

THE PILGRIM'S AWAKENING

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

MAIN

KATHRYN ELIZABETH/THE PRINCE — a marine biologist / a mad prince
DAVIES/MATE PROOMPT — a Shakespearean actor / The Pilgrim's Mate
DAN KERNIGAN — a trial attorney, fiance to Nadia
LI — a philosophical, anti-scientific skeptic from Beijing
JACK — a pediatrician
NADIA — a teacher of the 2nd grade

CHILDREN*

DEDAI — a female child, age 7
AIDO — a male child, age 7

DOUBLED CHARACTERS**

CRICKET — a young actor (same actor as JACK)
MADDOX — actor/Captain of The Pilgrim (same actor as DAVIES)
FEMALE TEACHERS 1, 2, & 3 (JACK, DAN, and DAVIES in drag)

NOTES ON THE CHILDREN*

The children may also be played by older child actors or by adult actors.

NOTES ON DOUBLING**

It's important that JACK is readily distinguishable from CRICKET, and DAVIES from MADDOX. The most straightforward way to accomplish this would be with beards. JACK should have a dark, trim beard, while MADDOX can have a sagely, bushy white beard. MADDOX's sailor uniform should be distinct from that of DAVIES. MADDOX's costume appears to be something from a corner costume store. DAVIES costume, contrarily, is the genuine article, tailored, impressive. The one scene requiring the THREE FEMALE TEACHERS can be accomplished by placing the three male actors in long wigs, and tucking them into their beds. Comedy, rather than verisimilitude, is the desired end here.

ACT I
Scene 1

The Dana Point Ocean Institute. A large hangar-style marine research center. Lab benches with microscopes and other scientific equipment stage right are cordoned off from the stage left portion, which functions as a museum. Downstage right: a lab bench with research papers and jars of marine specimens upon it, one of which contains the "improbable specimen": a large fin with a fragment of a 500-year old harpoon-spear lodged within it. Set along stage left: a gift shop, with books and pelican figurines for sale, a model of The Brig Pilgrim, some marine samples displayed behind glass barriers: the jaw bones of a large shark, a curated arrangement of coral, conches, shells, etc.

This play, as a whole, should come across as a black comedy: what's terrible and dark should contain frivolity, while the frivolous moments should reach for an air of gravitas.

(At open, LI, a tall, thin, modelesque Chinese woman in her early thirties, is seen rummaging through the notes and datasets on the front-most lab bench. She messes up the lab bench, and even throws some papers on the floor. After a few beats, 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 waist. She carries a scuba tank, and her hair is damp. There is a water-ulcer on her right lower abdomen, just above the wetsuit line. KATHRYN ELIZABETH briefly stops in her tracks, and drops her tank, appalled by what she's witnessing. For reasons that will be elaborated upon later, this is more than just some workplace nuisance to her. KATHRYN ELIZABETH's reaction is severe: one might get the impression that she's just stumbled upon this strange woman digging up the corpse of her late father. KATHRYN ELIZABETH proceeds, walking in a hurry towards LI, – she'd run if she weren't

coming off an 18-hour dive. LI has a yellow writing pad in hand, and she casually begins to jot down a note as KATHRYN ELIZABETH approaches.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(shouting, in a panic, from a distance)

Hey! Hey you!

(LI doesn't look up from her pad. KATHRYN ELIZABETH storms up to the lab bench.)

LI
(remaining calm, still not 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
(fuming, unsure why she's engaging with LI)

Shark. Not a whale.

(she huffs and puffs, as she observes the mess of her lab, then snaps)

Who the hell are you?

LI
(remaining calm)

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(still fuming; once again, unsure why she's engaging with LI)

It's a shark. You can tell by the skin alone.

(she double-checks her specimen jars, then re-directs her attention to LI; she manages to assume a forced, professional restraint)

Are you affiliated with the Ocean Institute?

LI (remaining calm)
I'm aware of *sharks and their scales*. I was sent here to work with you on this project, Kathryn Elizabeth. A Greenland shark, that's what we're thinking?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
And you're... what? A scientist?

LI (confident)

I am a scientist.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Sent by whom?

LI

Why do you suspect the Greenland shark?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I don't.

LI

There were several references made to the Greenland shark in the Ocean Institute's database.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(with a sense of violation)

That's a *private* database.

LI

You were the author of these notes. Pages of notes. Mounds upon mounds of late-night updates and nuanced corrections.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

MY business.

LI

You did mention the Greenland Shark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That was in regards to... (flustered) It's the only shark known to us that can live for up to 500 years, but I mean, dude...

(This "dude" should come across as "get real." She takes a pause, and looks around the building, confirming that nobody else is there with them)

Did the Director send you?

LI

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(shocked, then suspicious)

Beijing? You don't have an accent.

LI (nonchalant)

That's part of my training.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

B.J.I.A.S is a partner institute.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Partner? I would have heard of you. I haven't.

LI (nonchalant)

More of a *benefactor* than a partner.

(then, a change in tone, a skillfully
concealed religious fervor shows through,
as she inquires:)

Why do you find it so unlikely that a Greenland shark would end up off the coast of Dana Point?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (callous)

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

(LI is intrigued by this. She isn't
offended, but rather, her religious zeal is
emboldened. She calmly takes a note on her
pad.)

LI

Would it really be so absurd?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH retrieves her scuba tank
and places it in the lab bench sink. As she
carries on in her conversation with LI, she
begins to prep her tank for storage; first,
releasing the remaining air from the tank.)

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...

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH, hearing this, pauses and looks over at LI with confusion as LI continues:)

LI (cont.)

...that *pertain* to the ocean, but no, my own education was more in the fields of molecular biology and structural biophysics.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(fixated on the words:)

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.

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?

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. 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 bursts out laughing. LI remains unfazed by this reaction.)

LI

(facing the audience, like a prophet preaching to non-believers)

In the 1800's there was a prominent ornithologist, a respected scientist, who... Took? Undertook?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Mistook?

LI

Mis-undertook? – the great effort to document twenty-thousand distinct seagulls on the North American coasts, East and West, and concluded, 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...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (impatient)

The take-home message?

LI

And... he would have told me that I sounded *ridiculous*, if I would have suggested to him that there were, in fact, seagulls that have black bodies. It wasn't until years later that 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, by now, has finished washing her gear. She starts drying off the tank with a towel.)

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 looks upon LI with disdain and suspicion, as if she now recognizes who this woman and her "science" represent. She isn't just a curiosity anymore, but a potent threat to something she holds dear. She places the scuba gear back under the desk, and begins to organize the mess of papers upon her lab bench. LI takes notice of KATHRYN ELIZABETH's ulcer.)

LI

Was something... feeding on you?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH observes her ulcer.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No. That's just a water-ulcer. I'm rotting.

LI

Are you now?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH, frustrated as she is organizing her papers, suddenly tosses her papers down and slams her fist against the desk. This is an impulsive, violent moment, as if she's been visited by an unexpected memory of her father's passing. LI is startled, nearly dropping her yellow pad. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks over at LI, with an exhausted glare.)

LI

How long has it been since you last slept? Hours? Days?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH restrains her emotions, and responds to LI, her facade remaining strong, but her voice briefly betraying her grief:)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's nothing. I can hardly remember what it feels like to *NOT* be awake.

(LI looks on with confusion and concern. KATHRYN ELIZABETH kneels down and places her scuba gear in a cabinet. She then begins placing all the papers from the desk in the same cabinet.)

LI

Eighteen hours in the water, and yet, you have nothing to show for it. Did you ever take a pause down there and ask yourself, *is it possible I've been searching in the wrong places?*

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks up from over her lab bench, offended, then resumes stuffing the drawer with her papers. She locks the drawer. Meanwhile, LI is flipping through her yellow pad; she stops when she arrives at a specific page.)

LI

Last night, while you were, wherever you were, snorkeling...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Scuba diving.

LI (cont.)

Three people reported spotting a shark, or what they *believed* to be a shark, next to some tall ship. The Brig Pilgrim. It's nearby?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH starts heading for the exit, stage left, as she points to the stage right window.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Just outside the Institute.

(LI walks over to the stage right window and looks out at the Brig Pilgrim.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Goodnight, lady. Goodnight. Goodnight.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is about to reach the stage left exit, when LI calls after her.)

LI

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 (stopping)

What theory is that?

LI (matter-of-fact)

Proprietary.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (annoyed)

Of course. Call me an idiot for asking. If you're looking for a shark, why the hell do you keep insisting that it could be a whale?

LI

I'm asserting that, and only that: that it COULD be a whale. I'm here because I believe this creature MIGHT, in fact, BE a shark. An "impossible" shark. A Greenland shark.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH can't help but laugh.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Well, on that note, I'm going to bed.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is done here. She continues towards the stage left exit.)

LI

Your father...

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH stops, a pale, mask-life expression envelops her face)

LI (provoking her)

Murdered in his sleep, was he?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (turning back)

How dare you speak of...

LI (interrupting)

Then a trial lawyer. Left you for his ex? Ouch.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH paces gradually, aggressively towards LI, until she is standing chest-to-chest with her. LI continues, without flinching.)

LI

Marine Biology. L&O. Journal of Marine Systems. I've never seen so many courteous letters of rejection.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is about to snap, but LI remains focused on the task at hand.)

LI

I can help you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(restraining her emotions)

You're the problem.

LI

Agree to disagree. The odds: that the genetic results come back non-viable. The odds: that the creature out there doesn't stick around in Dana Point for another day. The odds: that when it's gone, it's gone for good.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH shakes her head NO, doing her best to not succumb to these games; she glances over longingly at the "improbable specimen.")

LI

I need you on that ship. We board at six. We should try to get there before the actors.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (confused)

The actors?

(LI extends her hand towards KATHRYN ELIZABETH)

LI

So. Put 'er there. Partner?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Tell me. Do I have a choice in this partnership?

LI

B.J.I.A.S does account for over 60% of your paycheck, and, more importantly, your Director's paycheck.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So that's a NO on the whole choice matter?

LI (shrugging)

Go find a bed. Get to sleep. (mocking her) You do look like you could use some sleep.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH takes a moment, and then, her own obsessions getting the best of her, she extends her hand. They shake, and do not let go.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (in a trance)

I've had enough of the body, squawking at my soul, waiting for the wind and the fish to settle.

LI

Come again?

(They release hands, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH walks off to the stage right exit.)

LI (calling after her)

Shower quick, and change. We have thirty minutes till boarding.

Scene 2

The wharf before the Brig Pilgrim. The port side of the Brig Pilgrim rises in the backdrop, a zig-zagging ramp leading up to the ship's main door. [staging alternative: the floor/audience serves as the wharf, and the stage is the deck of the Brig Pilgrim]

(From right, enter DAN, a well-built, well-dressed man in his early 30s, and NADIA,

his fiancée, a thin but athletic-looking Indian woman in her late 20s. DAN is confident, financially successful, and charismatic. In spite of his elevated social and financial status, he's still a child at heart, who wants to play games and have a good laugh. NADIA is acidic and snappy. She cares deeply for DAN, but never passes up an opportunity to assert her domineering energy.)

NADIA (correcting DAN)

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 (with charm)

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.

(she looks around with impatience)

Where the hell did Dedai and Aido go?

(she looks around, and finds them)

Come along now!

(Enter DEDAI and AIDO, a female and male student, respectively, each about age 7. NADIA extends her hands and they grab on. They continue walking.)

DAN

An entire night, camping aboard The Brig Pilgrim with fifty sleep-deprived children. What else could a guy ask for on the night before his wedding.

NADIA

The purpose of this camp isn't to entertain you, Dan. The actors are here to educate the children, through an immersive theatrical experience...

DAN

Yah, yah... so that the little buggers can learn what day-to-day life was like for a merchant sailor in the 19th century. Now, that part, I'm very much looking forward to, I'll have you know.

NADIA

They've been doing this sleep-away camp for decades. Just try not to be the one who ruins it.

DAN

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

(NADIA gives DAN a look, as if to say, "It's NOT a pirate ship." They exit, up the ramp, onto the Brig Pilgrim.)

Scene 3

The main deck. The stage is now the deck of the Brig Pilgrim. Railing stage front, and rear. Two masts, the foremast and main mast rise up from the stage. At stage center, there is a stairwell that exits into the belly of the ship. A large vat of fish guts rests between the stairwell and the foremast. Several tall boxes against the rear railing. A box of costumes stage right, and another box of costumes far across from this one, stage left. The sign for THE DANA POINT OCEAN INSTITUTE in the backdrop.

(Enter CAPTAIN MADDOX, a grey-haired, long-bearded actor playing the Captain of the ship. His costume is unimpressive, likely something purchased from a Halloween store. He is burnt out and bored, simply going through the motions.)

He begins passing out food to "the children":
who will be played by the audience.)

MADDOX

(with as little enthusiasm as possible)

Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits. Here you go, you charming second-graders. Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits. And for you. Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits.

(A spitting sound resounds through the theatre, as if one of the children has spit out their food. MADDOX looks back with disgust at the audience member to whom he's just handed out food. Enter DAN and NADIA, stage left.)

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.

(MADDOX returns to the stage and grabs a set of child-sized sailor uniforms, then begins passing them out to the audience.)

MADDOX

Now, seamen don't dress in denim and hoodies. Do they? No, they don't.

DAN

This is disappointing. This man really seems to hate 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 probably 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.

DAN

It'll get better soon. I have a feeling.

MADDOX (continues, 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... or slit their wrists with the cake knife.

NADIA
Daniel, don't be morbid.

(Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI, stage right, far across-ship from DAN and NADIA – at great enough distance that they're believably out of sight. KATHRYN ELIZABETH has changed into casual clothing. LI is carrying a clanking bag of wine bottles. [ALTERNATIVE STAGING: The girls enter through the auditorium doors, and stand in the aisle, aside the audience, illuminated by a spotlight.])

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (nostalgic)
It's... camp night.

LI
Is... something wrong?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is overwhelmed by the site of the children and actors.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
It's... It's fine.

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, she looks towards where DAN is standing. She squints, but fails to spot DAN or NADIA)

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

(she laughs, and shakes her head "no," appearing 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 lost and found, you could say, what's been left behind and collected through the years.

(NADIA is unamused by the costumes. DAN is a little too elated. DAN digs through the stage left costume bin. 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. Such a woman must have been out of her mind.

(LI pulls out more costumes: GERMAN BEER WENCH, A MERMAID'S TUBE TOP, and then a TRICORNE HAT.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh! I think I could pull the hat off.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH puts on the Tricorne hat. LI takes off her shirt. KATHRYN ELIZABETH positions herself between LI and the children/the audience.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dude! Are you trying to get yourself arrested? The children!

(She points to the audience. LI doesn't respond. She slips on a checkered shirt. LI spots a trench coat in the bin. She takes the trench coat and stuffs it into her bag. As she does, 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 (indicating KATHRYN ELIZABETH)

You see that girl in the pirate hat?

NADIA

For the last time, Dan, it's not a pirate ship. Oh, that is a pirate hat. Oh my god, that's...

DAN

That's who I think it is, right?

NADIA (elated)

Is that Kathryn Elizabeth?

DAN (concerned)

I wouldn't get so excited if I were you.

NADIA (taunting)

Ah, is big Dan-Dan scared of little Katy Beth-Beth?

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.

(NADIA points to the DANA POINT OCEAN INSTITUTE. DAN looks around for any possible exit.)

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 the evening. 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 stands next to KATHRYN ELIZABETH.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Jack, was it?

JACK

Kathryn Elizabeth, is it?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The doctor who buys the pelican figurines from our rough-and-tumble gift shop. The man who once told me how much he despises the ocean.

JACK

I didn't know you were a marine... I was still under the impression that you worked FOR the gift shop.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What are you doing here?

JACK

The camp requires a medical doctor on...

(JACK falls silent, as he notices NADIA across the ship. He's distraught by the

site of her. DAN, meanwhile, looks over to where JACK is standing.)

DAN (indicating JACK)
Is that who I think it is? Didn't he leave the country?

NADIA (pausing, looking over at JACK)
I thought he was dead.

DAN
He looks a little older than I remember.

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

DAN
Oh, really, Nadia?

NADIA
He's back, and I suppose that means he's not dead.

DAN
It's Jack, is all.

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

DAN
Do you think the two of them know each other? 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
No.

JACK (more sincere)

Marry. Me.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We hardly know each other. We've spoken, what? Two or three times?

JACK

At least five times.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH suddenly spots DAN across the ship. She struggles to catch her breath. She continues conversing with JACK while staring at DAN.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(to JACK, but staring at DAN)

Well, then. Good enough.

JACK

Is that a... *Maybe*?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That's a... *Why Not*?

JACK

So, we're... *Good*?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Good Enough.

(she sniffs the air, and shifts her sight back to JACK)

Something... reeks.

JACK (with spite)

The harbor has been rotting.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is offended by JACK's comment.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You should watch your tone. We're all rotting.

JACK

Are we?

(From hereon, JACK and KATHRYN ELIZABETH begin calling one another "fiance," but this is not in a sincere manner.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Every complex system. You, me, the sturdy order of romance... we're all in a controlled state of decay, fiance.

JACK (correcting her)

Homeostasis.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (firmly)

No. Just rot.

JACK

Is that how you perceive the world, my warm and bubbly fiance?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Not in a sad way or anything. Did you know that a yellow banana, though most appealing to our senses, is already in its final stages of decay? You can't see the beauty, and that's why you find it so off-putting.

JACK

So, just let the world rot?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Why not? Take a chip from my father, a man who tried his best, and threw it all away. 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

Not yet. The year is 1840. Remember: until the sun comes up tomorrow, that's the year we're in.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

So what if it is?

JACK

Then, this... is Mexico, my dear fiance.

(JACK exits down the stairs. Enter LI, who walks over to KATHRYN ELIZABETH. A voice calls up with force from beneath deck.)

PROOMPT

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

Listen!

(DAN is suddenly overcome by a child-like excitement. NADIA is indifferent.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What's that?

LI

It's coming from downstairs.

PROOMPT

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

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

(Enter JOHN DAVIES, in character, performing the role of FIRST MATE PROOMPT. JOHN DAVIES is a method actor renowned for his streak of never breaking character. He takes the characters he portrays much too seriously, and his portrayal of MATE PROOMPT is a showcase of the actor's artistic zeal and his habit of theatrical over-performance. MATE PROOMPT should come across as a Shakespearean character, such as a King Lear or a Richard II transplanted to the Brig Pilgrim, rather than an actual seafarer; the actor should consciously avoid giving off the impression of a

pirate; e.g., avoiding rolling of the R's, speaking with twang, or indulging in drawn-out gutturals. PROOMPT's costume, unlike that of MADDUX, is the genuine article. He carries a pistol holstered to his right hip, and a cat-o-nine-tails whip strapped to his left hip. The whip jangles as he walks.)

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 (playful)

I told you it could be a whale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(doing her best to be playful)

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 odors that climb 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! (he 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, again, briefly looks over at LI.)

LI

I'm so fucking turned on right now.

(LI partially unbuttons her shirt.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Put your tits away.

LI

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.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH burst out laughing.
PROOMPT glances over at her,
threateningly.)

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.

(The sound of a second grader crying
resounds throughout the theatre. NADIA
stares into the distance, in a state of
panic.)

DAN

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

(NADIA grabs DAN tight.)

DAN

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

NADIA

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

DAN

It's John Davies. He's from the Dana Point Theatre.

NADIA (concerned)

The theatre that burned down?

(DAN places his arm around NADIA)

PROOMPT

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 will get you through this. That's my promise. All I demand in return is your complete loyalty, and strict obedience.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH scoffs aloud at this, finding the bargain too much. PROOMPT glances over at her, as if he feels he might have a problem to handle. As he glances over, LI begins pressing up her cleavage for him.)

PROOMPT (continuing, undeterred)

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) Second Mate Cricket! Come forth!

(Enter CRICKET, a young actor playing the Second Mate. He's a frail-looking man of 20 with a high-pitched, pubescent voice.)

CRICKET

Yes, Mate.

PROOMPT

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. (he sniffs the air) There's a foul odor coming from the deck. I want it scrubbed during the night watch.

(CRICKET leans in too close to the vat of fish guts, and wafts the odor from his nose with intense disgust. Exit PROOMPT.)

CRICKET

Aye, Mate! (to DAN) Hey you! First Mate's orders: set sail.

NADIA

What are you, new? The Pilgrim doesn't leave the dock. Take the kids down for me, will ya?

CRICKET

Please follow me, kids... (poorly improvising) to the, um, under-ship!

(Exit CRICKET, into the belly of the ship, followed by AIDO and DEDAI. *OPTIONAL: CRICKET grabs some audience members and brings them along with him.*)

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.

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! What the heck are you doing here, Katy Beth?

(DAN passes towards the stairs, herding a child [or, an audience member or two onto the stage and] down into the cabin. KATHRYN ELIZABETH rubs her chest bone with a sense of anxiety, as she watches DAN descend the stairs in front of her.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

ACT II
Scene 1

The men's cabin. A small dimly lit room. Two twin sized beds, one against the left wall, the other against the right wall. A desk in front of the left bed. The bag of wine, previously held by Li, is atop the desk.

(DAN is alone, in his boxers. He is about to begin slipping on a pair of sailor's trousers. A knock is heard at the door, which opens immediately, without any pause. Enter JACK. DAN is still shirtless, and has his back to the door.)

DAN (with a very American accent)

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)

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. (short pause, then chipper) Well, look at you... (he throws his shirt over his shoulder) You're a doctor now.

JACK (solemn)

I'm a doctor now.

DAN

(trying to remain chipper)

And you're back in the states!

JACK

Been back for a year now.

DAN

I wouldn't have known. And what do you know? 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? Our house?

JACK

I drive by your mansion at the bottom of the hill whenever I'm on my way to my grandparent's mansion at the top of the hill.

DAN

I'm just starting out. The economy was a lot different when your grandparents were making their fortunes. Interest rates and whatnot. Don't get me started.

(DAN pauses abruptly. He puts on the shirt. As they stew in an awkward silence, DAN begins to unpack some items from his overnight bag: a toothbrush, a book, pajamas, etc. JACK sits down on his bed and opens his own overnight bag. They each unpack their bags, without saying a word, until DAN and JACK simultaneously unpack a pelican figurine from their respective overnight bags. The figurines are 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

You're telling me. You know, the one next to the porch is three feet tall. Fucking traumatizing.

JACK

I've bought one for my grandmother that's four feet tall.

DAN

Yah but, get this. So... I'll put a new one out there on the lawn every Tuesday night, after I get home from my partners' meeting. Then when Nadia sees it in the morning, I'll pretend like I don't have any fucking clue how the thing got out there. I started telling her the figurines are reproducing. You know, like the real birds do.

JACK

She sounds... happy.

DAN

She is.

JACK

I never said that I wished her to be unhappy.

(following a pause, he finally summons the courage)

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

DAN

How about some wine?

JACK

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.)

DAN

You come here often, Jack?

JACK

I volunteer every Tuesday.

(DAN twists off the cap, and takes a generous swig.)

JACK

I've had time 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

We were like brothers. All those years, the women would come and go. It should have never come between us.

JACK

But it did.

DAN

I know it did.

JACK

And it still does. Nadia is still... there.

DAN

You were really sick.

JACK

I'm still sick, Dan.

(he takes a deep breath)

She was there, and she even encouraged me to let it out. She wanted me to come at her. She felt guilty just for walking up the stairs, and then for being able to take a long, deep breath of fresh air when she reached the top; she felt guilty when she'd take that long deep breath, because she knew I'd never do that again. So she begged me to let my frustration out; she wanted me to rip into her. And so I ripped into her. Then I ripped into her again. And again. And again.

(DAN takes another swig. He is eager to change the subject.)

DAN

That First Mate. He's quite a character.

JACK

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

DAN

Yah, I know who John Davies is. I'm the one who got him here. He's officiating our... (DAN catches himself before he says "wedding")... They say that even when the Dana Point Theatre caught fire, John Davies kept on with the show.

JACK

And the audience bought into it?

DAN

The audience thought the flames funneling down from the stage-left ceiling were just part of his act. They stayed in their seats the whole time. His streak is famous. He's NEVER broken character, you know. Not a slip. Not a crack on him.

(JACK senses an opportunity; he begins to provoke DAN)

JACK

If that's not a winning streak begging for a challenger, then what the hell is?

DAN

(falling for it, competitive)

I bet I could get him to break. Discrediting evidence is what I do, Jack.

JACK

Care to put your money where your mouth is?

DAN (chipper)

You wanna place a bet, for old times' sake?

JACK

Ten bucks?

DAN

Ten bucks? That's it?

(DAN extends his hand)

JACK

His act ends at sunrise. If you can't break him by then, you fail, you come up short, you're a big... fat... loser.

(JACK extends his hand. They shake.)

DAN (a little too competitive)

Give me an hour.

Scene 2

The First Mate's cabin. A tall, throne-like wooden chair at stage center, where PROOMPT sits. The chair has an historic design, but the padding on the back and arms has been reupholstered in a garish, crimson leather. The chair is an eyesore in the room. This is clearly something John Davies has brought along with him to serve as a prop. The rear 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. Apples and bananas, in sizable, but separate piles, sit atop a dresser against the stage right wall. There is no electric lighting in this cabin.

(PROOMPT shuts his eyes in his chair.
CRICKET stands over a desk at stage left,
and reads through the First Mate's hand-
written journal by candlelight.)

CRICKET (reading)

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

(CRICKET looks to PROOMPT)

CRICKET

(breaking character, as "the actor")

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 MATE 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 Trade Winds? 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 Saturday morning.

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 DOOD-le?

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?

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.

CRICKET

Does that mean you have a harpoon... Is that what's in the bag? Jesus! Mr. Davies!

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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 with his cat-o-nine-tails whip. CRICKET cries aloud in agony.)

Scene 3

The women's cabin. Two twin-sized beds, one stage left and the other to right. To the rear, two sets of bunkbeds. A desk to stage right, in front of the right bed.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is asleep upon NADIA's lap. LI sits on top of the desk across from them, sipping from a bottle of wine. Upstage of them, TEACHER 1, TEACHER 2, and TEACHER 3 are

tucked into the bunkbeds,
engaged in idle nighttime tasks:
knitting, reading, journaling,
etc. DEDAI, a female child,
stands next to NADIA, hugging
one of her legs.)

LI

So let me get this straight. You come back from India, after the pandemic, 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

Whatever. I 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 (cont.)

Reclaim the man that this one (indicating KATHRYN ELIZABETH) had 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.

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.

(LI makes a note on her yellow pad. She stands up and pulls out her trench coat from under the desk. DEDAI walks over to LI, and begins tugging on the trench coat.

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 desk. She faces the THREE FEMALE TEACHERS and undresses until she is wearing only her underwear and bra. DEDAI stares up at LI's chest.)

DEDAI

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. There are 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 towards upstage. While still covered in the trench coat, she removes her bra and underwear while facing the THREE TEACHERS, then ties her trench coat, and turns back around to face DEDAI. DEDAI stares up at LI.)

DEDAI

Can I have a lollipop?

LI

I've said all I can say. 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, who awakens in a panic, as if she were having a bad dream.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

How long was I out?

(The THREE FEMALE TEACHERS return to their bed-time activities, shaking their heads in disapproval as they settle down.)

NADIA

Three minutes.

LI

Now that you're here with us, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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. Ignore her. I'm engaged to my own fiance, I'll have you know. A nice young man. A doctor.

(NADIA grows concerned, and stares at LI.
LI jots something on her pad. They've
discussed JACK.)

LI (to NADIA)

It could be a coincidence.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (continues)

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

NADIA (gravely concerned)

Pelican figurines? I'm starting to connect the dots.

LI

Connecting the dots. A slippery slope.

(NADIA lets out a long, deep sigh.)

NADIA (sympathetic)

I know why you're here, Katy Beth. 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 what-have-you, I remember well, he brought up the whale too.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's a shark.

LI

A Greenland shark.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (correcting LI)

Of undetermined species.

LI

Or a whale of undetermined species.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not a whale.

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.

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 my lab has scales.

NADIA (innocently)

Maybe some type of whale that has a scale.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (mocking her)

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

LI (playing along)

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

NADIA

Oh. 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? (then, almost comedically) It's a good thing she's getting married!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

We were just playing around, Nadia.

NADIA (upset)

It doesn't feel good.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I didn't mean anything by... Whales don't have scales. 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

No, that means, it can't be a whale.

NADIA (over-dramatic)

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. I'm not saying you're wrong, or that the First Mate is right...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

Hypothetically, the genetic analysis comes back and informs us that this creature is a whale. Hypothetically, we prove there's

in fact a whale out there in the harbor. And, if your word can be taken as bible, the sample in your lab has scales. Look closely enough, and the creature appears to be a whale. Take a step back and it's a shark. From far enough out, it's a whale again. Which is just to say: 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. (to KATHRYN ELIZABETH) Did your father ever, you know... (she grabs her own hip playfully, and makes sexual implications)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What the fuck?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH stares at LI)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What kind of question is that? My father was a hero in this city, the most blameless KING this city's known.

NADIA (kindly)

You mean, Mayor.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (snapping)

That's what I said!

LI (cont.)

It's a cruel thing for me to suggest, I'll admit it, but there's a well-known correlation. This constant need for order.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

My father was as great a man as he was a king. This city was great... It was, once...

LI (cont.)

This compulsion to MAKE SENSE of things, at the expense of everything else, perhaps, sometimes, at the expense of the truth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

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?

(NADIA sighs and grabs the bottle of wine from LI.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Nadia? Come on. Don't give her this one.

NADIA (sympathetic)

Katy Beth.

(she hesitates, then nods her head in affirmation, and takes a gulp of wine)

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Six years!

NADIA

Six long years. We were grieving together, over your father, Katy Beth. The last thing you needed to hear was anything about my... many traumas... with Jack.

LI

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

If it's a whale out there, then I will have no choice but to admit, that I know nothing. Absolutely nothing. I might as well be lost at sea, without a map.

NADIA

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

DEDAI

I'm gonna become a whale.

(LI, NADIA, and KATHRYN ELIZABETH all laugh. Suddenly, a loud banging sound is heard. It's loud enough that LI loses her

balance and falls from the desk to the floor.)

LI

What the hell was that!

CRICKET (offstage)

Holy shit!

DAN (offstage)

My bad.

NADIA (looking at the left wall)

Is that Dan? What the hell is Dan doing in the First Mate's room?

Scene 4

The First Mate's cabin. Banana gunk covers the clothes and hair of CRICKET and DAN. The pile of bananas from earlier has been obliterated, only the apples remain. The spear from Proompt's harpoon is lodged in the stage right wall.

(CRICKET is crouching against the wall, stage left. DAN pulls on the harpoon-spear, attempting with all his might to loosen the object from the wall's unyielding grip.)

DAN

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

CRICKET

Holy shit! (he looks around) There is banana sludge all over the place.

DAN

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

CRICKET (losing his shit)

Why are you playing around? Proompt isn't playing around. He's gonna kill us both when he gets back.

DAN

How long since "Proompt" 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?

PROOMPT (offstage, hostile)

Cricket! Why do I see no semblance of torch-light coming from the sailors' quarters? The men snore and appear to still be fast asleep! Cricket, wherefore sleepeth my crew, damn you?

CRICKET

Oh, God! Proompt told me to wake the children for the night watch. Not the children. THE SAILORS. For the night watch.

(CRICKET runs out. DAN removes his shirt and begins cleaning the harpoon spear. He places the harpoon spear back inside the duffle bag.)

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? (to DAN) Where's your shirt sailor, and why are you in my quarters without my permission?

(The sound of wheels creeping is heard. PROOMPT looks offstage and spots CRICKET in the hallway)

PROOMPT

Cricket! I see you, Cricket! Get back here and clean up this mess.

(CRICKET enters, with a mop and a modern-day industrial mop-bucket: bright yellow plastic, metal wheels; he's proud of his

find. PROOMPT is outraged, as if bodily offended by the anachronism.)

PROOMPT

What torture rack holds your broom in this barrow of water? It's been painted in such an obscene hue of yellow! Get it out!

(CRICKET's pride turns to panic, as he exits with the mop bucket.)

PROOMPT

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 are some more nuanced methods for getting a person to break character 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 hurries towards the exit. As DAN is exiting, LI casually passes him, and stands up on the front edge of PROOMPT's chair. She opens her trench coat, and gyrates her crotch in PROOMPT's face.)

PROOMPT (in a trance)

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 quickly ties her coat. Before LI can dismount from the chair, PROOMPT snaps out of his trance, and lunges upwards, throwing LI against the stage right wall. LI struggles to get up, but when she finally does, 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 stands with her back to the audience, and opens up her trench-coat again. It's implied that she is flashing PROOMPT.)

LI

Subtle, am I?

(PROOMPT clutches his chest and falls back down into his chair, exasperated. LI exits.)

Scene 5

The main hallway. Three doors upstage, which lead to, from right to left, the Women's Cabin, the First Mate's Cabin, and the Men's Cabin. A set of stairs upstage right that exit to the deck.

(LI holds the middle door closed tight. LI releases the door knob and approaches DAN.)

DAN (threatening)

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

You've had your fantasies. I've had mine.

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

I've always wanted to meet a big strong American ape like you, so I could see the expression on his face when he realizes: I'm nothing more than a small, delicate lily, waiting upon the water. You're undoing has been yours alone.

DAN (offended)

I really will choke you.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH enters stage right,
wearing the Tricorne hat.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Tell me, Dan.

(DAN quickly releases LI's neck and
grabs his chest in a panic)

DAN

Jesus Christ!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Since you're here, maybe you can settle this for us. What's the difference between fabrication and truth?

(DAN finds his composure. He quickly
transitions to *lawyer mode*.)

DAN (improvising)

It's fabrication until it's agreed upon by the majority. Then, it's the truth.

LI (uninterested)

Spoiler: She was in hell. None of it was real. Blah, blah, blah.

(LI exits, up the stairs.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You and I never had a good understanding about the difference between fabrication and truth, did we? How did you get so good at fabricating?

DAN

I told you, Katy Beth, time and time again.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You said one thing with your words and something very different with your body. Your emotions can speak volumes, Dan.

(DAN hunches down to her, as if he's about to offer his amends)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

DON'T apologize. That's what makes you such a great lawyer.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH grabs DAN's shoulders, and straightens out his posture. DAN takes an eager step towards her, and she takes a cautious step back.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I should go. I need to start looking for this creature.

(When she reaches the top of the stairs, she turns back.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (concerned)

Dan... What's the *legal* definition of madness?

DAN (improvising)

Having thoughts or ideas that are, I dunno, outside the... *purview*... of social harmony.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Well. 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...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (uncertain)

To what?

(DAN points his fingers, in the shape of a gun, at KATHRYN ELIZABETH:)

DAN

To fucking... kill.

(DAN fires his "finger gun" at her)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (dead serious)

I'm not the mad one on this ship.

DAN

(not necessarily in agreement.)

Yah. Sure you're not.

(She exits. DAN exits into the left door.
Enter JACK and NADIA from opposite ends of
the hallway. They stare at one another for
a moment, until NADIA breaks the silence:)

NADIA

I had a dream you died.

JACK

Was it a pleasant dream?

NADIA

I know why you're here. I think you should leave, before one of us gets hurt. Probably you.

JACK

The law requires that there be a medical doctor on board.

NADIA

The law has low standards.

JACK

I can't leave.

NADIA (interrupting)

You can jump.

JACK

I considered it. You know I did. Don't you?

NADIA

You're a farce.

JACK

You're drunk.

(NADIA and JACK stare at one another in silence, until NADIA's eyes begin to water. She backs away, nearly at the point of crying)

NADIA (with spite)

The dream was nice while it lasted.

(NADIA walks off. JACK walks over to the stairs. He begins to ascend them, until he suddenly starts coughing up a lung. The severity of the coughing forces him to sit down and take a rest halfway up the stairs.)

Scene 6

The main deck. Same set as in ACT I, except it is now close to midnight. Lights illuminate the harbor, and the sign for The Ocean Institute is well-lit in the backdrop.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH and LI sit on the starboard side of the ship, their legs dangling from the stage.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (sleep-deprived)

I can see my bed in the moonlight.

LI

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You know I came on this field trip when I was a child.

LI

And your father, he was your chaperone.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

How'd you know?

LI

When he did things, it made the papers.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That was then, this is now. That was him, this is me.

LI

The winds of change blew hard, and the fruit fell far from the tree.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I don't know how much longer I can avoid asking myself that awful question.

LI

Well, as they say, if you have to ask.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Dedicate your entire life to something. Fail again. Fail worse. Then what? Admit it now? I'd have nothing.

LI

Either way, you have nothing.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I thought it was something, but then something went missing. Now everything is out of reach.

LI

Why keep on grabbing, if there's nothing else to even touch?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What else would I do? This is my duty.

LI

To the sciences? The sciences have no sense of duty towards you.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The world is slipping. I MUST try and take it back.

(This strikes a cord with LI, who begins empathizing, and cautiously pats KATHRYN

ELIZABETH on the back. In a moment of vulnerability, LI confesses one her "proprietary" theories:)

LI
(looking far into the distance)
B.J.I.A.S. believes...
(long pause)
I believe...
(long pause)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (impatient)
Out with it.

LI
That there are black holes.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Obviously.

LI
Millions of them.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
This is known.

LI
In the Earth's oceans.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Huh?

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

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH bursts out laughing)

LI (defensive)
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 (matter-of-fact)

We don't *adhere* to mathematics.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (concerned)

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. $1 + 1 = 2$ 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. 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 pilgrimage, since you'd be trusting in solutions that are not purely logical.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's 4.

LI

If you spend your whole life playing by a strict set of rules, don't be surprised when someone else comes along that plays your own game better than you, if only because they don't feel obliged to stay within the boundaries to which you've chosen to adhere.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

This is NOT a game.

LI

What else could it be?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's much more to lose.

LI

Are we not playing by a predetermined set of rules?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The end would be irrevocable.

LI

Are the gains and losses, the risks, and insurances against them, not laid out clearly before us?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

There's much, much, too much uncertainty. I really don't think I can bear it much longer.

LI

The question you should be asking yourself is: what cards does a pilgrim such as yourself have left to play? What's in your hand?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You might not care to find out.

LI

I bear no ill-will, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Don't call me that.

LI

All I'm trying to say is: try and keep an open mind.

(Enter JACK from the stairwell. LI takes this as her cue to get up and leave. She exits stage right, towards the poop deck. JACK approaches. LI calls out from offstage:)

LI (offstage)

Here's my portent. A spoiler if you will. Jack will rescue a child... shrouded in a caul of water. And another: Jack and Kathryn Elizabeth will tie the knot by noon. And if not, one of them will be dead.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Well, then. We should make sure to get married by noon. For your sake.

JACK

I should caution you. Or warn you. That you're the one who appears to be rotting.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You know that everything that comes out of her mouth is bullshit.

JACK

Obviously. At any rate, we appear to have a spy on our poop deck. Poop: it's from the French. *Le pupe*. Not sure what it means. Pilgrim: from the Provencal, *peregrinus*, foreign, from the outside. Brig: from *brigante*, related to brigand – an armored foot soldier.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

What about it makes it a Brig?

JACK

Well, it has two masts: the main mast, and then a second mast, called the foremast, since it's in front of the main.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

She's not a spy.

JACK

Surely, you know that's not true.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

She's just a woman trying to make it in this world, no different than me.

JACK

Has she already convinced you of this? Dan and I are in agreement, we should throw her off the ship.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Throw her off the ship?

JACK

Do you know why she's here?

KATHRYN ELIZABAETH

I believe she intends to travel through time.

JACK

(matter of fact, philosophical)

Travel? To where? The present is all that exists.

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

We're traveling to the future, Jack, right this moment.

JACK

I'm afraid that's not the case. There is nothing out there in some other time. No, there's nothing that exists, nothing but the present. No comfort of belonging in the future, or knowledge 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

Jesus.

JACK

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Huh?

JACK

The girl from Beijing – There's this notion that the past will remain preserved somewhere on the shores of time. 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? You know, when you proposed to me earlier, you neglected to tell me you were sick and, well, dying.

JACK

I might not be dying. 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? You know we've been talking a long time.

JACK

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You can kiss me.

JACK

Do you want me to kiss you?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You're here. I'm here. It may as well be you.

(A rolling blackout sweeps through Dana Point. The stage goes dark. The sign for The Ocean Institute in the backdrop goes dark. The only light remaining is the box of light coming out from the ship's stairwell. Exit JACK, down the stairwell. Enter LI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks around, and JACK is nowhere to be seen.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
(confused)

What's going on? Jack?

LI

Jack left.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Romance isn't dead, Li. It's sallow, and monstrous.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH stands up and takes three steps backwards. She trips and falls into the vat of fish guts. A loud thud is heard, as she hits her head, rather severely on the edge of the vat. Her head bleeds profusely. LI rushes over, but stops short of pulling her out, as she's too offended by the smell.)

LI
Oh God. That didn't sound good.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH
Toss a line! The harbor's laid a trap for me!

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (to the mast)
Have we strayed too far outside of time, Jack?

LI (concerned)
Jack left. I told you that. Do you not remember?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH climbs out of the vat. LI backs away, offended by the smell.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Then who's that?

LI (concerned)

That's the mast.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH approaches the foremast. She walks over with great confidence:)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The mast? Which one? Main mast, or foremast?

LI (confused)

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. 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 piece of rope from the floor and ties it around KATHRYN ELIZABETH'S left wrist. LI attempts to lead her to the stairwell, but KATHRYN ELIZABETH resumes:)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(to the mast)

What's that? A fine question, my good man. 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, Li. 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 a fish head lodged within the cleavage of her breasts.)

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 holds up the fish head.)

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)

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. 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 part of the sport, Li. 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

I'm ready to strike!

LI (doubtful)

A few moments ago, you thought you were the Prince of Denmark.

(LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH walk into the light of the stairwell.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(holding up the fish head)

What's this? A fish head?

LI

Seriously, stop. Why are you still holding that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (excited)

I saw a mop bucket in the hallway!

(They exit. The central box of light is all that remains upon the blackened deck.)

ACT III

Scene 1

The main deck. Same as before. All is black, except for the central box of light: the stairwell to the belly of the ship.

(The jangling of PROOMPT's whip is heard. The shouting and screaming of children spreads through the theatre. 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. On account of the rolling blackout, the character now "believes" that the Brig Pilgrim is in the middle of the ocean.)

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. The seafarer's former 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

(still 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. Enter DAN, and then NADIA, who is holding hands with AIDO, the seven year old boy.)

NADIA

I can't see a thing.

DAN

Is it usually this dark? It's gotta be a rolling blackout.

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 leans in towards NADIA, but speaks loud enough for PROOMPT to overhear him:)

DAN

I'm pretty sure we're still in the harbor.

(he looks over the railing)

If you squint hard enough, you can see the dock. It's barely visible, but there it is. That slither of light. That's the dock.

(PROOMPT doesn't respond. NADIA is irate.)

NADIA

Daniel! Play along. I mean it.

AIDO

I see the dock!

NADIA

Fix that while you're at it, will you?

DAN

Jesus. Alright. Hey Aido, do you see it? Do you see the dock?

AIDO

I do.

NADIA

Daniel! He does NOT see it. Don't ruin this for the children.

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

DAN

Look at the moon.

(AIDO looks up)

DAN

Okay? Still looking at it? Now close your eyes.

(AIDO does as told, as DAN continues:)

DAN

Keep them closed. Now look down there 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 is in the water?

AIDO

No!

DAN

No! Do you know what your eyes do when they don't see anything, Aido?

AIDO

Dream?

DAN

That's right. They go to sleep, and 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 (with concern)

Slow it down, Dan.

PROOMPT

Cricket!

CRICKET

Yes, Mate.

PROOMPT

How many miles do you reckon we've traveled since I instructed you to take The Pilgrim out to sea?

CRICKET

(fearful, looking over the railing at the dock)

Not many.

PROOMPT (with fury)

How many is not many?

CRICKET

We're still... well...

DAN (aloud)

I'd say we're a good 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

Kernigan. Daniel Kernigan. Now, Cricket, my fellow sea-people, if you fell for the illusion of the dock, you're bound to fall for any of the others that the open seas might play on a sailor.

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.

(Enter KATHERYN ELIZABETH, she is wearing the trench coat that LI was previously wearing. LI wears the checkered shirt with denim shorts from before. They talk side by side and PROOMPT catches sight of KATHERYN ELIZABETH's trench coat, mistaking her for LI. The women exit.)

PROOMPT

Kernigan, I may have spotted one of these nymphs just now. With me. Follow that black coat.

DAN (aside)

Once I get John Davies away from Nadia, all deals are off: I crack him like an egg.

(Exit DAN, after the girls. PROOMPT grabs one of the Marlin spears.)

PROOMPT

Cricket, I'm off to the poop deck. 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.

CRICKET (believing his words)

We're 18 miles out at sea.

(NADIA becomes unsettled. Enter DEDAI.)

DEDAI (to AIDO)

I'm gonna be a whale!

AIDO

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

NADIA

Aido! 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?

(short pause, then with disappointment, to AIDO)

You don't call girls stupid. It's a real rotten thing to call somebody. (then, to DEDAI) If your dream is to become a whale, then don't stop believing you can do it, just because somebody

else 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.

(DEDAI runs off. AIDO begins crying and 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.

(CRICKET tries to stabilize the harpoon and the mount, but the contraption collapses, making a loud racket. CRICKET, frustrated, calls out to AIDO.)

CRICKET (to AIDO)

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

(AIDO begins to walk over, cautiously, 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? Now look at me. I'm a common sailor, suffering my way through the 1840s. What made me think I was in that other year, what year was it? When the truth is too difficult to believe, it doesn't make you a fool when you refuse to believe it, does 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 2

The bow of the ship. The railing converges in a point at stage center. [OPTIONAL: the bowsprit projects into the audience.] There's a tall stand with a bowl of white powder atop it.

(LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH run out. LI stands nearest to the powder bowl.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Any luck in rendezvousing with the first mate?

LI

I saw him when we first returned to deck. Haven't seen him since.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Show him your tits. Remind him of the immortality he once felt while sucking on his mother's boob. Is that all you've got to offer?

(LI attempts to lean on the stand. She quickly pulls her hand back when she realizes she's plunged her hand into a bowl of white powder.)

LI (freaking out)

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. If I'm a prince and you're my fool, then 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

The last original text was misplaced many, many years ago. Only the translations remain, in full. I prefer the Late Modern English translation. (she recites the simplified "translation" as if its real poetry) *To remain alive, or not to remain alive, that's the essential question at stake here.* Isn't that beautiful? My favorite part is 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?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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. 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

What are you doing?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Preparing for my role. 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

The Prince is you, yourself?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The same. Except, The Prince 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 (mocking her)

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.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH walks to stage center, 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.

(Exit LI and KATHRYN ELIZABETH, stage right.)

Scene 3

The main deck. The harpoon is fully mounted by now at stage center.

(NADIA is force-feeding herself raw onions. DEDAI and AIDO are roughhousing near the harpoon stand. Enter JACK.)

JACK

Making my rounds.

NADIA

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 (to AIDO)

I'll eat you!

(AIDO tries to climb on the harpoon, but DEDAI pushes him off. JACK approaches the children, who are near NADIA.)

NADIA

There's a scurvy outbreak. Don't come near me!

(JACK breaks up the children's fighting.)

NADIA

Is death from scurvy peaceful, Jack? Or is it more like being around you for six years? 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 (matter of fact)

It's not the nineteenth century anymore.

NADIA

How many years have I lost staring at that face?

JACK

Scurvy's not contagious.

NADIA

We don't know that!

JACK

I'm a doctor, Nadia.

NADIA

Mate Proompt knows the sight of scurvy when he comes across it. 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.

NADIA

The aroma staves off the animalcules. The Mate says so.

(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. 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:)

NADIA

I did feel it.

(NADIA suddenly begins to weep.)

NADIA

I do feel it.

JACK

Something you will never utter again.

NADIA

No. Never. You know, I only came to you when I felt empty because I'd rather feel grotesque like you.

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!

(JACK tosses the onion to her and begins to walk away.)

NADIA

Jack, don't leave me here alone.

JACK

There's nothing to be scared of. The times are changing is all.

(Exit JACK.)

Scene 4

The bow. Same as before.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH leans over the railing staring out onto the waters. Enter PROOMPT; he walks up from behind her, fixated on the trench coat.)

PROOMPT

Hello, nymph!

(PROOMPT places his hand seductively on KATHERINE ELIZABETH's hip. 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, don't be fooled. Though my blood 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.

(PROOMPT cocks the pistol.)

KATHERINE ELIZABETH
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
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 gradually lowers the gun and then holsters his pistol.)

PROOMPT
Oh, you're mad!

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

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

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?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

My father was never seen again.

PROOMPT

Placed in a shark?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Aye, where else?

PROOMPT

Anywhere else.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Mendacity took the throne and married Despair. 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. Now get me your Captain. I'm not immortal yet, you know, and my time is precious.

(PROOMPT backs away, and then begins applauding. He wipes a tear from his eye.)

PROOMPT

(as DAVIES, breaking character)

Bravo. Bravo. Never have I witnessed a performance so.. seamless, and with such IMMEDIACY.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH launches the powder bowl in the air. PROOMPT begins choking.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

(approaching PROOMPT, remaining in character)

Give not into the temptation of this pale odor, the earth's false molecules. Avail yourself not of this warping of life and your performance of it. Shark's got your nose!

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH begins to suffocate PROOMPT by grabbing his nose. PROOMPT runs away, terrified. Enter DAN, bumping into KATHRYN ELIZABETH.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Nothing ever really changes, does it? Nothing can remain the same, can it? Dan Kernigan, Attorney at Law!

(DAN walks over and kisses her on the forehead. He feels the powder on his lips and begins spitting it out, as he wipes his mouth clean.)

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.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I woke up from that dream...

DAN

A hot mime.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

And you taunt me that I ever dreamt it.

(He brings his hand to her chin.)

DAN

Could we at least end this on a happy note?

(She backs away.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No, not happy. But I can compromise.

DAN

I'd settle for, you and I not being bitter towards one another.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (ecstatic)

The time capsule is marred now!

DAN

Why does that excited you? I needed it to be a time capsule. Do you understand? I should have been there for you, you know, when your father... To send Nadia of all people to check up on you...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

A slight paucity of the bitter.

DAN

Huh?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

That's the counter. We can't change the past, Daniel. It doesn't exist.

DAN

You should have been a lawyer. You could have been great.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I wanted to be great at something else. My vision was blinded by too much light, but your harsh fabrications, they offered me a passing cloud.

DAN

You're acting strange. You sure you're doing alright?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Overwhelmed by ambition, is all.

DAN

You'll hit that precious mark someday. You just gotta be patient.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, I'll wait as long as I must. My revenge taken, I'll lord over my father's kingdom, for all eternity.

DAN

Say what?

KATHRYN 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. 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.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The first thing to go in the Kingdom of Dana will be all you lawyers. Every man in my kingdom will understand the rules and be sufficiently learned to plead his own case before my court.

DAN

Alright, King Arthur. Let me know how that goes.

(Enter LI)

DAN

Ah! There you are, spy.

(DAN lifts LI over his shoulder. LI doesn't struggle: she wants to go.)

DAN

I do believe Proompt is gonna throw your scrawny ass from this ship. Either that, or John Davies will be forced to break.

LI (insincere)

Help me, Katy Beth.

(whispering to her)

Don't actually help me.

(Exit DAN and LI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks out upon the waters beneath her. For a moment, she's at peace. Then, a loud shot is heard. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks around, and walks off, and exits.)

Scene 5

The main deck. Same as before.

(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, nor is JACK. PROOMPT is pointing his Marlin Spear towards CRICKET.)

CRICKET

(pointing to PROOMPT)

The son of a bitch shot me with the Marlin Spear!

PROOMPT

(to CRICKET, sternly)

I warned you three times that there would be no intercourse between you and the seductress, Slave.

DAN

Intercourse?

LI

Slave?

(DEDAI and AIDO begin wrestling with each other, dangerously close to the harpoon. KATHERYN ELIZABETH enters, and breaks them up. KATHERYN ELIZABETH pulls DEDAI away from AIDO, picking the girl up into her arms.)

KATHERYN ELIZABETH

Puppy! Your leg is bleeding.

DEDAI

No, it's not.

(KATHERYN ELIZABETH places DEDAI on a tall crate that is along the deck's starboard railing. AIDO hides behind the harpoon. She examines DEDAI for wounds.)

DEDAI (vicious)

I'm gonna turn into a whale. I'm gonna do it now, and I'm gonna eat you, Aido.

(DEDAI screams at the top of her lungs. LI slips loose from DAN's grasp. DAN grabs her again.)

DAN

How do we proceed with this, what do you call it, offering?

PROOMPT

Simple, Kernigan. We toss the temptress over the railing.

(DAN hands LI 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 farce to a sudden close. Option 2, you throw the girl into the water. It's dark out there, and God knows where the nearest land is. There's a good chance the girl drowns.

LI (mocking DAN)

Is this your master plan?

(LI kisses PROOMPT on the lips.)

PROOMPT

The seductress has entranced me in a spell. Ah! And she slips away from my clutch!

(PROOMPT releases his grip on LI. DAN grabs her.)

DAN

Oh, no you don't, Davies.

(LI turns around to face DAN, and kisses him on the lips.)

PROOMPT (collecting himself)

I've shaken her spell! You'll snap out of it once she's gone from our ship, Kernigan.

(PROOMPT lifts LI into the air, and attempts to throw her off the ship. DAN intervenes, pulling LI back down onto the deck.)

DAN

He was really gonna throw you off!

PROOMPT (to DAN)

You're under her control. I'm sorry for what I must do.

(PROOMPT points the marlin spear at DAN.
DAN grabs the spear and tosses it into the
water. KATHRYN ELIZABETH attempts to break
up the skirmish. Enter NADIA, holding a
glass jar full of red lollipops.)

DEDAI

Ms. Nadia? How do I become a whale?

AIDO

No!

NADIA

Whatever you wanna be, just believe.

AIDO

She's gonna eat me!

NADIA

See yourself as a beautiful woman, and that's what you are.
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, crying, grabs the harpoon handle. He
begins turning the weapon towards DEDAI.)

DAN

Aido, don't you dare!

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH sprints over towards
DEDAI. NADIA takes out a lollipop and holds
it up in the air.)

NADIA (to DEDAI)

I have your lollipop, baby.

(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. She cries out in agony, and looks as if she is about to pass out. DEDAI loses her balance, and off the ship, into the water. LI points down at something in the water.)

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.

DAN

Does anyone see the kid? Jesus, Katy Beth, your hand! That doesn't look good. Where the hell is Jack? (aloud) Jack!

NADIA

Dedai 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. (then, to LI) Do you see the girl?

LI (insincere)

Swimming through that moonbeam, I see her. Ha! She blows her water up.

(PROOMPT marches with purpose, heading towards CRICKET and the harpoon. KATHRYN ELIZABETH stands up on the crate and jumps. DAN attempts to grab her, but when he lifts his arm up, he is only holding her trench

coat. PROOMPT begins reloading the harpoon.)

LI

There's another whale! It's the momma. The momma whale is missing part of her fin!

NADIA (to LI)

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

LI

I am a scientist.

NADIA

Is it possible that they both turned into whales?

LI

Probably not.

NADIA

So it's not entirely *im*-possible.

PROOMPT (authoritative)

Push me, Cricket! Dinner has arrived.

(PROOMPT whips CRICKET. CRICKET, limping, begins moving PROOMPT, who is perched upon the harpoon stand. PROOMPT fires the harpoon at the whale. NADIA is horrified, still believing the whale is KATHRYN ELIZABETH.)

NADIA

No!

PROOMPT

Reload, Cricket!

DAN

(looking at PROOMPT upon the harpoon stand)

I give up. Throwing in the towel. I owe you ten bucks, Jack. Jack? Where the hell is Jack?

(DAN exits down the stairs. LI stares off the starboard side of the ship, stoically,

and her posture conveys a sense of concern. The entire stage becomes bright, as the harbor lights flicker on, one by one. The sign for the "Dana Point Ocean Institute" is illuminated in the background.)

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, disillusioned, but nobody responds)

I'm going to bed.

(NADIA takes AIDO, and exits down the stairs. LI continues to stare off starboard, concerned for Kathryn Elizabeth's wellbeing. Enter CRICKET, suddenly, from stage left, followed by PROOMPT.)

PROOMPT

We're still in the harbor, Cricket, you duplicitous slave! Get back here!

(CRICKET runs across the deck and dives over the port side, and slams hard against the wharf. PROOMPT chases after him to the edge of the railing, then takes a pause, and looks around at the harbor lights. The sun begins to rise. A beam of sunlight begins to cross the stage, towards where PROOMPT is standing.)

PROOMPT (dramatic)

There it is! The sun reveals all!

(PROOMPT kneels on the deck, and removes his shirt.)

PROOMPT (solemn)

Cape Horn. You were moments ago within reach of my looking glass, and now at an eternity's hold. How'd it come to this? Was it a nymph's magic? The madness of some jiggling prince? It matters not. There's only one to blame.

(PROOMPT removes his shirt, with a sense of gravity. The sun's light approaches PROOMPT, and should reach the tip of his boot by the end of his soliloquy.)

The sun comes forth, and the sea's bosom sleeps.

(PROOMPT kneels on the deck. He holds his whip on high.)

PROOMPT (shouting)

Grant me this favor, Captain. My flesh is yours, the whole of it, but take not the Pilgrim from me.

(PROOMPT bows his head, and lifts his whip.)

PROOMPT

I am ready for my judgement!

(The sunlight touches PROOMPT's boot. He stands up and bows to the audience.)

PROOMPT

And, scene.

(Enter KATHRYN ELIZABETH, wearing the Sailor Moon Cosplay outfit from earlier. Now that she is wearing less clothing, another water-ulcer is visible on her right leg. She begins clapping in the direction of PROOMPT [now, JOHN DAVIES]. Blood drips from her severed hand. DEDAI accompanies her, also drenched in blood and water, shivering. LI grabs DEDAI and urgently throws a towel around her.)

LI (offstage)

Doctor! We need a doctor!

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I'm not that mad one... could I be?

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH collapses upon the deck. JOHN DAVIES kneels over her, and he now appears even more concerned. Enter THE FLOWER BEARERS from the wharf, up the ramp.

They place the wedding flowers along the port side of the ship – paying no attention to KATHRYN ELIZABETH – then exit.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Is it time for my wedding?

JOHN DAVIES

The flowers have arrived.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH closes her eyes.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

It's not time to sleep.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH collapses into sleep. JOHN DAVIES attempts to break his arm free and leave. KATHRYN ELIZABETH jolts awake, and protests:)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The Mate will stay.

JOHN DAVIES

My work's not done. I still have a wedding to officiate.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I don't care. The Mate will stay, or I'll be having a word with the Captain.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH closes her eyes. JOHN DAVIES looks around at the carnage, and agrees, it's best to play along.)

JOHN DAVIES

It would be best, to NOT wake the Captain.

(JOHN DAVIES yawns. KATHRYN ELIZABETH keeps her eyes closed.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

You don't sleep, Mate. If The Prince doesn't wake by noon...

JOHN DAVIES (concerned)

Why wouldn't the Prince wake?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Oh, the Prince can sleep. You're the officiant. If the Prince doesn't wake, I'll tell you now: "I DO."

JOHN DAVIES

Married? To whom?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The Princess. Who else?

JOHN DAVIES

Are you sure you're not mad?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

I could never be sure.

(She falls into a deep sleep. JOHN DAVIES looks on, expressionless, sleep deprived.)

Scene 6

The deck of the Brig Pilgrim. Almost noon. The deck is adorned with expensive flower arrangements, and the two masts of the Brig Pilgrim are wrapped in garlands.

(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. His shirt is stained in blood. KATHRYN ELIZABETH wears the Sailor Moon cosplay outfit, and sleeps upright in the first mate's chair. Her hand is wrapped in a bandage, splinted by Proompt's cat-o-nine-tails whip. Proompt's First Mate Costume is draped over the back of the chair, along with his gun holster. The tricorne hat covers Kathryn Elizabeth's face as she sleeps. JOHN DAVIES, serving as the wedding officiant, is dressed in a tuxedo. LI stands on her own, downstage-right, near the stage exit, and watches the wedding ceremony from afar.)

JOHN DAVIES

(yawning throughout, toneless, rushing it, barely awake)

The kernel of the play is the word, the word combines with other words to make... what does a word make with a word? A pair of words. Yes! Or, no, to make scenes, ah!, and scenes acts, and acts, many acts... (he skips ahead) And I, we, perform them! In life, the kernel is the family. A family breeds and this builds a town. Breeding towns... Or... Families come together and build towns, and towns, cities... (he skips ahead) On with it... With my part said, this ceremony now comes to a close. You are hereby bound in matrimony, Mr. and Mrs. Dan Kernigan, and congratulations to... (forgetting their names) the two of you as well (he indicates KATHRYN ELIZABETH and JACK). May I present to you, the setting of the Pilgrim's sails. Ladies and Gentlemen: The Brig Pilgrim! Awaketh!

(A RECORDING OF VOICES IS HEARD while the setting of the sails commences:)

VOICE 1

Stand by to set sails!

VOICE 2

Jib ready!

VOICE 1

Foresail, stand by to go aloft.

(LI approaches JOHN DAVIES)

LI (lusting)

You wanna show me the harpoon?

JOHN DAVIES (also lusting)

You mean, below deck?

LI

How big is it?

JOHN DAVIES

The standard.

LI

Oh?

JOHN DAVIES

It's authentic.

(LI and JOHN DAVIES head towards the stairway)

JOHN DAVIES (cont.)

The prop. It's a piece of machinery I borrowed from a whaling museum in Nantucket.

LI

(her hopes shattered)

Oh?

JOHN DAVIES

What is it?

LI

I should be on my way.

JOHN DAVIES

What happened?

LI

It now seems very unlikely that there's a Greenland Shark in Dana Point.

(LI stops walking and glances around the ship, pensively. JOHN DAVIES, not noticing, continues, lusting, down the stairs. JACK, DAN and NADIA continue to watch the setting of the sails. KATHRYN ELIZABETH snores.)

VOICE 1

Jib sail ready to loose!

(The stage lights go off and a spotlight shines on KATHRYN ELIZABETH. Her eyes are open. This should have the appearance of a dream. She gasps, and wakes up.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (longingly)

Papa? (then, firmly) Enough of this.

(She squirms in her chair, as if sitting on something hard. She reaches around in her seat until she finds it: the First Mate's

gun. She knows what she must do. The stage lights come on.)

VOICE 1

Foremast: Trim the topsails! Loose the mainsails!

VOICE 2

Mainmast: Loose the topsails! Trim the mainsails!

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks around the stage, as she holds the gun on high, until she spots LI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH stands, and aims the gun at LI. LI notices, and screams in terror.)

VOICE 1

Foremast: Loose the topsails! Trim the mainsails!

(The sound of ropes and sails jerking. The stage curtains bounce up and down. KATHRYN ELIZABETH briefly glances up overhead at the sails.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The topsails are jumping up and down. The Pilgrim is awakening! She must know what comes after the wedding ceremony.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks over at JACK and winks, while she continues to point the gun at LI.)

VOICE 2

Other way around! LOOSE the topsails!

LI (trembling)

Kathryn. Elizabeth.

(JACK makes a gesture to DAN, suggesting they do something. JACK and DAN nod in agreement, then stand up and take a step towards KATHRYN ELIZABETH. She cocks the pistol, and JACK and DAN take a step back and sit down in their chairs.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

First to three hits wins. First point goes to Li, since – as it would appear – the creature out there may have, in fact, been a whale this whole time.

LI

Put the gun down. You aren't a Prince.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The Prince of Dana. He was swallowed by a whale.

LI

This isn't Hamlet.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The time for playing is over.

LI

Then stop playing. On, and on, and on. This isn't a game.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No, a game can be won.

LI

Then why go on pretending? The fix is in.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Time is all we have, until we have none. A wise man said that. A man wiser than any I've ever known. A man who once was, and who no longer is.

LI

Your father was not a king.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

He was Mayor. Of a small harbor-side town. A town that once was great, and that will never be great again.

LI

It's time to wake up. You're going to lose. It's guaranteed you'll lose.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH (defiant, firm)

The chips are as good as lost. But there are still hands to be won.

(LI can't help but laugh at the irony of her words. KATHRYN ELIZABETH looks out over the harbor.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

The harbor is so tranquil in the noontime sun. Do you see the seagulls diving for their prey? The pelicans plopped upon oils tracing out rainbows in the waters? The unrelenting urge for new life, and the rather pungent

(she plugs her nose with her bloody hand)
resistances... This was my childhood.

(JOHN DAVIES re-enters from the stairwell. KATHRYN ELIZABETH fires the gun at LI. The pop is loud, and smoke pours from the chamber. LI screams in terror, and looks down frantically at her chest. She takes relief when she can confirm she isn't injured. NADIA claps, believing this is part of the show. DAN restrains her clapping. Without looking at PROOMPT, LI breathes heavily and inquires:)

LI (still in a panic)

It's a prop?

(JOHN DAVIES nods YES. LI struggles to catch her breath. As everyone else on board looks around with concern and confusion, LI aggressively stares down KATHRYN ELIZABETH, who stares back, ready for war.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Second point goes to Li.

LI

Your career is over. It's dead.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

No argument. This flower is for you. Your impregnable bond.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH slides the gun towards PROOMPT and LI. KATHRYN ELIZABETH turns and looks out over the audience.)

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Third point goes to... he comes on from afar, softly, softly.
Boredom. Boredom is his name.

(to the mast, as she climbs the railing)
To remain alive or not to remain alive. Your sailors don't know
these words, do they? How's the original? *To be or not to be?*
That's the fragment... 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... Goodnight, Pilgrim.
Sweet dreams, Pilgrim. Goodnight, for now.

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH spreads her arms out,
and falls from the ship, into the water. A
splashing sound is heard. JACK begins
coughing, harder and harder, until he is
forced to kneel upon the floor. DAN rushes
over to him.)

LI

I'm done here.

(Exit LI)

JOHN DAVIES

Wait! How will I see you again?

(Exit JOHN DAVIES, in pursuit. JACK
spits up blood, and collapses.)

DAN (raw, emotional)

Jack? No! Jack!

NADIA (horrified)

No. Not like this. Not on my wedding day.

CURTAIN.