.

Clarissa: But louder!

Others: Much louder!

All: Cuthbert's taken away! Etc.

(The verses are repeated as they get louder and louder and eventually march out of the room singing at the tops of their voices. The

singing fades as they leave the room. There is a moment of peace and quiet and the SIR GILES, MOTHER, SALLY SPENDER, THE POLICE, INSPECTOR GORSE, CLAIRE and the TELEVISION CREW enter.)

Sally: This really is astonishing Sir Giles.

Sir Giles: I've made up my mind. There's nothing else for it.

Sally: We've got here just in time. The news is just about to begin. Are you ready fellows?

Technician: All's ready Sally.

Sally: Miss Spender to you!

Technician: Sorry Miss Spender. *(He makes a face behind her back.)*

Lady Violet: I do hope your idea will work.

Sir Giles: Well if this doesn't nothing will.

(There is loud News music.)

Sally: Hush, it's starting.

Newsreader: Boy captured by aliens now missing for a week.
Still more alien sitings.
Rice products banned.

After a week of searching and anxiety there has been no sign of the missing boy Cuthbert Smuglee who is believed to have been captured by aliens. The reward for the return of Cuthbert was today increased to one million pounds. Over now to Sally Spender who is at the home of Sir Giles and Lady Smuglee, Cuthbert's parents. One million pounds Sally, that's a lot of money.

Sally: Indeed it is. And here to talk about is Sir Giles and his wife. Sir Giles, why this dramatic increase in the reward?

Sir Giles: A week has passed and we have had no news.

Lady Violet: No news.

Sir Giles: And we thought...

Lady Violet: Yes, we thought...

Sir Giles: That if we increased the reward...

Lady Violet: Increased the reward...

Sir Giles: We might have some new information.

Lady Violet: New information.

Sally: Lady Smuglee, do you agree with your husband?

Sir Giles: She echoes my every word.

Lady Violet: Every word.

Sally: And has there been any news?

Sir Giles: Not a thing.

Lady Violet: Not a thing.

Sally: Inspector Gorse, do you think any thing will come of this increased reward?

Chief Inspector: You never know, a million pounds is a lot of money.

Sally: Have you had any more clues?

Chief Inspector: There's been a lot more sitings but so far we haven't

(Suddenly the room is plunged into darkness there is a sound of struggle and voices heard from the garden. The curtains are drawn back but there is only a little light.)

Technician: There's a blackout, the cameras have stopped working.

(The silhouette of a ZORON figure is seen running across.)

Claire: That's one of them, those space aliens, they're here again.

(There are more sounds of struggle, CUTHBERT'S voice is clear.)

Cuthbert: Save me! Save me! They're trying to take me away!

Zoron voice: Come with us! Come with us!

Cuthbert: No! NO! You shan't take me! Save me!

Sir Giles: Save him!

Lady Violet: Save my precious boy!

(SIR GILES is about to dash into the garden but INSPECTOR GORSE prevents him.)

Chief Inspector: You can't go out there sir, it's too dangerous. We must call up reinforcements. *(He does so.)*

Sir Giles: But that may be too late, They're trying to take him away.

Zoron voice: You have failed. The Zorons cannot be defeated. We shall return and fight again.

Claire: That's it. That's the voice it is them again.

Sir Giles: Too late inspector they've taken him.

(There are more sounds of struggle then there are the sounds of a space ship departing as lights flash and there are clouds of smoke. The lights come back on and JONQUIL and friends enter.)

Jonquil and friends: *(They scream loudly.)* What's going on what's happening?

Sir Giles: Your brother has finally been taken from us by those aliens.

Jonquil: *(Giggling.)* Far away to a distant planet? I hope those aliens have computer games.

Lady Violet: Jonquil, that's a very odd thing to say.

Jonquil: He'll soon be back if they don't have computer games.

Lady Violet: Why?

Jonquil: Because dear Cuthbert will be utterly unbearable. They'll bring him back to stop him grumbling.

Lady Violet: Jonquil! That's an awful thing to say. This is serious. Cuthbert's taken away

Jonquil: *(As her Mother's words sink in.)* Yes. Cuthbert's taken away! *(To her friends, happily.)* Cuthbert's taken away! Cuthbert's taken away!

Friends: Cuthbert's taken away!
We're feeling happy as Cuthbert's taken away!

(JONQUIL and FRIENDS march round the room.)

Jonquil: Cuthbert's up in space!

Lady Violet: *(Frantically.)* Jonquil! Stop it!

Friends: Cuthbert's up in space!
We're feeling happy as Cuthbert's up in space!

Lady Violet: *(Desperately.)* Giles! Stop them! This is dreadful!

Jonquil: He's never coming back!

Friends: He's never coming back!
We're feeling happy he's never coming back!

(JONQUIL and FRIENDS march out of the room still singing.)

Sir Giles: Potter, where have you been?

Potter: Checking the fuses sir. For some reason the main switch had thrown.

Technician: Just as an alien space ship was taking off I've missed my big chance. No one will ever believe this happened.

Sally: I could have been the first person to interview a space alien.

Chief Inspector: (*Looking out to the garden.*) There's people in the garden.

Sir Giles: Who are you what are you doing?

(*CUTHBERT is heard calling.*)

Cuthbert: It's me father! I'm here, safe and sound.

(*JONQUIL and FRIENDS march in to the room still singing.*)

Friends: Cuthbert's taken away!
We're feeling happy as Cuthbert's taken away!

(*CUTHBERT enters.*)

Jonquil: (*Not seeing CUTHBERT.*) Cuthbert's up in space! (*She sees him.*)
Cuthbert!

Girls: *Cuthbert!*

Chief Inspector: I must go and look for clues. (*He goes out in to the garden.*)

Jonquil: (*Furious.*) What are you doing here? You've ruined another party.
Fancy coming back when we were all so happy.

Cuthbert: I've been rescued.

Sir Giles and Lady Violet: Rescued, how?

Jonquil: (*Exasperated.*) What stupid people had to rescue you?

(*The faces of the GANG appear at the window.*)

Gang: We rescued him!

(*CHIEF INSPECTOR, LEADER and GANG enter.*)

Chief Inspector: I found these people in the garden, Sir Giles.

Cuthbert: These kind people rescued me.

Sir Giles: What were you doing here?

Leader: We are from the U.F.O. Agency.

Sir Giles: The U.F.O. Agency? Whatever's that?

Leader: A top-secret government department.

Slipper: So secret.

Morbid: So deadly secret.

Trunks: That no one's ever heard of it.

Blackeye: *(Aside.)* Not even us

Cuthbert: I'd heard of it.

Jonquil: *(Sarcastically.)* You would have.

Leader: Because our work is so secret we had been tracking a U.F.O.

Blackeye: *(Aside.)* That's what we were doing.

Leader: And knew it had come to land in this vicinity so we came to investigate.

Sir Giles: Fortunately in the nick of time.

Leader: Exactly. We had the U.F.O. under surveillance...

Blackeye: *(Aside.)* Whatever that means.

Leader: ...when alien figures appeared with this boy here.

Claire: I saw one.

Chief Inspector: We must have another search in the garden for clues.

(CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN go out to the garden.)

Cuthbert: I couldn't escape because they were holding me so tight.

Lady Violet: Were you hurt?

Cuthbert: Oh, no. They were all very kind to me.

(GANG all nod their heads.)

Sally: What did they look like?

Cuthbert: They had big bulbous heads, big feet and big hands.

(GANG all look at each other.)

Sally: And how did they speak?

Cuthbert: Nearly all of them used short simple words. They couldn't cope with long words.

(GANG silently look offended.)

Leader: I'm sure that's true.

Cuthbert: The leader was much cleverer than the rest.

Leader: That's why he was the leader.

*(GANG nod until they realise what's been said then shake their heads
CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN enter from the garden.)*

Chief Inspector: There's no sign of any thing out there. Not a sign.

Policeman one: No scorch marks.

Policeman two: No prints of alien feet.

Jonquil: I wonder why.

Chief Inspector: We must come back in the morning and investigate more closely.

Sir Giles: Of course.

Leader: But I doubt if you'll find anything.

Chief Inspector: Nevertheless we must have a close inspection and search for clues.

Sir Giles: Naturally. Well good night inspector.

Chief Inspector: Good night, Sir Giles.

(CHIEF INSPECTOR and POLICEMEN leave.)

Leader: These space aliens are obviously very sophisticated.

Gang: Yeah!

Blackeye: What does that mean?

Lady Violet: Who cares what they are like? Our darling Cuthbert is safely home.

Jonquil: Well he's at home, but I'm not sure that he's safe.

Lady Violet: Jonquil!

Sir Giles: And you gentlemen are heroes.

Gang: Heroes! *(They pose briefly in heroic positions.)*

Sir Giles: You'll go down in History.

Gang: History!

Sir Giles: I must give you your reward.

Gang: A reward! *(Chanting.)* We didn't know there was a reward.

Sir Giles: Oh yes, a million pounds.

Cuthbert: You'll be rich and famous!
Sally: You'll be on the television!
Trunks: I've always wanted to be on television.
Leader: We are pleased to accept the reward but because of the secret nature of our work we cannot risk being on television.
Trunks: (*Petulant.*) But I want to be on television.
Blackeye: I'm desperate to be on television. I want to be a star.
Others: Yes. We want to be stars.
Leader: But our work is so secret.
Morbid: We'll never have another chance to be heroes.
Sally: We'll not mention your secret work.
Sir Giles: We'll give you a special presentation.
Sally: And we'll film it for the news.
Blackeye: And I'll be a star.
Leader: Very well, provided our secret work is not mentioned.
Gang: Great.
Leader: And provided we are paid a suitable fee.
Sally: Shall we say another million? This story will sell all round the world. We'll interview Cuthbert and he can tell us more about these aliens.
Cuthbert: I've lots to tell you.
Girls: Oh no!
Jonquil: We'll never hear the last of this.
Lady Violet: Cuthbert, it's very late. It's time you went to bed.
Cuthbert: But I must have a game on my computer. You know I can't sleep unless I've played some computer games.
Sir Giles: (*Firmly.*) You must be exhausted after all you've endured. Up to bed now.

(*LADY VIOLET takes a reluctant CUTHBERT from the room.*)

Jonquil, you and your friends can go to bed now as well.
Jonquil: It's not fair. Just because that little squirt's going to bed why do we have to?
Maria: Can we raid the kitchens and have a bedroom feast?
Sir Giles: Anything.
Girls: Thanks!

(JONQUIL and her FRIENDS leave noisily discussing food.)

Sally: When will you be making the award?

Sir Giles: Would here at eleven o'clock tomorrow suit everyone?

Sally: Very good. We'll be here in good time. Good night see you tomorrow.

(SALLY and TECHNICIANS leave.)

Leader: That's fine. Could we be paid in cash?

Sir Giles: Certainly. And you must have some refreshment. You are welcome to have anything you choose.

Leader: You are very kind but I know that I speak for all when I make a simple request.

Sir Giles: Anything, anything.

Leader: Could we have some tea?

Sir Giles: Certainly. Anything else.

Gang: Choccy biccies.

Claire: I'll go and put the kettle on. *(She leaves.)*

Sir Giles: Now I must say good night to my family. Thank you for saving our son. Take good care of these wonderful people Potter.

Potter: Very good Sir Giles.

Leader: That's a pleasure.

Sir Giles: Well good night.

(SIR GILES leaves shaking hands with the GANG.)

Gang: Good night, see you tomorrow.

Potter: If you'd like to follow me tea and chocolate biscuits are served.

Leader: Thank you.

(POTTER leads the way and with much chatter the GANG and LEADER leave. The last one puts out the lights and the stage is gloomy. The windows at the back are still open. The clock ticks. CUTHBERT, now in zombified state enters, switches on the computer and begins playing his favourite game.)

Cuthbert: I must defeat the Zorons... Catch them when they least expect

it... Defeat them... *(He switches on the computer; the light from the screen illuminates his face. He begins to play again.)* Nothing can stop me now. Here we go. Pe..ow! Boom! One... Pe....ow! Boom! Two... And the Zorons are martialling their forces but they don't know that they face the might of Captain Cuthbert Smuglee. Now here comes a wave in close formation. Captain Smuglee seizes his controls and with a deft semicircular sweep of his deadly devastating fire power... Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom! ... obliterates the first attack.

(CUTHBERT is totally absorbed in his game and does not notice a gentle bleeping sound and lights flashing that are different from before. Suddenly a weird space alien is standing framed by the window. It stays long enough to register with audience before the lights black out.)