

Journey to the Centre of the Earth

a radio play by Steve Walker

A free adaptation of the Jules Verne classic

CHARACTERS

On the Journey:

PROFESSOR OTTO LIDENBROCK
AXEL.....his nephew
ROSEMARIE MACNAB.....an adventuress
HANS BJELKE.....an Icelandic guide

In Hamburg:

GRÄUBEN.....Lidenbrock's ward
MARTHA.....the housekeeper at No. 19 Königstrasse
HEINDRICH.....a friend of AXEL'S
VON STUMPF.....a duellist (death-cry only)
COUNT SAKNUSSEMM.....another duellist
VON KLIMTSTEIN.....a reluctant duellist
HEADMASTER OF JOHANNEUM

Also:

WELSHMEN.....in AXEL'S dream
GIANT.....at the centre of the earth
PEPE GONZALEZ.....a Mexican
ADOLF.....a rude student at the Johanneum of 1875

PLAY IN WITH LAIBACH'S ANTHEM *THE GREAT SEAL*.

SCENE 1 LECTURE HALL, JOHANNAEUM, HAMBURG.

SIGH AND SNORE OF BORED STUDENTS, SHUFFLING ON WOODEN BENCHES WHILE LIDENBROCK LECTURES.

LIDENBROCK: (MECHANICAL AND BORED) We have already seen in my previous lecture that physical energies have frequently acted with great intensity upon all classes of rocks subsequently to their consolidation... (SLAMS DESK WITH RULER AND YELLS TO US AND THEM) ...WAKE UP, YOU DUMMKOPFS!!! I, LIDENBROCK, AM TEACHING YOU THE TRUE NATURE OF THE EARTH UPON WHICH YOU WILL WASTE YOUR STUPID LIVES... (HE SUDDENLY RETURNS TO THE SAME BORED MANNER AS BEFORE) ...and we may next inquire whether the component minerals of the altered rocks usually arrange themselves in planes of stratification, or whether, after metamorphosis, they more commonly take up a different direction... (YAWNS)

AXEL NARRATION.

SCENE 2

FADE LIDENBROCK'S LECTURE UNDER BRIEF SNATCH OF DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES, THEN BRING UP AXEL...

AXEL: (NARRATES) My uncle, Professor Lidenbrock, was a Professor at the Johannaem in Hamburg. He gave courses in mineralogy and was more often than not in a bad temper. This was because he was a great man, but no one thought this except himself. He was extremely modern in his views, argued with everyone brave enough to answer him back, and was always fighting duels.

CHRISTMAS CAROL IN BACKGROUND. GRÄUBEN LAUGHING TICKLISHLY. AXEL MOANS AND WHISPERS SWEET NOTHINGS TO HER UNDER HIS OWN NARRATION.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Five days before the Christmas of 1863 I was sitting in the parlour of the Professor's little house, Number 19 Königstrasse, in the old quarter of Hamburg, canoodling with the Professor's ward Gräuben, seventeen and smelling of roses. It was breakfast-time but she was allowing me to kiss her bare arms as far as the elbows. I was also eating toast and licking the crumbs from the fine hairs on her wrists. (IN PASSION) Gott in Himmel! What a creature I was in those days! - When in came Martha my uncle's housekeeper, and my friend Heindrich.

SCENE 3 THE PARLOUR AT No. 19 KÖNIGSTRASSE.

HEINDRICH AND MARTHA BURSTING IN. CRY OF SURPRISE FROM GRÄUBEN.

MARTHA: Oh, Master Axel! It's terrible! Terrible! He will be killed this time, I know it!

HEINDRICH: Entschuldigungs for the intrusion, old bean. It is your uncle. He is in the botanical gardens. Fighting three duels. The first was commencing when I was leaving him.

GRÄUBEN: Axel, stop him! You must! He'll be killed. (STAMPS HER FOOT AND WEEPS)

AXEL: Me? But he never listens to me.

HEINDRICH: Oh, cummon you fat fool!

AXEL BEING BUSTLED OUT.

AXEL: But my breakfast, I...

HEINDRICH: They had the most dreadful row about Darwinism and your uncle said...

SCENE 4 BOTANICAL GARDENS, HAMBURG.

CLICK OF EPÉE SWORDS.

LIDENBROCK: (LIKE BASIL RATHBONE) Ha! Ha! Ha! So!

VON STUMPF: (A DEATH CRY) Arrrrrrrrhhhhh!!!!!!

HE FALLS DEAD ON THE GRASSY GROUND.

LIDENBROCK: (BRAGGARTLY PLEASED) It's all in the wrist, you know. Quite scientific. Gentlemen, would you mind if I refreshed myself with a sausage before fighting you?

**SAKNUSSEMM,
VON
KLIMTSTEIN:** Very well. Be quick about it.

HEADMASTER: (A DITHERER IN A DITHERY PANIC) Please, Lidenbrock. You've killed Von Stumpf. Isn't that enough for one morning?

LIDENBROCK: (ANGRY, SAUSAGE-EATING) Enough, Headmaster! They said that the world was created at 4 o'clock in the afternoon in the year four thousand and four B.C. There will be less nonsense in a world without them!

HEADMASTER: But...but...you have killed or wounded half the Faculty. I'm teaching all their classes. I'm worn out.

AXEL AND HEINDRICH ARRIVING, PUFFED.

AXEL: Uncle Lidenbrock...please, I...erm...

LIDENBROCK: Axel, my boy! You're just in time. Am I correct in thinking that you have chosen pistols, Saknussem?

SAKNUSSEMM: Pistols it is, Professor.

AXEL: (TERRIFIED OF HIS UNCLE) But you mustn't! NO! YOU CAN'T! What if he kills you? Your research...all wasted. Your book on the classification of trilobites, unfinished!

LIDENBROCK: (GRUFFLY) I fight in the cause of truth.

AXEL: (PANICS, THIS POPS OUT) There is something I must say... I SHALL SAY IT NOW! Before it is too late! - Gräuben and I... we...I love her...we love each other...we want to get married!

LIDENBROCK: (UTTERLY MAD WITH FURY) WHAT!? YOU! MY WORST EVER STUDENT! YOU AND GRÄUBEN! NEVER! I WON'T ALLOW IT!

SAKNUSSEMM: I am waiting, Professor.

LIDENBROCK: (TO SAKNUSSEMM) Can't you see I'm insulting my nephew. I'll deal with you in a minute. (TO AXEL: MORE CALM, MORE VICIOUS) Axel, my boy, Gräuben is a mere child. She has hardly left the house! When she does she will meet real men. Then what will she think of you, eh! It pains me to say it, Axel, but you are a fat dummkopf! If Gräuben doesn't see it now she soon will. Am I right or am I right?

AXEL: (SADLY RESIGNED) Yes, Uncle, I'm sure you're right.

LIDENBROCK: Good boy - here, finish my sausage. Saknussem! Pistols it is!

CLICK OF PISTOLS BEING COCKED.

HEADMASTER: You will each walk twenty paces, turn, and when I am dropping my handkerchief, go bang-bang - alles klar?

SAKNUSSEMM: (A FINAL DEFIANCE) God created the world, 4 P.M. 4004 B.C.

LIDENBROCK: HA! HAAARRRRRRHH!

SCENE 5 AXEL NARRATES WITH DUEL PROGRESSING IN BACKGROUND.

HEADMASTER COUNTING THE PACES. IN DISTANCE THE SHRIEK OF WILD ANIMALS

AXEL: (NARRATES) I ate my uncle's sausage. Over the trees it was feeding time in the zoological gardens. In the business centre of Hamburg, successful businessmen were beginning a new day at their desks. The Fatherland was shaking off its dreams. In our little house in Königstrasse, Gräuben was stripped to the waist, washing herself while her little heart pitter-pattered with anxiety. Would she ever see her beloved bad-tempered uncle again? Meanwhile, Professor Lidenbrock did not know that those twenty paces for his duel were the first of the many paces in his journey to the centre of the earth.

SCENE 6 THE BOTANICAL GARDENS.

A SHOT FOLLOWED BY A CLOSER SHOT. SAKNUSSEMM CRIES AND FALLS.

AXEL: (MOUTH FULL OF SAUSAGE) Good shot, Uncle!

LIDENBROCK: (DELIGHTED) Ha! Ha! Two down, one to go! Cummon, Von Klimtstein, you're next. Let's waste no time about it, man!

VON KLIMTSTEIN: (GONE YELLOW) Actually, Professor, I have been thinking about what you said about evolution, and I think there may be some truth in it, you know...

LIDENBROCK: Good! Good! You must come to dinner, we will discuss. HA!

HEADMASTER: Count Saksussemm is dying, Lidenbrock. He wishes a final word.

LIDENBROCK: Oh, very well. But make it quick. I have work to do.

THEY ALL WALK ACROSS THE GARDENS TO SAKNUSSEMM.

SAKNUSSEMM:(PAINED, COUGHING BLOOD) Lidenbrock...Lidenbrock...are you there?

LIDENBROCK: (IMPATIENT) Ja, ja. I am here. Say your piece.

SAKNUSSEMM:I curse you. The stones and snow of my homeland, Iceland, curse you. My ancestor, the great scientist Arne Saksussemm, he curses you.

LIDENBROCK: Axel, boy, let's go... (ON HIS WAY) ...and leave this fool to choke on his curses.

SAKNUSSEMM:(SHOUTING AFTER THEM) You will be receiving a package! Then you will know!

HEADMASTER: Please, Count Saksussemm, you must be still.

SAKNUSSEMM:(SHOUTING LOUDER) THEN YOU WILL FEEL MY CURSE! LIDENBROCK!

LIDENBROCK! (IN A SLOW FAINT, WEAKLY) God created the world, didn't he Headmaster?

HEADMASTER: (KINDLY) Of course He did. Of course. (BARKS ORDERS TO LOITERING ASSISTANTS) Help me carry the Count to my carriage.

SCENE 7 PARLOUR OF THE HOUSE IN KÖNIGSTRASSE.

AXEL: (NARRATES) It was Christmas Eve when the package arrived. I was helping my darling Gräuben decorate the tree..

CLINK OF DECORATIONS, RASP OF GRÄUBEN'S DRESS AGAINST THE PINENEEDLES.

GRÄUBEN: (LA-LA-ING *SILENT NIGHT* WHILE SHE DECORATES TREE)

SLAM OF DOOR. LIDENBROCK STORMS IN, SWEARING UNDER HIS BREATH.

LIDENBROCK: Gott in Himmel! Schweinhund! He knew nothing! NOTHING! Now he curses me in the name of his infantile Christian God.

GRÄUBEN: Ooooh, another present, Uncle - for me? Let me put it under the tree!

LIDENBROCK: No, it is not for you! And if I see you holding hands with Axel once more I shall shoot you both! (STORMS AWAY AND SLAMS STUDY DOOR)

MARTHA: The parcel is from that nice Count Saknussem who your uncle recently killed.

GRÄUBEN: Oh, poor Uncle Lidenbrock. He will be so upset. A Christmas present from a dead person! (STRICT) Axel, go and comfort him!

AXEL: No fear! He'll shout at me again. I'm developing a tic.

GRÄUBEN: (A GIGGLESOME TEASE) If you go and comfort him I will allow you to kiss me above the elbows.

MARTHA: (SHOCKED) Fräulein Gräuben!

AXEL: (PUSHING HIS LUCK, HOTLY) And on your knees.

MARTHA: GRÄUBEN!!!! AXEL!!!!!!!!!!

GRÄUBEN: (LAUGHING) Not the knees.

AXEL: (LAUGHING WITH HER) Knees!

GRÄUBEN: (POUTING TEASINGLY, ENJOYING THE GAME) Nein.

AXEL: (PLAYING THEIR USUAL GAME) Ja. Ja.

GRÄUBEN: I will let you hold my waist while I put the star on the top of the tree.

AXEL: (SIR GALAHADISHLY) And knees! Then I shall be brave enough to go into the dragon's cave!

GRÄUBEN: Hold my hand tight, Axel!

AXEL: And knees! Please!

MARTHA: Master Axel, leave that child alone!

GRÄUBEN: (LAUGHS TICKLISHLY) Axel! Don't! Be careful! (STRICTLY) Axel!!!! (SHE SHRIEKS AS SHE, AXEL AND THE TREE FALL OVER)

CLATTERSOME NOISE AS THEY ALL FALL. TINKLE OF SMASHING DECORATIONS, HISS OF TINSEL AND PINENEEDLES.

SCENE 8 AXEL'S BEDROOM.

AXEL: (NARRATES) It took us an hour to put the tree back together. Uncle Lidenbrock stayed locked in his study with Count Saksussemm's package. (BRAVELY) But I would not disturb him without a promise from Gräuben that I could kiss her knees! She said she would not allow this until we had been married for several years. We bickered. She went away, tossing her curls in a beautiful huff. But at her bedtime, she came to my room and I was there. I was cataloguing trilobites in my underwear. She lifted her dressing-gown to the knees.

GRÄUBEN: (A CHAMPION TEASE) You may kiss each knee once...and only once!

AXEL: (NARRATES) Oh, joy! How often I was to think of that moment in the perils I was later to endure.

SOUND OF AXEL KISSING KNEES.

AXEL: Pretty knees...I love you, knees...mmmmmmmm...

GRÄUBEN: (VEXED) I SAID ONE KISS EACH!!!!

A KICK. A GROAN FROM AXEL.

SCENE 9 LIDENBROCK'S STUDY.

LIDENBROCK MUTTERING IN CONSTERNATION, TURNING PAGES. DOOR OPENS.

AXEL: Uncle Lidenbrock. Professor. Sir. Uncle Otto. (YELLS) Hoi!

LIDENBROCK: Ah, Axel, my boy. Saksussemm's Christmas present to his murderer. A curse indeed! I can't make sense of it.

AXEL: Book, is it?

LIDENBROCK: (MIND ELSEWHERE) Um? Ja. It is the *Heims Kringla* of Snorro Turleston, the famous twelfth century Icelandic writer.

AXEL: Good translation, is it?

LIDENBROCK: Translation? DUMMKOPF! It is written in his own hand. In Icelandic. A magnificent language, both rich and simple... But this here, this is what is most fascinating. I found it inside. A little piece of parchment with strange writing upon it.

AXEL: Hebrew, is it?

LIDENBROCK: (SCORNS) Hebrew! Pah!

AXEL: What is it then?

LIDENBROCK: (ANGUISHED) I don't know. The characters of the writing are runic, but it makes no sense. I've been at it for hours and it has beaten me.

AXEL: Gräuben is very worried about you. She thinks you're upset.

LIDENBROCK: Why upset?

AXEL: Because you killed Count Saknussem and he has sent you a Christmas present.

LIDENBROCK: Pah! Sentimental women!

AXEL: Could I perhaps be looking at the cryptogram, please?

LIDENBROCK: (HANDS IT OVER WITH A SCORNFUL NOISE) You have not a mind for such a profound puzzle, Axel. Here you are, then! (TO HIMSELF WHILE AXEL STUDIES THE PARCHMENT) Saknussem has indeed cursed me! He's probably been trying to solve that cryptogram all his life. And now so will I... ruin myself, exhaust my brilliant mind to the exclusion of all else, and never, NEVER find the solution.

AXEL: (SMUGLY) It's Latin.

LIDENBROCK: You silly fat boy - I have tried Latin! You think I don't know Latin?!

AXEL: I promise, Uncle - if you regard only the bottom half of each character, read the whole thing upsidedown, backwards, and miss out every other word, I can see Latin words.

LIDENBROCK: Show me!

AXEL: Am I right or am I right?

LIDENBROCK: Ja! JA! Well done, Axel. (ABSTRACTLY, WHILE STUDYING) You are truly worthy of the name Lidenbrock. I shall read in Latin and you translate.

AXEL: (SIGHS, HE IS BACK IN THE CLASSROOM) Ja, natürlich.

LIDENBROCK: In Sneffels Yoculis craterem kem delibat...

AXEL: (CLOSER) Descend into the crater of Sneffells Yokul...

LIDENBROCK: Umbra Scataris Julii intra calendas descende...

AXEL: (CLOSER) Erm...over which the shadow of Scartaris falls...before the kalends...kalends?...of July...

LIDENBROCK: Audas viator, et terrestre centrum attinges.

AXEL: (CLOSER) Bold, audacious traveller, and you will... (INCRECULOUS) ...reach the centre of the earth.

LIDENBROCK: (A SMALL CRY OF DELIGHT FROM HIS DEPTHS) Kod feci. Arne Saknussem.

AXEL: (CLOSER) I have done this. Signed: Arne Saknussemm.

LIDENBROCK: (AWESTRUCK) I have done this! Arne Saknussemm.

AXEL: It's some sort of a joke, surely?

LIDENBROCK: (HIS SOUL RISING IN DELIGHT) We have nearly six months to raise the money. Fare to Iceland, of course. Rope, provisions, instruments, equipment.... it's all beyond the pocket of a poor professor. But we shall do it! WE MUST DO IT!

AXEL: Do what?

LIDENBROCK: The Lidenbrock Expedition, my boy. I've been waiting for something like this all my life! It is my destiny. And yours is to follow.

AXEL: You can't be serious.

LIDENBROCK: (DANCING, SLAPPING HIMSELF ALL OVER) We shall go to Iceland, climb into the crater of the mountain of Sneffels Yokul, and from there we shall journey to the centre of the earth.

AXEL: But what you suggest - it is against all the laws of science!

LIDENBROCK: No it's not.

AXEL: IS TOO!

LIDENBROCK: Nein, is NOT!

AXEL: Bloody is!

LIDENBROCK: The fiery core theory is just that - a theory! Have all these boneheaded scientists who profess this theory been to see! Nein! We shall go and see for ourselves!

AXEL: But it is recognised, is it not, that the temperature underground rises one degree for every 70 feet below surface. Therefore, admitting that the ratio is constant, and the earth's radius being over 4 thousand miles, the temperature at the centre must be over 2 million degrees. Even the hardest rocks cannot withstand such a heat. Everything down there is incandescent gas! And you are proposing to go there! Pah!

LIDENBROCK: (BUBBLING WITH AMUSEMENT) Pah to you, baby donkey! You are afraid that the earth will melt your lovesick sighs, huh? (SLAPPING DOWN HIS RULER, LIKE IN CLASS, HE PACES BETWEEN MIKES) Listen, learn - I will explain... Real scientists, such as my friend Sir Humphry Davy and myself, have conclusively proved that if a temperature of 2 million degrees existed within the globe, then the gases given off by the fiery matter would be more than enough to blow up the earth like a boiler under steam-pressure... (HIS EXPLANATION BURBLES UNDER AXEL'S FOLLOWING NARRATION) ...Fournier has proved that the temperature of interplanetary space steadily decreases, and as the lowest temperature in the ethereal regions is never below 40 or 50 degrees below zero... why, why, why shouldn't the same be true of the internal temperature? PAH! At a certain depth, an impassable limit will be reached...the temperature will rise no higher... IT IS SO! I AM RIGHT! I AM

LIDENBROCK!

AXEL: (NARRATES) I sat in my uncle's reading chair, while he paced the room, a brilliant lecture all for me alone. For a while I was listening, then I was just thinking of Gräuben's pretty knees. I was so tired, dreaming while awake, that I could actually SEE those knees, floating around the room, with my uncle wagging between them in an erudite frenzy. But for all his so-very-clever explanations, and though perhaps he was right in everything he said, I did not lose my common sense: I still believed that the interior of the earth was fiery hot. All night he droned on...

LIDENBROCK: (CONTINUING HIS RANT) ...the terrestrial nucleus therefore, is solid...SOLID! But with cheesy tunnels...

AXEL: (NARRATES) ...until, with the windowpane turned pale blue, the bells of the Saint Petrikerche rattled the surface of our world.

THESE SAME CHRISTMAS BELLS RATTLE OUR RADIOS.

AXEL: (A SENTIMENTAL CHRISTMAS IN HIS HEART AND THROAT) Happy Christmas, Uncle.

LIDENBROCK: (GRUFF) Christmas? I do not keep Christian festivals.

AXEL: Of course, sorry.

SCENE 10 LECTURE HALL, JOHANNAEUM, HAMBURG.

AS BEFORE. LIDENBROCK IS LECTURING. STUDENTS SHUFFLE, SNORE AND YAWN.

LIDENBROCK: My paper 'On the Structure of Large Mineral Masses' first cleared the way towards a better understanding of this difficult subject... (FADE HIM GRADUALLY DURING AXEL'S NEXT SPEECH)

AXEL: (NARRATES) My favourite kind of walk is to wander through Hamburg, stopping to buy pastries at all the pastry shops, then arriving late at the Johannaem to fall asleep in one of my uncle's lectures. The idea of walking to the centre of the earth frightened the scheisse out of me. But when I told Gräuben about it she said:

GRÄUBEN: But you must go! You'll become a famous scientist if you go! The whole world will applaud you! We will be rich. I will have dresses, a carriage, white horses. Oh, Axel - you must go!

AXEL: I am too fat.

GRÄUBEN: If you go, when you return I will let you do anything you like to me.

AXEL: Anything?

GRÄUBEN: Anything!

AXEL: (SADLY SIGHS) Uncle Lidenbrock will never raise the money. Already he has tried to borrow from everyone he hasn't fought a duel with recently. He has raised only 12 marks,

from the Head Waiter at the Cafe Hell in Hermanstrasse. He has put his trilobite collection up for sale but nobody is interested. There are many reasons why it is impossible to go to the centre of the earth, but lack of money prevents everything. (A SUDDEN HOT, ROMATIC TONE) Er... Knees?

GRÄUBEN: (DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED) Not today, Axel.

BRING BACK LIDENBROCK'S LECTURE...

LIDENBROCK: ...Some of the contorted strata are of a coarse mechanical structure alternating with fine-grained crystalline chloritic slates (FADE HIM UNDER AXEL) ...in which case some of the slaty cleavage extends through the coarser and finer beds...

AXEL: (NARRATES) At the end of the winter of 1863-4 everyone in Hamburg was pale and at every chance turned up their faces to the lukewarm sun. Except my uncle. His head was always down, sometimes sad, sometimes biting his furious lips. The kalends of July were getting closer every day, and still there was no money to pay for the Lidenbrock Expedition. I had quite forgotten about the whole blasted thing, until that Friday afternoon in May, when I was awoken during one of my uncle's geology lectures by a commotion...

GRÄUBEN: (BURSTING IN) Uncle Lidenbrock! Uncle Lidenbrock!

LIDENBROCK: (CHALKING ON THE BOARD) ...the cleavage is generally constant over the whole of any area affected... GRÄUBEN! CHILD! CAN'T YOU SEE I AM GIVING A LECTURE?!

LEWD "COR!"S AND WHISTLES FROM STUDENT BODY.

LIDENBROCK: (TO STUDENTS) **SILENCE!** (HUSHED, TO GRÄUBEN) Gräuben, go home this instant and lock yourself in your cupboard!

GRÄUBEN: (IMPLORES) Uncle, I have met this English lady...

ROSEMARIE: (HOITY-TOITY ENGLISH ARISTO) Good afternoon, Professor.

LIDENBROCK: (IMPOLITELY GRUNTS) I will not have women in my lectures. OUT! OUT! (HE CONTINUES TO SHOUT "OUT" DURING GRÄUBEN'S NEXT SPEECH BUT SHE PERSISTS)

GRÄUBEN: ...She was giving a lecture of her own...at my Women's Club... in perfect German...about her most exciting travels in Patagonia ...and I have told her about the JOURNEY... the journey you are wishing to make to you-know-where!

LIDENBROCK: (HORRIFIED) YOU TOLD HER??! BUT IT IS A SECRET! MY ENEMIES WILL...

GRÄUBEN: (UNGENTLE HINTS) She is very interested in the expedition! She is a VERY RICH English lady.

ROSEMARIE: Stinking, I'm afraid.

LIDENBROCK: (AN ABRUPT CHANGE OF MOOD, CHEERFULLY BUSINESSLIKE, TO CLASS) That will be all for today, gentlemen. (WITH ALL HIS BRITTLE CHARM, TO ROSEMARIE) Madam, I am charmed to meet you. Shall we adjourn to the dinosaur room? (YELLS) AXEL!

SCENE 11 DINOSAUR ROOM, JOHANNAEUM, HAMBURG.

CLACK OF DINOSAUR BONES AS LIDENBROCK, AXEL, GRÄUBEN AND ROSEMARIE HURRY IN THROUGH RICKETY GLASS DOOR. STREET NOISES PENETRATE THE ROOM: CARRIAGES, MARCH OF TROOPS.

- LIDENBROCK:** (USUAL VEXED SELF) Please, Madam, be careful with my diplodocus. It is very fragile. (PATRONISING BEYOND BELIEF) Is your husband also visiting Hamburg? I would be honoured to meet him. He took you to Patagonia - how kind of him!
- ROSEMARIE:** My husband died horribly in the Charge of the Light Brigade. I travelled in Patagonia alone.
- LIDENBROCK:** (IN HUMOROUS DISBELIEF) A woman? Alone? Ho-ho. With no one to protect her from those gauchos? Nein.
- ROSEMARIE:** (CLIPPED AND GUSHING) Professor Lidenbrock. I was once a sweet little woman who stayed home arranging flowers and embroidering trite slogans on cushions. But the Crimean War released me from such an existence. I became independently wealthy and embarked upon a life of travel and adventure. Among other things, I have traversed the Andes, climbed the Alps and Caucasus, searched for the source of the Zambesi, lived with Red Indians in New Mexico, and crossed Arabia on an insolent camel. Now, your ward has told me that you need finance for an expedition under the earth. I am fascinated.
- LIDENBROCK:** We propose to journey to the centre of the globe, Madam.
- ROSEMARIE:** Please, don't call me madam. My name is Rosemarie MacNab.
- LIDENBROCK:** Frau MacNab, destiny has sent you!
- ROSEMARIE:** Make a list of all the things we need. The kalends of July, I believe, are an essential part of the calculation. We have ample time, but I abhor dawdling.
- LIDENBROCK:** Ja, ja, ja - but...
- ROSEMARIE:** The steamer *Ellenora* leaves for Reykjavik Monday next. Good day, Gentlemen. I must purchase sturdy boots for myself. Six pairs should do. (ON HER WAY)
- LIDENBROCK:** (CALLING HER BACK) Excuse please, Madam - but there is some misunderstanding here. You surely do not think you are coming with us. Oh, no. You are a woman.
- ROSEMARIE:** Of course I am coming. What would the MacNab Expedition be without MacNab herself?
- LIDENBROCK:** (A TEETH-GRITTED APOPLEXY) MACNAB EXPEDITION!?!
- AXEL:** Calm yourself, Uncle, please!
- GRÄUBEN:** She is only joking, Uncle.
- LIDENBROCK:** If you were a man...I would...I would...
- ROSEMARIE:** (AMUSED) Swords or pistols, Professor?
- LIDENBROCK:** A WOMAN! A WOMAN! GOTT IN HIMMEL! SPRAINED ANKLES AND UNEXPLAINABLE MOOD-SWINGS!

ROSEMARIE: (SLAPPING AXEL'S PAUNCH) And you, young fella-me-lad, are too fat for adventure.

LIDENBROCK: (YELLS DEFIANTLY) UNDER ALL THAT FAT HE IS DECEPTIVELY STRONG.

AXEL: (MEEKLY) I am deceptively strong.

GRÄUBEN: He has hands like a raccoon.

AXEL: A raccoon.

LIDENBROCK: (IN PAINED CALMED FURY, CLEARS HIS THROAT AND ANNOUNCES) Madam, Frau MacNab... as you are having the monies for an expedition and I am not, I therefore reluctantly agree that you should be coming with us.

ROSEMARIE: Good-o!

LIDENBROCK: But I am insisting that from this moment on you will act like a man in all possible examples of behaviour. Also, one essential condition, upon this I will not budge - it MUST, MUST, MUST be 'The Lidenbrock Expedition'.

GRÄUBEN: It's only fair, Rose. My uncle is the most brilliant scientist in his field.

ROSEMARIE: (AFTER A DANGEROUS PAUSE, AIRILY WHILE THINKING) Your diplodocus is the largest I have ever seen, Professor. (LAUGHS) Very well, old chap - 'The Lidenbrock Expedition'.

LAUGHTER AND HANDSHAKES ALL AROUND. WHOOPS FROM AXEL.

AXEL: (SUDDENLY EMOTIONAL AND SCARED, CLOSER) Oh, God help me - we're really going! (FRIGHTENED FAKE LAUGHTER)

SCENE 12 AXEL NARRATION, IN STREETS OF REYKJAVIK AND ON THE ROAD.

ENERGETIC BLAST OF DIDGERIJIG DIDGERIDOO MUSIC.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The boat journey to Iceland was most unpleasant. (BRIEF SOUND OF HEAVING WAVES, AXEL VOMITING IN THE BACKGROUND TO HIS NARRATION) I almost died from the maldemer. My uncle also. (IN DEEP VOMITISH RESENTMENT) But Frau MacNab, she was okay... with her boiled eggs and bacon sandwiches. Pah! (HER SNOOTY LAUGH, WHILE SHOVING FOOD INTO HER GOB) A strapping woman with a large bust, I should have liked her. But I did not like her. I did not desire her - I only desired my little Gräuben, safe and well in lovely Hamburg. (SOUNDS OF THE BLEAK REYKJAVIK STREETS, SEAGULLS) Reykjavik also, was not to my liking. Muddy and bleak, it stank of fishguts, was just two wooden streets and no cake shops. In the distance, growing out of the sea, was the extinct volcano of Sneffels with its great peak called Scataris. I had been in my room (SUDDEN FURY) - on a plank bed, I ask you! - (FURY UTTERLY GONE) for two days, and had ventured outside for the first time in a vain search for cake shops, when my uncle and Frau MacNab found me palely loitering and introduced me to our gigantic Icelandic guide..

LIDENBROCK: (A NEW CHEERY LIDENBROCK) Hans, this baby donkey is my

nephew Axel. - Axel, Hans Bjelke.

HANS: (A LURCH-LIKE GROAN) Góðan daginn. Pvi meir, pvi betra.

AXEL: Same back with knobs on.

ROSEMARIE: Hans speaks no German. But your uncle and I both speak Icelandic with reasonable fluency. I learned on the boat, don't you know, while you were leaning over your buckets. So if you wish to ask anything of Hans, we will translate. Beautiful specimen, isn't he?

HANS: (GROANS)

LIDENBROCK: Hans answers to me! I am the leader! I translate!

HANS: Vinna eins og praell. Taka I sig kjark.

LIDENBROCK: What was that, Hans?

ROSEMARIE: Hans was just saying...

LIDENBROCK: I do not need a woman to tell me what Hans was saying!

AXEL: Ask him if these seagulls make this racket all the time. They've given me a headache. Oh, and cake shops?

HANS: (GROANS MEANINGFULLY)

SEAGULLS LOUDER AND CLOSER, FILLING OUR EARS. FADE THEM AS AXEL NARRATES...

AXEL: (NARRATES) But soon my headache cleared, the seagulls were gone, and we were mounted on mules with our equipment, picking our way around the ragged-rugged coast towards Mount Sneffels. My mule was called Erik, after the King of Denmark. Hans was too big for his mule. He walked alongside, groaning to himself. (WE HEAR THIS) I was frightened of him. I did not like him. Anytime he felt like it, he could kill us all with a single punch. As it was, the great Icelander saved our lives a hundred times each. After five days on muleback, Erik and I were no longer friends. But when we reached the foot of Snaefells and we turned the mules loose, he stayed behind a moment to say goodbye.

HORRIBLE MULISH BRAYING SOUND. THEN MULES TROTting INTO DISTANCE.

AXEL: (NARRATES) When he trotted away after his mule friends, I almost cried. I did not want to go into caves. I wanted to be a mule, and amble back to Reykjavik with my friends. It was the kalends of July.

SCENE 13 IN THE CRATER OF SNEFFELS.

STONY CLAMBERING OF AXEL. HIS BREATHLESS WHEEZES.

LIDENBROCK: Axel! Where have you been, boy?! You can't lag behind when we are underground or you'll get lost!

AXEL: (WHEEZY, SARCASTIC) I was just studying the hardy flora and mineralogical curiosities. Most especially the volcanic tufa and other eruptive phenomena.

LIDENBROCK: So! You still think the earth's core is nothing but lava!
Huh!

AXEL: (DEFIANTLY) Ja! Ja! Unt a 2 million times JA!

ROSEMARIE: I do believe your nephew is losing weight, Professor.

LIDENBROCK: You will desist at all times, Madam, from making personal remarks. (CURSES) Damn these clouds! If they do not disperse, Scataris will not be able to show us the entrance. We will have to come back next year.

AXEL: (GROANS MISERABLY)

AXEL: (NARRATES) Frau MacNab spent this cloudy time performing callisthenics.

ROSEMARIE: (COUNTING WHILE SWINGING) 1, 2, 3, 4...

AXEL: (NARRATES) Her swinging limbs gave me lewd thoughts, while I scratched the surface of the earth with my boot heels, waiting for the sun to escape the clouds.

THE SUNBURST MUSIC FROM THE VERY BEGINNING OF GRIEG'S PIANO CONCERTO...

AXEL: (CRIES IN EXCITEMENT) - And then the sun was in my eyes and I could see nothing but light!!!!!!

LIDENBROCK CRYING IN DELIGHT. ROSEMARIE CALLING "PROFESSOR! PROFESSOR!". HANS MAKING ICELANDIC NOISES.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The sun slipped behind the sharp peak of Scataris and in a moment the crater was all yellow highlights and indigo shadows. One long shadow, like a finger, grew and grew, pointing and pointing, then stopped.

HANS: (CLOSE, YELLS) SKÁL!!!!!!!!!! SKÁL!!!!!!!!!!

LIDENBROCK: It's there! The entrance! Scataris points the way!

HANS: (CALLS) Forut! Forut!

LIDENBROCK: Yes, Hans - quickly, before the finger moves. Schnell! Schnell!

THEY RUN ACROSS THE CRUMBLY ROCK IN THEIR BOOTS. ROSEMARIE ARRIVES FIRST...

LIDENBROCK: (SCRAMBLISHLY ARRIVING, ECHOING BESIDE HER) I say which is the way!!!! (IN SUDDEN EXCITEMENT) Look, here, Frau MacNab - these marks on the stone.....(HE FRANTICALLY RUBS AWAY GRIT)....I thought so! Runic letters. Arne Saknussem. He has signed his name here. 400 years ago he came this way. (CALLS) Axel!

AXEL: (PUFFING UP LATE) Yes, uncle... (SEES THE CHASM, IN CUSTARDLY FRIGHT) ...We are not going down there, are we?

LIDENBROCK: (LAUGHING IN DELIGHT) Of course we are!

ROSEMARIE: (ALL HER EXCITEMENT EXPRESSED IN ONE WORD) Gosh!

SCENE 14 IN THE CHASM.

MUSIC: DESCENDING, FROM BERNARD HERRMANN'S SCORE FOR BENEATH THE 12-MILE REEF.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Our longest rope was 400 feet. The chasm was, it turned out, 14 times this. So we looped the rope over a rock and went down 200 feet at a time. It was most unpleasant. They made me go first, because they were cruel.

A SLIGHT TUMBLE OF STONES.

HANS: (CALLS FROM ABOVE) GIF AKT!

ROSEMARIE: (CALLS FROM ABOVE) HANS SAYS BE CAREFUL!

AXEL: (HIT BY STONES) OWYA! Please stop kicking your grit onto me!

LIDENBROCK: (HIS LAUGHTER FILLING THE CHASM, THEN HE BEGINS SINGING *TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME.*)

AXEL: (NARRATES) I do not believe I had ever heard my uncle more cheerful. But I was not cheerful. Two hundred feet at a time, each ropes-length taking half an hour from ledge to ledge. That made seven hours, plus fourteen quarterhours for rest on the ledges. We started at one o'clock in the afternoon. (WITH MISERABLE EMPHASIS) It was eleven before we reached the bottom. I ate a packet of biscuits and fell into a deep sleep.

DIDGERIDOO MUSIC LOW AND THREATENING. DISCREET GRUNTS AND CRIES FROM HANS AND ROSEMARIE AS THEY MAKE LOVE IN THE DEEP DARK.

AXEL: I awoke hours later not knowing where I was. Something was writhing in the darkness at the bottom of the three-thousand-foot tube we had descended. Far above, a bright point of light, a star twinkling in Heaven. What was writhing? (HE BEGINS A CRY OF FRIGHT - IT GURGLES OUT OF HIM.....)

ROSEMARIE: (ECSTATICALLY) Yes, Hans. Yes! Yes!

AXEL: (SCREAMS IN LONG TERROR A SCREAM WHICH RATTLES THROUGH THE EARTH, ECHOING A MILLION TIMES)

SCENE 15 BOTTOM OF CRATER.

SIZZLE OF BACON IN PAN.

LIDENBROCK: Axel, you fatty speckknödel, have you ever spent a more peaceful night in our little house in Hamburg? Eh? No carts rumbling past, no hawkers screaming about their wares! (BEATS HIS CHEST AND BREATHEs THE HAPPY AIR)

AXEL: I had a most disturbing nightmare.

ROSEMARIE: A bacon sandwich, Herr Lidenbrock? Our last cooked meal.

AXEL: Jawohl. Thankyou. I will. Of course, we will all be cooked like bacon soon, when the lava gets us.

LIDENBROCK: AXEL! I will allow no more such talk! This volcano has not erupted since 1229. And the earth's core is COOL! COOL!

ROSEMARIE: (EXPLORING NEARBY, CALLS) The lava must have forced its way along these tunnels - see how shiny the rock is! Which tunnel do we take, Professor? They are all so enticing!

LIDENBROCK: Look for Saknussem's mark, madam! I will come with my lamp. (GRUFF) Eat your breakfast quickly, Axel - dummkopf!

AXEL: (COMPLAINS, MOUTH FULL) What have I done to be a dummkopf?

SOUND OF LIDENBROCK WINDING UP HIS RUHMKORFF LAMP. ITS ELECTRIC FIZZ.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Our expedition was equipped with two Ruhmkorff electric lamps. Naked flames, of course, could be fatal underground, with so many explosive gases seeping about. The Ruhmkorff lamp's dull filament caused a sunshine of brightness as its light bounced off the shiny walls of the tunnels.

LIDENBROCK: (CALLS) I have found it! Saknussem's mark! Hans, help Axel on with his pack. (VERY EXCITED) CUMMON, will you! Now our real journey begins.

HANS: (GROWLINGLY GRUNTS)

AXEL IS HELPED WITH HIS PACK.

AXEL: (COMPLAINS) I'll never carry this three steps! Never mind to the centre of the earth! It's as big as yours and I'm half your size and not nearly so fit.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The giant was scratching his groin. My face fell into a gloomladen scowl when I caught him doing this. I remembered my nightmare. The thing that writhed.

HANS: (A GROANING LAUGHTER)

AXEL: What's so funny?

HANS: (LAUGHTER FURTHER AWAY)

AXEL: Hey! You! Jolly giant! You can't leave me here!

AXEL: (NARRATES) It was 8.17 A.M. on Monday the 29th of June, 1864. The barometer said sea-level. The temperature was 6 degrees centigrade. I hurried after the others, catching the end of their light down a smooth gallery. We were heading east-south-east into the bowels of the earth.

SCENE 16 THE GREAT GALLERY.

DIDGERIDOO MUSIC FADING INTO THE CRUNCH OF THEIR BOOTS DOWN THE TUNNEL AND THE STEADY TINKLE OF GLASSY CHIMES.

ROSEMARIE: Gosh! Gosh! Gosh!

LIDENBROCK: What is this infernal GOSH???!!!

ROSEMARIE: Professor - it is so gorgeous down here! The deserts of

Arabia do not compare! Nothing compares! These round blisters of glass on the walls...

LIDENBROCK: (BARKS) Quartz! Opaque quartz!

ROSEMARIE: Like the tears of half-forgotten sorrows gone hard and buried underground.

LIDENBROCK: Pah! Women's talk!

ROSEMARIE: (MIFFED IRONY) I'm sorry if this does not appeal to the aesthetic of the Teutonic male.

AXEL: This Teutonic male thinks it is magnificent, Frau MacNab. I can see your reflection a million times.

ROSEMARIE: Thankyou, Axel. I hope you find it pleasing.

LIDENBROCK: (STOPPING, IN SUDDEN PASSION) Yes, Madam, it is beautiful, magnificent - it is the greatest sight I have ever beheld. This moment, right now, is the finest of my life, but my very next step takes me to a finer moment.

ROSEMARIE: Professor! (CONTRITE) I'm sorry - I have been misjudging you. You are as romantic as Schiller, as Goethe!

LIDENBROCK: PAH!

HANS: (GROANS)

SCENE 17 THE SAME, 8 HOURS LATER.

AXEL: (NARRATES) My uncle was so excited that he forgot to stop. No rest for ten hours. Hunger and fatigue had made me incapable of reasoning. Dreams flitted from my eyes and ran ahead up the corridor, into the dark, where diamond-studded walls were waiting to gleam in our approaching lights.

AXEL: (IN TUNNEL, COLLAPSES) I can't go on! I want rest! Cakes! Sandwiches!

ROSEMARIE: Poor thing - he's worn out!

LIDENBROCK: Ja, so. Let us rest here.

AXEL: (GLUGGING WATER)

LIDENBROCK: Axel! Do not drink so much water. We have enough only for five days.

AXEL: Oh, God! We'll die of thirst!

LIDENBROCK: Nein, we shall find an underground stream and replenish our supply. A trickle, a leak, somewhere.

AXEL: We won't! We won't!

LIDENBROCK: (FIDDLING WITH HIS INSTRUMENTS) Write this down into your notebook, Axel. Temperature 15 degrees. Hah! A rise of only 9 degrees since we set off. Depth: 10 thousand feet below sea-level.

AXEL: Impossible!

LIDENBROCK: It is so! Read the instruments for yourself, boy! Am I right or am I right?

AXEL: My eyes are all fuzzy, but yes, it does seem...but it should be...what...81 degrees at this depth!

LIDENBROCK: (CHUCKLES) According to your theory, baby donkey. (QUIETLY) Oh, and Axel.

AXEL: Yes, Uncle?

LIDENBROCK: No matter how tired you become, do not show weakness in front of that woman. You do not wish me to be ashamed of you, do you?

AXEL: No, Uncle. I will try my best. Do we have any cakes left?

SCENE 18 THE WRONG TUNNEL.

FADE UP FARAWAY GREGORIAN CHOIR DURING AXEL'S NARRATION...

AXEL: (NARRATES) June 30th. After two days in the lava gallery, a gentle sloping walk, down and slowly down, we stepped out into a gigantic cavern, full of looping arches of stone...

ROSEMARIE: (ECHOING INTO CAVERN) YOOoooooOOOOO-ooooooooooooo...

AXEL: (NARRATES)...like the religious architecture of a hundred bizarre cathedrals scrunched together, their floors strewn with cherts, quartz and dull emeralds. We searched for a way out all day, then found Saknussem's mark in a side-chapel, and beside it a tunnel like a beaver's hole. We crawled! We crawled!

THEIR UNCOMFORTABLE PROGRESS ON THEIR KNEES.

ROSEMARIE: We shall all get housemaid's knee. (GUFFAWS ANNOYINGLY)

HANS: (GROANS MEANINGFULLY) Hamingjan góða! Läturhægt!

AXEL: He's in a world of his own, isn't he!

HANS: (LAUGHS ICELANDICALLY, SLAPS AXEL'S BACK PLAYFULLY) Hafa hjartao á réttum stao!

AXEL: He's spanking me!

ALL: (LAUGH)

AXEL: (COMPLAINS) What an adventure!

WE FOLLOW THEIR ECHO AWAY INTO SILENCE.

SCENE 19 NEW TUNNEL.

AXEL: (NARRATING) Urinating while on all fours is most unpleasant. But at last we crawled out of that miserable little tunnel and stood straight again. My poor bleeding knees! The new tunnel was of old red sandstone, streaked with marble, reaching upwards as if each streak hoped to reach surface and be made into a Greek warrior. It offered us a choice -

left fork or right fork. Saknussem's mark was nowhere to be seen.

LIDENBROCK: (ANNOUNCES SERGEANT-MAJOR-ISHLY) To the left, quick march!

AXEL: Why not the right? Uncle? UNCLE?

LIDENBROCK: LEFT!!!!

AXEL: (NARRATES) My uncle could not be seen to hesitate in front of Frau MacNab. But it was just a guess, I knew. And our water was running dangerously low. Walking in the Tyrol often I had come across fountains in the village squares. "Wasser ist Leben" was carved into the wood above the fountains. Water is life. For a while we were distracted from our thirst...

LIDENBROCK: Look, Axel - trilobites! Everywhere, trilobites. I, Madam, am the world's foremost authority on trilobites.

ROSEMARIE: I'd be more impressed, Professor, if I knew what a trilobite is...or rather, was.

LIDENBROCK: An ancient creature who inhabited the Devonian seas in vast numbers. Once, Madam, they had the world almost to themselves. Amazing !!!!! - new trilobite species, wherever I look! (A LAUGHTER THAT TURNS INTO TEARS OF NERVOUS EXCITEMENT WHICH HE COVERS BY BEGINNING TO SING TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME.)

THEY WALK AWAY FROM US, LIDENBROCK'S SINGING GETTING FURTHER AWAY.

SCENE 20 INTO THE COAL TUNNEL.

THEIR STEADY TRUDGE. BREATHING HARD.

AXEL: (NARRATES) We had taken the wrong fork. Now the incline was UP. The long marble walls, exhibiting their display of dry dead fossils of saurians and ganoid fishes, gave way to a buried-alive blackness which smelled like an old yard. Coal. It crunched under our steps. Dry coal. Our water almost gone, on the evening of our fifth day, we rested and stared at the coal walls, full of the imprints of ferns. Frau MacNab walked ahead to do her toilet. After a few moments, Hans walked into blackness and followed her.

HANS: (A GRUNT AS HE LEAVES)

AXEL: (COMPLAINS THIRSTILY) I'm thirsty, really thirsty now.

LIDENBROCK: I know, my boy. Hold on. We shall find water soon.

AXEL: (SHYLY) Uncle?

LIDENBROCK: Ja.

AXEL: You have never married.

LIDENBROCK: (ONLY A TOUCH VEXED) Ja, Axel, neither have you.

AXEL: Yes, but soon Gräuben and I... and you are so much older.

LIDENBROCK: (UNUSUAL PERSONAL FRANKNESS) I have never been in love, Axel. Not once. Not ever. I wanted a woman who would be my equal. There is no such thing.

AXEL: But Frau MacNab, she...

LIDENBROCK: She is an Englishwoman.

AXEL: Of course. Entschuldigung.

SOUNDS OF ECSTASY COMING FROM UP THE TUNNEL.

AXEL: What does that sound like to you, Uncle?

LIDENBROCK: (THINKS FOR A BIT, LISTENING MORE) Constipation. She is constipated.

AXEL: I think they are copulating.

LIDENBROCK: (SLAPPING HIM) You filthy-minded little schweinhund!!!!

SCENE 21 THE DEAD END OF THE COAL TUNNEL.

AXEL: (NARRATES) We were far deeper into the earth than man had ever reached before. I slept with coal all around me, coal never to be shattered by a miner's pick, tasting coal dust on my dry tongue...tossing in a deep dream where Gräuben and my friend Heindrich wandered naked along the quays of our native Hamburg..

HEINDRICH: (IN DREAM) Oh, Gräuben, how clever you were to forge that runic document and send those fools to their death in the earth's bowels.

GRÄUBEN: Now we can be together forever, darling Heindrich, wandering naked along the quays of Hamburg. (THEY KISS HOTLY)

AXEL: (IN HIS NIGHTMARE) No! No! Gräuben - you are mine, mine! I shall return.

LAUGHTER OF DREAM FIGURES... FADE AND BRING UP GRITTY SHUFFLING FEET...

AXEL: (NARRATES) When I awoke the others were standing over me, looking grim.

HANS: Sigla milli og baru.

LIDENBROCK: (GRAVELY) Hans has looked ahead, Axel. This tunnel is a dead end. We must go back the way we came.

AXEL: But it's days and days and we've hardly a drop of water left! We'll die.

LIDENBROCK: Courage, lad. Remember, you are a Hamburger.

SCENE 22 THE WAY BACK.

THE DULL GROANING CHANT OF TIBETAN GYUTO MONKS.

AXEL: (NARRATES) We walked back, past the same trilobites we had greeted with such excitement days before. But now we were

dying. Hans showed no emotion. My uncle swore through his thirst... (WE HEAR THIS) ...Frau MacNab was brave. But when she turned to check on me, the straggler, I saw the terror in her eyes. She expected to die.

ROSEMARIE: (DRY-THROATEDLY) Chin up, lad - whatever happens to us, see how beautiful it is here...what an inspiration for the poetic soul, in its pain and struggles, even more than in its tranquility.

LIDENBROCK: (DRY-THROATEDLY SCORNS) Feminine blither!

AXEL: (IN TUNNEL, WEEPS, THROUGH DRY LIPS) I can only think of the beauty of my Gräuben...my pretty Gräuben...splashing in her bathwater, so pretty and wet, knees wet, hair wet... (SOBS)

LIDENBROCK: (DRYLY) Courage, Axel, my boy - bitte, bitte! We must go on or die right here. There is nothing else we can do.

AXEL: (NARRATES) We passed the place where we had chosen the wrong fork, and pressed on with all our remaining strength the other way. A breeze breathed through the tunnel. We smelled it for water. It smelled like the bottom of a parrot's cage when the parrot has been dead and gone for a thousand years. Another ten hours of walking and my legs failed me. I sat down. I gave up. I had decided to die.

AXEL'S SORRY THIRSTY GROANS IN THE TUNNEL.

ROSEMARIE: (DEAD DRY) Poor little cherub - I said, didn't I say, he was not up to this.

LIDENBROCK: (BARKS AT HER) HE IS! HE IS! (THICK WITH EMOTION) Axel, my dearest boy. Please hold on. A little further. COME! COME!

SOUND OF LIDENBROCK PULLING HIM UP. AXEL'S EXHAUSTED DRY GROAN.

ROSEMARIE: It's no use - leave him, he's had enough. Let him die.

LIDENBROCK EASES AXEL BACK TO THE GROUND AGAIN.

LIDENBROCK: I'm sorry, my boy, for everything. (TO HIMSELF) It's all over.

FAINTLY AT FIRST, THE SOUND OF A DISTANT RUSHING AND GURGLING.

AXEL: (NARRATES) It was the only affection my uncle had ever shown me, in all our life together - from the first day I arrived in his house as a little pudgy boy, the first signs of love for me. Then and now, I am profoundly moved by this. As darkness crowded in on my eyes I watched him stroking my hair. I saw Frau MacNab with her hands on his shoulders, her swollen lips in a sad smile. Then the lights went out and I thought I had died. Only a sound remained, a mocking sound in my ears like new-fangled plumbing.

RAISE THE NEW-FANGLED PLUMBING SOUND...

HANS: (SHOUTS WITH SORE THROAT) Vatten! VATTEN!

ROSEMARIE: It is - water! WATER!!!

LIDENBROCK: Go and see! I'll stay with Axel.

HANS AND ROSEMARIE RUNNING DOWN THE TUNNEL.

AXEL: (NARRATES) They took the Ruhmkorff lamps. That's why I was left in the dark. It was an hour before they returned. My uncle stroked my hair while I slept. (MUFFLED CONVERSATION) There was chatter I could not hear. Then I was being carried - perhaps I was in my coffin on my way to a Hamburg churchyard and Gräuben weeping somewhere behind.

LIDENBROCK: (EXCITED) It is in the wall! An underground stream! Trapped in a tunnel parallel to this one. Hans, your pickaxe, man!

HANS IS ALREADY WHACKING THE STONE WITH HIS AXE.

HANS: (A SORE-THROATED ICELANDIC SONG)

LIDENBROCK: (EXCITEDLY) Axel, wake up - there is water...water...

AXEL: (WEAKLY) Wasser ist Leben.

A CRASHING BURST, A CASCADING SQUIRT OF WATER SPLASHES INTO THE TUNNEL. CRIES OF DELIGHT FROM THE EXPLORERS AS THEY EAGERLY SLAKE THEMSELVES.

SCENE 23 THE WATERY TUNNEL... THE STAIRCASE...

AXEL: (NARRATES, CHEERFULLY) Now there was an abundance of water. We filled our flasks, but we did not need to. The hole in the wall caused a stream to flow down our tunnel. We christened the stream the "Hansbach", in honour of our big friend. It followed us on our way, itself seeking out the earth's centre, down and down and down. Our past sufferings were quickly forgotten. Then I remembered that, in all the excitement, Frau MacNab had kissed me. I skipped along, enflamed...

MUSIC: HEINO SINGING GERMAN LOVESONG ROSE-MARIE.
FADE THIS UNDER ROSEMARIE'S NEXT SPEECH...

ROSEMARIE: Stop me if I've told you this - but when I was a gal I once went for a walk around Lake Windermere with Wordsworth, the nature poet. In many ways, Professor, you remind me of him.

LIDENBROCK: (A SOUND OF GRUFF SCORN) I am a scientist. Poets are all idiots. The future belongs to science.

ROSEMARIE: Of course he was very old at the time, but I still expected poetic comments about the sky, hedges and wotnot as we ambled along. Not a sausage. All he did was pick his nose and hammer the indigestion out of his chest. Not a gem passed his lips.

LIDENBROCK: Madam, if you are hinting that you expect me to give you a running commentary of the geological highlights of our journey, you will be disappointed!

ROSEMARIE: (WARNS) Your head, Professor...

A CLUNK AS HE HITS HIS HEAD ON A JUTTY-OUT ROCK.

LIDENBROCK: OW! SCHEISSE!!!!

ROSEMARIE'S GIRLISH DELIGHTED LAUGHTER. FADE THIS, BRING UP BURST OF FARAWAY DIDGERIDOO MUSIC...

AXEL: (NARRATES) On the afternoon of Friday, July 10, I noted down my uncle's calculations. We were 75 miles south-west of Reykjavik, and seven miles underground. A frightening shaft had opened at our feet. So steep! Most unpleasant. But my uncle was delighted. He held Frau MacNab's hands and danced.

LIDENBROCK DANCING AND LAUGHING.

ROSEMARIE: Professor, what has come over you?

LIDENBROCK: (STIFFLY RETURNING TO HIS OLD SELF) A thousand excuse me's, Madam! But now we shall make real progress...and with no great effort. See, how the projections in the rock form a kind of staircase... Alles schön in Ordnung - off we go!

HANS: I húõ og hár.

THEIR SCRAMBLING STEPS AS THEY DESCEND.

AXEL: (NARRATES) When Gräuben and I were children Uncle Lidenbrock took us to the top of the spire of the Saint Petrikirche in Hamburg. I was most wicked in those days. I stole a bun from my darling girl and ran away with it down and down the steps in the spire, around and around. I could not stop. There seemed more and more steps, turning, twisting. Without breath I tripped and ran, stepping on the thick part, then the thin part of the steps, suddenly frightened that the Devil would be at the bottom with his mouth open to eat me. And so on that other day, down and down we went, the Hansbach following, showering upon us, wetting our way. My calves were numb and sore, my clothes loose because I was losing so much weight. For four days we walked down the staircase. Saturday, 18th July, we arrived downstairs at a huge grotto. I searched my pockets for the stale crumbs of cakes. 213 miles south-east of Sneffels. Depth: 48 miles.

AXEL: (IN GROTTA) Uncle?

LIDENBROCK: Ja?

AXEL: 48 miles is, is it not, one hundredth of the earth's radius - no? In 28 days. Therefore, I calculate that if we keep on at this rate, it will take us two thousand days, or five and a half years to reach the centre.

LIDENBROCK: SCHWEINHUND! To bugging Blue Blazes with you and your calculations! You forget, another man has done this. Saknussem. Now I, LIDENBROCK, shall reach the centre of the earth!

AXEL: (NOT INTIMIDATED) And five and a half years back again. If the heat at the earth's core doesn't kill us first.

LIDENBROCK: (CRIES IN RAGE)

AXEL: (NARRATES) My uncle beat me repeatedly about the head with his manometer. Then, in order not to further damage this valuable instrument, he pulled trilobites from his pockets

lamp was damaged. It flickered and went out. No man has ever known such darkness. I was alone, miles underground, blind in the pit of the abyss.

AXEL: (IN TUNNEL, CALMING HIMSELF) No, no... This can't be happening! Wake up, Axel! Wake up - Gräuben is next door, you are asleep in Hamburg... (SOBS AND WHIMPERS)

A RAT-LIKE EEK.

AXEL: (IN TERROR) What's that? Who is it? The ghost of Arne Saknussem, that's what - bitte, bitte, I didn't kill your descendant, my uncle did, not me! NOT MEEEE!!!!!!!!!!

ANOTHER EEK, A CREAK.

AXEL: (SCREAMS EVERLASTINGLY, FOR A GOOD 20 SECONDS)

AXEL IS RUNNING FAST, IN PANIC THROUGH THE DARK CORRIDOR, FALLING AND BUMPING INTO THINGS. HIS PACK RATTLES, ITS PANS AND INSTRUMENTS CLASHING AND BREAKING AS HE FALLS.

AXEL: (NARRATES) I lost my reason and ran from devils inside of me and spirits in the stones, I dashed and fell and bruised myself and ran with blood running down my face and...

AXEL'S NARRATION STOPS SUDDENLY AS AXEL CRASHES INTO A WALL AND FALLS UNCONSCIOUS ONTO THE FLOOR. NO GROANS. JUST SILENCE.

LIDENBROCK: (MILES AWAY, WHISPERS DOWN THE WALLS OF THE LABYRINTH) Axel... Axel...

ROSEMARIE: (MILES AWAY) Axel...Darling boy... Axel...

HANS: (MILES AWAY) Komdu sall...AAAaxelllll!!!!

AXEL STIRS ON THE GROUND.

AXEL: (NARRATES) I had smashed myself into a solid wall. Extremely unpleasant, I promise you. Now I awoke in a darkness that would make any child mad all its life long. I could hear voices.

**LIDENBROCK,
ROSEMARIE,** Axel!! Axel!! Axel!!

HANS:

AXEL: Who is it? Hello...!!!

THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE HAS A DELAY IN IT, LIKE IN A SATELLITE LINK...

LIDENBROCK: "WHO IS IT?" DUMMKOPF! WHO ELSE IS 75 MILES UNDERGROUND?! NAPOLEON III?! (KINDLY) Where are you, my boy?

AXEL: (BURSTING INTO TEARS) I'm lost! In the dark!

LIDENBROCK: Where is your lamp?

AXEL: Gone out! Broken! Where are you?

LIDENBROCK: Courage, lad. I am somewhere else, away from you. The sound is being conducted along the walls of the labrynth. Bitte,

go "La-la-la", so that I might calculate the exact distance between you and us with my chronometer.

AXEL: Jawohl, Uncle. (3 NOTES FROM *TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME*) LA-LA-LA!!!! LA-LA-LA!!!!!! (GOES "LA-LA-LA" TO HIMSELF UNDER HIS BREATH)

PAUSE WHILE LIDENBROCK CALCULATES

LIDENBROCK: 20 seconds, Axel. I'm afraid with sound travelling a 1,020 feet per second, that makes 20,400 feet - four miles.

ROSEMARIE: Poor Axel!

AXEL: (IN ROARING PANIC) FOUR MILES! I'M GOING TO DIE! DIE HERE, ALONE IN THE DARK WITH CACKLING GHOSTS! WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRR!!!!!!!!!!!!

LIDENBROCK: (CALLING THROUGH AXEL'S PITIFUL CRIES) Axel... AXEL!!!! ... Listen, boy, courage! Courage and one day when I am dead and gone, you shall be Professor Lidenbrock.

AXEL: (HALTING SWIFTLY, WITH A SNIFFLE) Yes, Uncle, I am listening...

LIDENBROCK: We are in a huge cavern with hundreds of tunnels leading down into it. There is every reason to suppose that your tunnel will lead here also. Drag yourself, crawl, stagger, however you can, DOWN, DOWN, DOWN, my boy. I love you. Gräuben loves you. Frau MacNab loves you. Hans loves you.

HANS: (A DOUBTFUL GROAN FROM HANS)

LIDENBROCK: On your way, my boy - on your way!

AXEL: (NARRATES) I dragged myself along. Soon the slope was very steep and I went feet first, sliding down. The strange acoustic effect which allowed my uncle to talk to me no longer worked. But for moments I heard snatches of chatter...

LIDENBROCK: Oh, Frau MacNab...Rose, it is so long since I held a strong vital woman in my arms.

ROSEMARIE: Professor, ever since you first looked at me scoldingly I have awaited this moment! This obscure place will be ours forever!

LIDENBROCK: (WITH NINETEENTH-CENTURY STIFFNESS) Darling Madam - I never dared dream of such happiness!

AS ROSEMARIE AND LIDENBROCK EXCHANGE THEIR ROMANTIC NOTHINGS WE HEAR AXEL SCRAMBLING DOWN HIS CHUTE THEN FALLING DOWN THE SHEER CHUTE ...

ROSEMARIE: Hans means nothing to me ... he's just an animal, a big handsome animal ... it's just that, since I stayed in that Watutsi village, I must have a man every day, or I don't feel myself. You understand, Professor ... Otto...

LIDENBROCK: (IN HEAT) I understand ... mmmmmmmmm ...

ROSEMARIE: (COMING OUT OF KISS) You're not a bit like Wordsworth, really you're not ...

LIDENBROCK: (OVER THE SOUND OF THE WAVES AND MUSIC) May I introduce you, dear boy, to the Lidenbroock Sea. I, LIDENBROCK, have discovered it - who will dispute that I should name it after myself?

AXEL: Not I, uncle, not I!

AXEL: (NARRATES) Level water stretched away out of sight - an underground sea! Or an ocean? And here, we, jolly explorers, like two Columbuses, standing on a beach strewn with strange shells. Holding one to my throbbing ear I heard the cries of monsters ...

HISSES AND CRIES OF MONSTERS ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) Above us, a vault - or sky - composed of huge clouds, floating away from us like sailing ships. And everywhere a brightness, caused by an electrical phenomenon - it was a light that shone from no distant source, but broke out from the air itself, a continuous cosmic event. A sunless sea, indeed, but covered with the clean brightness of a saint's halo. My astonishment revived my battered flesh.

AXEL: No more tunnels. Air! Light! - Mushrooms!?

LIDENBROCK: Ja, mushrooms. Come and see ... HaHA!!! Now, baby donkey, aren't you glad you came?

THEY RUN ACROSS THE SAND AND PEBBLES.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Beside the shore was a vast forest of giant mushrooms, as tall as pinetrees.

LIDENBROCK: (SLAPPING A MUSHROOM STALK) Magnificent, no?

AXEL: Splendiferous! Never has a botanist beheld such a feast for the eyes!

LIDENBROCK: And for the belly! Taste! EAT! I recognise the species - quite safe!

THEY TEAR OFF MUSHROOM STEAKS AND EAT, LAUGHING AND SLAPPING EACH OTHER IN GLEE. MEANWHILE, WE HEAR A SNUFFLING, A GROWLING IN THE FOREST.

AXEL: Best mushrooms I ever tasted! The flavour fills my very soul! (SUDDENLY WORRIED) Uncle Otto ... do you ...

LIDENBROCK: Ja, there is something in the forest, snuffling among the mushrooms.

AXEL: It's not a French chef, is it?

LIDENBROCK: I do not think so.

A SNUFFLING SQUEAL. A CRASH AND A BREAK OF GIANT MUSHROOMS AS THE HUGE PIG-DOG-GLYPTODONISH CREATURE GALLOPS OUR WAY.

AXEL: It's coming, fast! Let's go ...

LIDENBROCK: Nein, we must wait and see what it is ...

A HUGE ANGRY SQUEAL.

LIDENBROCK: Well, perhaps you're right.

THEY RUN AWAY ACROSS THE PEBBLES. WE STAY WITH THE CREATURE. IT SNORTS, STAMPS AND SQUEALS. MUSIC: BERNARD HERRMANN'S THE DEATH HUNT FROM ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Hans had found a large petrified mushroom lying on the shore, its head 15 feet in diameter. It floated most satisfactorily. By turning it upside-down its stalk became into a mast, its head became a coracle. Meanwhile, a huge pig-like creature, a glyptodon, twice the size of the biggest elephant was charging across the shore towards us. We put to sea in a mushroom, we did, we put to sea in a mushroom, leaving the creature pawing the earth and threatening us with its many horns. With a blanket for a sail, the fair breeze caught us and took us across the Lidenbrock Sea, with the creature watching us until we were a speck to it and it to us. In all this time, everyone of us was too astonished to speak a word.

SCENE 26 ON THE LIDENBROCK SEA IN A MUSHROOM

SEA BREEZE. LAP OF WAVES. ROSEMARIE SOFTLY SINGS MY BONNIE LIES OVER THE OCEAN. LIDENBROCK TINKERS WITH HIS INSTRUMENTS.

LIDENBROCK: Axel, please take down my calculations. August 13th. Horizontally, we are 875 miles from our starting point in Iceland. Our depth: 88 miles.

AXEL: Uncle, this is most unpleasant for me - but I must apologise. Obviously, I was wrong to believe in the concept of a molten core.

LIDENBROCK: Erh, science is full of mistakes. But look, what do you make of the compass?

AXEL: It is pointing straight up? But ... AH HA! This must mean that the magnetic pole is somewhere above us - UP THERE!

LIDENBROCK: (PROUDLY) Well said, my worst student.

HANS: (EXCITED) Skál, Professor ... Hugsau þér bara!

FLIPFLOP OF A LARGE FISH FLOPPING ONTO MUSHROOM DECK.

ROSEMARIE: Hans has caught a fish!

HANS: (LAUGHS) Hver fjandinn!

AXEL: Some kind of sturgeon!

LIDENBROCK: Nein, nein - but it certainly belongs to the family that became sturgeon. This fish has been extinct in the upper oceans since Jurassic times. Observe - it has no eyes.

ROSEMARIE: (HOPEFULLY) We couldn't eat it, could we?

HANS: Pokk! Pokk! Yum-yum!!!!

SCENE 27 FISH SUPPER AT SEA ... MONSTERS

AXEL: (NARRATES) There was a steady Northwest wind. Our unusual craft sailed fast and straight. Coast: 75 miles to leeward. Nothing on horizon. Weather fine. Hans was an excellent fisherman - and cook! We sampled all manner of impossible fish which no man had eaten before. For the first time in our journey I was content, comfortable. But one thought crept in to disturb me ...

AXEL: (WHILE EATING FISH) Uncle ...

LIDENBROCK: (CHEWING) Ja, baby donkey.

AXEL: We have seen a pig the size of Hamburg Town Hall.

LIDENBROCK: It was a glyptodon, not a pig.

AXEL: Ja, ja - so. We are also consuming long-extinct fishes.

LIDENBROCK: We could not be consuming them if they were extinct - Hans, have you another of those little blue ones?

HANS: Ja. (TOSSES IT OVER)

LIDENBROCK: Danke.

AXEL: What I am saying is ... if we have seen these creatures, perhaps all the bones in our dinosaur room back at the Johannaem are down here, walking around inside their flesh and skin, alive.

LIDENBROCK: (SCORNS) Ya, unt giants unt fairies, and Goethe still writing his poetry. Rose, do you hear the boy! Haha!

ROSEMARIE: (SIGHS ROMANTICALLY) The water looks so inviting ... so perfect in its remote languid beauty ... a beauty that has brought no tear to human eye ... (LAUNCHES INTO KEATS) "O YE ... who hast thy eyeballs vexed and tired, Feast them upon the wideness of the Sea ..."

LIDENBROCK: (COMPLAINS UNDER HER POETRY, TO AXEL) Ach! You have set her going again! (A LOATHING SCORN) Poetry! Pah!

AXEL: (NARRATES) We had eaten a great many fishes and Hans, having gutted them for us, had thrown the guts overboard. This, unfortunately, acted as bait for other creatures who ascended from the depths of the Lidenbrock Sea. We awoke from a snooze during the endless light to see a huge black shape approaching us.

SOUND OF A HUGE THING MOVING THROUGH WATER.

ROSEMARIE: It's a ship without sails! A ship! Yooooooooooooo!!!!

AXEL: (HIS USUAL TERROR) What is it?

HANS: I vandraeoum! (YELLS DEFIANTLY) SKRATTEUM HAFI PIG!!!!

LIDENBROCK: It's like nothing I've ever heard of, like a huge basking shark ...

THEY ALL SCREAM AND CRY. HUGE SPLASH AS IT SKIMS BY THEM.

AXEL: That was close!

ROSEMARIE: Good job this mushroom is so seaworthy! (A QUICK CRY OF SHOCK) It's coming back.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The creature was heading straight at us, its great mouth open, sucking in the sea. Hans stood with the pickaxe ready in his hand. My uncle fetched the pistols from his pack and we steadied ourselves on the mast ... My uncle wore the sour grin he had for stepping out in a duel. But had he ever had such an opponent!

A PISTOL SHOT.

LIDENBROCK: Not yet, Axel - wait till it is closer!

AXEL: Entschuldigung.

AXEL: (NARRATES) But before it reached us a dozen huge smiling heads, like the heads of bald scaly dogs, popped out of the sea between our mushroom boat and the creature.

AXEL: (YELPING)

ROSEMARIE: Oh, such pretty faces!

LIDENBROCK: (DELIGHTED) Plesiosauruses! A whole regiment! WUNDERBAR!

ROSEMARIE: Like the Loch Ness Monster! What a wheeze! Splendiferous! Byronic! Do cease that yelping, Axel - you'll frighten them away!

HISS AND DINOSAURIC CRIES RAISING THEIR STANDARD FOR BATTLE. THEIR SPLASHING IN THE WATER. MUSIC: THE OCTOPUS FROM HERRMANN'S BENEATH THE 12 MILE REEF.

LIDENBROCK: They're going to attack that basking shark creature. Hans, we must paddle away or we'll be swamped! We are like a toy boat caught in the middle of the battle of Trafalgar!!!!

CRY AND HUGE SPLASH OF BATTLE IN BACKGROUND.

AXEL: (NARRATES) We all four paddled with our hands. Most unpleasant because I was sure some other monster was going to bite off the fingers with which I caressed Gräuben's ivory knees. All the time the breeze was blowing us back towards the battle, where the long necks of the plesiosauruses flicked down their snapping heads onto the basking shark creature. It rolled and rolled in the water, strangling its enemies with long tentacles. A saving breeze collected us and took us away. I was shivering with fright. Frau MacNab pressed my head against her chest ...

ROSEMARIE: There, there, brave boy ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) ... I kept pulling it away to watch the end of the battle. More basking shark creatures were sailing up. Would they be in time to save their kinsman? The air was warm and smelled of a butcher's shop. For miles around the seawater was pink with the blood of the combatants ...

FARAWAY SINGLE CRIES OF THE VICTORS. DEATHRATTLE OF THE LOSER. A KIND OF REPTILIAN CRY THAT SOUNDS LIKE LAUGHTER ...

SCENE 28 AT SEA ... THE WATERFALL ...

HANS HUMMINGLY SINGS AN OLD ICELANDIC SEAFARING TUNE ...
CONTINUING THROUGH THE NARRATION ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) Thursday, 20th August. Wind Nor-nor-east, variable. Temperature high. Speed about 9 knots. All my troubles had returned to me and my mind was coming off its hinges. I felt sure that in the unlikely event I ever returned to the surface of our world I would end my days in that ivy-covered madhouse on the Lübeck road. There I would be, beckoning passers-by to the railings to tell them of my journey to the centre of the earth. But my uncle and Frau MacNab, our dearest Rose, they sat in the mushroom playing footsie in bare feet. If they loved each other, I said to myself, I will be safe, always and always.

A GROWING SOUND OF RUSHING WATER.

HANS: (BREAKS OFF HIS SONG, POINTING TO HORIZON, WORRIED) I klipu! Versna stoougt! Ur oskunni I eldinn!

AXEL: (DISTRUGHT) What is it now? I can't stand anything else! I want to go home!

LIDENBROCK: (IN BLANK FRIGHT) Oh! ... I had expected the sea to end in another shore.

ROSEMARIE: Doesn't it?

LIDENBROCK: I do not think so, no.

AXEL: (NARRATES) When Hans shook us all by the hands, as if saying goodbye, I knew this was IT! I fell on my knees and prayed.

AXEL: O Heavenly Father, I apologise for all my lewd thoughts and actions, about women and cakes ... and the things I have done to myself privately. Today my soul shall flee through rock and be at your side in Heaven.

LIDENBROCK: (DURING AXEL'S PRAYERS ABOVE) STOP PRAYING! HALT THIS PRAYING! THERE IS NO GOD! NO GOD!

MEANWHILE, ROSEMARIE STARTS SINGING TO BE A PILGRIM. THE
ROAR OF THE WATERFALL GETS CLOSER, THEN DEAFENS US.

LIDENBROCK: STOP THIS RELIGIOSITY! I AM A SCIENTIST! NATURE DOES THIS TO US, NOT GODS! DUMMKOPFS! AM I RIGHT OR AM I RIGHT?

THEIR CRY AS THEY FALL OFF THE EDGE OF THE SEA. A MAELSTROM
PLAYS AROUND THEM.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The Lidenbrock Sea ended in a waterfall, a huge slide of water, spinning and splashing towards the centre of the earth. I knew this was the end of us ... As I watched my uncle and Rose gripped together in a final embrace, so passionate and full of lebensfunke, I dug my nails into the mushroom and remembered my uncle's vision of the future of mankind, a future of which I would not see one more day ...

LIDENBROCK: (SPEAKING BACK IN HIS STUDY IN HAMBURG, BUT SPEECHIFYING

OVER THE DIN OF THE TORRENT) Oh yes, baby donkey, science will transform the world with its miracles. Men will cross the oceans in flying machines. And to the stars themselves, why not! And there will be a cure to every disease! And you will not need to go to Vienna to see the opera - - you will be able to see it in a travelling-light-machine in your own house. And such weapons of destruction the armies of the fatherland shall have at its disposal. We shall know everything that can be known, do everything we can imagine doing. Oh, great times ahead, of which we will see only a very, very little ...

THE WATERSLIDE CONTINUES. MORE SCREAMS AND CRIES ...
LIDENBROCK SINGS DEUTSCHLAND ÜBER ALLES. A FINAL MURDEROUS CRASH ... THEN CUT TORRENT, LEAVE ONLY A PLINKY DRIPPING.

SCENE 29 CENTRE OF THE EARTH LAND.

GENTLE LAP OF WAVES. HULA-HULA MUSIC.

AXEL: Where are we?

ROSEMARIE: Paradise. The Garden of Eden.

LIDENBROCK: (AWESTRUCK) Ja. Look, the sea, it is above us now ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) The sea curved from the pools at our feet until it sparkled far above our heads. It was like being wrapped in a wave of the blue Aegean, a wave which never reached for shore. Flitting shadows crossed this sea that was also the sky - sea-monsters swimming upsidedown. We had fallen into a land of turquoise grottoes and golden sand, cliffs full of caves all around us, and at the foot of the caves, huge bones among the palmtrees.

THEY PICK THEIR WAY THROUGH BRITTLE BONES.

LIDENBROCK: (EXCITED) Look, Rose! Look what I have found - a human skull!

ROSE: (NEARBY) Yes, there's some more over here. Big ones.

AXEL: Uncle, I hate to bring this up at this most exciting moment. But how are we going to return home?

LIDENBROCK: Ach, we will find a way! (IN TOTAL AMAZEMENT) AXEL, LOOK at the size of this skeleton! An human skeleton! SEE! Why, when this personage was alive, he must have stood 12 feet tall!

AXEL: That's big, I do admit. (TO HIMSELF) I wonder what Gräuben is doing right this minute!

LIDENBROCK: (LAUGHS) Can you imagine what they will say in Germany when I write of this! They will never believe! They will burn me at the stake!

ROSEMARIE: (TAPPING A SKULL, BREAKING OFF FLAKES OF BONE) Otto, if you'll excuse an amateur's observation - all these skulls, they've had their heads caved in. I saw something similar in the Burmese jungles ...

LIDENBROCK: (EXAMINING ONE, TAPPING IT) Ja, ja - you are right,

Liebling. A ritual killing perhaps ... see how they all have the same hole in the temple. Fascinating. I wonder if ...

AXEL: I want to go home!

HANS: (TROTting UP, FOR THE FIRST TIME A SHADE PERTURBED) Eurm, ur oskunni I eldinn! Nauouleg undankoma! (BEATS HIS CHEST, MAKES A TARZAN SOUND)

LIDENBROCK: Where, Hans, where?

HANS AND LIDENBROCK RUN OFF.

AXEL: What is it, Rose? What's he found?

ROSEMARIE: Human footprints. Gigantic human footprints.

AXEL: NO! I REFUSE TO BELIEVE IT! THIS HAS ALL GONE TOO FAR!!!!!!!

ROSEMARIE: But if they have dinosaurs and other ancient creatures down here, why not people? Don't be such a scaredycat, Axel - perhaps they'll be friendly.

THEY WALK AFTER THE OTHERS.

AXEL: (AS THEY GO) They'll eat us, you know that, don't you?

SCENE 30 FURTHER ALONG THE BEACH ... GIANT SCENE ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) Rose and myself had a most pleasant walk along the beach, hopping through the rockpools. We held hands and I had tears in my eyes. I was remembering meine Mutter. Often she had taken me for walks beside the sea at Cuxhaven, even when she was very ill. I put my arms around Frau MacNab, Rose, and held her tightly.

ROSEMARIE: (STRUGGLING IN FRIGHT) Axel - Axel, let go - look! The mushroom boat, it's gone! And the Professor ... and Hans ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) We could see a long way up the beach ... but nothing and no one was there. No footprints, either. But palmleaves were lying here and there. Perhaps the footprints had been rubbed away with one of those.

THEY RUN ALONG THE BEACH.

ROSEMARIE,
AXEL: Uncle Otto! Professor! OTTO!!!! Hans! Hans! Uncle Otto!

AXEL: (NARRATES) And then he came, running fast across the sand from the cliffs - a huge man, 12 feet tall, a prophet's black beard, naked and hairy.

SOUND OF THE CHASE. THE GIANT'S YELLS. AXEL AND ROSEMARIE YELP. THE GIANT'S SATISFIED LAUGH AS HE CATCHES ROSEMARIE.

ROSEMARIE: Run, Axel, run - he's got me! Run, boy!

AXEL: (NARRATES) I climbed a palm tree, up it like a monkey I

was, as far as the coconuts, too scared to find any problems in such an exercise. Along came the giant, holding Rosemarie limply in one hand, sniffing at her as he looked about for me.

AXEL SNEEZES UP HIS PALMTREE.

AXEL: (NARRATES) I hadn't sneezed since I arrived in Reykjavik. Why just then at the worst possible moment? Now he was under the palmtree ... smiling up at me with his broken teeth.

GIANT: (REASONABLY, A VOICE AS DEEP AS THE EARTH, IN GIANTS' LANGUAGE) Hoonar ... snayyyyy. Par groonla meeishy-meeishy - gona la neme, hata CHO! Hoonar ... ma ... coulatnasta ... huh? Wha-wha? (LAUGHS)

AXEL: Go away! Leave me alone! I'm a geology student!

GIANT: (STILL REASONABLE) Bala, whoo, gona la neme - HOONAR! Hoonar? (SIGHS) Ooor, groolnasta, huh? Snayyyyy! HOONAR!

AXEL: (NARRATES) My mind was all confusion. I felt like a suicide being talked down from a ledge. How kind his face was. How gently he held Rosemarie, stroking her abdomen with his little finger. But suddenly, as I knew he would, he lost his patience.

GIANT: (LOSING PATIENCE) HOONAR! PAHLKNA! BAUMINGLA! CHAY!
BOOLAKS!!!!!!!!!!

AS HE SHOUTS THE GIANT SHAKES THE PALMTREE. SOUND OF COCONUTS DROPPING TO GROUND, THEN AXEL WITH A CRY ...

SCENE 31 IN THE CAVE AT THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH

A WHISTLING WIND IN A HUGE HOLLOW CAVE. SINISTER SHRIEKS, NEAR AND FAR.

LIDENBROCK: (CALLS) Axel! AXEL!!!!!!!!!!

AS AXEL DESCRIBES THE CAVE WE HEAR THE ACTIONS IN THE BACKGROUND ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) I was in Hamburg, in a cakeshop, and had eaten all but one cake ... I was just about to bite into it ... when I awoke with a thumping headache into a reality far less real than my dream. I was flying, weightlessly in a cave. Frau MacNab was nearby, reaching out to me. She caught my hand, then we rolled together, ours legs entwined, most sexily. We flew together, like angels.

LIDENBROCK: Axel! Rose! OVER HERE!

AXEL: (NARRATES) And there was my uncle, weightless, Hans holding him by the legs, waving at us, in a floating mushroom - our mushroom boat! A vast grotto, sand fizzing at its many entrances, and floating in there with us, tamely looking our way, were brontosauruses, iguanadons, brachiosaurs, a pachyrhinosaurus, triceratops, and a hundred smaller feathered lizards who clucked like chickens ...

THE TAME SOUNDS OF CLUCKING DINOSAURS, ODD SUDDEN TERRIFYING

CRIES.

ROSEMARIE: Kick with your feet! Flap your arms! Cummon, Axel!

AXEL: I'm flapping! Flapping! LOOK UNCLE, I'M FLYING!

LIDENBROCK: SLOW DOWN, DUMMKOPF! OR WE'LL NEVER CATCH YOU!

SLAP AND CRASH OF ROSEMARIE AND AXEL BEING CAUGHT IN MID-FLIGHT AND HAULED DOWN INTO THE MUSHROOM. STONES CLACKING TOGETHER.

LIDENBROCK: Quickly - fill your pockets with stones to weigh you down!

AXEL: What is this place?

LIDENBROCK: Axel, my dear boy, we have arrived! THIS cavern is the centre of the Earth. I was a fool not to realise before - obviously, the centre of the planet will be weightless - the effect of gravity pulling equally in all directions causes weightlessness! HA! HA! WE'VE DONE IT! WE'VE ARRIVED AT THE LITTLE HOLLOW SEED AT THE CENTRE OF THE ANISEED BALL! Unfortunately, our giant friends use this as a kind of larder ...

AXEL: Fresh dinosaur steaks, eh?

LIDENBROCK: Jawohl. And they have put us here for the same reason I suspect.

HANS: Setya I sig kyark!

LIDENBROCK: Ja, Hans. I see them. Our giant friend has brought along his friends to see us. See ...

MURMURING CHUCKLE OF GIANTS.

AXEL: (NARRATES) The giants released lassoes into the weightless grotto. They floated towards us ... their lunch!

ROSEMARIE: (STIFFUPPERLIPPED) In New Guinea back in '59 I saw an Anglican bishop eaten alive. It's not a death I care to suffer, Otto. Do we still have the pistols?

LIDENBROCK: Ja. In my pack, strapped to the mushroom stalk there. Mein Gott, has there ever been such a brave woman! Rose, I love you! You are my equal in every way!

ROSEMARIE: I love you too, Otto. Now, let's get on with it! A death both poetic and practical.

AXEL: (IN A GROWING DITHERING PANIC) Entschuldigung, bitte! Are you seriously saying that, after all the fiendish torments we have been through, we are going to shoot ourselves!?!?!??
???

LIDENBROCK: (COCKING A PISTOL, SAYS SOFTLY) This is the greatest moment of triumph we will ever know, Axel. We have reached our objective, the centre of the earth! After this, what will the rest of our lives be - too dull to endure! (CHEERFULLY) Alles in Ordnung - who wants to go first?

AXEL: HELP! HELP! HELP!

AXEL: (NARRATES) My uncle was mad! He was going to kill me! I screamed to the giants to help me!

AXEL: (YELLS IN PANIC) Gräuben will never forgive you!

LIDENBROCK: (CALLS) Auf wiedersehen, Axel, dearest boy! I am going to shoot you now!

AXEL COLLIDES WITH A CHICKEN-DINOSAUR - A HUMAN OOF AND A CHICKENISH CLUCK. LIDENBROCK FIRES, ONCE, TWICE ... A MASSIVE EXPLOSION. CLUCK OF DYING CHICKENS. HOWL OF SPOOKED DINOSAURS.

AXEL: (NARRATES) I collided with one of those giant-chicken-dinosaurs at just the right moment ... Its vicious peck knocked me out of the line of fire. My uncle's bullet hit his pack, and ignited the box of explosives he had carried all the way to the earth's core. The explosion cracked the floating chamber ... the air was sucked away, light was shattered like a mirror, and a terrifying rumble was the latest fright to assail us.

THE RUMBLE AND BEAT OF THE EARTH'S HEART. CRACKS AS THE CHAMBER BREAKS UP. THEN BUBBLE OF LAVA BECOMING EVER MORE INTENSE ...

AXEL: (NARRATES) The sides of the chamber collapsed and lava broke through. It was so hot! We couldn't breathe!

THE EXPLORERS ALL GASPING FOR BREATH. DINOSAURS ALSO.

AXEL: (NARRATES) I floated with my hands gripping my face. When I looked through my fingers I saw the others in the mushroom and my uncle's hand raised towards me in the gesture of a man releasing a dove. On a cushion of air we were forced upwards, the lava insane below us, pushing upwards, searching, violently, desperatingly for the surface. Faster and faster and faster upward ... I rolled and rolled, my hair on fire, upwards and upward, the mushroom boat following me through the bloodstream of our mother earth ...

SCENE 32 THE ERUPTION MONTAGE

THIS BEGINS DURING AXEL'S PREVIOUS SPEECH, A FAST, ROLLING MONTAGE OF NOISE, VOMITING ROCK AND MUSIC. INCLUDED ALSO ARE SNATCHES OF DIALOGUE FROM EARLIER IN THE PLAY, REVIEWING THE JOURNEY ...

GRÄUBEN: I will let you hold my waist while I put the star ...

SAKNUSSEMM: (SCREAMS) Lidenbrock, are you there? I curse you! The stones and snow of my homeland, Iceland, curse you!

MARTHA: (SHOUTS) GRÄUBEN! Axel!

AXEL: It is some sort of a joke, surely!

LIDENBROCK: We shall go to Iceland, climb into the crater of the mountain of Sneffels Yokul, and from there we shall journey to the centre of the earth ...

GRÄUBEN: Uncle Lidenbrock! Uncle Lidenbrock! Axel! Axel!

ROSEMARIE: ... I have traversed the Andes, climbed the Alps and Causcasus, searched for the source of the Zambesi ...

HEINDRICH: Oh, cummon you fat fool!

LIDENBROCK: (SINGS *TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME* PASSIONATELY ON AND OFF ALL THROUGH THE ERUPTION)

DIDGERIDOO MUSIC BEATS US UPWARDS, SNATCHES OF GYUTO MONKS CHANTING ... LAIBACH'S THE GREAT SEAL ... SHOSTAKOVICH'S PASSACAGLIA LAIBACH'S HERZ-FELDE ... MARLENE DIETRICH SINGING WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE? ... MIREILLE MATHIEU SINGING QU'ELLE EST BELLE. THE CLIMAX OF BEETHOVEN'S NINTH ... ORGAN MUSIC GOING WILD ... A NUREMBURG RALLY SHOUTING "SIEG HEIL" ... SCREAMING AND HILARIOUS LAUGHTER ... AN EVER-GROWING CACOPHONOUS NOISE, UNRELENTING. SOMEWHERE IN THERE NEIL ARMSTRONG SAYS "One small step for a man". A BABY CRIES. WHOOSHING. ECSTATIC CRIES. THE WHEEEE OF A ROLLER-COASTER RIDE.

GRÄUBEN: (WITHIN THE ERUPTIVE CACOPHONY, PRAYS) God bless Uncle Otto, God bless Axel and God bless me ...

SCREAMS OF ALL THE EXPLORERS ...

AXEL: (NARRATES WITHIN THE ERUPTIVE CACOPHONY) Up, up and away, like the Devil's lost balloon ... higher and higher we rose through the earth, shooting through its bowels. My lungs burned! O uncle! Uncle! Rose! Brave Hans!

WE KEEP THIS ERUPTIVE CACOPHONY GOING **FOR A FULL THREE MINUTES**. WE ARE BRAVE AND DON'T STOP AFTER TWO MINUTES. WE TAKE 3 MINUTES OF AIRTIME TO EXPRESS THIS REBIRTH. IT IS A RADIO EQUIVALENT OF THE 'COLOURS' SCENE IN KUBRICK'S 2001.

THEN ... SILENCE.

SCENE 33 AFTERMATH IN MEXICO

BRING UP LA CUCURACHA, SOFTLY. CRICKETS. A MEXICAN ON A DIRT ROAD. HE WHACKS HIS BURRO. IT BRAYS.

PEPE: Hurry up, you lazy burro ... there is lava flowing all over the hillside - you want to be burned alive, huh!

AXEL: (GROANS)

PEPE: Hey, who are you?

AXEL: I am Axel Lidenbrock of Hamburg. I came out of the volcano. Where the Hell am I?

COCK OF A PISTOL.

PEPE: Hands up! Give me all your money or I will keeeeeeel you!

AXEL: (LAUGHS HILARIOUSLY)

PEPE: What is so funny? Crazy gringo!

FADE WITH AXEL'S LAUGHTER.

SCENE 34 AXEL'S FAREWELL SPEECH

- AXEL:** (NARRATES, SOMBRELY AT FIRST, THEN RATTLES THROUGH CHEERFULLY) What did we do with the rest of our lives? I don't know ... My uncle, Rosemarie MacNab and Hans Bjellke, our Icelandic guide, were thrown onto the surface of the earth through the volcano of Stromboli off the coast of Sicily. I, somehow, was spat out from a volcano faraway in Mexico. I didn't like it at all. The Sierra Madre mountains, where I was lost for some time, the prisoner of bandits - how I hated the food! It was a year before I returned to Hamburg, sailing up the Elbe, my face streaming with tears ...
- AXEL:** (ON A BOAT RETURNING TO HAMBURG) Home! Home!
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) Thinking me dead, my beloved Gräuben has married my friend Heindrich.
- GRÄUBEN:** (SCREAMS) EurghhhhhHHHGGGGGGG!
- HEINDRICH:** Begone evil spirit!
- GRÄUBEN:** Axel! Hes' ALIVE!!!! (SWOONS PAINFULLLY)
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) The shock of seeing me caused her waters to break and the twins were born prematurely. They have grown into sickly fellows.
- BRING IN HEINO, SOFTLY IN BACKGROUND, SINGING ROSEMARIE.
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) Frau MacNab and my uncle had what the English call 'an understanding'. But they never married. She continued her adventures and died of fever in Jerusalem un 1869.
- ROSEMARIE:** (ON HER DEATHBED) Stop me if I've told you this before, but it was the most beautiful experience of my life, a journey to the centre ... (FADE HER)
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) Hans settled in the Fatherland. He opened a bar down by the docks ...
- BRIEF BACKGROUND LILT OF DRUNKS SINGING IN A GERMAN BAR.
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) ... and makes a point of always being more drunk than his customers. My uncle was not believed when he spoke of his journey to the centre of the earth. The scientific community laughed at him.
- ACADEMIA:** (WE HEAR THE SCORN OF ENGLISH, FRENCH AND GERMAN ACADEMICS) Wot piffle! He can't expect us to believe that tosh! The poor man is quite insane! The interior of the earth is molten! MOLTEN!!!!!!!!!!
- JULES VERNE:** Herr Lidenbrock, my name is Jules Verne. I am interested in your story, you know the one ...
- AXEL:** (NARRATES) In the end he sold his story to a French writer, and though the book was a great success, no one seemed to know it was based on truth. My uncle suffered a number of apoplexies brought on by his bad tempers.

WE HEAR LIDENBROCK IN BACKGROUND GROWLING AND SWEARING, CUT OFF AT THE END OF THE SENTENCE.

AXEL: (NARRATES) Last year, 1874, at the age of 60, and still a vigorous man, he locked himself in the dinosaur room at the Johannaem and shot himself. Count Saksussemm's curse was fulfilled.
These days I am Professor Lidenbrock. A rolypoly bachelor haunting cakeshops. Alles klar.

SCENE 35 LECTURE HALL, JOHANNAEUM, HAMBURG.

SIGH AND SNORE OF BORED STUDENTS, SHUFFLING ON WOODEN BENCHES WHILE PROFESSOR AXEL LIDENBROCK LECTURES ...

AXEL: (LECTURING MECHANICALLY AND BORED, JUST LIKE HIS UNCLE IN SCENE 1) We have already seen in my previous lecture that physical energies have frequently acted with great intensity upon all classes of rocks subsequently to their consolidation ...

RUDE STUDENT: (YELLS) Tell us about your journey to the centre of the earth - go on! (LAUGHS CRUDELY)

ALL STUDENTS LAUGH HILARIOUSLY. BEGIN PLAY-OUT MUSIC: LAIBACH'S THE GREAT SEAL.

AXEL: (FURIOUSLY) SILENCE! DUMMKOPFS!!!! SILENCE!!!!
THEY KEEP ON LAUGHING. THE JOURNEY IS OVER.