

PILGRIM



A Comedy of Realities
by Jordan Paul Sullivan

PILGRIM

A Comedy In Five Acts

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

KATHRYN ELIZABETH – a marine biologist
JOHN DAVIES / PROOMPT – stage actor / first mate
DAN KERNIGAN – a trial attorney, fiance to Nadia
LI LIBAI – a visiting scientist from Beijing
JACK DRUMMOND – a pediatrician
MS. NADIA – a teacher of the 2nd grade
JEREMIAH HAWLEY/ CRICKET – a young actor/2nd mate
DEDAI – a female child, aged 7
AIDO – a male child, aged 7
MADDOX – captain of the Brig Pilgrim
ACTOR 1/ PONC – an actor/ 3rd mate
ACTOR 2/ STAMO – an actor/ common sailor
ACTOR 3/ QUIGLEY – an actor/ chief cook
LAW ASSOCIATE
THREE FEMALE TEACHERS
CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS
CHILDREN

ACT I

THE PILGRIM SLUMBERS

SCENE I.

THREE ACTORS stand upon the wharf before the Brig Pilgrim, gossiping amongst themselves.

ACTOR 1

I hear he's a method actor.

ACTOR 2

What's that?

ACTOR 1

I dunno. He's won a Tony Award.

ACTOR 2

What's a Tony Award?

ACTOR 1

I dunno.

ACTOR 3

He never breaks character, from what I heard.

ACTOR 1

Yah, that's also what I heard.

ACTOR 2

He's coming tonight?

ACTOR 3

That's what I heard.

ACTOR 1

Then where is he?

ACTOR 3

I dunno.

ACTOR 1

This guy, Davies, he's from the Dana Point Theater.

ACTOR 2

Didn't that theater burn down?

ACTOR 1

A fire broke out during a staging of Moses and The Exodus. The fire came funneling down where the red sea was s'posed to be parting, and John Davies carried on as if the whole thing was just part of the act.

ACTOR 2

Aint no fire in Moses and The Exodus. How'd he manage to adopt a fire into the plot?

ACTOR 1

Davies, playin' Moses, said the flames were a sign from God that the Israelites should return to Egypt.

ACTOR 3

The audience didn't find that suspicious?

ACTOR 1

The audience stayed in their seats. They didn't leave until the fire chief grabbed John Davies off the stage and ordered his men to force the audience out of the burning theater.

ACTOR 3

They bought into that plot structure? Kinda lame if you ask me, to end in the same place you started.

ACTOR 1

They interviewed a few of the theater-goers later on that week, and some of them did admit they felt it was strange, that the Israelites would be so eager to return to Egypt to become indentured servants to the Pharaoh... But, you know, while they were watchin' it, they said it seemed alright.

ACTOR 2

Queer.

ACTOR 1

I'd say.

SCENE II.

The Dana Point Ocean Institute. The main hall of the institute is part laboratory, part museum and tourist gift shop, the latter of which is open to the public. There's a monitor in the

lab area upon which dive footage is playing. KATHRYN ELIZABETH, a marine biologist, age 30, enters from upstage right, wearing a conservative bikini top and a wetsuit that's been peeled down to the level of her waste. There is a water-ulcer on her right lower abdomen, just above the wetsuit line. As KATHRYN ELIZABETH approaches her lab bench, she notices LI, a tall, thin, modelesque Chinese woman in her early thirties, rummaging through her notes and data. LI begins to take notes on a yellow pad. KATHRYN ELIZABETH is on the verge of collapsing into sleep, and appears quite confused by what she's witnessing.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
I've never seen you before.

LI continues to take notes.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Are you affiliated with the Ocean Institute?

LI
(without looking up from her pad)
So it's a 500 year old spear-tip, probably from a harpoon, and a fin that belongs to either a shark or a whale...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (interrupting)
Shark. Not a whale.

LI (confident)
The genetic analysis isn't finished yet. This five-hundred year old creature, it could very well be a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (keeping calm)
It's a shark. You can tell by the skin alone.

LI
Can you now?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Whales evolved from land-based mammals, and so their skin is smooth like mine and yours... (enthusiastic) If you were to look well enough, you might even be able to find some hairs... (restraining herself) This piece of fin... (she points to a close-up photo) well, you can see the scales.

LI

I'm aware of sharks and their scales.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (extends her hand)

I'm Kathryn Elizabeth, by the way, Assistant Director of Marine Research here at the Ocean Institute of Dana Point.

LI

I know who you are, Kathryn Elizabeth. I was sent here to work with you on this project. A Greenland shark, that's what we're thinking?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

And you're, what? A scientist?

LI

I am a scientist.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Sent by whom?

LI

Why do you suspect the Greenland shark?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's on the list of possibilities, for no other reason than it's the only shark known to us that can live for up to 500 years. Did the director send you?

LI

The director? You mean your supervisor? No... I was sent directly to you, Kathryn Elizabeth, from my own institute in Beijing.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Beijing? You don't have an accent.

LI

That's part of my training.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What does Beijing have to do with the Dana Point Ocean Institute?

LI

The B.J.I.A.S. is one of the Ocean Institute's main benefactors. Sixty percent of your budget in the previous fiscal year came directly, or indirectly, from B.J.I.A.S. contributions. Why do you think it's so unlikely that a Greenland shark would end up off the coast of Dana Point?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That wouldn't just be unlikely. It would be more along the lines of the absurd.

LI

(making a note on her pad)

Is it really so absurd?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're not a marine biologist, I'll take it.

LI

I've read up on the ocean, because there are some theories that interest us at the Institute of Alternative Sciences that *pertain* to the ocean, but no, my own education was more in the fields of biophysics and molecular biology.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Alternative sciences?

LI

It's a poor translation. It's science, in essence... with all the Western methods and models and studies, but with Chinese characteristics.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's only one scientific method. It's not Western. It's just science.

LI

Yes, there is one method, but there are different standards.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

And you've made findings that conflict with those of traditional scientific approaches?

LI

Tens of thousands.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Such as? Give me one example.

LI

All of our findings are proprietary at B.J.I.A.S.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Sounds fishy.

LI

Indeed. It would be insulting to a woman of your intelligence to pretend it wasn't fishy. But it works for us. It suits our purposes. Rest assured Kathryn Elizabeth, any findings that I or my partners back at B.J.I.A.S. make during this investigation will be made one-hundred percent transparent; you'll have immediate access to our database upon request. You still haven't answered my question: a Greenland shark in Dana Point... why do you find it so unlikely? (correcting herself) Absurd?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It would be close to impossible, in theory.

LI takes a note on her pad

LI

In theory. Why so?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's just too many barriers. Crossing one barrier, I mean, I could permit that, but ten or twenty barriers...

LI

What do you mean, barriers?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Borders, in essence. (she thinks for a moment) When I was a child, I used to imagine the ocean as a uniform, continuous sphere.

LI

It's not that.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No, it's not that. This is how most people imagine the ocean to be, give or take a little structuring.

LI

Give or take.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The painters and the poets throughout the ages took... mistook...

LI

Undertook...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (playful)

Mistook... the ocean to be a symbol of freedom. Michelangelo saw heaven; Rimbaud, eternity; Apollinaire, disorder and the fertility of women.

LI

It's not that.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not that. Not really... The ocean is much more ordered, dangerous, merciless, than how they took it to be, and the sea life within it is divided into discrete, unwavering domains. It's not just one giant bubble.

LI

It's not just one giant bubble.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Passing from one loculated zone to the next, is unlikely... to bypass ten, twenty, and swim from the icy depths of Greenland to the warm shallows of Dana Point... Let's just say, if this turns out to be the reality of our situation, it would be rather mind-boggling to me.

LI

We have a saying at the institute of alternative sciences: that what seems absurd is often closer to

reality, and what seems real is sometimes closer to the absurd. Once again, a poor translation.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That's ridiculous.

LI

What's ridiculous today is the truth tomorrow.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Says who?

LI (continues)

In the 1800's there was a prominent ornithologist, a respected scientist, who took... mistook... misundertook... the great effort to document twenty-thousand distinct seagulls on the North American coasts, east and west, and concluded, correctly, based on the scientific method he had employed, and with his own standards of methodological rigor, that seagulls, as a species, have white bodies. He went to his grave believing he was correct in this assertion, and would have told me I sounded ridiculous if I would have suggested that there were seagulls that in fact have black bodies. He was correct based on his methods, but years later, black-bodied seagulls were discovered in New Zealand, and then in South America, discrediting our ornithologist's entire proof about seagulls and white bodies.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If anything, that's proof that our methods work. As more data comes in, you update your model. It's better to have a working model than stagnation.

LI

Well, that's where the alternative sciences disagree. We believe it's better to be stagnant than wrong.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's probably a very simple explanation for how a five hundred year-old spear ended up in a shark's fin.

LI

Man's only explored 5% of the sea, after all. We hardly know what's beneath our waters.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(not taking LI seriously)
Yah, okay.

A mako shark suddenly enters into frame on the monitor

LI
There's a shark!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(looking at the monitor)
Adolescent mako.

LI
He keeps swimming up to you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Yah, a male mako... it's one of the bite-y sharks.

LI
Is that what happened there? (pointing to KATHRYN
ELIZABETH's ulcer)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
No. That's just a water-ulcer. I'm rotting. The human
body wasn't designed to remain submerged in water for
more than an hour, let alone eighteen hours. Our human
skin begins to rot.

LI (looking at the screen)
That must have been scary.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Rotting?

LI
Getting circled by a mako shark.

LI palpates the blister on KATHRYN ELIZABETH's abdomen

LI
You should really get some ointment on that.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH, uncomfortable about letting this stranger
touch her abdomen, gradually backs away, while consciously

trying to avoid making the situation blatantly awkward. She hurriedly changes the subject of the conversation.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So whatever we discover on this endeavor, we will be sharing our findings, with full transparency?

LI

That's my promise to you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So...

LI

So in the transcripts three people said they'd spotted a shark, or what they believed to be a shark, next to some tall ship.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The Brig Pilgrim.

LI

That's it!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So...

LI

So?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So, I mean, the transparency... I feel like it's only going one way here.

LI (ignoring her)

The Pilgrim. It's nearby, right?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Just outside the institute.

LI

Built in the 1800's?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The one outside's a replica. It's old, but not that old.

LI

Even if it's a replica, the ship might remind this creature of a bygone world. Imagine aging to 500 years, and watching the world changing before your eyes, until the world of your youth has transformed into something... otherworldly.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (laughing)

That's the dumbest... Look, sharks aren't nostalgic creatures. They're dumb. Like really fucking dumb.

LI

Full transparency?

LI pulls out a tablet

LI

Greenland shark spotted off the coast of Cuba, three years ago.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Fuck... Is this for real? That's deep isn't it?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH takes a closer look

LI

That's Cuba. This is Dana Point. If we could locate a Greenland shark in the shallows of Dana Point Harbor, it would go a long way towards proving a fundamental theory of ours over at B.J.I.A.S.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What theory is that?

LI

Proprietary.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (annoyed)

Of course.

LI

As I said, everything else we find will be made available to you and your lab in full.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Do I have a choice in this partnership?

LI

B.J.I.A.S. does account for over half of your paycheck, and more importantly, your director's paycheck.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So that's a no, on the whole choice matter?

LI

You could *choose* to quit.

LI lets out a playful laugh, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH returns the laughter with contentious playfulness. After the women are finished laughing, LI extends her hand towards KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

LI

Put 'er there (they shake hands)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If I find you're hiding anything from me, or falsifying data...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH thinks for a minute, coming up with nothing too clever.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (unsure)

Then I will divorce you!

LI

Aren't you a modest one?

Enter JACK, a frail-looking but sharply dressed doctor in his early thirties.

LI (observing the monitor)

And what's this one? That's not a mako.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH, distracted by JACK, doesn't respond.

LI

(looking up, and noticing JACK)

You know him?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

As well as I know the ocean.

LI

So... barely?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

As well as I can. I have a year's worth of data and models I've drawn up to know him by.

LI (uninspired)

I'm dry as the fucking Gobi.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

He's a doctor. Specializes in children. He comes here every Tuesday to buy a pelican figurine for somebody... he says it's for his grandmother, but I suspect that might not be the whole story. The better question for you to be asking is, does he know me?

LI

Does he know you?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Not at all. He still believes I'm the receptionist for the gift shop.

LI

You know, if you want to catch his eye, you could start by showing like (LI examines KATHRYN ELIZABETH's chest) even a starter's portion of cleavage.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I don't want him to know me like that.

LI (darkly)

What else is there?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH zips her wet suit up.

LI (disappointed)

Now you look like a fucking sea lion.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I haven't slept in twenty hours. This is not the time to make my move.

LI starts pulling KATHRYN ELIZABETH's wet suit back down.

LI

He's already seen you with it down.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(shocked at how she's being violated, but
trying to remain polite)

This is wildly inappropriate. I don't know you, at
all. This is quickly devolving into some
unprofessional...

LI adjusts KATHRYN ELIZABETH's bikini top.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What the fuck?

LI

You need to get laid; I can tell when a girl needs
some long, and sturdy lumber.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I need to lie down, and have a long and steady
slumber... And if I'm lucky, perhaps a pleasant dream.

LI adjusts her bikini top again.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

And you need to stop touching my tits, dude.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH gently slaps LI's hand away.

LI

Quiet. I may have come here to find a Greenland shark,
but now a certain thing about a fellow scientist...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're not a scientist.

LI (continues)

Has got me intrigued. I'll make you two promises:
first, I'm gonna get you laid.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'd settle on having you show me to a bed. And the second?

LI

We're gonna find this Greenland shark. It's out there, in the harbor.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Whatever it is, it may be in the harbor, but it's not a Greenland shark. I'm going to bed.

JACK approaches. He observes KATHRYN ELIZABETH's wetsuit.

JACK

Surfing? Paddleboarding? No, you look like the surfing type.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Scuba.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH becomes flustered on account of her attire. She quickly pulls up her wetsuit and zips it up to her neck.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Sorry.

LI

You apologize too much.

JACK

Just this please.

JACK places the pelican figurine atop the lab table, next to the marine specimens.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You say you buy these for your grandmother?

LI

Don't talk about his grandma. Jesus.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Do you surf?

JACK

God no. I avoid the ocean at all costs.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I almost feel sorry for the ocean when you say it that way. Has the ocean offended you or something?

LI

(taking pleasure in stirring the pot)

Sir, the checkout stand for the gift shop is over that way... just adjacent to the gift shop.

JACK

It's okay. Kathryn Elizabeth here always checks me out.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I do not. I mean, maybe a casual checking here and there. Nothing excessive or creepy. It's natural, even healthy, to be curious.

LI

Kathryn Elizabeth, this isn't what I'm paying you for... you're my Director of Research...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Assistant Director, dude. (then, to JACK) Really, she's not my boss. I barely know her.

JACK (putting two and two together)

You're a scientist! Scuba diving! Ah ha. Got it. Why'd you let me think you were the receptionist for, God knows how long... nearly a year?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I haven't slept in like 20 hours, so I'm gonna go lie down. It's nice to see you, Jack, as always.

Exit KATHRYN ELIZABETH, too exhausted to feel any sense of embarrassment or defeat.

LI

I'll check you out. Cash only.

JACK

You can keep the change. I'm in a bit of a rush. I need to be on the Brig Pilgrim by six o'clock.

LI

The Pilgrim, you say?

LI grabs the money and slips it into her pocket. JACK doesn't seem to care.

JACK

Every Tuesday night they do this sleep-away camp aboard the Brig Pilgrim for a class of children from one of the local elementary schools. By law, the camp is required to have a medical expert on board, so here I am. I volunteer every Tuesday.

LI

Well, what a coincidence! Kathryn Elizabeth and I will be on board the Brig Pilgrim tonight as well.

JACK

As part of the camp?

LI

God no. We're looking for a 500-year old shark.

JACK

Five hundred? Can anything really live that long?

LI

Why not?

Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (embarrassed)

Forgot the key.

LI

Be ready by six.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

For what?

LI

To board the Brig Pilgrim.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

To board the Pilgrim?

JACK

See the two of you there. I really do have to be on my way. If anyone should require medical attention, I'll be your appointed doctor for the evening.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The hell is going on?

LI (to JACK)

Give me your hand.

JACK

I really do need to get...

LI

I'll be quick.

LI grabs JACK's hand. JACK is uncertain how to respond.

LI

(aside, to KATHRYN ELIZABETH)

An old trick we used to play in high school with the boys in Beijing.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(grabbing a set of keys from under the lab bench)

Don't listen to anything she says.

LI

(examining JACK's hand, like a palm reader)

Here's my portent. Jack here will save the life of a child, shrouded in a caul of water.

JACK (laughing)

A caul?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, you can see the future now?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH turns away, and is about to exit stage right

LI

You and Kathryn Elizabeth will be married, by noon tomorrow...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(turning back to LI, annoyed)

Li!

LI (continuing)
And if not, one of you will be dead.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (appalled)
Jesus! Stop it. I'm going to bed.

LI
You've got an hour till boarding.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
We can't just board the Pilgrim.

Exit KATHRYN ELIZABETH

SCENE III.

The wharf before the Brig Pilgrim. Enter DAN, a well-built man in his early 30s, and NADIA, his fiance, a thin, dark-skinned Indian woman in her late 20s.

NADIA
(as if correcting something DAN's said)
It's a *merchant vessel*. And you haven't been a bachelor in three years Mr. Kernigan... and you know it. A ring only makes it official.

DAN
Legally, I'm a bachelor until we've entered into a contract of...

NADIA (interrupting)
You leave that legal mumbo jumbo for somebody else. You're no bachelor. And you know why? Because I say you're no bachelor.

DAN
Alright, if you say I'm not a bachelor, then I'm not a bachelor.

NADIA

See how easy it is to beat you in an argument. Who says trial law is hard?

DAN

It really isn't. It's not nearly as difficult as teaching second graders.

NADIA

You'll find that out real fast tonight, my pet chaperone; you get it? You'll be the teacher's pet tonight, Dan.

DAN

I'll be the best damn chaperone this pirate ship has ever seen.

They exit, up the ramp to the Brig Pilgrim.

SCENE IV.

The deck of the Brig Pilgrim. THE CHILDREN are gathered in a circle around CAPTAIN MADDOX. QUIGLEY enters and begins passing out food to the children.

QUIGLEY

Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits. (he walks around to another set of children) Here you go. Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits. (and to another set of children) And for you. Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits.

ONE OF THE CHILDREN spits out the food. Enter DAN and NADIA, stage left.

QUIGLEY

Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits.

Enter PONC, carrying a stack of sailor uniforms. He begins distributing them to the children.

MADDOX

(with as little enthusiasm as possible)
Come morning we'll be serving oat-meal with brown sugar, which might be a little more appetizing to you all, you adorable green-hands. Now, seamen don't dress in denim and hoodies. Do they? No, they don't.

DAN

This man really hates his job, doesn't he?

NADIA

Well, if you had to do this every week, you'd start to hate your job too. The man's an actor, and this is where he's ended up.

DAN

I'd still put in more effort than that.

NADIA

Imagine his disappointment. He has an audience that would be just as entertained by a birthday clown tying animals out of balloons.

MADDOX (toneless)

You'll get blown off the upper yards with a billowy shirt like that.

DAN

This is difficult for me to watch, Nadia. At least with the birthday clown they'd have the option to leave.

NADIA

Daniel...

DAN

Or slit their wrists with the cake knife.

NADIA

Daniel, don't be morbid.

Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI, stage right (across-ship from DAN and NADIA). LI is carrying a clanking bag of wine bottles.

MADDOX

Here are your outfits. You can change after you finish your supper, once you head down into the cabin. Tarpaulin hats. Duck trousers. The old dependable checkered shirt.

DAN (playful, aloud)

Do I get a uniform, Captain?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(still drowsy, squinting, looking over
towards where DAN is standing)

Is that... No, that couldn't be...

(she laughs, and appears relieved)

MADDOX

If any of the adult chaperones would like to indulge
in this good fun, you'll find chests set out along the
starboard side. The adult costumes, I'm afraid to say,
are not the standard sailing gear. It's more or less a
bunch of items we've collected over the years; a lost
and found, you could say.

NADIA is unamused by the costumes. DAN is a little too elated.
DAN digs through the stage left costume bin with a sense of
childish enjoyment, and finds a billowing white pirate shirt,
and a set of long beige pants. LI brings KATHRYN ELIZABETH over
to the stage right costume bin, and the two of them begin
pulling out item after item. KATHRYN ELIZABETH pulls out a
Sailor Moon cosplay outfit.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (suspicious)

Lost and found?

LI

What adult chaperone would leave behind her Sailor
Moon cosplay outfit?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

In perfect condition too.

LI

Such a chaperone would be out of her mind.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I, in all sincerity, would love to meet that woman.

LI pulls out more costumes: German beer wench, a mermaid's tube
top, and then a TRICORNE HAT.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I think I could pull the hat off.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH puts on the Tricorne hat and smiles at LI. LI takes off her shirt, revealing a rather seductive bra. KATHRYN ELIZABETH immediately hits LI on the shoulder, and positions herself between LI and THE CHILDREN.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Are you trying to get yourself arrested?

LI doesn't respond, and continues to show indifference towards the children as she dresses. LI spots a trench coat in the bin.

LI (with intrigue)

Oh!

LI takes the trench coat and holds it up, then throws it into the bag she is carrying. As she stuffs the coat into the bag, wine bottles clank. Exit LI.

MADDOX

After dinner you'll all head down to your sleeping quarters and get as much rest as you can.

DAN

You see that girl in the pirate hat?

NADIA

For the last time, Dan, it's not a pirate ship. (she looks across the ship, and spots KATHRYN ELIZABETH's hat). Oh, that is a pirate hat. Oh my god, that's...

DAN

That's who I think it is, right?

NADIA (elated, for some reason)

Is that Kathryn Elizabeth?

DAN (concerned)

It's not a good omen, you know. I wouldn't get so excited if I were you.

NADIA

Ah, is big Dan Dan scared of his little ex girl-fweeend?

DAN

The night before our wedding? It can't be a good sign, you know.

NADIA

I had lunch with her two days ago.

DAN

Did she mention anything about being on the Pilgrim the night before our wedding?

NADIA

Why the hell would that come up? It's really not such a coincidence she's here. She does work in that building, right over there.

DAN

I don't think she's spotted us yet.

NADIA

You can avoid her and avoid her if you want, but I'm not playing this game. It's ancient, and quite frankly, it's boring. You both just need to move on, for my sake.

MADDOX

My first mate, Proompt, will be taking over responsibilities for now. Your Captain is off to get his sleep. This is the greatest perk of being Captain: sleep!

DAN

A perk for all of us when this guy sleeps.

Exit MADDOX. Enter JACK. JACK walks up to KATHRYN ELIZABETH, and stands to her right side. KATHRYN ELIZABETH acknowledges JACK, but JACK's eyes are locked upon NADIA. He remains silent, as if he is in a state of shock. DAN looks over to where JACK is standing.

DAN

Is that who I think it is?

NADIA

Didn't he leave the country?

DAN

He looks a little older than I remember.

NADIA

People age, even when you don't see them for three years.

DAN

Oh, really, Nadia?

NADIA

That can't be a good sign. The night before our wedding day.

DAN

It's Jack, is all.

NADIA

You were concerned about Kathryn Elizabeth. You were with her for one year. Those are the chicken scraps of a relationship, Dan.

DAN

It was a pandemic year. That's longer than just a year.

NADIA

Jack and I were engaged. We were together for six years.

DAN

And Jack and I were friends long before you ever knew him... since we were children. He and I were like brothers.

NADIA

And yet he hasn't spoken to either of us in three years.

DAN

Do you think the two of them know each other? They are standing side by side over there. Now, come on, Nadia, there's no way in hell that that's just some coincidence.

NADIA

It could be a coincidence.

JACK and NADIA lock eyes for a few moments, and JACK, as if traumatized by the sight of NADIA, finally breaks his silence.

JACK (melancholic)

Marry me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (laughing)

You don't know me at all.

JACK (more confident)

Marry me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're mocking me.

JACK (earnest)

I'm sincere and appealing to any romantic bone in your body. (Seductively) The right hip bone, perhaps.

JACK touches her hip

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Careful of my ulcer.

JACK

Sorry.

JACK pulls his hand back

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I don't know, Jack. What you said earlier about the ocean. I'm not sure if we're *sympatico*. Let's say I agreed to this... And I still think you're mocking me...

JACK (interjecting)

I'm not mocking you...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (continuing)

Would you promise me one thing?

JACK

What's that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Will you at least promise to come and explore the sea with me?

JACK

As long as we can both acknowledge that I'd only be doing so begrudgingly.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Okay.

JACK

What do you mean, okay?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I mean, good enough.

JACK

Is that a maybe?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That's a 'why not?'

JACK

So we're good?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Good enough. (then, testing JACK) If we are gonna get married, we should tie the knot before tomorrow at noon. For your sake.

JACK

You mean the palm reader from Beijing? You know that everything that comes out of that girl's mouth is horseshit?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Obviously.

JACK

But it's interesting...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What? Tell me.

JACK

That you'd assume I'd be the one to die.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Why's that so interesting? I don't intend to die.

JACK

I just feel that I should caution you, um... to remind you... that you're the one who appears to be rotting.

JACK points to KATHRYN ELIZABETH's water-ulcer.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(she slaps his arm down)

Hey now. We're all rotting. You, me, any system that's complex, we're all in a controlled state of decay, fiance.

JACK (correcting her)

Homeostasis.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(correcting him)

Nope. Just rot. Every complex system. The sturdy order of Romance. Romance never died, fiance, it's just been gradually rotting away, ever since its construction began upon some shared dream of Middle Earth.

JACK (correcting her)

The Middle Ages. Is that how you perceive the world, my warm and bubbly fiance?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Not in a sad way or anything. Do you know Baudelaire?

JACK

Who?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Or Cattelan?

JACK

The board game?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No, Cattelan, the early 21st century performance artist. Dude duct-taped a banana to a wall, and called the thing art. I see the world as that yellow banana,

duct-taped to the wall. Did you know that a yellow banana, though most appealing to us, aesthetically, isn't fresh at all? You can't see the beauty, and that's why you find it so off-putting. You know, the artist taped that banana to the wall as a joke.

JACK

You didn't take it as a joke?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

A lot of great art begins as a joke. Did you know that Shakespeare wrote all of his plays as jokes?

JACK

I don't know Shakespeare.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I remember the first time I saw the rot of that banana, and how it defied the stagnation of the duct tape that bound it, confining it in space. It's beautiful. All things rot away. The reality of the Romans decayed into the Christian reality, and the Christian reality decayed into our own reality, which is governed by science and reason. It's a sign of a healthy ecosystem. It is in the ocean, at any rate.

JACK

It's not a very good philosophy for those of us in medicine: out with the rot.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We're all entitled to our own interpretations of the world.

JACK

Are we?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Of course we are. This is America, after all.

JACK

That's right. You're a first-time camper. The year is 1840. That's the year we're in.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Yah, so what if we are?

JACK

Then this is Mexico, my dear fiancé. I need to check in with the captain.

JACK exits down the stairs, doing his best to avoid NADIA and DAN along the way. A voice calls up from beneath deck.

PROOMPT (offstage, dramatic)

Listen!

Enter LI.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What's that?

LI

It's coming from downstairs.

PROOMPT (offstage, dramatic)

Do you hear it? There it is! And there! (short pause)
It sounds off once more.

Enter JOHN DAVIES, as FIRST MATE PROOMPT

PROOMPT (dramatic)

Silent as a tit-mouse, invisible as the winds that touch our sails, some penetrating force runs through every one of us... What is it? The spirit of the Pilgrim, perhaps. There's a will out there, I can sense it. But why has this will awakened? Why tonight of all the nights? Is it really circumstance that a five-hundred year old whale circles out there in our harbor?

LI

I told you it could be a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not a whale.

PROOMPT

And what else! A lusting! It disseminates like a musk in the darkened breezes. Sea nymphs, I am attuned to your scents! The intoxication! The odor that climbs on board a vessel when the magnificent female form

invites its sea-dwelling counterpart to come take part in the rule-assaulting games of man and woman's courtship. Oh, the Pilgrim doth awaken! Women with your long-flowing hair and your form that jiggles about with laughter; disguise yourselves. (PROOMPT very briefly looks over at LI). For the Pilgrim shows no greater animosity than when she encounters for her billowing sails a competing figure, be it nymph, or the slender gaps and curves of woman.

PROOMPT briefly looks over at LI.

LI

I'm so fucking turned on right now.

LI partially unbuttons her checkered shirt.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (playful)

Put your tits away.

LI (playful)

Once you stop acting a boob.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Don't you dare go tit for tat with me, nymph.

LI

My knickers pound, or something pounds my knockers. The pounding is not for an actor, but I'll be a sea nymph for a sailor, and I intend to fuck me a first mate.

PROOMPT

The very winds that direct our ship are sisters to the wind that seeks to capsize our vessel, or dash us against a protuberant rock. The seawater that coddles the great hull of the Pilgrim is constructed of the selfsame moisture that eats away, even now, at the wood beneath our feet.

One of THE CHILDREN begins to cry

DAN

Protuberant rocks? If I have no idea what he's talking about, you can bet the kids' minds are off in goddamn Timbuktu.

NADIA stares into the distance, in a state of panic

DAN

Hey, Nads, you alright? (teasing) You're not getting scared, are you?

NADIA hugs DAN tightly

DAN

It's an act. It's John Davies. They say he never breaks character.

NADIA

Shut up, Dan. Hold me.

DAN

You're getting worked up over nothing. It's a dramatic production.

NADIA

I know, I know. It's something he said earlier, the invisible will; I think that's what he called it. It's nothing, I know.

PROOMPT

Ah, First Mate Proompt, all hope is lost! We'll soon be gazing collectively into the eyes of our doom, with absolute certainty. If you've never had to think about the elements and your death amidst such a calamity of them, then that's a privilege to which you're all entitled. The first mate cannot afford to trifle with such fantastic dreaming. Your mate knows how to balance the spirit of the Pilgrim and the elements around her. I'll get you through this. That's my promise. All I demand in return is your complete loyalty, and strict obedience. Those who fall out of line will be punished, to the full extent of this vessel's laws. These laws I know well, for they're the laws I've written. They're laws that I've for years enforced. (then, with authority) Cricket! Come forth!

CRICKET comes to PROOMPT

CRICKET

Yes, Mate.

PROOMPT (to CRICKET)

Delegate to the crew: we set sail. Pacific trade winds by 6am, and passing Mexico City by Saturday noon. Delegate, Cricket. What I command, get it done.

CRICKET

Yes, Mate.

PROOMPT sniffs the air.

PROOMPT

There's a foul odor coming from the deck. I want it washed during the night watch. Make it happen.

Exit PROOMPT. Enter PONC, carrying dirty plates.

CRICKET

Ponc! First Mate's orders: *set sail*.

PONC

The Pilgrim doesn't leave the dock, new guy. This is when you tell the kids, get to bed, tell them you'll wake 'em for the night watch. Try to get some rest.

Exit PONC

CRICKET

Okay, um... Please follow me, kids... to the, um, under-ship!

Exit CRICKET, into the belly of the ship, followed by THE CHILDREN

NADIA

You'll be rooming with Jack, you know.

DAN

It's been three years... I'm sure he misses me as much as I miss him.

NADIA

You're insane if you believe that. I'm gonna go say hello to Katy Beth. You should come. She always asks about you.

DAN

Nah.

NADIA

It's been a year. She's moved past all that, Dan.

DAN

You go do that. I'll, um, you know, make sure the kids make it alive down the stairs.

NADIA runs over towards stage right.

NADIA (energetic, hollering)

Kathryn Elizabeth! Kathryn Elizabeth!

NADIA runs over to KATHRYN ELIZABETH and briefly picks her up in a state of unbridled elation. KATHRYN ELIZABETH seems to be confused and has no idea what's going on.

NADIA (excited)

What the heck are you doing here, Katy Beth?

DAN passes towards the stairs, herding the kids down into the cabin. As KATHRYN ELIZABETH glances around the ship in a state of drowsy confusion, she spots DAN, for the first time in well over a year, and as they lock eyes, ever briefly, she scratches softly against her chest-bone, startled and confused by what's going on.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Li, I think I'm gonna need to nap for another hour or two.

ACT II
ON WHALES AND SCALES

SCENE I.

The men's cabin. DAN is alone, and in his boxers. He's humming a chipper, whistle-while-you-work sort of upbeat song, and is about to begin slipping on his sailor's trousers. A knock is heard at the door, and the door opens immediately, without any pause. DAN pulls the sailor trousers up as quickly as he can, but as JACK enters, DAN is still shirtless, standing with his back to the door.

DAN
Un momento, por favor.

DAN turns around.

DAN (chipper)
Ah! It's my roommate.

JACK (brooding)
Both of our names are on the door, Dan. Who'd you think I was?

DAN
(nonchalant, as if he means it)
Room service.

JACK
This is the Brig Pilgrim. It's a far cry from the Peninsula Hotel in Shanghai.

DAN
(overwhelmed by the memory)
That hotel was worth every penny. Do you remember the shrimp bowl? That thing was the size of a small car. Then the next day we played that haggling game at the street market, and I convinced one of the street vendors to sell me a fifty-RMB selfie stick for only five RMB. The best you could get them to slink down to was thirty.

DAN throws his shirt across his shoulder.

DAN (playful)
You're a doctor now.

JACK (solemn)

I'm a doctor now.

DAN
(nonchalant, pointing to his chest)
Does this mole look weird?

JACK
Is this a trap?

DAN
What, you don't treat lawyers in your practice?

JACK
I try to avoid litigious people, in general.

DAN
I see.

(long pause)

DAN
(trying to remain chipper and friendly)
You're back in the states!

JACK
Been back for a year now.

DAN
I wouldn't have known.

DAN puts on the shirt, and then begins to unpack some items from his overnight bag: a toothbrush, a book, pajamas, etc.

DAN
And you're here, tonight. Aren't you?

JACK
With this line of questioning, it's no wonder you can afford a place in Ritz Cove.

DAN (proud)
Have you seen my house, Jack? Our house? Mine and, well...

JACK
I've seen it. My grandparents live in Ritz Cove.

DAN

They do! That's right. What street are they on again?

JACK

The street just above yours. I drive by your mansion at the bottom of the hill whenever I'm on my way to their mansion at the top of the hill.

JACK sits down on his bed and opens his own overnight bag.

DAN

I'm just starting out. The economy was a lot different when your grandparents were making their fortunes.

DAN and JACK each unpack a pelican figurine, similar in size and design.

DAN

Whoa! What are the chances?

JACK

Better than you'd think. I've noticed the pelicans populating your front lawn.

DAN

Jesus, you're telling me. Sometimes when I pull up into the driveway, especially when I'm getting home from work late, I find myself getting flashbacks to the fucking Serengeti.

JACK

The Serengeti?

DAN

I went bird watching there a few summers back. Fucking traumatizing.

JACK

Some nasty pelicans in the Serengeti.

DAN

The figurines. The one next to the porch is three feet tall.

JACK

I've bought my grandmother one that's taller than that.

DAN

So I'll buy a new figurine every Tuesday. My partner and I have a weekly dinner at The Harbor Grill. Oyster night, Tuesdays. If you haven't tried it, you should.

JACK

You buy them from the Ocean Institute?

DAN

Oh! Not there, Jesus. The gift shop right across from Harbor Grill. I'm sure it has a name.

JACK

The store you go to every Tuesday?

DAN

Yah. That one. But listen to this... I'll place the latest figurine out on the lawn when I get home on Tuesday nights. Then when Nadia notices it out there on Wednesday morning, I'll pretend like I don't have any fucking clue how the thing got there. I started to tell Nadia that the figurines are reproducing, like the real birds do. She really doesn't get why the pelicans are replicating up and down her lawn.

JACK

She sounds... happy.

DAN

She is.

JACK

I never said that I wished her to be... unhappy.

(short pause)

DAN (excited)

Yah! And look at you. You got your license! And now you're a doctor... saving lives!

JACK

I'm still losing more patients than I'm saving. The first two or three years of a medical practice can be pretty difficult, for the patients.

DAN

Well, I hate to break it to you, but that's not something that's gonna change, Jack. You think my house is a palace, you should see this lawyer at our sister firm who works medical malpractice. Taj Ma-fucking-hal.

JACK

That doesn't mean there aren't good doctors out there helping people.

DAN

It means there's a lot of doctors out there who aren't doing no harm.

JACK

You think your perspective might be skewed? You're coming at this from the legal perspective. You know what motivates lawyers, don't you?

DAN

The legal perspective is the only perspective... and I can defend that statement all day long, Jack.

JACK

You'd think the truth would carry a lot more weight than your perspective.

DAN

My perspective is the only truth.

JACK

More true than the actual truth?

DAN

The legal truth, Jack, is the only truth that's binding. A man dies on the operating table. The doctor did everything by the book, but when the court rules that the doctor was negligent, then he's guilty, according to the law. What's more important? The absolute truth? That the doctor did everything by the book? Or the legal truth: that the doctor is legally

guilty of third degree murder, and he's been ordered to pay two million in restitution to the family of his victim? The victim of his murder.

JACK

And they wonder how we got ourselves into this situation.

DAN

Discrediting evidence, that's what I do, Jack. Who would have figured that someone out there would pay this son of a hard-hatter thousands to argue about a road, or some newspaper article?

(short pause)

JACK

It's been three years since the, you know, what happened...

DAN

How about some alcohol?

JACK

(shaking his head)

I'm on duty.

DAN

Then why the bag of wine?

JACK

I don't know.

DAN

Well, I do.

DAN walks over and grabs a bottle of cheap cabernet. He twists off the cap, and takes a generous swig.

JACK

I've had a few years to reflect on things. In regards to what transpired... Don't you say a damn thing once I say this. (he takes a deep breath) I deserve my fair share of the blame.

DAN

I concur.

JACK

I said don't say a thing.

DAN

Only saying that I agree.

JACK

And don't you dare pass that along to Nadia. It doesn't make you or her any less culpable.

DAN

That's your perspective.

JACK

That's the goddamn truth, and you know it.

DAN starts laughing uncontrollably and JACK laughs along with him, without explanation.

DAN

You were really sick.

JACK

I'm still sick, Dan.

DAN

Yah, but the thing, the immune thing, it's better.

JACK

It's dormant. Every day, every year, is a game of probability. If I roll a six, that's it; I'm just walking around and treating patient after patient—though I'm not that talented—, and waiting for the six to roll. If it never rolls, then great. I just do what I can to keep busy nowadays.

DAN

You know, you and I... we were inseparable. Twenty years, the women would come and go... I'm just saying, it shouldn't have come between us.

JACK

But it did.

DAN

I know it did.

JACK

And it still does.

DAN chugs the whole bottle of wine.

DAN

(forcing a change of subject)

That first mate. He's quite a character.

JACK

He is indeed a character. They say he never breaks.

DAN

I know who John Davies is. I'm the one who got him here.

JACK

(as if intentionally egging Dan on)

He's never once broken. Not a single slip. Not a crack on him. If that's not a winning streak begging for a challenger, then what the hell is?

DAN

I bet I could get him to break.

JACK

Care to put your money where your mouth is?

DAN

You wanna place a bet, for old times' sake? I'll bet you ten bucks I can get him to break before sunrise.

JACK

I'll bet you...

JACK pulls out all the spare change from his pocket

JACK

12 dollars, 33, 34 cents— \$12.34 that you can't.

DAN

12.34. 1-2-3-4. You see that? 1-2-3-4. In your pocket. What are the chances?

JACK

The same chance that dinner at Turks costs 50 minus
12.34.

DAN

Alright...

JACK

Do we have a deal? Before sunrise.

DAN

Deal.

They shake. DAN takes a swig from the wine bottle, but then realizes there's nothing left.

DAN

I thought there was a little more in there.

JACK

You goddamn drunk.

JACK and DAN both laugh.

SCENE II.

The first mate's quarters. A tall, wooden chair at stage center. The chair is an eyesore in the room, and it's implied by its placement at the center-point of the scene that this is something John Davies has brought along with him to serve as a prop. The back wall is covered in holes, each about three inches in diameter. There's a six-foot long duffle bag at PROOMPT's feet, with something massive inside. A pile of bananas and apples atop a short dresser stage right. CRICKET stands over a desk stage left, and reads through the first mate's hand-written journal.

CRICKET (reading)

Went to land this morning at twenty past six, in order to restock supplies following a series of misfortunes I encountered while trying to haul in a fish and supply my body with its vital nourishment. Inventory of purchased goods: twenty apples, ten bunches of bananas, fifty onions, ten pounds of salt beef. Total

expenditures: two dollars and thirty four cents... *numbers, numbers, numbers.* I then paid visit to the local blacksmith and invited the young man to visit me, at his earliest convenience, aboard the Brig Pilgrim. (he flips a few pages) I swiftly reprimanded the swindler, reminding him that I was no tyro to the sailing industry, nor virgin to the rake, and that I knew well the standard price for harpoon repair in these parts of Alto California: two dollars and twelve cents, on average, and never higher than three dollars and ten cents (he flips a few pages) having reached my limit of patience with the con, I felt obliged to challenge the young man to a dual (he flips a few pages) the next time he feels impelled to drag a rake, he should think twice before he sets his mark upon a humble seafarer.

CRICKET flips a few more pages, and then closes the journal; he looks to PROOMPT

CRICKET

(as HAWLEY, breaking character)

You really go all out, don't you? I should tell you, from a young student of the craft, to a man whom I consider a master, that I admire your dedication to the art.

PROOMPT

(as PROOMPT, remaining in character)

The Pilgrim is my dedication, and the art is in the shipwrights who built her. I only watch over her. I've no art in me. I'm a simple manager of men.

CRICKET

Have you been living on board this, um... (having no idea how to improvise along)... have you been living inside of... (hesitant) her? (then worried, observing the back wall) What are all these holes in the wall?

PROOMPT

For the past fifteen years, I've spent nine of ten nights shutting my eyes right here in this chair. The comfort of curling up all cozy upon some mattress on firm land, the very nostalgia for it is gone from me.

CRICKET (confused)

You're sleeping in a chair? You do realize there's, like, a comfortable bed right behind you.

PROOMPT

I spin about when I lie flat.

CRICKET

Spin about?

PROOMPT

Promptly, into a fit of bile and vomit. The towering rollers don't do well for my sensitive bowels. It's no bother, Cricket. I've become acclimated to the chair.

CRICKET

A little over the top. Wouldn't you say?

PROOMPT

Oh, if you could spend one night with me when I make that grievous error of lying in parallel to the Pilgrim, you would be grateful that I've chosen to pass my sleeping hours upright in this chair.

CRICKET

No, I mean... We're still in the harbor, aren't we?

PROOMPT

(with a threatening tone)

I remember telling you to take us out. I have a distinctively vivid memory of our conference. What did I tell you, Cricket? That I expected you to, what was that word I used: delegate, yes? To have us in open waters by midnight, then in line of the trade winds by six in the morning, passing Mexico City by noon Saturday. Have I conjured this memory out of the aether, Cricket?

CRICKET

(frightened)

You did say that you wanted to be in Mexico City within four days.

PROOMPT

PASSING Mexico City! Never do I wish to be IN Mexico City! How far to the Pacific Tradewinds? Six hours?

CRICKET

(fearful, struggling to improvise)

Yes. Six hours. And now that you mention it, you're right, and I am wrong... By Saturday at noon, we'll be in, um, Mexico, First Mate Proompt.

PROOMPT

Don't you take me to Mexico, Cricket!

CRICKET

I mean, passing Mexico... Mexico City by 12 noon, Friday.

PROOMPT

Well, the sooner the better.

CRICKET

(believing vulnerability will win him sympathy, he begins to open up)

I'm really out of my league. Today is my first day, and I was under the impression I wouldn't be the only new actor... But it seems you've been living here for... weeks? Weeks, or perhaps even months.

PROOMPT

Actor?

PROOMPT stands up from his chair and approaches CRICKET, with suspicion and rage brewing within him.

CRICKET

Listen, brother...

PROOMPT

Are you Longfellow Prometheus Proompt? If not, then call me not your brother.

CRICKET

Oh, God! Chill! Chill! I know you're like, deep in character right now. But, dude!

PROOMPT

Dude? You take me to be some Yankee DOODle?

CRICKET

I'm really fucking tired.

PROOMPT

Fucking? What's that, are you speaking in some savage tongue? You're not of mixed blood are you? Open your mouth. Show me your tongue hasn't the dark spots.

PROOMPT inspects CRICKET's face. CRICKET opens his mouth wide.

CRICKET

I don't know how to play along in this act. I'm tired, and... and... and I'm going to sleep.

PROOMPT

Oh, no. You don't slink off to sleep. Look into my eyes, Cricket. You're an actor, you say?

CRICKET

I am an actor, one of two new actors in this troupe.

PROOMPT

An entire troupe of impostors, you say, has infiltrated my brig? (PROOMPT laughs) Prove this lie! When was it you could have possibly switched out my crew for actors? The short hour when I went to land to visit the blacksmith?

CRICKET

Wait. You actually saw a blacksmith today? Mister Davies...

PROOMPT

Your last warning, to address me by formal titles, Mate Proompt, or Mate, or First Mate, Cricket.

CRICKET

Does that mean there's a harpoon... Is that what's in the bag? Jesus! There's fifty children on board, man.

PROOMPT

(full of rage)

I may be man, but on this ship, whether by crew or impostor, I will be called MATE!

PROOMPT whips CRICKET, and CRICKET cries aloud in agony.

PROOMPT

Name the other members of this troupe. We shall see if they reject this lie, or uphold your story of conspiracy against the Pilgrim. The punishment for false accusation and conspiracy is the same. Beware, Cricket, of holding fast to a lie for too long. For that lie might become your reality, and you'll have to atone for your lie, as lie becomes truth. Do you know what the ship's law says in regards to the punishment for conspiracy and false accusation?

CRICKET

(about to shit his pants)

You misunderstand me, First Mate Proompt. I am an actor, this part you understood (struggling to not fall into contemporary idioms or usages) in the um, in the proper, as I intended for you to understand it. I'm an actor, by hobby I am. By career, I am a sailor, like yourself, a sea-man.

PROOMPT

(relieved)

So it's not really your first day, then, Cricket?

CRICKET

It's my first day aboard the Brig Pilgrim.

PROOMPT

(even more relieved)

Ah!

CRICKET

But I come recommended as second mate due to my time aboard another ship.

PROOMPT

Of course! What ship?

CRICKET

The... (panicking) The HMS Beagle.

PROOMPT

H-M-S. Her Majesties' Ship. Few build ships as fine as the Brits. Leave it to the British to conflate their art with some sycophantish tail-wagging cur, like the Beagle, a real pitiable creature. What model of ship is that, the Beagle?

CRICKET

It's called a (poorly improvising) Darwinian.

PROOMPT

It must be a new model. How'd you come to work for the Brits? You're not one of those warmongers from (takes a dramatic pause) Canada? Tell me you're not one of those northerner barbarians who still kneels for that obtuse wench, Victoria.

CRICKET

No! I saw an ad (struggling to improvise) in the classifieds.

PROOMPT

A classified ad? Where were you living? Not in England, I pray.

CRICKET

No... in, um, Boston.

PROOMPT

And the Brits picked you up in Boston! You're not pulling a rake on me, are you Cricket?

CRICKET

No! No, I had to take a connecting... flight... voyage!... a connecting voyage to, um, Charles-shire, then we departed from the, um, English Channel.

PROOMPT

These are places I know very little of. You sound like a well-traveled man, Cricket. I'll get some rest.

CRICKET

(his nerves begin settling)

Aye, First Mate Proompt. Let's rest.

PROOMPT

I will rest. If you sleep, then how do you imagine we'll rouse the crew for the midnight watch?

CRICKET

I'll set an alarm, Mate.

PROOMPT

(the character is unfamiliar with the
concept of alarm clocks)

Who will sound an alarm if every man sleeps? Just set
your eyes on that clock and wait for the hands to make
their way to 10 plus 45.

CRICKET

(attempts to feign enthusiasm)

Aye aye, Mate Proompt.

PROOMPT closes his eyes, and CRICKET stares at the clock upon
the wall

SCENE III.

The women's cabin. KATHRYN ELIZABETH is asleep upon NADIA's lap.
LI sits on top of a desk across from them. Upstage of them,
TEACHER 1, TEACHER 2, and TEACHER 3 are tucked into their beds,
but still awake. DEDAI stands next to NADIA, hugging one of her
legs.

LI

So let me get this straight. You come back from India,
and you steal away the man that this one (indicating
KATHRYN ELIZABETH) was falling in love with...

NADIA

(agitated at LI's phrasing)

Reclaimed. I reclaimed the man who was mine and was
never not mine to be claiming. Katy Beth was aware of
the terms of her relationship with Dan. Or she wasn't
ignorant.

LI

I really don't care about any of that. Here's the part
that piques my interest. So, after you return and
steal away...

NADIA

(interrupting her)

Reclaim.

LI

(continuing)

Reclaim the man that this one (indicating KATHRYN ELIZABETH) has been falling in love with, for nearly a year, her response to all this, was to form a deep and lasting friendship with you, a complete stranger to her, and the woman who had taken away, (correcting herself) reclaimed, the man, who, as you say, she was falling madly in love with...

NADIA

That's Katy Beth.

LI

She really is the sweetest little pretty thing.

NADIA

I know it doesn't make much sense, but I'm telling you, that's all just something that happened.

LI

Oh no, you had me from the start. Kathryn Elizabeth, you really are a charming little piece of rot.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(groggy, she pokes her head up)

You guys talking about me?

(then she immediately falls back asleep)

DEDAI walks over to LI, and begins tugging on LI's trenchcoat.

LI

Why is the kid in here?

NADIA

She said she was feeling sea sick.

LI

We're parked at the dock.

NADIA

Doesn't mean she can't feel sea sick.

DEDAI begins climbing LI's leg.

LI

Whatever. Can someone please excise this thing from my leg?

LI kicks DEDAI off her leg

DEDAI
Can I have a lollipop?

NADIA
The lollipops are in Dan's suit case honey. You'll have to wait.

LI places her trench coat on the table. She undresses until she is wearing only her underwear and bra. DEDAI stares up at LI.

DEDAI
(pointing to LI's chest)
What are those?

LI
These are breasts. You've never seen breasts?

DEDAI (copying LI)
Breasts.

LI
But nobody calls them breasts anymore, not in day-to-day conversation. So you should probably call them tits.

NADIA
We don't need to teach Dedai these words.

LI puts on the trench coat.

DEDAI
(repeating the word she's learned)
Tits.

NADIA
Dedai, don't say that word.

LI
It's fine. It's just something girls have. All girls have them, after all.

DEDAI
I don't have tits.

NADIA

Dedai, I mean it.

LI

No. You don't have tits.

DEDAI

But I'm a girl!

LI

There are plenty of girls who don't have tits. Earlier when I said all girls have tits, I misspoke. Young girls, such as yourself, typically do not have tits.

NADIA

You know, if you say it enough, she's gonna remember that word.

LI

Wringing a contradiction out of some language game. It's a good start, for finding some sense of meaning in the world. It's not an acceptable substitute for an unyielding deferment of certainty, and the diligent uncovering of further evidence— because eventually, with language games, you find yourself tumbling down a slippery slope and into a leaden wall, a painful wall to slam up against when the slope is so, so slippery, and if you insist on continuing along this track, kid, you'll just end up hitting the same wall that I once hit. There's better methods we've come up with at B.J.I.A.S, and if these methods are no longer proprietary by the time you're a grown woman with tits of her own, you should consider employing them in your own quest for purpose and meaning. That is, if you and your tits mean to get to the bottom of things, I mean really get to the bottom of things, and uncover the hidden truths that lurk beyond some of the more absurd governing principles that play out their tendencies in a universe that has somehow managed to give rise to the likes of you and me and our tits.

LI turns away from stage front. She removes her bra and underwear and drops them upon the desk. The THREE TEACHERS ogle her body. She ties the trench coat, and then turns back around to face DEDAI. DEDAI stares up at LI.

DEDAI
Can I have a lollipop?

LI
Now, be gone. I've said all I can say.

DEDAI
I want a lollipop.

LI
I mean it. Fuck off, kid.

The THREE TEACHERS sound off in a cacophony of indignation.

FEMALE TEACHER 1
How dare she speak that way to a child!

FEMALE TEACHER 2
The shame! Who does she think she is? Lady Jesus?
Giving us The Sermon on her Mounds.

FEMALE TEACHER 3
Chugging wine like it's grape juice, in front of a
child.

The shouting wakes KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
How long was I out?

The THREE FEMALE TEACHERS return to their previous activities,
shaking their heads in disapproval as they settle down.

NADIA
Two hours.

LI
Katy Beth!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (confused)
Don't call me that.

LI (changing gears)
Now that you're here with us, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Seriously, don't call me that.

LI

Why, on this night, did you decide, of all nights, to come aboard the Brig Pilgrim?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(still waking up)

You know why I'm here.

LI

Tell us, you're not here to beg the lawyer to marry you, instead of the teacher Nadia, are you?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

She does this, Nadia. Just ignore her. I'm engaged, I'll have you know, to my own fiance. Well, I might be engaged... to a nice young man, a doctor.

LI jots something on her pad. NADIA becomes concerned, staring at the floor.

NADIA

Oh, God.

LI (to NADIA)

It could be a coincidence.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

He comes into the Ocean Institute every Tuesday and he buys these pelican figurines for his grannie.

NADIA

Pelican figurines? (then, to LI) I'm starting to connect the dots.

LI (aside)

Connecting the dots: a slippery slope.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (continues)

He has a fine taste in crafts. I find that attractive in a man.

LI studies NADIA's face. NADIA lets out a long, deep sigh. LI jots another note.

NADIA

(in a calm, comforting tone; she almost seems sympathetic)

I know why you're here, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (to LI, sternly)

Only Nadia can call me that.

NADIA (continuing)

I know why you're here... You're looking for that whale, the one the First Mate was rambling on about. It's no coincidence that she's looking for a whale and the first mate says there's one out there in the harbor.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Yes, that one. Except it's not a whale.

NADIA

When he was talking about that invisible will or whathaveyou, I remember well, he brought up the whale too.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's a shark.

LI

A Greenland shark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Of undetermined species.

LI

Or a whale of undetermined species.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not a whale; we know that, for sure.

NADIA

The first mate seemed very certain that it was a whale. You'd have thought he'd seen it with his own eyes, the way he said it, when he said it was a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You can sound real sure of something, but it doesn't mean you know what the hell you're talking about, you know, not really.

LI

I came here to find a Greenland shark. That was my bias, and I'll admit it. However, I will agree with the teacher here, that the first mate was incredibly convincing when he spoke about that creature out there in the harbor and said with such heartrending certainty that it was a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The sample in our lab had scales.

NADIA

So?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So it can't be a whale!

NADIA

Maybe some type of whale that has a scale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh yah, or is it a shark who's fin hit the mark?

LI

Or maybe a dolphin who... fuckin'... went... golfin'? I picked a bad fish. Nothing rhymes with dolphin.

NADIA

Oh. Ha, ha! You're making fun of me. You are, aren't you? Oh, yah, I get it. Nadia's not a scientist like us. She's not college-educated like us two women. So let's pick on her for being the nincompoop in this conversation among the educated, is that right?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (sympathetic)

Oh, no. Nadia!

NADIA (almost seething)

It's a good thing she's getting married!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(sympathetic, but she can't help but find some humor in NADIA's outburst)
Oh my god! Come on, Nadia. We were just playing around.

NADIA (solemn)
It doesn't feel good.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(sympathetic, kind)
I love you. Whales don't have scales, not a one of them. It's a rather useless piece of information if you're not a marine biologist. But hey, now you know. The sample in my lab, it's got the scales.

NADIA (still confused)
So it can't be a shark?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(frustrated, but trying to be patient)
No! That means, it can't be a whale.

NADIA
(losing her patience, almost comical)
I'm confused, it's all so confusing.

LI
Always jumping to conclusions.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Say what now?

LI
I'm not so ready to make that jump, even if you are.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(as if expecting this by now)
Tell me more. Do tell.

LI
I'm not saying you're wrong, or that the first mate is right...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(glares at LI with annoyance, drowsy by now)

Or that the first mate is right? It was his opening monologue. He's a well-known actor!

LI

Yes, but even you'll have to admit, there is a disparity. We should try to keep an open mind.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That doesn't make any sense, dude. Even by your standards.

LI

Why do things always have to make sense with you? (to NADIA) Something in her childhood, I'm sure. (then to KATHRYN ELIZABETH) Did your father ever, you know... (she points towards her own genitals)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What the fuck? What kind of question is that?

LI

The constant need for order. MAKING SENSE, at the expense of everything else, perhaps, sometimes, at the expense of the truth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(incredibly frustrated by now)

How do you expect to understand the world when you refuse every opportunity where you might be able to make some sense of it?

LI

(remaining calm and cool)

Because you're missing so much that's right in front of you, rejecting anything and everything that, to use your phrasing, "doesn't make sense, dude." If I were to tell you that the doctor, Jack, your fiance, was once the fiance of your closest friend, Nadia... Would you say that too doesn't make any sense?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (defeated)

Nadia?

NADIA (apologetic)

Katy Beth...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (defeated)

No...

NADIA, hesitating, nods her head up and down

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Don't give her this one.

NADIA

Jack and I were together for six years. We were engaged to be married.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Six years!

NADIA

Six long years.

LI

Is it a whale? Is it a shark? We don't know.

NADIA

I'm almost sure it's a whale out there.

DEDAI

A shark is a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (gently explaining)

No, honey. A shark is a shark, and a whale is a whale. A whale is a mammal, and you're also a mammal. The whale is a mammal like you, Dedai.

DEDAI

I'm a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(disappointed in herself)

Shit. No... You're not a whale. You're a mammal. And the whale is also a mammal.

DEDAI (excited)

I'm a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not like that, Dedai. One group of ancient mammals became human, and another group swam out into the ocean and turned into whales.

DEDAI

I'm gonna turn into a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(alarmed, but also finding the child's imagination adorable)

Oh, no!

NADIA

(takes a sip of wine)

I don't care for it. (she takes another drink) I'm a human being, damn it. Of course, that's not enough for these scientists telling us how to live out our lives. The rest of us just want to live in a world of humanity, you know. That's all we care for: a world of humanity, where we can all live on with the consequences of being human.

DEDAI

I want a lollipop!

NADIA

No lollipop, Dedai. We'll get you one later.

DEDAI

If you don't give me a lollipop I'll turn into a whale!

LI

Now, that would be absurd.

DEDAI

I'll turn into a whale. And I'll sink the ship!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, my god, you're so adorable.

LI, KATHRYN ELIZABETH and NADIA look down at DEDAI.

LI

But she'll be plain when she grows up, you can tell.

NADIA

(solemn, looking at KATHRYN ELIZABETH)
I have hope for Dedai. (then with levity, looking at DEDAI) Her dad has a great ass.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (laughing)

Nadia!

NADIA

Her mom's got tits that all the other moms envy; tits that give the other dads dreams. All natural, grass-fed, massive tits.

TEACHER 3

Ladies!

DEDAI

(copying NADIA)
My dad has a great ass!

TEACHER 2 (snarky)

Hope you're happy.

NADIA

Shit.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, no! Undo! Delete. Revert to factory settings!

NADIA

Hey Dedai, can you spell your name for me?

DEDAI

D-E-D-A-I

LI

Is this how you make them forget?

NADIA

We'll see if it works. Hey Dedai, can you sing the ABC's for us?

DEDAI

A_B_C_D_E_F_G_H_I_J

(she forgets the rest)

NADIA

Oh, that's good enough. Sing that part again.

DEDAI

A_B_C_D_E

NADIA

F

DEDAI

F_G!

(she forgets the rest)

LI

(mocking DEDAI)

And she doesn't even get a lollipop.

ACT III
MADNESS AND TIME

SCENE I.

The first mate's cabin. The spear from Proompt's harpoon is stuck firmly in the stage right wall. Banana gunk covers the clothes and hair of both CRICKET and DAN. The gunk is pretty much everywhere in the room. The huge pile of bananas that previously covered the dresser is no more. CRICKET cowers against the wall, stage left. DAN is pulling on the harpoon-spear, attempting with all his might to loosen the object from the unyielding grip of the stage right wall.

DAN

I'll say it again. That was my bad.

CRICKET

Holy shit!

DAN

I need to get me one of these. How much you think this thing set Davies back?

CRICKET (losing his shit)

There is banana sludge all over the place. Proompt's gonna kill us both when he gets back. He's got a gun, you know.

DAN (enjoying himself)

I think I'd take this thing any day over that civil war-era revolver he's carryin' about there on his hip.

CRICKET

Why are you playing around? Proompt isn't playing around. Proompt shot at us earlier today. Just because some of the men were goofing off, Proompt shot at us.

DAN

Davies shot someone?

CRICKET

First Mate Proompt. Don't get me into the habit of calling him Davies, damn it. Proompt shot right past Ponc's head.

DAN

It was probably a blank. How long since he left for, you know, wherever he went.

CRICKET

The bath—, not the bathroom. Don't want that lecture again. The powder room.

DAN

Yah. How long since he left to take a shit?

CRICKET

I don't know. Ten minutes ago he left.

DAN

You can relax, Cricket. It's John Davies. This is what he does.

CRICKET

(with the fear of God in his voice)

He's not John Davies. He's Proompt, a first mate who happens to have great authority aboard this ship... Godlike authority. This is how first mates were back in the 1800s, and Proompt, whether you agree or not, is this brig's mate.

DAN

So here's how we handle this. You're gonna help me clean up these banana guts. We'll be polite to "Proompt" and apologize for the mess we've made.

CRICKET

That YOU made.

DAN

For the mess we made.

CRICKET (sternly)

Leave me out of this.

DAN

That way Davies won't feel forced to follow through with his Proompt character's zeal for punishing instances of, you know, shit like this. And everything will be honky dory. Got it?

PROOMPT (offstage, hostile)

Cricket! Why do I see no semblance of torchlight coming from the sailors' quarters? The men snore and

appear to still be fast asleep! Cricket, wherefore sleepeth my crew, damn you? (short pause, then more violent) Cricket!

CRICKET

Oh, God! Proompt told me to wake the children. Move!

CRICKET runs out. DAN removes his shirt and begins using it to wipe away the banana gunk from the harpoon spear. He then places the instrument back inside the duffle bag. He slides the apples over to where the stack of bananas used to be, in order to cover the hole he's made in the wall.

PROOMPT

(offstage, as the door opens)

Cricket!

Enter PROOMPT, He is in a state of shock and horror as he looks upon the condition of his cabin.

PROOMPT (exasperated)

What fruity hell is this? Are we under attack? That'll teach me to buy my dessert bananas from an Alto California savage. He sees me in my livery and tries to take advantage of my first mate's salary. Then he has the gall to send me off with produce from his self-combusting stock.

DAN

I never heard of exploding bananas before.

PROOMPT

I've only come across them once myself, when I was still a young man working as a crew member aboard a merchant vessel. We stopped by the eastern coast of Jamaica to restock on supplies and procure some special tobacco, the important things, young sailor. It was there I saw my first and only banana combust into its elemental aromas and vapors. Until now! Did you see it combust?

DAN

I did. It got all over me, as you can see. The East side of Jamaica, huh? Which port was that?

PROOMPT

Puerto Anton.

DAN

That doesn't exist. (aside) Does it?

PROOMPT

Are you sure, sailor?

DAN

Never heard of it.

PROOMPT

Do you know Kingston? I'm sure you do. It's north of Kingston. Have you ever sailed Jamaica?

DAN

No, can't say I've *sailed* there.

PROOMPT

That's why you've never heard of it. Your reason for being in my quarters? Nobody should enter a first mate's quarters without the mate's express permission.

DAN

The other guy let me in.

PROOMPT

The other guy?

DAN

Your second mate, he gave me permission...

PROOMPT

Cricket?

DAN

I asked if I could come in, and he said sure. Then the bananas just, bam, exploded.

PROOMPT

Surely, Cricket knows better. He'll be disciplined. Where's your shirt, sailor?

DAN

Is there a dress code?

PROOMPT

If you're not aloft in the rigging, then you'll dress as if you were in a woman's company. That's the dress code. You're inside the Brig Pilgrim. I won't have my sailors offend the vessel by walking up and down her halls like you're stromping about some cheap brothel in the Dakota Territory.

DAN

What you were doing in the powder room, that doesn't offend the vessel at all, right?

PROOMPT

(he spots CRICKET in the hallway)

Cricket! I see you, Cricket. Get back here and clean up this mess. There's been a war in here between apple and banana stock, and the apples seem to have made a most decisive conquest. Cricket!

CRICKET enters, with a mop and a modern-day industrial mop-bucket: bright yellow plastic, metal wheels.

PROOMPT

(outraged, as if bodily offended by the anachronism)

What torture rack holds your broom in this barrow of water? It's been painted in such an obscene hue of yellow! I'll have no broom sopping its wet filth around my quarters. Get it out.

CRICKET exits with the mop bucket. CRICKET re-enters. PROOMPT retrieves some filthy rags from under his bed, and hands them to CRICKET.

PROOMPT

Cricket, here. Get to work. If you want something done right, do it with your own two hands. No dripping brooms. I want the odor gone, too much sweetness is putting a strain on my nostrils. The sugars dissipated in the air have set the deepest innards of my nose aflame.

PROOMPT, exasperated by the smell, sits down in his chair.

DAN (aside)

This might be a little more difficult than I was anticipating. Davies is really dug in deep. There's one method, a method that's tried and true. It's quick, it works, and there's not much to it. There are some more nuanced methods for getting a person to break character, of course, but, I mean... why not start off with something simple... the old dependable?

DAN lifts his leg up slightly, and rips a loud, roaring fart. PROOMPT slides down into the seat of his chair, and his entire face is cartoonishly aghast.

PROOMPT

My nostrils, they are beset on two fronts. The sweet, and the foul.

DAN limps slowly away. PROOMPT whips DAN upon the back, and DAN hies towards the exit. As DAN is exiting, LI casually passes him by. LI stands up on the front edge of PROOMPT's chair, and opens her trench coat. It is implied that she is gyrating her bare genitals in front of PROOMPT's face.

PROOMPT

Smooth as a seal's nose! Ah! And there's a third front. The musky aroma drowns out the others, and it mesmerizes... ah, so, ah...

PROOMPT dozes into a brief dream-like state. LI ties her jacket back up, and then begins to dismount from the chair. Before she can get down, PROOMPT snaps out of his trance, and lunges upwards, throwing LI with all his might against the stage right wall. LI stands up promptly, and she faces PROOMPT. They stand as if readying for a duel.

PROOMPT

No! Be gone you crimson fleshed, you beautiful, nymph, breath of hypnotic air, I will not vouchsafe myself to the subtleties of your luring, your base erotic desires. This is my vessel!

LI

Your vessel will be mine whether you permit it or not.

LI opens up her trench-coat again, and flashes her breasts and genitals.

LI

Subtle, am I?

PROOMPT clutches his chest and falls into his chair, exasperated. PROOMPT takes hold of his whip, and raises it in the air. LI runs out, laughing. She slams the door behind her.

PROOMPT (violently)

Cricket!

PROOMPT turns violently towards CRICKET who cries out in horror, cowering behind the bed.

SCENE II.

The main hallway.

DAN

You know, I've always wanted to meet a Chinese spy, so I could live out this little fantasy of mine.

LI

You have a fantasy, do you?

DAN

Yah, where I put my hands around the guy's neck and I squeeze harder and harder until his head pops like a grape.

LI

I'm not a spy.

DAN

I don't care what you call yourself.

LI takes DAN's hands and places them around her neck

LI

You've had your fantasies. I've had mine. I've always wanted to meet a big strong American ape like you. I've desired to see the expression on your face when you realize, I'm nothing more than a small, delicate lily, waiting upon the water.

DAN

I really will choke you.

LI runs away.

DAN

Ah, those legs.

Exit DAN. Enter JACK from stage left and NADIA from right. JACK turns away from NADIA, and reaches for the door handle.

NADIA

I had a dream you died.

JACK

Was it a pleasant dream?

JACK turns back around and faces NADIA.

NADIA

I know why you're here. I think you should leave before things get real messy. One of us might get hurt tonight. Probably you.

JACK

I can't leave.

NADIA

You can jump into the ocean.

JACK

I considered it. You know I did, don't you?

NADIA

You're a farce.

JACK

You're drunk.

NADIA and JACK look at one another with disgust. Suddenly, NADIA pulls herself towards JACK and forces an embrace. NADIA kisses JACK upon the lips.

NADIA

Nothing.

JACK

Fortunate for you.

JACK breathes out into NADIA's face

NADIA
What's the matter with you?

JACK
Can you smell it?

NADIA
What?

JACK
The vomit.

NADIA
(looking upon JACK with condescension)
Ha!

JACK spits some vomit on the floor.

NADIA
You really did vomit? Oh, you're a real piece of work,
Jack.

They stare at one another with disgust. JACK kisses NADIA, and they embrace for a few moments. NADIA pushes JACK away, wiping tears from her eyes.

NADIA
The dream was nice while it lasted, wasn't it?

NADIA passes JACK, and exits stage left. JACK exits via the left door. KATHRYN ELIZABETH enters stage right, holding DEDAI by the hand.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (downtrodden)
Oh, Nadia. Do you really not believe that anything you sequester away in your private keep I couldn't just steal it all back, with an ease that should be terrifying to you?

The left door opens unexpectedly, and DAN walks out. KATHRYN ELIZABETH hides under the tricorne hat, and walks towards the

right door. DAN grabs KATHRYN ELIZABETH by the elbow, pulling her face to face with him.

DAN

You know, there's a difference...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(interrupting)

There is!

DAN

Between...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (interrupting)

Between what?

DAN

Between refusing...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (interrupting)

Refusing who?

DAN (frustrated)

Would you shut up for a goddamn...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (defiant)

How long?

DAN (remaining calm)

There's a difference between refusing to meet somebody, and snubbing that someone when you happen to encounter them live and in person.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Aw, I'm a somebody?

DAN

A whole year together. A nice little time capsule, stored away in our memories. If one of us were to just snub the other person, a whole year after the whole thing was sealed and stowed away...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Okay, Dan. Hello, Daniel. Have a good evening, Daniel.

She begins to walk away.

DAN

So you're gonna snub me after all that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Do you know what my last memory is of us?

DAN

Come on. I told you time and time again...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (returning)

You said one thing with your words, and something very different with your body. Your emotions can speak volumes. Can I go now?

She begins to ascend the stairs.

DAN (shouting after her)

Well, now that we're in the middle of a conversation, there's no need to rush off... Unless you gotta, you know, hit the powder room, as they say in the 1840s. (short pause) That means take a shit.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offended)

No.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH stops at the bottom of the stairs and turns back towards DAN.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We were never as sincere as Jack and Nadia, were we?

DAN

You don't want to be that sincere.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If it was that sincere, you really think it's something two people can just put behind them?

DAN

Well, I suppose there would have to be feelings, of some sort, you know, like that shell left behind where those feelings used to live. Enough to know that the other person is still a part of you, but minor in comparison to how they once lit up the night sky. It's

like the way I feel about you. You know what I mean.
I'm sure you have those feelings too.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
I have no feelings for you.

DAN
I mean the minor ones.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Not even.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH touches his chest lightly, as if apologizing.

DEDAI
I'm bored.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Me too. Can you take her, dude?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH passes DEDAI off to DAN.

DAN
Sure. I should go help Nadia round up the other kids
for the night watch.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Alright. (noticing DAN seems upset) Are you okay?

DAN
You feel nothing? Nothing? Come on. Nothing?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Not a thing. Do you want me to lie?

DAN
No, I don't want you to lie.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Then I won't.

DAN
You see, this is why. It's marred now.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
I know. I'm sorry.

DAN

You shouldn't be sorry. I should go.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I shouldn't be. But then again, I won't lie. I'm sorry.

DEDAI

Can I have a lollipop?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Man, this girl is really into lollipops.

DAN

Good for her. You're gonna be popular with the boys some day, aren't you, Dedai?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Pervert.

DAN

That's why Robert Riggles designed the lollipop the way he did, to look like the head of a penis.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What?

DAN

Don't come at me and call me a pervert, just for knowing a little trivia about corporate history in this great country of ours. It's important to know some of that history when you're part of that lineage.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Bullshit alert. Bullshit alert.

DAN

No. Get this. In consumer testing...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Bullshit alert.

DAN

In consumer testing, Rob Riggles concluded that girls found that the whatsitcalled kind of shape—you know,

Saturn and the ring— to be more appealing than any of the alternatives: spherical, concave, oblong. The only model that tested better was the lollipop that was an exact candied replica of Riggles's own penis.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(she bursts into laughter)

Okay, definitely bullshit.

DAN

Look it up. I swear on my marriage, it's the truth. They felt the Saturn ring wasn't as overtly sexual as the Riggles penis model, whether that's with or without the cock-ring.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh my god, your poor marriage.

DAN

And so they went with that Saturn-plus-rings molding, since it would make the Riggles company less vulnerable to lawsuits from *certain mothers*. You know what sort I mean.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I have no idea what you mean.

DAN

The type who might be confused by their lusting for the lollipop in the shape of Riggles' genitalia and their outrage about the how the lollipop is prematurely sexualizing their prepubescent daughters.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm gonna look that up when I get back to the lab. I think you're fabricating again. How'd you get so good at fabricating?

DAN

It's only fabricating until it becomes agreed upon by the majority, then it's the truth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You and I never had a good understanding on the difference between fabrication and truth.

DAN

The advertisers for Riggles Corp, they do what they do for a reason. You never see a middle aged fat chick with hirsutism sucking the lollipop on the Riggles posters, do you?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Is Riggles a real brand? Why do I feel, out of left field, that Riggles is a real brand of lollipops? Get the hell out of my head.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH begins to leave

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's a lesson, not emotions that I've stored up in my own time capsule. Goodbye, Dan, goodbye. Goodbye, goodbye. I've gotta head up to the deck. I should start looking for my shark.

DAN

It's a shark then? I've been telling everyone it's a whale out there.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH laughs and begins to walk away. Before she reaches stage right, KATHRYN ELIZABETH turns back towards DAN.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dan, what's the legal definition of madness?

DAN

Having thoughts or ideas that are outside the, I don't know, *purview* of social harmony. If you want the legalese you can look that up too, when you're researching the Riggles Corp.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's a sick sort of social harmony aboard this ship.

DAN

Well, you know, like, who gives a fuck. You do what you gotta do to, well...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

To what?

DAN

To, you know, fucking...

DAN points his fingers, in the shape of a gun, in KATHRYN ELIZABETH's general direction. DAN pulls recoils his hand back, as if shooting his finger-gun.

DAN

Kill.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH laughs, playfully

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Ride on, Cowboy.

Exit DAN, through the far left door

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The Greenland shark, how does such a dumb, cold, slow-moving shark take its bite out of a lightning-quick seal? Maybe the shark doesn't have to rely on its natural abilities. Not its speed. Not its appearance. Not even its intelligence. It has none of those. Perhaps, all the shark has to do is convince the world around it, as it dreams on there for 500 years, that it's as harmless as a rock, planted on the bottom of the ocean. The seals swim over to the rock, and one may even look for shelter under that frigid body, not realizing until it's been caught by the dreamer... that it has wandered into a place where none in their right mind should have ever dared to adventure, risking it all: life, limb, everything the seal loved; everything the seal only thought it loved.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH exits stage right

SCENE III.

The deck of the Brig Pilgrim. All is black, except for a sliver of moonlight, and a box of light coming up from the stairwell. KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI sit on the starboard side of the ship overlooking the harbor water. LI is wearing her flannel top and shorts from earlier.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I can see my bed in the moonlight.

LI

The moonlight on the water makes me nostalgic for my hometown.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's really dark. If it wasn't for the moonlight I don't think I'd be able to see my own feet.

LI

Is it usually this dark?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's probably a rolling blackout.

LI

Are we still in the harbor?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Yes.

LI

I can't see anything.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You can almost see a pale reflection there in the foam-line on baby beach.

LI

A beach for babies?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

A beach with no waves.

LI

How's that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The ocean is kept out by the jetty, the waves are banned.

LI

I don't hear waves colliding against a jetty.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I do. There!

LI

Nope.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Maybe.

LI

Maybe we've traveled through time.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Now that's a speedy conclusion.

LI

Just thinking out loud.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

In a way we have traveled back in time. This is probably what the harbor looked like back in 1835.

LI

Reminds me of a poem I read when I was a young girl. The poet wrote about falling asleep on his couch while staring at the tree in his courtyard, and then upon waking, he realized he was outside the whole time, resting under that tree, looking in on his couch, and his jug of wine.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

How'd you get out here?

LI laughs, and then KATHRYN ELIZABETH laughs along with her.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Do you have a problem?

LI

The universe has a problem.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What's that?

LI

It has no purpose, but to expand, and then end.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

How's that?

LI

The heat death of the universe is coming on, faster than we can appreciate. Time is relative and a trillion years can dissipate in an instant. Spacetime will fracture, and there will be no heat, no information, no meaning.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You can't go on thinking things like that.

LI

When little pockets of the universe develop some momentary sentience or even, you know, intelligence, as you and I have here, we should do whatever we can to drink up all the pleasure that we can manage, while time permits.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You need to have a little faith in the universe.

LI

It's irrational.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I think you have a problem.

LI

There are a few downsides to being raised with no religion. You have no story to fall back on.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I was raised a Christian, but that's not what I fall back on. There are other things. I have my family.

LI

Purged.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, that's right. I'm sorry. (she quickly attempts to change the subject) We've transported through time, you say. What's your theory?

LI

I can't.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's 1840. Don't make me get Dan up here. He'll tell you all about how there's this thing called terms of endearment (malaprop: statute of limitations), that says if an event happens so many years ago..

LI

Stop. (short pause), fine... B.J.I.A.S believes there are black holes.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Obviously.

LI

Millions of them.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

This is known.

LI

In the earth's oceans.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What!

LI

And we believe they're large enough, that they have sufficient mass, to allow for time dilation.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH laughs, and immediately feels guilty for laughing, noticing LI's discomfort.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm sorry.

LI

We've only explored 5% of the ocean.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

But black holes? Is that even possible?

LI

What do you mean?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Mathematically?

LI

We don't adhere to mathematics.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What! You don't believe in math?

LI

We use mathematics, but we aren't devoted to it. It's led scientists astray in the past.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What!

LI

$1 + 1 = 2$ is the most faithful function we know. $2 + 2$ is less so.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's 4!

LI

It's less stable though.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's 4!

LI

Not as often as $1 + 1$ is 2.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What!

LI

Once the numbers are large enough and the functions complex enough, believing in the output of a mathematical function is tantamount to undertaking a religious observance, since you'd be trusting the solutions based on formulas that are not purely logical.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What! But, dude. Black holes in the ocean? The math would have to be really wrong. I mean, really wrong.

LI

Once we find the things, the mathematicians can come along and figure out how all their little numbers fit our observations.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

But black holes... Millions of them?

LI

Thousands. Millions. We can't be sure.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You believe in numbers, I'll take it?

LI

Our evidence suggests that if they do exist, they exist in multitudes.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What evidence?

LI

It's proprietary.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Goddamn it. You do understand why I'm hesitant to believe in anything you say?

LI

The holes in the ocean, they're not the sort of holes we've studied in space. These would be massive enough to distort time, but too small to become stable for more than a few seconds.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

A black hole can slow down the flow of time, but it wouldn't take us back in time, not that I'm an expert in holes.

LI

I'm not telling you to believe it. I'm not convinced either. Keep an open mind.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If my mind opens any further, my sleepy little brain will spill out.

LI gets up, and stretches, and then looks around.

LI
I'm heading to the poop deck.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
The back of the ship?

LI
Is that where it is?

Exit LI.

LI (offstage)
The poop deck looks nice and quiet and dark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Careful it's not a black hole... or a bung hole.

LI (offstage)
What are you, five?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
I don't know, does 2 plus 3 make 30?

LI (offstage)
Don't embarrass yourself.

Enter JACK, from the stairs.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Why do they call it the poop deck?

JACK
It's from the French.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
French for what? Poop?

JACK
I have no idea what it means.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's where the French pop a squat and their asses start chirping "le poop, le poop, le poop."

JACK and KATHRYN ELIZABETH laugh

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's like a whole different way of living, on board a ship. The most rudimentary English, deleted, find and replace, no more left, no more right.

JACK

They still use left and right. I'm sitting to your right.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're sitting to my starboard. Wait, no. You're sitting aft of me. Also known as poop-ward.

JACK

No, I'm sitting to your right. The sailor uses words like port and starboard in situations when he's referring to the anatomy of his ship, in this case, his brig.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What makes it a brig?

JACK

It has two masts (he points with his finger): the main mast, and then a second mast, called the foremast, since it's in front of the main.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You really must be coming down here every week. You're almost like one of the crew now.

JACK

In medicine we take the same approach to human anatomy. More anatomical terms like distal, dorsal, anterior, replace up and down, back and front. It shows that the object is worthy enough to be categorized into its organizing parts and figured out. By giving an object, such as the poop deck, a name, you bring that object to life, and give it dignity.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Not much dignity.

JACK

The nomenclature takes a pile of wood and ropes and canvas and constructs a brig inside the minds of those who sail upon it, work upon it, live upon it.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Now that's what I feel like! In the minds of everyone else, a big pile of flesh and bone and brains.

LI (offstage)

And rot.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Go away.

JACK

Is she spying on us?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

She's trying to figure out how to time travel, is all.

JACK

Interesting.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No, really. She intends to travel through time.

JACK (matter of fact, philosophical)

To where? The present is all that exists.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What?

JACK

There is no past or future.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Since when?

JACK

Since now.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Who said so?

JACK

A man who lived many thousands of years ago.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You mean, like, in the past?

JACK

He was a man wiser than anyone here in our time, and who no longer exists, not here, not there, not in some place we've deemed the past.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Every second that passes, we're gradually creeping into the future. There it is, there we go: time traveling.

JACK

I'm afraid that's not the case. There is nothing out there: no comfort of belonging in the future, no comfort in knowing that the past will remain a part of us.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You always this chipper, man?

JACK

The present is like a ship, traveling through the ocean. The present is moving, but the past and future, it's all just water.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (distressed)

Jesus.

JACK

Do you happen to know if she has any intense preoccupations with her own mortality?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm gonna have PTSD after this conversation, dude. Who the hell we talking about?

JACK

The Chinese girl.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Li? A fear of death... I'd say.

JACK

There's this notion that the past is preserved on some shore. Time travel is a figment of this belief. But there are no shores. Just water.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'd say you might be preoccupied with your own mortality too. What do you want me to do with this information, jump off the ship?

JACK

It's funny.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Finally, something funny.

JACK

When you're healthy, you're mostly preoccupied with your own mortality, but when you're sick, you become more concerned about the people you'll be leaving behind. Your preoccupation with your own mortality subsides. You're just ready to move on.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

How's that funny?

JACK

I try to remind myself that everyone I know will be dead soon, so it really doesn't matter that much.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Fuck me. Where's the punchline? In the future? The one that doesn't exist?

JACK

There's something about you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That's nice. We've been talking a lot.

JACK

What else is there, stuck on a tall ship, but to talk?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You could kiss me.

JACK

You want me to kiss you?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're here, so it might as well be you.

JACK

I am the one who's here, and you're also here.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, Jack.

JACK

And you look so stunning, there, with the soft moonlight combing through your hair.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You don't always get a second opportunity at romance these days. If it does come along, you take it.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH leans forward and closes her eyes. She puckers her lips, and waits patiently to receive the kiss. JACK overshoots KATHRYN ELIZABETH's lips, and delivers a modest kiss upon her forehead.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (playfully)

On the forehead! Well, don't wait up for me Jack if I faint on you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH falls upon the deck and lies there for a moment. JACK stands up and exits. KATHRYN ELIZABETH doesn't know that JACK has left.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm starting to envy the harbor fish and the way the pelicans eat them up so passionately.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH sits up and looks around.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (confused)

Jack? Did you really just leave?

Enter LI

LI

Any progress?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No... and no shark sitings down here either.

LI

We're not really here looking for a shark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You seem to be confused.

LI

No, you are. We're trying to get you laid.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

And here I am, engaged.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH stands up and takes three steps backwards. She trips and falls into a giant vat of fish guts. The tricorne hat falls to the deck, remaining dry.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What is this? Has the harbor laid a trap for me?

LI

No, it's that vat of fish guts. I almost fell in earlier.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Did we stray too far outside of time, Jack?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH climbs out of the vat. LI appears offended by the smell.

LI

Jack left. You don't remember?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Then who's that?

LI

That's the mast. Is your head okay?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The mast? Which one, main mast or foremast?

LI

I don't know. The front one.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Foremast!

(addressing the mast)

Good! Announce to the pelicans out there in the harbor, my good man, that there's an all you can eat smorgasbord aboard the Brig Pilgrim. Let them know, my good man, and advise them, they should come get some of me while it lasts, because there's not much of me. My only stipulation is that they take the stench of the harbor back with them. That's the memo, dispatch it promptly, my good man.

LI picks up a small rope from the floor and ties it around KATHRYN ELIZABETH's left wrist.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(continuing, to the mast)

What's that? A fine question, my good man. The pelicans wouldn't see me at all. It's nice to have a good man looking out for a good prince. Send out the dispatch: we've modified our menu. They can have the fish guts, but they are to leave my rot alone, since that's for another to notice.

LI

Come with me. You're talking to a pole.

LI leads KATHRYN ELIZABETH towards the stairwell

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm fine. Is it time for the watch? I had to get something off my chest. It's gone now.

LI

It's still there. Try not to look down.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH touches the fish head tucked between her breasts

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You mean this, Li?

LI

Oh, god. Let's find you a shower.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Ah, it's fine, Li. Don't be startled. If I can't settle for a man, then I can settle for a fish.

LI

Its head at least.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What are you, friend, a shad, shiner, trout? Announce yourself!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH pulls out the fish head

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Ah! Claudius.

LI

Claudius?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The minnow. I knew him well, Li.

LI

I really hope not.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The minnows in his troupe were always such a serious lot, subservient to a tee, ever adhering to the will of the school that moved about their smaller noses. But not Claudius, no. He was a fish of infinite jest, who swam at the front line, and with just one quip could send the whole school into a frenzied rupture, and put every shrunken brain in mortal jeopardy. His bravado and good humor got them through the oil spill and the second oil spill, but alas...

(holding up the fish head)

it seems you didn't make it much longer. You couldn't have been far past your seventh year.

LI

You're talking to a minnow's head, which means you must have hit your own. I'll call for the doctor. Let's get you to a bed.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Get thee to a nunnery, Horatio. The Prince of Denmark has more pressing matters.

LI

You're losing blood from your head.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's the sport, Horatio. Blood may be drawn, but fret not, for I won't be dying of the insult.

LI

Let's get you to a bed.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Li, did something hit me?

LI

Is Katy Beth back?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm ready to strike!

LI

Ten seconds ago you thought you were the Prince of Denmark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We're no longer in the year 1840, are we?

LI

We might be.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Ha! You're the one losing her mind.

LI

I'll take you to that nunnery.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The minute you walked in it wouldn't be a nunnery anymore, you lascivious whore. I'm sorry. Nymph is your calling! Do what you must.

LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH walk into the light of the stairwell

LI

Oh, god. I'm gonna puke.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(holding up the fish head)

What's this? A fish head?

LI

Seriously, stop. Why are you still holding that?

Exit LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offstage)

Why's he look so familiar? Hold him for me?

LI (offstage)

Oh god. I'm gonna blow. Let's see if they have any running water down here.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offstage)

I saw a mop bucket in the hallway.

The central box of light is all that remains upon the blackened deck. The shouting and hollering of children is heard coming from below deck.

ACT IV
THE NIGHT WATCH

SCENE I.

The deck. Same as before. A few moments pass, and then the jangling of PROOMPT's whip is heard. Enter PROOMPT, via the stairwell. He occupies the box of light, which illuminates his face and costume with a sense of factitious grandeur.

PROOMPT

Ah!

PROOMPT takes a long, deep breath, and he appears refreshed by the air.

PROOMPT (to himself)

The open sea! Night, fallen in all directions. Darkness, and silence all, and water. The seafarer returns to the deep reaches of the ocean, and the night falls, awakens in him doth the most refined and subtlest of his hibernating senses: the brush of wind like gullfeathers 'gainst his cheek, the rhythmic heaving of the currents carrying about in their muffled commutations: Southwards! First Baja! Then Peru, and Patagonia. The Land of Fire! In the heavens, dark-bellied angels on the verge of slumber tease him with a frenzy of winks. 'tis all left to us, 'tis all, 'tis all, to bring assurance to the seafarer: though forsaken of land, still he be. The seafarer's senses wait in recess like a monk in diligent study of his books, perchance, to be reawakened, when another sailor calls out that pair of words, those words which can beckon forth the utmost efficiency of his crew, the words...

CRICKET (offstage, interrupting)

Goddamn it!

PROOMPT

Were those the words? I think not.

A commotion is heard coming from below.

PROOMPT

(looking down into the stairwell)

Cricket, have I lost you?

CRICKET

(in the stairwell)

Sorry, Mate Proompt. This thing has to weigh a good hundred pounds.

Enter CRICKET, carrying the harpoon, harpoon mount, and two marlin spears.

CRICKET

Good god! I'm dead.

Enter THE CHILDREN. THE CHILDREN immediately exit stage right and stage left. Enter PONC, and STAMO, followed by DAN, and then NADIA, who is holding hands with AIDO, a seven year old boy.

NADIA

I can't see a thing. Do you have a flashlight, Dan?

DAN

Why would I have a flashlight, Nadia?

NADIA

You know what I mean. Your phone, Dan.

DAN

You told me not to bring my phone. You think the sailors had cell phones, Dan. Keep that shit out of 1840. They've got enough problems. You remember?

NADIA

That sounds like something I'd say.

DAN

Is it usually this dark?

PONC

It's a rolling blackout. It happens from time to time.

DAN

Never seen it this dark.

PROOMPT

Fifteen miles, in all directions, water. No torch or campfire, no laments from sleepless cattle, no lighthouse to beckon us hurry home, not a homemade stew with beef and one hearty potato in it, awaiting us at the local inn, our favorite hostess greeting us

at the counter with smile genuine as smiles do come. Black waters consumed by the black skies, and then us sailors, in the middle of it all. The open seas, what life! We're home, my fellow seamen.

DAN

(to NADIA, but loud enough for PROOMPT to overhear)

I'm pretty sure we're still in the harbor. Come here, Nadia. If you squint hard enough, you can still see the edge of the dock. It's barely visible, but there it is. That slither of light. That's the dock.

PROOMPT doesn't respond.

NADIA

Daniel! Play along. I mean it.

AIDO

I see the dock!

NADIA

Fix that while you're at it, will you? Don't ruin this for the children. That's what I want preprogrammed into your little lawyer brain, Dan.

DAN

Jesus. (he picks up AIDO) Hey Aido, do you see it? Do you see the dock?

AIDO

I do.

NADIA

Daniel! He does NOT see it.

DAN

Yah, calm your horses. Watch and learn, my lady. This is why they pay me the big bucks. Say Aido, you know why you see the edge of the dock there?

AIDO

The dock!

DAN

Because why?

AIDO

Because... the dock. It's there.

DAN lifts AIDO and holds the boy against his chest. They gaze off the port side of the ship.

DAN

Hey Aido, look at the moon. (AIDO looks up) Okay? Still looking at it? Now close your eyes. (AIDO does as told). Keep them closed. Now look down to where the dock used to be. Keep your eyes closed! Don't open them until I tell you. Now open your eyes. What do you see in the water?

AIDO opens his eyes, and becomes excited

AIDO

The moon!

DAN

The moon! What? The moon is in the water?

AIDO

No!

DAN

Do you know what eyes do when they don't see anything and they go to sleep Aido?

AIDO

Dream?

DAN

That's right. They dream about the very last thing they looked at. What's the last thing your eyes looked at on this side of the ship, when your eyes were still awake?

AIDO

(excited that he knows the answer)

The dock!

DAN

The dock. When we look over there we think we see a dock, but the dock isn't there anymore, is it? Nope. There's nothing, just the ocean.

AIDO looks down at the water

AIDO

There's nothing.

NADIA

Slow it down, Dan.

PROOMPT

Ponc, you're the one I'm relieving. How many miles do you reckon we've traveled since Cricket left you in command?

PONC

Not many.

PROOMPT

How many is not many?

PONC

Not many at all. We've traveled none.

PROOMPT

The real update, Ponc. Out with it. I haven't time for your jests and rakes. I have a watch to supervise. Your update, Third Mate Ponc!

PONC

We're moored to the dock. That's the update. The Brig Pilgrim is in the harbor, where it was yesterday, and the day before that.

NADIA

This man is a derelict, Dan. Do something.

CRICKET

(concerned for his own well-being)

Ponc is very tired, Mate Proompt. He may also be a bit drunk.

PONC

I can see the fucking dock.

NADIA

Dan!

DAN

(feigning confidence, loud enough for all
to hear)

We're at least 18 miles out into the Pacific.

PROOMPT

A promising young voice, and familiar to my ears,
though who he be, I can't put my nose to it, for I
can't see past it. Who speaks?

DAN

As someone who spent a good ten years on, you know,
pirate, um, sailing ships like this one here, I can
tell you, we're 18 miles out from the North American
mainland. My senses are attuned to the salt gradients.

PROOMPT

10 years experience, you say?

DAN

Ten long years, every year longer than the previous
one, or so it seemed.

PROOMPT

That is the way with the sea.

DAN

If you're finely attuned, as I am, from years and
years of tuning my senses, you can determine your
ship's precise distance from the continent. The
saltier the air gets, and the softer the ocean, you
know, hums.

PROOMPT

The ocean! Hums does it?

DAN

So as I smell the salt in the air, and listen to the
hum of the ocean, I can calculate with a high degree
of accuracy, that we're 18 miles...

PROOMPT

Nautical miles?

DAN

Nautical miles... from the American continent.

NADIA

You didn't really spend time aboard ships before you were a lawyer, right Dan?

DAN

No, Nadia. I'm playing along with it.

NADIA

Oh, keep it up. It's getting me in the mood.

DAN (to NADIA)

Do I look like I swing that way, sailor?

NADIA

Not at all.

PROOMPT

What a fine-tuned sailor, with ten years experience, and senses enviable. I won't have you as some common sailor. Ponc you're relieved of your duties. You there (to DAN), your name please?

DAN

Dan. Daniel Kernigan.

PROOMPT

Kernigan, a Mick, are you? You drunk as well, sailor?

DAN

That's besides the point. You should know, I function even better when I'm drinking.

PROOMPT

The only trustworthy Micks are the ones who fit such a description. How I know that well. Kernigan, you've been promoted to third mate.

DAN

(to NADIA, proud of himself)

Hear that, Nadia? I already got a promotion.

NADIA

Slow it down, Dan.

DAN

You alright, Nadia?

NADIA

Yes, but I'm starting to believe we're on the high seas.

NADIA laughs, a bit unsettled. DAN continues to fabricate, expertly.

DAN

We are on the high seas.

PROOMPT

Kernigan is right, sailors. Anything you think you see out there is certainly an illusion. That's but the simplest of many tricks the sea does play on the naive sailor.

DAN

If you fell for the illusion of the dock, you're bound to fall for any of the others.

PROOMPT

The nymph who enters your cabin, exposing her shivering genitals and dripping an ocean of herself upon the floor till your boots are logged..

NADIA covers AIDO's ears

PROOMPT (continuing)

Only to distract you, as a high roller swallows your crew, lusting, into the nymph's body, which is to say, the ocean, since she is but a trick the ocean plays.

NADIA

Are there Atlantic nymphs, and Pacific nymphs, and well, Indian nymphs, who'd come, of course, from the Indian Ocean?

PROOMPT

All nymphs, to my knowledge, are descended from the Greeks.

NADIA

I couldn't be a nymph then.

PROOMPT

Nymphs haven't the form immutable. A nymph could take the body of any woman. Your body even, can be mirrored. With clothes, sailor, or without clothes, as the nymph desires you to appear.

NADIA

Oh, he's taken my clothes off, Dan.

DAN

I told you I'm not into that sort of thing, sailor.

PROOMPT

I've seen a nymph change clothes and remain in the same body, or change body and remain in the same clothes. There are even some real hellhounds in the deeper parts of the ocean, nymphs who can change their form, not in a process, but in the blink of an eye.

Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH in the trench coat LI was previously wearing, along with LI, who is still wearing the checkered shirt with denim shorts. KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI hold hands as they walk.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Who the hell took my clothes, then?

LI

Beats me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're the one who wanted to get me into this damned trench coat in the first place. You've a motive, nymph.

LI

I told you it wasn't me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI exit stage right. PROOMPT catches sight of KATHRYN ELIZABETH's trench coat from behind.

PROOMPT

Oh, that black coat! I recognize it. Kernigan, I may have caught sight of one of these shape-shifting nymphs just now.

PROOMPT grabs one of the marlin spears

PROOMPT

Are your senses tunable to the musk of naiads by any chance? There's a salt component.

Exit DAN, following LI.

PROOMPT

Cricket, I'm off to poop (by which he means, the poop deck; CRICKET gives the Marlin spear a curious look). I want you to assemble the harpoon. When you're finished, mount it, and double, triple check that it's stable.

Exit PROOMPT.

NADIA (observing the harpoon)

That thing is safe, right? It's a prop?

CRICKET

It's not a prop.

NADIA

Of course you'd have to say that. And we're out at sea, too.

NADIA laughs

CRICKET

We're 18 miles out to sea.

NADIA becomes unsettled. Enter DEDAI.

DEDAI (to AIDO)

I'm gonna become a whale!

AIDO

You can't.

DEDAI

Yes, I can.

AIDO

You can't be a whale, Dedai! Dumb Dedai. Dedai's a dumb dumb.

NADIA

Hey! Enough!

AIDO

The scientist said so... Dedai can't become a whale. Dedai is stupid.

DEDAI

You're stupid!

NADIA

Oh did Kathryn Elizabeth tell you you couldn't become a whale, Dedai? You don't call girls stupid, Aido. It's a real rotten thing to call somebody.

AIDO

The scientist said...

NADIA (interrupting)

You listen here. Just because some scientist with a highfalutin degree tells you that something isn't possible, that doesn't mean it's true. If your dream is to become a whale, then don't stop believing you can do it, just because someone who thinks they understand this world better than you comes along and tries to convince you your dreams are foolish.

AIDO

So she can become a whale?

NADIA

(oblivious to AIDO's mental anguish)

Of course she can! Just don't become a whale on this ship, Dedai. We'll sink and we'll all be at the bottom of the ocean.

AIDO looks at DEDAI in terror.

DEDAI (taunting)

I'll sink this ship!

AIDO (worried)

Ms. Nadia, we need to throw Dedai in the water.

NADIA

We're not throwing anyone into the water.

AIDO

She'll sink us.

NADIA

Dedai, if I promise to go get you a lollipop, will you promise not to turn into a whale and sink the ship?

DEDAI (defiant, she shouts)

No!

DEDAI runs off. AIDO begins crying; he hugs NADIA's leg.

NADIA

It's okay, Aido. She's only acting out. Run along now. You're supposed to be on watch, whatever that means.

AIDO

No.

CRICKET drops a screwdriver, and the harpoon and the mount fall over, making a loud racket. CRICKET, frustrated calls out to AIDO.

CRICKET

Sailor!

AIDO doesn't answer, as he doesn't realize he's the one being called.

CRICKET

You! Sailor!

AIDO (he points to himself)

Me?

CRICKET (frustrated)

You're standing there during your shift, and you aint doing nothing. I need you. Come on, get over here.

AIDO begins to walk over, cautiously slow, towards CRICKET and the harpoon

NADIA

This is all starting to feel so strange. Moments ago I was convinced it was the year... Oh, what was that year? It's like I can almost believe it's the year 1840, and I'm aboard the Brig Pilgrim, and I'm 18 miles out into the pacific. Did I wake up here from that dream? Now look at me. I'm a common sailor, suffering my way through the 1840s. What came over me, to make me think I was in that other year, what year was it? When the truth is too absurd to believe, it doesn't make you a fool when you refuse to believe it.

CRICKET

What are you doing there, talking to yourself?

NADIA

Day dreaming is all.

CRICKET

No day-dreaming on the night watch! If you're on duty, you'll be working. You come help me too.

NADIA

It won't happen again, Second Mate. How can I be of help with the fishing equipment?

SCENE II.

On the poop deck. Enter DAN and PROOMPT, sprinting. KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI are nowhere to be seen.

PROOMPT

The temptress went that way!

DAN

How do you know? We lost them next to the kitchen thing... the galley.

PROOMPT

You're right, I don't know.

DAN

First you say she's that way, and then you tell me you have no idea where she is? What gives?

PROOMPT

The trappings of leadership. It's my obligation to project confidence to subordinates like you, Kernigan, even when I have my doubts. Congratulations, you've seen the frail biology of your mate.

DAN

You're gonna answer some questions for me, Davies.

PROOMPT begins to walk away from DAN. DAN grabs PROOMPT by the collar and pins him against the railing.

DAN

Here's why you'll answer whatever I ask you. It's because I'm bigger than you. I have a bet to win, and I intend to win it. I don't enjoy losing.

PROOMPT locks eyes with DAN.

PROOMPT

Some Davies, is it, that I'm meant to be?

DAN

When were you born?

PROOMPT

I promote you to third mate and here you are, already attempting mutiny against me!

DAN

When were you born? Out with it!

PROOMPT

Get your hand off me or I will have it removed by Chef Quigley. You would be shuddering right now, if you could only imagine the way he discards the heads of marlon.

DAN

You won't respond to force, I get it. So how about a deal. Answer my questions, and for the rest of the evening, you'll have my complete obedience. Tell me to

jump off the ship, I'll jump; no questions asked. A lapdog I'll be.

PROOMPT

A mutineer who promises loyalty! Am I going mad?

DAN

If you ever needed a wingman to really carry out a charade that was more real than the real itself, I can be your trickster, and convince the old reality that it's become a dud.

PROOMPT (perhaps breaking character)

Be careful when cracking an egg with an egg. You might get yolk on your shoe. Yours is such a nice shoe.

DAN (continues)

Now answer me: when were you born?

PROOMPT

Your threats have no hold on me. The promise, however, of your loyalty, I find enticing. I was born January 17th, 1804.

DAN

How old does that make you?

PROOMPT

Ha! 36.

DAN

Good job. Easy math. The first time you ever sailed? Age and year.

PROOMPT

In 1817... I was but 12 years old.

DAN

Who was president then?

PROOMPT

I don't know.

DAN

Ha!

PROOMPT

It may have been Madison. No, Monroe. We had a chef named Monroe and the sailors called him Pres... sailors like ourselves, we have the luxury to forget presidents and kings, or whomever the Gods decide should rule over that secondary domain of land.

DAN

So I guess you'd extend that defense to explain why it is you don't know who the president is today. I mean, in 1840.

PROOMPT

I know the year. I don't know who the president is. You and I have been on this ship for 11 months now. I'd suppose you don't know who the president is either. Tell me Kernigan, who's head of state over there on the American mainland?

DAN

In 1840?

PROOMPT

When else? Do you know?

DAN (aside, frustrated)

The defendant wins by cross-examining his prosecutor. What the hell is wrong with me? (to PROOMPT)

PROOMPT

You're my slave now, Kernigan.

DAN

Yah. We're not using that word.

PROOMPT

Jump off the ship, Kernigan.

DAN

I'm not done yet. (he thinks a moment) Your first voyage was in 1817. That's long before the Pilgrim was around. Tell me, before I count down from three, what was the first ship you sailed on?

PROOMPT

Well...

DAN

Name it, in three, two, one...

PROOMPT (scrambling)

The HMS Beagle!

DAN (suspicious)

The HMS Beagle? Hey! Isn't that the ship that Charles Darwin guy took, you know, when he went down to that island with the blue-footed boobies?

PROOMPT (aside)

Darwin! The Darwinian. Your paranoia is contagious. I suddenly suspect there's something quite off about Cricket's story.

DAN

So... HMS. That's a British ship, right?

PROOMPT

Yes, I know where you're going with this. I had to take a connecting voyage. How'd I hear about a job aboard some British ship, you'll ask me after. The classifieds in the newspaper, which I read in Boston.

DAN

Goddamn, he's good.

PROOMPT

How'd you hear about the Pilgrim's voyage?

DAN

My fiance.

PROOMPT begins laughing.

PROOMPT

You're funny, Kernigan. For that, I feel a little less inclined to send you into the grumbling bowels of the ocean.

DAN lets PROOMPT go. PROOMPT points his gun at DAN.

DAN

Get that thing out of my face.

PROOMPT

You're my slave for the night.

DAN

Your faithful dog. But conditions apply.

PROOMPT

What conditions?

DAN

One: you don't call me slave.

PROOMPT

Dog it is. And two?

DAN

You don't point weapons at me.

PROOMPT

Deal.

PROOMPT puts his gun back into the holster. KATHRYN ELIZABETH enters and then casually exits.

PROOMPT

There she goes! That's the nymph's coat.

DAN

As long as this ends with you tossing that Chinese spy into the water, I'll play along; I'll be your dog.

Exit DAN and PROOMPT. Enter LI, stage left. Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH, wandering back onto set. Both women are oblivious to the fact that DAN and PROOMPT are pursuing them.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So this is the poop deck? I overshot it, almost went off the back end. Any luck in rendezvousing with the first mate?

LI

I saw him when we first came up on deck. Haven't seen him since.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH laughs derisively at LI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH wipes some blood from her head, and examines the wet blood on her hand.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (mocking LI)
Show him your tits! Remind the man of the immortality he once felt while sucking on his mother's boob. Is that all you've got to offer?

LI
You sure you're feeling better? You're acting strange.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(derisive, yet playful)
Show him your tits. How's that working out for you? Standing here, alone on the poop.

LI
Oh, I'll make it work. Seduction is my second nature.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
It better be, or else you'd be a sorry nymph.

LI
How else?

LI accidentally plunges her hand into a bowl of white powder.

LI
Oh, God. What the hell is this?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH sticks her own hand into the bowl of powder, without a second thought.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(with condescension)
Looks like powder, what else? The sailors use it for the ropes. I've a question.

LI
You're acting strange.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
If I'm a prince and you're my fool...

LI

Your what now?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Then, if you're a nymph, does that make me a nymph, by the association?

LI

How's that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If you're a fool playing a nymph, and I'm your prince, does that make me a nymph as well, Li?

LI

I don't know. I'm the nymph.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Do you think Hamlet would have struggled just as much if he'd have settled for that dumb-witted daughter of Polonius?

LI

I don't know the play. I've only seen the Chinese adaptation of Hamlet.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Same here. I've only read the Late Modern English translation. *To remain alive, or not to remain alive, that's the essential question at stake here.* Isn't that beautiful? I'm at the part where the prince goes mad. I don't care to repeat the mindset.

LI

You might be repeating it now.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The loss would be so little, but the loss would be absolute. Wouldn't it?

LI

The loss of what, Katy Beth?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Don't call me that. You know this fellow, Hamlet, he too was plagued by rot, and he found death, not in

battle, but in the heat of sport. I'd be content with an earnest game. Li, I've decided... I'll play myself.

LI

That's for the best. If you played the Prince of Denmark, I might not be able to distinguish whether you were deep in character or declining on account of your concussion. Play yourself.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I will. I rather like myself, I'll have you know.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH takes a handful of white powder and applies it to her face.

LI

Now you really look like a crazy person. What are you doing?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Preparing for my role.

LI

As yourself?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Katy Beth, Prince of Dana.

LI

You don't like that name.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's my name. If a man can be reclaimed then so can a name.

LI

No different from Kathryn Elizabeth. The Prince is you, yourself?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No different, except Katy Beth reaches for the stars. Do you see them? Most are dust; the Prince of Dana minds not, he'll reach for all the dust. Ah, you have my emotions confused, Li. Am I lusting, or am I sporting?

LI

You're engaged to be married.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What a life! Now where's the first mate? I've a bone to pick with him.

LI

You're starting to concern me. Tell me you're not bleeding into your brain.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH walks to center stage, coming across her tricorne hat on the floor. She puts the hat back on, and faces up to the mast.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (to the mast)

Sir, I'm getting a draft, and the Prince's genitals feel unflattered as they flap in this post-midnight breeze. Direct me if you will to a pair of pants, wherever trousers might be stored upon your vessel.

LI

And she's talking to the mast again.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH begins walking off towards stage right.

LI

You've got some nice legs, my prince, don't go covering them up now.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

My legs are not your legs, nymph.

LI

It's like watching my own legs walk away, Katy Beth. Two men are coming this way. Should we run?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Is it pirates again?

Exit LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH, stage right. Enter DAN and PROOMPT, stage left.

PROOMPT

Did you see that? She's doubled! And one of the doubles has changed her disguise. This type of nymph

means utmost trouble. You follow the nymph in the trench coat, I'll chase down her doppelgänger.

Exit PROOMPT, chasing the girls. Exit DAN. Enter LI, followed by PROOMPT.

LI

Are these what you're after, my little sailor boy?

LI flashes PROOMPT. PROOMPT draws his whip and belts LI across her chest. LI falls to the floor and cries out in pain. The farce comes to an abrupt standstill. PROOMPT drops to the floor. He crawls over to LI.

LI (checking her chest, scared)

I'm bleeding.

PROOMPT (as DAVIES)

The tender flesh has been torn from your bosom. I'm sorry.

LI (snapping out of it)

You're a common bore, Davies.

LI sits up and ties her shirt closed. She stands to her feet. PROOMPT stands and faces her.

PROOMPT

(breaking character, as DAVIES)

It wasn't my intention to maim you like I did. Please, I ask your forgiveness, sweet gentle lady.

LI

Don't break character again.

LI stomps DAVIES upon the foot and then kicks him in the groin. DAVIES once again takes on the persona of PROOMPT.

PROOMPT

You nasty nymph, a ruse of weakness to play upon my masculine sympathies. Back to the ocean's bottom with you!

LI

Oh? Come get me, you cocksucker.

PROOMPT

The only cock I suck is dead, and well-cooked.

PROOMPT begins chasing LI. LI runs away from him, laughing hysterically, as if the maiming of her breast never happened. Exit LI, followed by PROOMPT.

SCENE III.

The main deck. NADIA is cleaning the harpoon, and AIDO helps her. CRICKET is polishing the Marlin spears. DEDAI sits downstage left, playing with a rope. Enter LI. LI kisses NADIA on the lips.

NADIA

What was that for? Are you the nymph everyone is looking for?

LI

I am the nymph, and that's what nymphs do.

NADIA

I didn't mind. You do it well.

LI

I would be a sad-looking nymph if I did it poorly.

NADIA

You're a nymph, but I remember you, as if in a fading memory... you're a scientist as well, am I right?

LI

I am a scientist.

NADIA

Is it possible that this is, in fact, the year 1840?

LI

Of course.

NADIA

You wouldn't lie to me?

LI

I believe it's possible.

Exit LI. Enter PROOMPT, carrying a heavy, well-stuffed burlap sack.

PROOMPT

Have you seen the nymph come by?

NADIA

What does she look like?

PROOMPT (in a swoon)

Oh, words can't describe her.

NADIA

Haven't seen anyone that fits the description.

PROOMPT

Update, Cricket? (aside, with suspicion) Perhaps your last?

CRICKET

(finally coming across as professional)

First Mate Proompt, the harpoon has been assembled and installed upon its base, and the sailors Nadia and Aido are to be credited for assisting me in this impressive, and if I dare say, heroic feat (CRICKET points to the harpoon). I have delegated the task of cleaning the ammunitions to the sailors Dedai and Aido. These two have, I must report, been somewhat quarrelsome, and I am formally suggesting that we separate these two young, um, cadets from one another on future watches.

PROOMPT

Fine work, Cricket. Now tell me that story again... about the time you sailed from NEW YORK to England, and then boarded that Darwinian, the HMS Beagle.

CRICKET (aside)

I remember telling him I started in Boston. But if he remembers New York, I should go with the narrative that's most inoffensive to his memory.

PROOMPT

Tell it quick.

CRICKET (to PROOMPT)

Ay. Well... we departed from, um, Ellis Island...

PROOMPT (baffled)

Ellis Island!

CRICKET

(improvising like a professional)

For thirty days we encountered heavy rains and towering rollers upon the Atlantic...

PROOMPT (boiling over)

Liar! Admit you lied! Ellis Island! You told me earlier a different story.

CRICKET (aside)

I knew I said Boston!

PROOMPT

How do you expect me to draw up any other conclusion but that you've been pulling a bloody rake over me, Cricket? You've one chance to come clean.

CRICKET

I admit it. My story was a lie!

PROOMPT

I know that much.

CRICKET

But I'm no impostor.

PROOMPT

Who are you, really, Cricket?

CRICKET

I'm a sailor!

PROOMPT

I thought that was a lie. Get your lies straight, Cricket.

CRICKET

If I lied about my past, I only lied to be closer to you. I wanted nothing more than to serve as second in command to such a consequential mate as you.

Enter DAN, panting

DAN

Mate Proompt. I can't find either of the nymphs. How'd she do that? The spy doubles, and now she's gone and disappeared, both of her fine bodies.

NADIA

Dan! Oh your voice. Dan what year is it, Dan?

DAN (fabricating)

1840.

NADIA

(traumatized, shouting aloud)

No!

PROOMPT

I'm afraid we've more pressing matters. When I was following the nymphs, I noticed the one in the coat had a great mark upon her leg. I've seen it before, on two occasions, and both met with the same, unhappy outcome. It's scurvy.

DAN

Scurvy?

PROOMPT

The Pilgrim has come under besiegement and we've an outbreak of scurvy. Some of our sailors may die.

NADIA

Oh, God.

CRICKET

Scurvy? Is it contagious?

PROOMPT

One of the most contagious diseases I've seen spread aboard a ship.

NADIA

I've never heard of any of my friends getting, what's it called, scurvy?

PROOMPT

On voyages like this, I can tell you it's not rare, not common... But when it does strike, it saddens me to report that sailors become very ill and succumb to the pest. Take care to protect yourselves, while Kernigan and I do what we can to eliminate its source.

NADIA

What's in the bag, Mate?

PROOMPT

Onions.

NADIA reaches into the burlap sack, as does CRICKET. They pull out raw onions.

CRICKET

But they're raw. Who would eat a raw onion?

PROOMPT

The animalcules can't stand the smell of the onions.

NADIA

Nobody can, when they're raw.

PROOMPT

Eat as many of them as you can, sailors. The more you eat, the better chance you'll acquire the onion's natural deterrence to the plague.

CRICKET

Please entrust me, Mate Proompt, as your second mate, to pass these plague-defeating onions out to the rest of our crew.

PROOMPT

Cricket you are no longer my second mate. Kernigan, you're promoted.

DAN

Promoted again, Nadia.

CRICKET begins biting a large chunk out of one of the raw onions. He spits it out and then he turns and vomits forcefully over the starboard railing.

PROOMPT

Cricket, I've decided on your punishment.

CRICKET's knees quaver and he kneels in front of PROOMPT.

CRICKET

Let me stay on board as a sailor, please. I'd trade my wife, my mother, my hobby as an actor, if it meant I could continue to serve under your leadership.

PROOMPT (to DAN)

I was going to execute him, but after that pathetic display, I'd pity the bullet... What's another punishment? Help me think of something. (short pause) A fine solution there, Kernigan. Cricket, you will be my slave.

DAN

Not my idea, at all.

CRICKET

I will be a most devoted slave to you, First Mate.

PROOMPT

Quiet slave.

(to DAN)

Second mate!

CRICKET

(forgetting he is no longer second mate)

Ay, Mate!

PROOMPT

Quiet, slave!

PROOMPT whips CRICKET, for speaking out of turn

CRICKET

(once again speaking out of turn)

Sorry, first mate, habit to respond to the title.

PROOMPT raises his whip in the air

PROOMPT

You'll call me 'Master.'

DAN

Come on, man. I mean, I know it's the year 1840 and all, but this is just bad optics.

PROOMPT whips CRICKET

DAN

Once again, just really bad optics here.

CRICKET

Yes, Master. Master Proompt!

DAN

Can we just nip this whole slave thing in the bud, I mean, please?

NADIA

It's 1840, Dan. There's nothing wrong with slavery.

DAN

I beg to differ.

STAMO

The sailor here is right. There's nothing wrong with slavery, not in this day and age.

DAN

Nadia, maybe this is just a step too far, okay?

NADIA (seething)

There's nothing wrong with slavery, Dan.

DAN (furious)

Would you stop saying that?

DEDAI (playful)

There's nothing wrong with slavery

AIDO (playful)

There's nothing wrong with slavery

DAN

Jesus fuck. Now you gotta do that thing you did in the car.

NADIA

What thing? What car? I do remember a car from my dream.

DAN

That thing where you reset the children, Nadia.

NADIA

The children. That's right, Dan. I remember being a teacher. I am a teacher, aren't I?

DAN

No shit. I don't know what this is.

AIDO pushes DEDAI to the ground, and DEDAI begins to cry

PROOMPT

Kernigan, with me.

Exit PROOMPT

DAN

(eager to get away from the crying children)

Well, looks like you've got everything covered here.

Exit PROOMPT and DAN. NADIA and CRICKET force-feed themselves raw onions. DEDAI and AIDO begin roughhousing near the harpoon stand. Enter JACK.

NADIA (with disdain)

You again.

JACK

(trying to avoid conflict)

Making my rounds.

NADIA

(with a tone of accusation)

You know there's other children on this ship.

JACK

I've seen them. Have you?

NADIA

You seem awfully concerned about these two.

DEDAI

I'll eat you!

AIDO tries to climb on the harpoon but CRICKET pushes him off.

NADIA

(almost drooling with disgust)

Six years, lost.

JACK

Calm yourself, woman.

JACK approaches the children.

CRICKET (to JACK)

There's a scurvy outbreak, don't come near me.

NADIA

And you stay where you are, you womanly man.

CRICKET

You can't say that.

NADIA (defensively)

It's 1840.

JACK (philosophically)

It's not 1840 anymore.

NADIA (disappointed)

I've lost another year.

JACK breaks up the children's fighting.

NADIA

(she starts out sweet, and vulnerable)

Is death from scurvy peaceful, Jack? (then she becomes venomous) or is it more like being around you for six years? (short pause) Lost!

JACK

We haven't seen scurvy in this part of the world since the nineteenth century.

NADIA

And what year do you think it is?

JACK (without any emotion)
It's not the nineteenth century anymore.

NADIA
(as if drunk with disgust)
How many years have I lost staring at that face?

CRICKET (anxious)
Is the scurvy still spreading, or has enough time passed?

JACK
Scurvy's not contagious.

NADIA
We don't know that!

JACK
I'm a doctor, Nadia.

NADIA
Dan says you're a real mediocre doctor. You just said it yourself... you've never seen it.

NADIA takes another bite of the raw onion. She chokes as she's swallowing it.

JACK
There's no reason for you to be doing that.

JACK grabs NADIA's onion and throws it away

NADIA
Get me my goddamned onion, Jack.

JACK
This is what you leave yourself vulnerable to, when you go through life never having a single goddamn thought of your own.

NADIA
(scoffing)
I know what this is about. The relationship, six years, that was all pretend! You were passionate for

me, and I wasn't even a real woman for you, was I?
That is what we're getting at, yes? How I never really
felt the way you did when you'd kiss me. That's it,
isn't it?

NADIA begins laughing at JACK, and then JACK kisses her upon the
lips.

NADIA

I did feel it.

NADIA suddenly begins to weep.

NADIA

I do feel it.

JACK

I know. It's not something you will ever utter again.

NADIA

You know, I only came to you when I felt empty because
I'd rather feel grotesque.

JACK

Funny. I only came to you when I hurt because I would
rather feel your nothingness.

NADIA

Why is it we never worked out?

JACK walks over and picks up the onion he previously threw.

JACK

Onion?

NADIA

Give me!

NADIA takes the onion. JACK begins to leave.

NADIA (trembling)

Jack. I'm scared.

JACK

There's nothing to be scared of. The times are
changing is all.

JACK exits.

NADIA

Jack. Don't you leave me here all alone.

NADIA stretches herself.

NADIA (to CRICKET)

How many onions do you have?

CRICKET

Four.

NADIA

I've only two left, give me one of yours. That way we're even.

CRICKET (clutching his onions)

Fend for yourself sailor.

NADIA (disgusted)

What a slave.

SCENE IV.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH leans over the starboard railing, staring out onto the waters. Enter LI, skipping along, joyfully. LI makes her way over to KATHRYN ELIZABETH. She lifts up the bottom part of KATHRYN ELIZABETH's coat and smacks her on the bare bottom.

LI

There's a scurvy outbreak.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (playful)

And what, I'm it? (as in a game of tag)

LI

You're the source.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's easy, Li, to confuse a ship's priority guest with a plague.

LI

Is it?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It is, when you've a prince whose flesh is mouldering. But who would I spread it to, fool? I've been keeping my distance, since I've business to attend to and I find the trifling jokes about women's breasts, and beer, and breaking wind too difficult to quit once these sailors get me started. If I'm the source, then who would I spread it to? Answer me.

LI

Beats me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What kind of plague?

LI

Beats me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Just something contagious then?

LI

Pretty sure it's not.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Then how is it a plague, fool?

LI

Beats me. (correcting KATHRYN ELIZABETH, playfully)
Not your fool.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Spreading rumors of a plague that can't be contracted. What should I call you? Nymph? You're seducing no one.

LI

No need to be hurtful.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Where are the others? Have I missed anything?

LI

Not much has happened. I saw the lawyer with the teacher, and then I was with the teacher, and then I saw the doctor with the teacher.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Well, Nadia's been busy. She never did shy away from a chance to roll about in the mud. Leave her be. I've more important matters.

LI

No, you don't.

LI skips away and exits. KATHRYN ELIZABETH leans upon the railing. Enter PROOMPT. PROOMPT approaches KATHRYN ELIZABETH, stealthily, from behind.

PROOMPT

Hello, nymph!

PROOMPT places his hand on KATHERINE ELIZABETH's backside. KATHERINE ELIZABETH turns around, and faces PROOMPT.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Is that any way to greet a prince?

PROOMPT, seeing KATHRYN ELIZABETH's powder-white face, screams in terror.

PROOMPT

(with great authority)

Who are you?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Another day. And you?

PROOMPT

Another day? Which day are you then? Thursday?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

I'm not sure. Yesterday, perhaps.

PROOMPT

A ghost from the past?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Oh, no. Don't be fooled by my appearance. Though my face be pale as stone and my skin molders, I am very much alive.

PROOMPT opens up KATHERINE ELIZABETH's coat to expose a small portion of her cleavage.

PROOMPT (with suspicion)
I'd say you're a nymph.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH (flippant)
I'd say you're middle management.

PROOMPT takes out his pistol and points it at KATHERINE ELIZABETH.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
Get me your captain. I've heard enough backtalk from mediocrity for these thirty years.

PROOMPT
Be you nymph or some newfangled prince with jiggling body, I won't put up with disrespect.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
(believing every word)
Fine. Shoot. The bullet will pass right through me.

PROOMPT (fearful)
Only if you're a ghost will a bullet pass right through you.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
I already told you, I'm not a ghost. The bullet will pass right through me, as I am.

PROOMPT
How's that? You're mad.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
No, I just don't exist.

PROOMPT
Oh, you're mad.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

(losing patience)

I'm not the mad one on this ship. I'm out here looking for a shark that finds this vessel of yours a familiar lure.

PROOMPT

The Brig Pilgrim, bait for a shark?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Not a blood worm, but a lure. It's a Greenland shark. They're harmless, small, and dumb, and they stick around well past their expiration date, much like middle management.

PROOMPT

And what's a prince need with a shark?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

My father's inside there.

PROOMPT

Inside the shark?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Where else?

PROOMPT

How'd he get there?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

He was placed there.

PROOMPT

By your own hands, probably.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Ha! My father was a gentle, noble man. He always liked a good story, or a patiently crafted, winding, and drawn-out joke. He ruled his kingdom fair, and suppressed no voices. Even his sternest critics were met with welcome: with open arms, and open heart. Oops!

PROOMPT

Oops?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
He disappeared one evening, and poof.

PROOMPT
Poof?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
My father was never seen again.

PROOMPT
Placed in a shark?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
Aye, where else?

PROOMPT
Anywhere else.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
My uncle took the throne, and he married my mother.

PROOMPT
What is this family? Greek? You may be a nymph.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
My mother and my nuncle, the two of them have spread their lies to the people, and the lies have built a kingdom of their own. I aim to find this shark, and bring back evidence of my father's whereabouts.

PROOMPT
Your father's whereabouts? Inside the shark?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
Yes! Are you not listening?

PROOMPT
His whereabouts. Is he alive?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
Oh no, but he's alive in me, old mate, since I am another day, after all.

PROOMPT
You're raving mad.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

I'm not the one who's mad on this ship.

PROOMPT

You've got the scurvy.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

Get me your captain. I'm not immortal yet, you know, and my time is precious.

PROOMPT

The scurvy has entered your brain, dear child. Stay away from me. Ghost, jiggling prince, or most devilish of nymphs, I know not which. I beg your mercy. Stay back!

PROOMPT runs away, terrified. KATHERINE ELIZABETH turns around and looks out over the bow. Enter DAN. He walks slowly and in stealth towards KATHERINE ELIZABETH, and suddenly grabs her by the leg and back, lifting her high into the air.

DAN

You know how to swim, right, spy?

KATHERYN ELIZABETH shakes free of DAN's grip and then DAN recaptures her, bear-hugging her from behind.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What the hell?

DAN

Katy Beth?

DAN places her back on the deck

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Obviously, it's me.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH turns around. DAN screams in horror upon seeing KATHERINE ELIZABETH's face.

DAN

What the hell is on your face?

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

You tell me. You're the one staring at it.

DAN

You look like a mime. A hot mime. I could tell it was you, by your hip bone.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Stain that memory too.

DAN kisses KATHRYN ELIZABETH

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I woke up from that dream, and you taunt me that I ever dreamt it. Be gone.

DAN

You could have the dream.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Why settle for a dream? I don't want it.

DAN

I'm sorry, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(no longer lucid)

Don't apologize. The world is yours, Daniel. Manipulate it as you please.

DAN

Can we at least... I'd like to end this on a happy note. Can we at least do that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Happy? Aren't we happy?

DAN

No.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

I won't give you happy. I can compromise. Negligent battery, is that a law thing?

DAN

I could go down to, you and I aren't bitter towards one another anymore. How about that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'd rather keep just a slight paucity of bitterness, but only that. We can't change the past, Daniel. It doesn't exist.

DAN

We can do our best to remember the good times.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Yes.

DAN

Are you alright? You're acting strange.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

A great paucity of the bitter.

DAN (heartfelt)

You should have been a lawyer. You could have been great.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (lucid)

I wanted to be great at something else.

DAN begins to walk away

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (lucid)

Hey Dan. Next time wait till the time capsule is sealed before you burry it.

DAN looks back at KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

DAN

You sure you're alright?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Overwhelmed by ambition, is all.

DAN

Good for you. Be patient. I know it's always been your dream to contribute something to the sciences. You'll hit that precious mark someday. You just gotta give it enough time.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Oh, I'll wait as long as I must.

DAN

Good to hear.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

I'll reclaim my throne from mother and nuncle, and my revenge taken, I'll lord over my father's kingdom, for all eternity.

DAN

Say what?

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

With just a drop of blood from the Greenland shark, my alchemists could make a potion that'd allow me to live forever. I'd be a good king. No one man in my kingdom would be worth any less than his neighbor. We'd have our fun with the women, but we'd treat them fair, and with admiration. No one would ever be able to challenge my rule.

DAN

Fortunately, we've got a constitution and millions of lawyers in this country to make sure something like that never happens here.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

The first thing to go in the kingdom of Dana is all you lawyers. Every man will understand my laws and shall be sufficiently learned to plead his own case before my court.

DAN

Alright, King Arthur. Let me know how that goes.

LI (offstage)

Oh, Katy Beth...

Enter LI, skipping towards KATHERYN ELIZABETH, not realizing DAN is there with her.

DAN

Ah! There you are!

LI

Help me, Katy Beth. (aside, to KATHERYN ELIZABETH)
Don't actually help me.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

What?

LI pretends to run back, but slow enough such that she is clearly affording DAN the opportunity to catch up to her. DAN grabs LI by the hair.

DAN

You're coming with me, spy.

LI

(screaming in horror, but in a way that it's clear she's acting)

Put me down!

DAN

Oh, I do believe First Mate Proompt might actually throw your scrawny ass from this ship.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Dan, put her down!

LI shushes KATHERYN ELIZABETH

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Okay, as you like. Take the nymph away.

DAN lifts LI over his shoulder. Exit DAN, carrying LI. Enter JACK.

JACK

What's on your face? (He looks closer) You're bleeding.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

It's nice to have a doctor on board.

JACK

I can treat you.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

I don't have scurvy.

JACK

Nobody does.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Tonight I fight Jack, ambitious as I've ever been. Then when the sun's up I'll be settled, and you'll permit me to be settled. Do you understand?

JACK

While we're here together, while we have the time, tell me everything there is to know about you.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

That's not how you get to know someone, Jack.

A loud bang is heard from offstage.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH (lucid)

What was that?

CRICKET

(offstage, crying in agony)

Medic!

KATHERYN ELIZABETH (lucid)

Oh, no. That's where Dan just went with Li.

JACK

The children!

KATHERYN ELIZABETH (lucid)

Oh, God. The children!

JACK begins to walk slowly towards stage right, breathing laboredly. KATHERYN ELIZABETH sprints past him.

SCENE V.

On the deck. DAN and PROOMPT hold LI against the railing. CRICKET lies on the floor near the harpoon stand with a spear through his leg. DEDAI and AIDO are on the floor. DEDAI is the closest to CRICKET. She's bleeding from her leg, but she is not seriously wounded. NADIA is not present. Enter KATHERYN ELIZABETH.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dan, what's going on? Where's Nadia?

DAN

I've no idea.

CRICKET

(pointing to PROOMPT, who is holding a
marlin spear)

The son of a bitch shot me with the marlin spear!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Medical help is on the way.

Enter JACK, panting hard.

JACK

What happened?

PROOMPT

(to CRICKET, sternly)

I warned you three times that there would be no
intercourse between you and the seductress, slave.

JACK

Intercourse?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Slave?

JACK

By intercourse, I think he means talking.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I really hope he means talking.

CRICKET (overdramatic)

Ah! The black curtain. I always thought it would start
with the vision.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Jack, don't just stand there. Help the poor guy.

DEDAI and AIDO begin wrestling with each other, dangerously
close to the harpoon. KATHRYN ELIZABETH breaks them up. JACK
approaches CRICKET, then kneels down and examines his wound,

somewhat reluctantly. KATHERYN ELIZABETH walks over to DEDAI and AIDO, and pulls DEDAI away, picking the girl up into her arms.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Are you okay, honey? Your leg is bleeding.

DEDAI (defiant)

No, it's not.

KATHERYN ELIZABETH places DEDAI on a tall crate that is along the deck's starboard railing. She begins examining the child for wounds.

DEDAI

He pushed me!

DEDAI points to AIDO. AIDO runs away and hides behind the harpoon.

DEDAI (vicious)

I'm gonna eat you. I'm gonna do it now, and I'm gonna eat you, Aido.

DEDAI begins to scream at the top of her lungs.

JACK

Shut that girl up!

DAN and PROOMPT continue to hold LI against the railing.

LI

Help a girl out, Cricket.

CRICKET

I'm not talking to you.

PROOMPT

Cricket!

PROOMPT aims the spear again at CRICKET. LI slips loose from DAN's grasp. DAN catches her again, immediately, and places her in a tight lock, with arms above her head.

PROOMPT

Kernigan, don't let your guard down. You know how they slip through.

DAN

How do we proceed with this, what do you call it, offering?

PROOMPT

Simple, Kernigan. We toss the temptress over the railing.

DAN lifts LI, and holds her over the ship's edge. LI screams bloody murder.

LI

Stop! You're hurting me!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH runs towards DAN and LI. DEDAI is left alone, standing upon the crate. She stands there, innocently, swinging her arms back and forth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dan! Enough!

PROOMPT

Nymph, I hereby sentence you to be cast down to the sea. Let her go, Kernigan.

DAN lifts LI up in the air and brings her back on board. DAN hands her over to PROOMPT.

DAN

Here's the bind you're in now, John Davies. You have two choices. Option 1, you admit you're a character and bring this act to a close. Option 2, you throw the girl into the water. It's dark out there, and God knows where the nearest land is. I'd say there's a high probability the girl drowns if you throw her off the ship.

LI kisses PROOMPT on the lips; after allowing a few moments to pass, PROOMPT finally pushes her away.

PROOMPT

The seductress has entranced me in a spell. I suddenly have such grave affection for those cheeks, like shimmering porcelain coddled by rare moonlight. Ah! And she slips away from my clutch!

PROOMPT releases his grip on LI. DAN immediately grabs her.

DAN

Oh, no you don't, Davies.

JACK

Dan, this is getting out of hand.

LI turns around to face DAN, and kisses him on the lips.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh! Ew! Don't kiss Dan, Li. Stop it! God.

LI releases DAN from the strong lock of her kiss.

PROOMPT

I've shaken her spell! You'll snap out of it once she's gone from our ship, Kernigan.

PROOMPT picks LI up over his shoulder and attempts to throw her off the ship, but DAN, realizing PROOMPT's intention, grabs LI by the shirt and pulls her back down onto the deck.

DAN

He was really gonna throw you off.

PROOMPT

You're under her spell, Kernigan.

DAN

He's flipped the script. The bastard.

PROOMPT

I'm sorry for what I must do.

PROOMPT points the marlin spear at DAN. DAN rips the Marlin spear from PROOMPT's hands and tosses it into the water. KATHRYN ELIZABETH attempts to break up DAN and PROOMPT and LI, who are all in a skirmish. Enter NADIA, holding a glass jar of lollipops.

DEDAI

Ms. Nadia?

NADIA

Yes, Dedai?

DEDAI

How do I become a whale?

NADIA

You just close your eyes, really tight.

AIDO

No! She's gonna eat me.

NADIA

And whatever you wanna be, just believe. See yourself as a beautiful woman, and that's what you are. See yourself as the president of some gorgeous land, and you can be that too. Imagine you're in the future, in that year, whatever that year was, and you're getting married to a kindhearted trial lawyer. Just close your eyes, and think of what you are, and that's what you'll become.

AIDO begins to cry. KATHRYN ELIZABETH tries to wrestle LI free from DAN's grip. AIDO grabs the harpoon handle. He begins turning the weapon, slowly, towards DEDAI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH notices the harpoon spear pointing in the direction of DEDAI, who is still standing atop the crate.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (freaking out)

No, no, no, no, no!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH sprints over to DEDAI. DAN notices AIDO aiming the harpoon at DEDAI.

DAN

Aido! Don't you dare!

NADIA takes out a lollipop and holds it up in the air.

NADIA (to DEDAI)

I have your lollipop, baby. Come on down from that box. How'd you get up so high? I told you not to go climbing on things. It's dangerous.

DEDAI stops screaming, and she reaches for the lollipop. KATHRYN ELIZABETH reaches DEDAI and pushes her, away from the harpoon's line of fire. AIDO shoots the harpoon, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH'S

right hand explodes in a mist of red; only her thumb and index fingers are spared. DEDAI, freaked out by the harpoon blast, steps back and loses her balance in the midst of the commotion, and she falls off the ship into the water. A splash is heard. KATHRYN ELIZABETH's hand drips with blood, and blood stains her face and teeth; she clenches her dismembered right hand with her other hand, wincing in agony, but she is too concerned about DEDAI's well-being to pay any extra attention to her pain, or to scream aloud. JACK quickly runs towards KATHRYN ELIZABETH, panting as he runs. AIDO begins to cry and grabs hold of NADIA.

JACK

My medical kit's downstairs. Someone, call an ambulance!

Exit JACK, down the stairs, in a hurry.

NADIA

An ambulance in the middle of the ocean!

LI points down at something in the waters.

LI

Hey, it's a whale!

DAN looks down and shakes his head in confused affirmation.

DAN

It's a whale! A little baby.

NADIA cracks a smile, and she seems somewhat relieved by what she's witnessing.

NADIA

Dedai really turned into a whale.

Enter PONC and STAMO.

STAMO

Did you all just see that? The girl turned into a whale.

PONC

Yah, that she did. How else do you explain what we just saw?

DAN

Does anyone see the kid?

NADIA

She said she was gonna turn into a whale, then she fell into the water, and now there's a baby whale in the water.

DAN

She's not a whale, Nadia. Do you see the girl, Li?

LI

Swimming through that moonbeam, I see her. Ha! She blows her water up.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I see Dedai! She's right there.

STAMO

We see her too. She's blowing her water all over us.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Not the whale! I see Dedai.

DAN

Where is she?

DAN takes his shirt off, as if ready to jump in and rescue DEDAI. NADIA runs over and grabs onto him.

NADIA

Don't you dare! You're not jumping into the middle of the goddamn ocean, Dan.

DAN

I'll be fine.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

She's right there.

DAN

I don't see her, Katy Beth.

PROOMPT marches with purpose, heading towards CRICKET and the harpoon.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm going in.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH stands up on the crate. Enter JACK. KATHRYN ELIZABETH takes on a stance like she's prepared to dive. JACK drops his doctor bag and begins to run towards her, breathing heavily.

JACK

Stop! Dan, stop her!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks back at JACK, with a smile on her face.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Stay there, Jack.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH jumps. A splash is heard.

LI (looking overboard)

She's got the whitest toosh.

DAN (looking overboard)

She really does have a very white toosh.

LI

Brighter than the whale's own skin.

PROOMPT begins reloading the harpoon.

LI

There's another whale! It's the momma.

PONC

Whoa! The momma whale is missing part of her fin!

STAMO

The scientist turned into a whale too.

NADIA

Katy Beth and Dedai both turned into whales, isn't that great, Dan? They'll be fine. I'm sure they'll be fine.

DAN

They didn't turn into whales, Nadia.

NADIA (to LI)
You're a scientist. Is it possible that they both
turned into whales?

LI
(staring into the harbor, not minding
NADIA)
Probably not.

NADIA
Probably not... so it's not entirely impossible.

JACK approaches the rail of the ship and DAN restrains him,
concerned that JACK will jump in after KATHRYN ELIZABETH.

PROOMPT (authoritative)
Push me, Cricket!

CRICKET
I can't, Master. My leg!

PROOMPT whips CRICKET. CRICKET begins limping along, pushing
PROOMPT who is perched upon the harpoon stand. They move towards
the starboard railing.

PROOMPT
Faster!

PROOMPT whips CRICKET, and CRICKET cries out again in agony.

DAN
This guy is unbelievable.

PROOMPT
Out of the way, sailors. Dinner has arrived!

PROOMPT fires the harpoon at the whale.

NADIA (horrified)
No!

PONC
He missed the whale by a mile.

DAN
(looking at PROOMPT upon the harpoon stand)

I give up. Throwing in the towel. I owe you \$12.34,
Jack.

JACK storms off and heads towards the stairs.

DAN

Jesus. Jack! Jack, come with me.

JACK exits down the stairs. DAN, frustrated, exits, stage right.
PONC and STAMO head towards the stairs.

PONC

We should call harbor patrol, shouldn't we?

STAMO

You think there's phones in 1840?

PONC

If there's no phones in 1840, then how do you know
what a phone is?

STAMO

I dunno.

PONC and STAMO exit. The entire stage becomes bright, as the
harbor lights flicker on, one by one.

LI (staring off starboard)

Hey! The harbor lights are back on!

NADIA (sapped of energy)

We've been in the harbor this entire time? (she looks
around but nobody answers her). I'm going to bed.

NADAI picks up AIDO, and exits down the stairs.

ACT V

THE PILGRIM'S AWAKENING

SCENE I.

Baby Beach. Early morning. A dense fog upon the sands. The beach has no waves, only a little gentle lapping of water. DEDAI is on the beach, sleeping in the sand. KATHERINE ELIZABETH's tricorne hat rests upon the sand, a foot in front of the child. JACK enters, then walks along the stage until he reaches DEDAI. He takes his coat off, sits down, and then picks DEDAI up to a standing position and places his coat around her.

JACK

You're cold, Dedai.

JACK rubs DEDAI, so as to get her warm.

JACK

It's dangerous for a little girl to be this cold. It's not good for you.

DEDAI is not responsive.

JACK

We need to get you back to the ship. Okay?

DEDAI stares out into the distance. She reaches into the coat pocket and pulls out a pelican figurine.

JACK

You can keep that.

DEDAI points to the harbor.

JACK

She didn't make it. Did she?

DEDAI points once more to the harbor.

JACK

When I know, I know. Kathryn Elizabeth, I noticed you. By my faith, I noticed you.

JACK picks DEDAI up into his arms. As he lifts her, the pelican figurine drops into the sand, near the tricorne hat. JACK doesn't notice that the figurine has fallen. He begins walking towards the stage right exit.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offstage)

Jack!

JACK turns back. KATHRYN ELIZABETH is nowhere to be seen.

JACK

Is the ocean speaking to me? It's been a good several years hasn't it? Don't worry, it won't be much longer now, till you'll have me back, to churn me into sand and hoard me in your gulches.

JACK exits

KATHERINE ELIZABETH (offstage)

Jack!

JACK enters once again

JACK

You want a taste?

JACK removes his shoes and socks. He steps towards the front of the stage, and a splashing sound is heard, and it is implied that he has put his feet into the water.

JACK

You're cold today. Yours isn't a relaxing chill, always a bitter sapping with you. There was a warmth, something refreshing, to the one you took for yourself this morning, you've taken her into your own rot, and here you call for me, you speak to me with her sound. The gall. It's easy to have gall when you've no goods and chattel, no consequence. My feet turn to white, like bone, bloodless. Look at you. I'd expect nothing less. Bye, for now. Bye. I bid you good morning, kind ocean, and the rest of your day, a good day to you.

Enter KATHERINE ELIZABETH, tiptoeing out from stage left. She covers her breasts and genitals with kelp that she's collected along the beach. More ulcers are visible now that she is wearing less clothing. She is missing three fingers from her right hand, with only the thumb and index remaining completely intact. JACK turns around and sees her approaching.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Don't look! The trench coat was pulling me down. I had to ditch it. I refuse to go out the way Polonius' daughter did, pulled under by water. Avert your eyes!

JACK looks away from KATHRYN ELIZABETH. JACK places DEDAI on the beach, removes his coat from around the child and then throws it behind him, towards KATHRYN ELIZABETH's feet. JACK hugs DEDAI to keep her warm.

JACK

I can't look?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH picks up the coat and wears it over the kelp.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

When we're married you can look.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH pulls the coat tight and then brushes the kelp down onto the beach.

JACK

(examining her hand)

We need to get you to a hospital.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's no time for hospitals. Just do what you must... to buy me a few hours. Do you have anything for the pain?

JACK

I can get you pain meds at the hospital.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'd rather be in pain than dead. We're getting married, my lady, and make it before 12 noon.

JACK

A girl in a caul of water, and one of us will be dead... Ha! Hogwash, you called it earlier. Hogwash, you called it last night.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

A prince doesn't push his luck, lady.

JACK

And you're clearly not in the right mindset to be getting married.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, you're fine with putting it off, now that you're not the one who's dying.

JACK

Is that why you were fine with postponing it last night? Huh. Well, as long as we can both agree now that it's most likely to be you, not I, who will be dying.

JACK kisses her.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Are you ready to return to the ship, my lady?

JACK

Let's get going. We need to get Dedai warmed up. I also want to check that wound on your head. I don't know if you're cognizant of this, but you keep calling me lady.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Well, Jack. I'll call you lady until we're married.

JACK

As long as it stops.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (sincere)

Only then will I call you "Princess."

JACK (concerned)

Oh... there's proof enough. I'm scheduling you for imaging.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Relax, Jack. It's a character I devised last night with Li. I was supposed to be done reaching for the stars by now.

JACK (playing along)

The world fell apart a long time ago, my prince. All we have left now is sand. Sand above water, and sand

below water. The world falls apart every day. The people need you to keep reaching.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

You reach for the stars once and you get a harpoon spear.

JACK

Are you sure you're not mad?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I could never be sure.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH and JACK turn, and begin walking towards stage right.

JACK

Do me a favor. No more playing around as this prince character, at least until noontide. If the prince doesn't come out any more this morning, then it proves you're sane.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Does that prove it? Well. Deal.

JACK

Deal?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Fine. Deal. No more acting.

JACK, KATHRYN ELIZABETH, and DEDAI approach the stage right exit. JACK runs out of breath and begins to lag behind.

JACK

Get yourselves to the ship.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We can wait for you, Jack.

JACK

No. Go.

Exit KATHRYN ELIZABETH and DEDAI.

JACK

(yelling after them)
Get Dedai wrapped in a thick blanket! Warm yourself!
Get yourself to the ship.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offstage)
Get yourself to a nunnery.

JACK
A what?

A few moments pass. JACK lifts his head, and looks down at his feet, which are now being touched by the water as the tide rises.

JACK
Is her hand still losing blood? Is the ocean still lapping? Nothing may survive and linger on forever, not even your own beauty there, playing about my feet, turning my toes white again. Nothing at all. So all we can do is pluck up the courage and pray for, ah, what dare we pray for? (short pause) All that we can really dare to say is: may it last a little longer; may it last as long as it may.

The ocean continues to lap. JACK stands up and exits. The pelican figurine and Tricorne hat remain upon the sand. The ocean continues to lap.

SCENE II.

The wedding ceremony, upon the deck of the Brig Pilgrim. DAN and NADIA are dressed in formal wedding attire: DAN in a tuxedo, and NADIA in an elegant dress. JACK wears the outfit from the night before, minus the coat. His shirt is stained in blood, and has sand all over it. KATHRYN ELIZABETH wears Jack's coat, and the sailor moon costume underneath it. JOHN DAVIES, serving as the officiant, is dressed in a tuxedo. The deck is adorned with expensive flower arrangements, and the two masts of the Brig Pilgrim are wrapped in garlands. LI stands on her own, downstage-right, almost near the stage exit, and watches the wedding ceremony from afar. The remaining guests are seated in white fold-out chairs, where they listen attentively to JOHN DAVIES as he delivers his speech.

DAVIES (no longer PROMPT)

The kernel of a play, is the word. The word combines with other words to make scenes and scenes acts, the acts a play, and then actors like myself come along to perform these acts for the audience's entertainment. In life, the kernel is the family. It all starts with the husband and his wife, and they raise a family. Families build towns, and then towns give rise to cities, and so forth, until you have countries and a global community of fathers and mothers, and their families. This ceremony is a tribute to the families of tomorrow. May we perform our familial roles, just as well or better, than the brides and grooms that raised their families before us, where we once played the roles of sons and daughters. The same, or a little bit better; nothing more. Each successive generation, the same or a little bit better. I have confidence that the couples here before me will live up to this benchmark. I give you my heartfelt blessing, and my wishes for success wherever you may find it. With my part said, this ceremony now comes to a close. You are hereby bound in matrimony, Mr. and Mrs. Kernigan, and congratulations to the two of you as well (he indicates KATHRYN ELIZABETH and JACK). May I present to you, Captain Maddox. Ladies and gentlemen: The Brig Pilgrim! Awaketh!

Enter PONC, who stands before the main mast. Enter the CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS, alongside PONC.

MADDOX (aloud)

Stand by to set sails!

The CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS congregate at the bases of the two masts, evenly distributed in their numbers. Enter STAMO, from the back of the ship, along with his own CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS. They walk across the deck, and exit stage left, to where the jib sail would be.

STAMO (offstage)

Jib ready!

PONC (to MADDOX)

We're short one Mast Captain, sir.

MADDOX

Who's missing?

PONC

The new guy.

MADDOX

Then you play both parts.

PONC

Okay, I'll be Ponc and Cricket, and I'll get payed for Ponc, and Ponc only; it goes without saying.

MADDOX

With the money the bridegroom is paying... I'll get you double.

PONC

I love you captain. I do. We can make this marriage triple. Main sail, stand ready to go aloft.

PONC

(as CRICKET, in a high-pitched voice)
Cricket here... Foresail, stand by to go aloft.

STAMO (offstage)

Jib sail ready to loose!

MADDOX

Sailors, aloft!

PONC (as himself)

Sailors aloft the main sail!

The CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS begins to climb the main mast, via the main mast ladders.

PONC

(as CRICKET, in a high-pitched voice)
Sailors aloft the foresail!

The CREW OF PROFESSIONAL SAILORS begin to climb the foremast, via the foremast ladders. DAVIES crosses the deck and approaches LI.

DAVIES

Did you ever find that shark?

LI

There wasn't a shark, after all.

DAVIES

Odd.

LI

Can I help you?

DAVIES

How's your chest?

LI

It's at ease now.

DAVIES

We botched the stunt.

LI

You botched it.

DAVIES

I botched it.

LI

Professional hazard. Sometimes a girl will lose a nipple.

DAVIES

And it wasn't a shark?

LI

Not at all. The species identification came back this morning.

PROOMPT

The girl was so sure it was a shark.

LI

Kathryn Elizabeth really is a gem, the poor thing, but she's just not very good at what she does.

DAVIES

Can I interest you in a morning cap?

LI

You mean, below deck?

DAVIES

I've enough booze down there to last us fourteen months.

LI

I don't think so.

LI begins to walk away

DAVIES (as PROOMPT)

Go, then! Rid yourself from this brig you sex-plagued besotter of decent men...

LI turns back, aroused

DAVIES (as PROOMPT)

Or be prepared to suffer the punishment: twenty-five spansks upon the nymph's naked bottom.

LI grabs DAVIES by the hand and drags him along with her. Exit LI and DAVIES stage center, down the stairs.

MADDOX

Prepare for tacking!

PONC (as himself)

Main sail ready, sailors hands on ropes!

PONC

(as CRICKET, in a high-pitched voice)

Foresail ready, sailors hands on ropes!

STAMO (offstage)

Jib standing by!

MADDOX

Cricket, Ponc, commence tacking!

PONC

(as CRICKET, in a high-pitched voice)

Foresail, raise the mainsail, trim the topsail.

PONC (as himself)

Main sail, trim the mainsail, loose the topsail.

PONC

(as CRICKET, in a high-pitched voice)
Let's go, let's go. Foresail loose the topsail, trim
the mainsail.

STAMO (offstage)

Other way around, Ponc!

PONC (as himself)

Main sail: trim the topsail.

MADDOX

Ponc, you're switching your lines!

JACK

The topsails are jumping up and down.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

This is terrible. The amount of money Dan probably
payed for this.

JACK

Oh, he loves it, look at him over there, smiling like
a baby under a rattle.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The spirit of the Pilgrim has awakened. The topsails
must know what comes after the wedding ceremony.

JACK

Debride, clean, suture your hand.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Suddenly the topsails have fallen flat again. Some say
the marriage isn't finalized until the hymen breaks.

JACK

Your hymen's broken.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I still need my husband to break into my body with his
hymen-breaker.

JACK (lusting)

Let's go now.

Exit JACK and KATHRYN ELIZABETH

MADDOX

Prepare to reeve in topsails!

NADIA

Do you think we'll last until death, Dan? That seems like such a long time.

Unexpectedly, a man falls from high above and splatters onto the deck.

DAN

We should get out of here too.

NADIA

Is that man dead?

Exit DAN and NADIA. A loud banging sound is heard, coming from beneath the deck. DAVIES runs out in a pair of striped boxers, carrying the harpoon. LI follows, in her panties, covering her breasts with a handful of clothes.

DAVIES

Abandon ship! We're taking in water! Everyone off!
Make haste!

PONC approaches MADDOX.

PONC

Stamo is dead, Captain. The sailor who fell, he's dead too. But, I wouldn't look at 'em.

MADDOX (traumatized)

Good God! (to DAVIES) What the hell is going on? Are we really taking in water, Davies? Tell me this is part of your bloody act!

DAVIES

There's the passion!

MADDOX

Is it, Davies? Please tell me, it's just part of the act.

DAVIES

Oh no, the ship is tilting starboard on its keel.

MADDOX

My god. It is, isn't it?

DAVIES

She was a beautiful ship, wasn't she?

DAVIES drops the harpoon and takes a rest.

MADDOX

What the hell is that thing?

DAVIES

A piece of machinery I borrowed from a whaling museum in Nantucket. The prop added something essential to the act. Not only verisimilitude, but something even more important: immediacy!

Exit MADDOX, stage right, with PONC, in a hurry.

LI

Well, that was fun.

DAVIES

How do I see you again?

LI

You won't.

DAVIES

I'll see you at the reception, right?

LI

I have a flight to catch. I leave for Beijing in an hour.

DAVIES

When you say you're leaving for Beijing, do you really mean it?

LI

I'm not an actress. I don't have to pretend like you do.

DAVIES

And do you mean it, when you say you're not an actress?

LI

If I am an actress, then I don't break character as easily as you do.

DAVIES smiles.

DAVIES

If I'm ever in Beijing..

LI

If John Davies is ever in Beijing, I think I'll know. Are you interested in Beijing Opera?

DAVIES

I'm always up for a challenge. John Davies as: "The Monkey King."

LI (laughing)

I'll tell the Chairman to lock up his peaches.

DAVIES

He better! And his women too.

LI

I'll be waiting for someone to come along and steal me away.

DAVIES

I'll call my agent now!

Exit DAVIES and LI. Enter DAN. DAN looks over to stage left, as if something has caught his eye. Exit DAN, stage left.

DAN (offstage)

Hey man, you alright?

DAN quickly returns to the stage. Exit DAN, down the stairs.

DAN (exiting)

Dear lord, please accept that man's soul into your house on high. (offstage) The other guy too, though I know him not, Lord.

Enter DAN, up the stairs, with DEDAI, who is wrapped in a blanket. AIDO is with them as well. DEDAI carries a lollipop.

DAN

What were you doing in there with Dedai? Huh, Aido?
You guys weren't kissing, were you?

AIDO

She kissed me, on the lips!

DEDAI

No I didn't! You're ugly.

DAN

Now, Aido, look, you're not gonna get very far in life
if you just volunteer information like that when
there's no benefit at all to you yourself.

DEDAI

My dad has a great ass.

AIDO

My dad has a great ass.

DAN

What did I just say?

Exit DAN, DEDAI, and AIDO. The two masts of the Brig Pilgrim
tilt further towards starboard. Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH, from
stage right, wearing the Sailor Moon cosplay outfit. She makes
her way towards the stairs at stage center.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dedai! Dedai, I came as soon as I saw. (a loud
creaking noise is heard, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH jumps
to her feet) Oh god, don't die in cosplay, don't die
in cosplay.

Exit KATHRYN ELIZABETH, down the stairs

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (offstage)

Dedai!

Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH, up the stairs

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (relieved)

She's not here. Oh, thank god!

The ship jolts towards stage rear, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH screams in shock. KATHRYN ELIZABETH crawls down to the starboard railing, stage rear. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks up, and notices that the foremast is tilting. She seems distressed and saddened by the sight.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, that's so sad, Pilgrim. You can't really be sinking, can you? I used to come here all the time with my father. You're what makes this harbor magical. Even if you're just a replica, you filled this harbor with your story. Where will your spirit go, good sir, now that there's no replica to bind you here above the water? Back to where your original sank, off the coast of the Carolinas? Perhaps we'll find you down there. I promise you, Pilgrim, I'll come and visit you someday. In the meantime, if you ever get lonely down there, know that you're in my heart. The past is still alive in some of us.

(reciting the "Late Modern English translation" of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy)

To remain alive, or not to remain alive, that's the essential question at stake here. The sailors don't know these words, do they? How's the original?

(reciting the original)

To be or not to be?

(to the mast)

You know it?

(improvised)

To remain awake, or not to remain awake. To waken into the new dream, and to learn, perchance, to see all the splendid beauty, here amongst the rot.

(to the mast, playful)

Goodnight, Pilgrim. Sweet dreams, Pilgrim. Good night, for now.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH walks along the railing, and then, the ship, collapsing under its own weight, jilts, and tosses her off stage rear, over the starboard railing of the ship.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (falling, offstage)

The harbor!

A loud splash is heard, followed by the sound of someone swimming away. The two masts of the Brig Pilgrim come crashing down onto the stage, and the sound reverberates throughout the theater.