

THE PILGRIM'S AWAKENING

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By Jordan Paul Sullivan

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

**MAIN**

KATHRYN ELIZABETH – a marine biologist  
DAVIES/MATE PROOMPT – a Shakespearean actor / the first mate  
DAN KERNIGAN – a trial attorney, fiance to Nadia  
LI – a philosophical skeptic from Beijing  
JACK – a doctor  
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/ the captain (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

*Before the curtain opens:*

(Enter MADDOX, a grey-haired, long-bearded actor who plays "The Captain" of the Brig Pilgrim. He is dressed as a mid-19th century merchant sailor. His costumes is unimpressive, likely something purchased from a Halloween store.)

MADDOX

(toneless, boring, speaking to himself)  
He's coming? He really is... he's coming.

(he addresses the audience:)

They say he never breaks character.

They say he's a method actor. He's won a Tony Award.

(aside, under his breath:)

*What's a Tony Award?*

(to the audience:)

They say that even when the Dana Point Theatre caught fire, he kept on with the show. The audience stayed in their seats the whole time. Thought the flames funneling down from the stage-left ceiling were just part of his act.

(speaking to himself:)

John Davies is coming – tonight. But... Why?

(Exit MADDOX. **CURTAIN UP.**)

Scene 2

*The Dana Point Ocean Institute. A large hangar-style marine research center which also functions, in part, as a museum. Stage center: 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. A window on the stage right wall that overlooks the harbor. The stage left portion is cordoned off from the lab area. Set along stage left: a gift shop, with books and pelican figurines for sale, a poster for "Two Years Before The Mast" by Richard Henry Dana Jr., some marine samples displayed behind glass barriers: the jaw bones of a large shark, a curated arrangement of coral, conches, shells, etc. An exit upstage right, which leads to the harbor, and another exit downstage left which leads to the main hallway of the museum.*

(At open, LI, a tall, thin, modelesque Chinese woman in her early thirties, is seen rummaging through the notes and datasets on the lab bench. 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, appalled by what she's witnessing, stops in her tracks and drops her tank. For reasons that will be elaborated upon later, this is more than just some workplace nuisance to her. KATHRYN's reaction is severe: one might get the impression that she's just stumbled upon this strange woman desecrating the corpse of her late father. KATHRYN 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 approaches.)

KATHRYN

(shouting, in a panic, from a distance)

Hey! Hey you!

(LI doesn't look up from her pad. KATHRYN 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

(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

(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

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

LI (confident)

I am a scientist.

KATHRYN

Sent by whom?

LI

Why do you suspect the Greenland shark?

KATHRYN

I don't.

LI

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

KATHRYN

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. Then it all stopped.

KATHRYN (defiant)

My business.

LI

You did mention the Greenland shark.

KATHRYN

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...

(as in, 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 (suspicious)

Beijing? You don't have an accent.

LI (nonchalant)

That's part of my training.

KATHRYN

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

LI

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

KATHRYN (suspicious)

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

That wouldn't just be unlikely.

LI

*Implausible.*

KATHRYN

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?

(beat., she collects herself, sighs, and continues:)

My assertion, that this creature *could* be a whale, is just that, an indication of possibility. I'm here because I believe this creature *might*, in fact, *be* a shark. An *improbable* shark. A Greenland shark.

(KATHRYN laughs under her breath, as she walks over and retrieves her scuba tank.)

KATHRYN

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

LI (remaining calm)

I've read up on the ocean, because there are some theories that interest us at the Institute of Alternative Sciences...

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

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

KATHRYN

(fixated on the words:)

Alternative Sciences?

LI

It's a poor translation.

(KATHRYN places her tank in the lab bench sink, and then begins to prep her tank for storage; first, by releasing the remaining air from the tank.)

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

KATHRYN

There's only one scientific method.

LI

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

KATHRYN

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

LI

Tens of thousands.

KATHRYN

Such as?

LI

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

KATHRYN

Sounds... fishy.

LI

Indeed.

(beat.)

But it works for us. It suits our purposes.

(beat.)

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

That's ridiculous.

LI

(as if reciting dogma)

What's ridiculous today is the truth tomorrow.

(KATHRYN laughs aloud at this statement. LI remains unfazed by her reaction. As KATHRYN washes her scuba tank, LI faces the audience, and delivers her monologue:)

LI

(like a prophet preaching to non-believers)  
In the 1800's there was a prominent ornithologist, a respected scientist, who... Took? Under-took?

KATHRYN

Mis-took?

LI

Mis-Undertook? – the great effort to document twenty-thousand distinct seagulls on the North American coasts, East and West, and concluded, "*correctly*," based on the scientific method he had employed, and with his own standards of methodological rigor, that seagulls, as a species, have white bodies. He went to his grave believing he was correct in this assertion, and would have...

KATHRYN

The take home message?

LI

And... he would have told me that I sounded *ridiculous*, if I'd have suggested that there were, in fact, seagulls that have black bodies. It wasn't until years later, long after his death, 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 starts drying off the washed scuba tank with a towel.)

KATHRYN

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 briefly panics, as she looks upon LI with disdain and suspicion; she now recognizes who this woman is, and what her "science" represents.)

LI

What's the matter?

(LI approaches the lab bench. KATHRYN intentionally positions herself between LI and her data sets. As LI approaches, KATHRYN leans back over the desk, covering her data sets with her arms. LI observes KATHRYN's ulcer.)

LI

Was something... feeding on you?

(KATHRYN observes her own abdomen.)

KATHRYN (nonchalant)

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

(LI takes another step towards her. KATHRYN jumps atop the lab bench, so that she is sitting on top of the remaining papers.)

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 gives LI an exhausted glare, as if telling her to take a step back.)

LI

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

Eighteen hours in the water. And yet, you have nothing to show for it. Don't take this the wrong way, but...

(LI pauses, then proceeds)

Are you even looking for this creature?

KATHRYN (offended)

Who are you?

LI (cont.)

Call me Li. I mean, *still* looking for it?

KATHRYN

Why are you here?

LI

*Really* looking for it?

(LI flips through her yellow pad until she lands upon a specific page.)

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

KATHRYN

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

Just outside the institute.

(KATHRYN points to the stage right window. LI walks towards the window. KATHRYN stuffs her notes in the lab bench drawer and locks it, then stands up, as if ready to leave. LI looks back at her.)

LI (with zeal)

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 (intrigued)

What theory is that?

LI (matter-of-fact)

Proprietary.

KATHRYN (annoyed)

Of course.

LI

I'm not gonna be able to ID this creature on my own.

(KATHRYN looks longingly at the "improbable specimen")

KATHRYN

Goodnight, lady. Goodnight, goodnight.

(KATHRYN turns, and begins walking towards the stage left exit.)

LI (calling after her)

Your father...

(KATHRYN stops and turns back, a pale, mask-life expression envelops her face)

LI (provoking her)

Murdered in his sleep, was he?

KATHRYN

How dare you speak of...

LI (interrupting)

As he slept on the job. Then a trial lawyer. Left you for his ex? Ouch.

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

You need this.

KATHRYN

I need a publication. Not *this*.

LI

I can help you.

KATHRYN (sternly)

You're the problem.

LI (remaining poised)

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.

(KATHRYN stares blankly on, doing her best to not succumb to these games)

The odds: that when it's gone, it's gone for good.

(KATHRYN glances longingly at the "improbable specimen." LI extends her hand towards KATHRYN)

I need you on that ship. Put 'er there. Partner?

(KATHRYN 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 (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?

KATHRYN

I'd given up when my father died. But you're gonna make it right. There's no research in this city that gets published. This is my shot. I wanna see my work in an established journal. I need grant money. I need freedom. Got me? If you don't make that happen, so help you God.

(They stare at one another, then release hands, having arrived at a sort of agreement.)

LI

We board at six. Shower quick, and change.

(KATHRYN walks off towards the stage left exit. LI shouts after her:)

We should try to get there before the actors.

KATHRYN (looking back)

The actors?

(After a beat, KATHRYN continues on and exits. LI tries to open the locker. It's locked. She hits the locker with her hand, and it opens. LI takes out a handful of data sets, and continues to read through them.)

### Scene 3

*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. They are accompanied by DEDAI and AIDO, a female and male student, respectively, each about age 7.)

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.

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," as they ascend the ramp.)

NADIA

They've been doing this camp for decades. Just don't be the one who ruins it.

(They exit. Enter CRICKET, a young actor who will be playing the Second Mate. His merchant sailor costume, like that of Maddox, is also unimpressive, cheap. He's a frail-looking man of 20 with a high-pitched, pubescent voice.)

CRICKET

(holding his script against his chest)

The children are here to learn, through an immersive, theatrical experience, about what...

(he frustratedly checks his card)

What life was like for a sailor in the 1800s.

(he presses the card against his chest, and begins to ascend the ramp, then recites once again:)

The children are here to learn, through an immersive, theatrical experience, what life was like for a sailor in... in the 1400s?

(he checks his card)

In the 1800s!

(he checks his card)

ALL hands! All HANDS!

(Exit CRICKET. Enter KATHRYN and LI.  
KATHRYN has changed into casual clothing.  
LI is carrying a clanking bag of wine  
bottles.)

LI

And what if it *is* a whale?

KATHRYN

It's not.

LI

Of course, it's not. Because someone told you, based on certain evidence, that *this* or *that* result must follow. But ask yourself, what if it *were*?

KATHRYN

It's not.

LI

No publication?

KATHRYN

Not with my current datasets. There'd be more questions than answers. The reviewers for grants would hammer me.

LI

That's why B.J.I.A.S. is here.

KATHRYN

To install bias in funding?

LI

To remove it.

KATHRYN

Villains often flip the script to make themselves appear the hero.

(They begin to ascend the ramp.)

LI

Pigs often salivate when the farmer shows up on the day of their slaughter. There's danger in becoming too acclimated to a factitious world-view.

(They reach the top of the ramp.)

KATHRYN

Have you ever heard the story of the trout and the minnow? It doesn't turn out well for the minnow. He really should've learned to have some faith in the world as he knew it.

LI

Must it always come back to faith?

(They exit, onto the Brig Pilgrim.)

#### Scene 4

*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 MADDUX, the actor playing the Captain, burnt out and bored; he is simply going through the motions. He begins passing out food to "the children": who will be played by the audience.)

MADDUX

(with as little enthusiasm as possible)

Cold salt-beef, dry biscuits. Here you go. 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. MADDUX looks back with disgust at the audience member to whom he's just handed out food. Enter DAN and NADIA, stage left.)

MADDUX

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

NADIA

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

DAN

I'd still put in more effort than that.

NADIA

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

(She indicates the audience)

DAN

It's gonna get better.

NADIA

I wouldn't count on it.

(Enter KATHRYN and LI, stage right, far across-ship from DAN and NADIA – at a great enough distance that they're believably out of sight. KATHRYN looks around the theatre, as if overcome by a memory.)

LI

What is it?

KATHRYN

I've been on this field trip before, when I was a child. I'm 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

(still drowsy, she looks towards where DAN is standing but fails to spot DAN or NADIA)

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

(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 over to the stage right costume bin, and the two of them begin pulling out item after item. KATHRYN pulls out a SAILOR MOON COSPLAY OUTFIT.)

KATHRYN (suspicious)

Lost and found?

LI

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

KATHRYN

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

Oh! I think I could pull the hat off.

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

KATHRYN

Dude! Are you trying to get yourself arrested?

(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)

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 his little ex-girl-fweend?

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, a thin but well-dressed medical doctor in his early 30s. JACK carries a medical bag. He stands next to KATHRYN.)

KATHRYN

Jack, was it?

JACK

Kathryn Elizabeth, is it?

KATHRYN

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 biologist, not back then. I was still under the impression that you worked *for* the gift shop.

KATHRYN

What are you doing here?

JACK

The camp requires that there be a medical expert on board. I volunteer every Tues... day.

(JACK falls silent, as he catches site of NADIA. NADIA, meanwhile, locks eyes with JACK.)

NADIA (to DAN)

Is that who I think it is?

DAN (looking at JACK)

Didn't he leave the country?

NADIA

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

DAN

Do you think the two of them know each other? Now, 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

No.

JACK (more sincere)

Marry. Me.

KATHRYN

We've spoken, what? Two, three times?

JACK

At least four.

KATHRYN (laughing)

Well, then...

(KATHRYN finally spotting DAN across ship, retreats into herself. KATHRYN locks eyes with DAN, as she continues to converse with JACK)

KATHRYN

Good enough.

JACK

Is that a... *Maybe?*

KATHRYN

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

JACK

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

KATHRYN

*Good Enough.*

(KATHRYN sniffs the air, and snaps out of it. She shifts her sight back to JACK)

Something... reeks.

JACK

It's the harbor.

KATHRYN

I think it's coming from the ship.

JACK

The harbor's rotting. Has been for years.

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

KATHRYN

I don't care much for your tone. We're *all* rotting.

JACK

We are?

(From hereon, JACK and KATHRYN ELIZABETH begin calling one another "fiance," but this is not done 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

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, the harbor... just let it rot?

KATHRYN

Why not? Take a chip from my father, a man who tried his best, and lost it all, attempting to preserve a city that had no desire to linger on. All things rot away. It's poetry. 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

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

JACK

Are we?

KATHRYN

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

JACK

Not yet. First time camper?

KATHRYN

No. Not exactly.

JACK

Well. Remember: the year is 1840. Until the sun comes up tomorrow, that's the year we're in.

KATHRYN

Yah. So what if we are?

JACK

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

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

PROOMPT

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

Listen!

KATHRYN

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.

DAN (overly enthusiastic)

He's coming, Nads.

NADIA

Who? Take it down a notch.

(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 MADDOX, 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 (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 (stern)

Put your tits away.

LI (half-playful)

Once you stop acting a boob.

KATHRYN (half-playful)

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

LI (lusting)

My knickers pound, or something pounds my knockers.

(KATHRYN bursts 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 cuddles 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. PROOMPT walks into the audience and searches for the crying sound. NADIA stares into the distance, in a state of panic.)

DAN

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

(NADIA hugs DAN tightly)

DAN

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

NADIA

Shut up, Dan. Hold me.

DAN

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

(DAN places his arm around NADIA. PROOMPT heads back to the stage.)

NADIA

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

PROOMPT

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 scoffs aloud at this, finding the bargain too much. PROOMPT glances over at her, as if he has a problem to handle. As he glances over, LI begins pressing up her cleavage.)

PROOMPT (cont.)

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)

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 you?

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 rubs her chest bone with a sense of anxiety, as she watches DAN descend the stairs just in front of her.)

KATHRYN

Li, get me to a bed.

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) So... (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? Mine and...  
(he stops, catching himself)

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

Hey, 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. 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.

(There's a brief period of awkward silence, then JACK proceeds:)

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

DAN (clearly uncomfortable)

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 (pausing, suspicious)

Come here often, Jack?

JACK (defensive)

I... volunteer every Tuesday.

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

JACK

I've had some time to reflect on things. In regards to what transpired... Don't you say a damn thing once I say this:

(long pause)

I deserve my fair share of the blame.

DAN

I concur.

JACK

I said don't say a thing!

DAN

We were like brothers, Jack. 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.

DAN

I know. It... Nadia... still does. You were really sick, Jack.

JACK

I'm still sick, Dan.

(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," quickly changing tone:)... He's NEVER broken.

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

JACK

He's never broken. Not a slip. Not a crack on him. 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.

JACK

Care to put your money where your mouth is? Ten bucks that you can't.

DAN

Ten bucks?

JACK

Ten bucks.

(DAN extends his hand.)

JACK

The camp 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, and they shake.)

DAN

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 handwritten 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 read silently as 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 noon.

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 as 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 claim, has infiltrated my brig? 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 title: 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 imposter, I SHALL 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 bunk beds. A desk to stage right, in front of the right bed.*

(KATHRYN 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 bunk beds, engaged in idle nighttime tasks: knitting, reading, journaling, etc. DEDAI, the 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 subsides, and you steal away the man that this one (indicating KATHRYN) 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)

*Reclaim.*

LI (cont.)

*Reclaim* the man that this one (indicating KATHRYN) 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, who awakens in  
a panic, as if she were having a bad  
dream.)

KATHRYN

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

A few minutes.

LI

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

KATHRYN

Don't call me that.

LI

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

KATHRYN (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

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 (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

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

It's a shark.

LI

A Greenland shark.

KATHRYN (correcting LI)

Of undetermined species.

LI

Or a whale of undetermined species.

KATHRYN

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

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

The sample in my lab has scales.

NADIA (innocently)

Maybe some type of whale that has a scale.

KATHRYN (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

We were just playing around, Nadia.

NADIA (upset)

It doesn't feel good.

KATHRYN

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

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

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

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

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

LI

Why do things always have to make sense with you? Something in her childhood, I'm sure. Did your father ever, you know...

KATHRYN

What the fuck? What kind of question is that? My father was a hero, the greatest *King* this city's known.

NADIA (kindly)

You mean, Mayor.

KATHRYN (snapping)

That's what I said!

LI (cont.)

The constant need for order.

KATHRYN

Dana Point was great... It was, once.

LI (cont.)

*Making sense* of things, at the expense of everything else, perhaps, sometimes, at the expense of the truth.

KATHRYN

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 (desperate)

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

Six years!

NADIA

Six long years. You were grieving, we were grieving, for your father. The last thing you needed to hear about was... anything about... Jack.

LI

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

NADIA

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

DEDAI (ferocious)

I'm gonna turn into a whale!

(LI, NADIA, and KATHRYN all laugh at the child. 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 (losing his shit)

Holy shit! (he looks around) There's 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?

(CRICKET is restless.)

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

CRICKET

(with the fear of God in his voice)

He's *not* John Davies. He's Proompt, a First Mate who happens to have great authority aboard this ship. Godlike authority. That's how First Mates were back in the 1800s... and Proompt, whether you agree with him or not, is this brig's Mate.

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! Move!

(CRICKET runs out. DAN removes his shirt and begins cleaning the harpoon spear.)

PROOMPT

(offstage, as the door opens)

Cricket!

(Enter PROOMPT. DAN tosses his shirt over the harpoon spear, in an attempt to hide it. PROOMPT is in a state of shock and horror as he looks upon the condition of his cabin.)

PROOMPT (exasperated)

What fruity hell is this?

(he spots DAN)

Where's your shirt sailor? And what are you doing in my quarters?

DAN

The other guy let me in.

(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 himself. 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, grabbing his shirt on the way. 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 the third. 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 and shuts the door.)

### 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 stage right that exits up to the deck.*

(LI holds the middle door closed tight. LI waits a few moments, then releases the door knob and turns around to face 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 enters stage right, wearing the  
Tricorne hat.)

KATHRYN

Dan.

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

DAN

Jesus!

(KATHRYN quickly gathers herself)

KATHRYN

Just me. Have you been avoiding HIM as well? 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.

KATHRYN

You and I never had a good understanding of the difference  
between fabrication and truth, did we?

DAN (improvising)

We were happy in that moment, Katy Beth, because.. we knew it was something temporary, like a dream, where happiness... can take on a different meaning. You knew, I knew, if we'd ever tried to make it something lasting, then it... it never would have been... better...

LI (uninterested)

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

(LI exits, up the stairs.)

KATHRYN

How did you get so good at fabricating?

DAN

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

KATHRYN

You told me 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

No. No. Don't apologize. It's what makes you such a great lawyer. I really can't bear the site of... this.

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

KATHRYN

I should go. I need to start looking for my shark.

(KATHRYN ascends the stairs. DAN contemplates as she is ascending. When she reaches the top, DAN calls after her.)

DAN

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

(She can't help but laugh. She turns back.)

KATHRYN (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

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

DAN

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

KATHRYN (uncertain)

To what?

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

DAN

To... fucking... kill.

(DAN fires his "finger gun" at her. 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?

(They approach one another.)

NADIA

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

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.

(They kiss.)

NADIA (disdainful)

Nothing.

JACK (disdainful)

Fortunate for you.

(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

The dream was nice while it lasted.

(NADIA walks off. JACK walks over to the stairs. He begins to ascend them, and then starts coughing. 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 and LI sit on the starboard side of the ship, their legs dangling from the stage.)

KATHRYN (sleep-deprived)

I can see my bed in the moonlight.

LI

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

KATHRYN

You know, I came on this field trip as a child.

LI

And your father was your chaperone?

KATHRYN

How'd you know?

LI

Lucky guess.

KATHRYN

When he did things, it made the papers. That was then, this is now.

LI

A foul wind blew, and the fruit fell far from the tree.

KATHRYN

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

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

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

LI

Why keep on reaching, if there's nothing left to grab at?

KATHRYN

What else would I do? This is my duty.

LI

What you care about most has no sense of duty towards you.

KATHRYN

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

(This strikes a cord with LI, who begins empathizing, and cautiously pats KATHRYN on the back. In a moment of vulnerability, LI confesses one of her "proprietary" theories:)

LI

(looking far into the distance)

B.J.I.A.S. believes...

(long pause)

I believe...

(longer pause)

KATHRYN (impatient)

Out with it.

LI

That there are black holes.

KATHRYN

Obviously.

LI

Millions of them.

KATHRYN

This is known.

LI

In the Earth's oceans.

KATHRYN

Huh?

LI

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

(KATHRYN bursts out laughing)

LI (defensive)

We've only explored 5% of the ocean.

KATHRYN

But black holes? Is that even possible?

LI

What do you mean?

KATHRYN

Mathematically?

LI (matter-of-fact)

We don't *adhere* to mathematics.

KATHRYN (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 consistent function we know.  $2 + 2$  is less so.

KATHRYN

It's 4.

LI

It's less stable though.

KATHRYN

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

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 who plays your own game better than you, if only because they don't feel

obligated to stay within the boundaries to which you've chosen to confine yourself.

KATHRYN

This is *not* a game.

LI

What else could it be?

KATHRYN

There's so much more to lose. 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

You might not care to find out.

LI

I bear no ill-will towards you, Kathryn Elizabeth. All I'm trying to say is: 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.)

JACK

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

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

She's not a spy.

JACK

You know that's not true.

KATHRYN

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

JACK

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

KATHRYN

Throw her off the ship!

JACK

Do you know why she's here?

KATHRYN ELIZABAETH

I think she's trying to travel through time.

JACK

(matter of fact, philosophical)

To where? The present is all that exists.

KATHRYN

Says who?

JACK

A man who lived many thousands of years ago.

KATHRYN

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

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

Jesus.

JACK

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

KATHRYN

Who are we talking about?

JACK

The girl from Beijing. — There's this notion that the past is preserved somewhere on the shores of time. Time travel is an extension of this belief. But there are no shores. Just water.

KATHRYN

You know, Jack, when you proposed to me earlier, you neglected to tell me that you were sick and, well, dying.

JACK

I might not be dying. It's funny.

KATHRYN

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

How's that funny? You know we've been talking a lot.

JACK

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

KATHRYN

You could kiss me.

JACK

Do you want me to kiss you?

KATHRYN

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

(They lean in for a kiss. Suddenly, 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 (confused)

Jack?

LI

Jack left.

KATHRYN

Romance isn't dead, Li. It's sallow, and monstrous. I desire him, slightly more.

LI

How are we supposed to find this whale without any goddamned light.

KATHRYN

Just wait for the dorsal fin to reflect off a moonbeam.

(KATHRYN 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!

KATHRYN

What's this?

LI

That didn't sound good.

KATHRYN

Has the harbor laid a trap for me?

LI

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

KATHRYN (to the mast)

Have we strayed too far outside of time, Jack?

LI (concerned)

Jack left. Do you not remember?

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

KATHRYN

Then who's that?

LI (concerned)

That's the mast.

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

KATHRYN

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

LI (confused)

I don't know. The front one.

KATHRYN

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'S left wrist. LI attempts to lead her to the stairwell, but KATHRYN resumes:)

KATHRYN

(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 towards the stairwell.)

KATHRYN

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 touches a fish head lodged within the cleavage of her breasts.)

KATHRYN

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

(KATHRYN pulls out the fish head.)

KATHRYN

Ah! Claudius.

LI

Claudius?

KATHRYN

The minnow. I knew him well, Li.

LI

I really hope not.

(KATHRYN holds up the fish head.)

KATHRYN

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

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

LI

You're losing blood from your head.

KATHRYN

It's part of the sport, my friend. 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

Li, I'm ready to strike!

LI (doubtful)

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

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

KATHRYN

(holding up the fish head)

What's this? A fish head?

LI

Seriously, stop. Why are you still holding that?

KATHRYN

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 (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 from the belly of the ship.*

(The jangling of PROOMPT's whip is heard. The shouting and screaming of children resounds throughout 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. 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 perceptive Humours await 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

Probably 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? Don't ruin this for the children. That's what I want pre-programmed into your little lawyer brain.

DAN

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

AIDO

I do.

NADIA

Daniel! He does NOT see it.

DAN

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

AIDO

The dock!

(DAN 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

What! 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 *delegate* to the Third Mate to take The Pilgrim out to sea?

CRICKET  
(fearful, looking over the railing at the dock)

Not many.

PROOMPT (brimming with fury)

How many is *not many*?

CRICKET (about to shit his pants)  
Well. We're still... um... Oh God...

DAN (aloud, intervening)  
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.

CRICKET (whispering, concerned)  
But... the dock. Thank God.

DAN  
There's no dock. There's nothing down there. Just the ocean. Now, 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...

(DAN 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 KATHRYN 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.)

KATHRYN

Do you have the chum?

LI

What chum?

(KATHRYN looks up at the sails, and notices they're closed.)

KATHRYN

Better yet... Why isn't the ship in motion?

LI

The ship never leaves the dock, I thought.

KATHRYN

There's the problem. Where's the Captain? He should know his First Mate is derelict in his duties.

(PROOMPT catches sight of KATHRYN ELIZABETH's trench coat, mistaking her for LI. The women exit.)

PROOMPT

I may have spotted one of these nymphs just now. Kernigan, 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 *poop*. 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, Aido. It's a real rotten thing to call somebody.

AIDO

The scientist said..

NADIA

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!

(AIDO doesn't answer to CRICKET, as he doesn't realize he's the one being called for.)

CRICKET

You! Sailor!

AIDO (he points to himself)

Me?

CRICKET

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

(AIDO begins to walk over, cautiously, 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 absurd 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. The bowsprit projects into the audience. There's a tall stand with a bowl of white powder atop it.*

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

KATHRYN

Any luck in locating the Captain?

LI

No.

KATHRYN

We may have to run it by the First Mate.

LI

I could try to seduce him.

KATHRYN

You're seducing no one.

LI

No need to be mean. Seduction is my second nature.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

What's your plan, exactly? Couldn't we just use that vat of fish guts?

KATHRYN

There's a better lure.

(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 sticks her own hand into the bowl of powder, without a second thought.)

KATHRYN

(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

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

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

I've only read 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? I'm at the part where The Prince goes mad. I don't care to repeat the mindset.

LI

You might be repeating it now.

KATHRYN

The loss would be so little, but the loss would be absolute.

LI

The loss of what?

KATHRYN

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 were to keep playing 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

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

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

LI

What are you doing?

KATHRYN

Preparing for my role. Katy Beth, Prince of Dana.

LI

You don't like that name.

KATHRYN

If a man can be reclaimed, then so can a name.

LI

The Prince is you, yourself?

KATHRYN

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

What a life! Now, where's the First Mate? We've a bone to pick with him.

(KATHRYN 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 (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, stage right.)

### Scene 3

*The main deck. The same set as before, except that the harpoon is now fully mounted 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  
JACK begins to walk away.)

NADIA

I did feel it.

(NADIA suddenly begins to weep. JACK  
stops.)

NADIA

I do feel it.

JACK

Something you will never utter again.

NADIA

No. 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

A great mystery of the universe.

(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 all 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 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 KATHRYN's hip. KATHRYN turns around, and faces PROOMPT.)

KATHRYN

Is that any way to greet a prince?

(PROOMPT, seeing KATHRYN's powder-white face, screams in terror)

PROOMPT  
(with great authority)

Who are you?

KATHRYN

Another day. And you?

PROOMPT  
Another day? Which day are you then? Thursday?

KATHRYN  
I'm not sure. Yesterday, perhaps.

PROOMPT  
A ghost from the past?

KATHRYN  
Oh, don't be fooled. Though my blood be pale as stone and my skin molders, I am very much alive.

(PROOMPT opens up KATHRYN's coat to expose a small portion of her cleavage.)

PROOMPT (with suspicion)  
I'd say you're a nymph.

KATHRYN (flippant)  
I'd say you're middle management. Can't even keep his own ship in motion.

(PROOMPT takes out his pistol and points it at KATHRYN.)

KATHRYN  
Get me your Captain. I've heard enough backtalk from mediocrity for an evening.

PROOMPT  
Be you nymph or some newfangled prince with jiggling body, I won't put up with disrespect while you're on my ship.

(PROOMPT cocks the pistol.)

KATHRYN

Shoot. The bullet will pass right through me.

PROOMPT (fearful)

Only if you're a ghost will a bullet pass right through you.

KATHRYN

The bullet will pass right through me, as I am.

PROOMPT

How's that? You're mad.

KATHRYN

No, I just don't exist.

PROOMPT

Oh, you're mad!

(PROOMPT gradually lowers the gun and then holsters his pistol.)

KATHRYN

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 (offended)

The Brig Pilgrim, bait for a shark?

KATHRYN

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?

KATHRYN

My father's inside there.

PROOMPT

Inside the shark? How'd he get there?

KATHRYN

He was placed there.

PROOMPT

By your own hands, probably!

KATHRYN

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?

KATHRYN

He disappeared one evening, and poof.

PROOMPT

Poof?

KATHRYN

My father was never seen again.

PROOMPT

Placed in a shark?

KATHRYN

Aye, where else?

PROOMPT

Anywhere else.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

My uncle took the throne, and he married my mother.

PROOMPT

What is this family? Greek? You may be a nymph.

KATHERINE ELIZABETH

My mother and my nuncle, the two of them have spread their lies to the people, and the lies have built a kingdom of their own. I aim to find this shark, and bring back evidence of my father's whereabouts.

PROOMPT

Your father's whereabouts? Inside the shark?

KATHRYN

Yes! Are you not listening?

PROOMPT

His *where-abouts*. Is he alive?

KATHRYN

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 breaking character, he begins applauding. He wipes a tear from his eye.)

PROOMPT

(as JOHN DAVIES)

Bravo! Bravo! Reality, at times, becomes too much. My father. He too is out there.

(he takes two steps forward and observes the deck)

Through mankind's darkest hours, the theatre has endured. When the stage goes... (he holds his face in a panic) oh, my imagination really can't bear it... when the stage goes...

KATHRYN

Ah, you're the mad one on this ship, Mate. You wear your bait on your nose. Watch out! Here he comes!

(KATHRYN launches the powder bowl in the air. She grabs PROOMPT's nose, and begins to suffocate him..)

KATHRYN

Shark's got your *schnozz*.

(PROOMPT begins choking, and struggling to break free)

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.

(PROOMPT breaks free, and gasps for breath, then runs away, terrified. Exit PROOMPT. Enter DAN.)

DAN

Katy Beth.

(DAN walks up and kisses her, then starts wiping the powder from his lips in a panic. KATHRYN is unresponsive.)

DAN

What the hell is on your face?

KATHRYN

You tell me, you're the one staring at it.

DAN

You look like a mime...

KATHRYN

I woke up from that dream...

DAN

A hot mime.

KATHRYN

And you taunt me that I ever dreamt it.

DAN

We had everything we wanted, and knew it couldn't last. It only felt like a dream.

KATHRYN

It was something great and it came to nothing. What else could it have been, but a dream?

DAN

A man has to make compromises in his life, sometimes at the expense of his own happiness.

KATHRYN

You mean, for your reputation?

DAN

For Nadia. For her... stability. In retrospect, Nadia never wanted to say YES to *this*. I made it so that she couldn't say NO.

Oh, Dan.

I'm just a man. I'm not perfect.

No, no.

Four years ago, when Jack first started getting sick, he began to... say things... And Nadia. Well. Nadia ended up in a bad place, and I... I just so happened to be there. For better or worse, Nadia is my responsibility now. If it felt like a dream, Katy Beth, it's because I thought I needed a passing diversion. I needed my desires to be a memory. I need the memory. I need it to last a lifetime. I'm really in need. Couldn't we at least end this on a happy note?

KATHRYN

A slight paucity of the bitter.

DAN

Huh?

KATHRYN

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

DAN

You know, you should have been a lawyer. You could have been great.

KATHRYN

I wanted to be great at something else.

DAN

Don't give up.

(Enter LI. She spots DAN and stops.)

DAN

Ah! There you are, spy.

(Exit LI. Exit DAN, in pursuit.)

KATHRYN (disillusioned)

I was never mad at all, was I?

(she brushes the white powder from her face to the side, and has a moment of doubt:)

The curtain peels back, and reveals the light of sanity, where a thousand grey-winged moths gnaw at my flesh — heap upon heap of

doubt. In my madness, I was certain of my sanity. Was it a whale? Was it a shark? It didn't matter. I could never be wrong.

(she smears the powder over her entire face again, regaining her confidence:)

I must go back there. *Certainty* is the way. I'll strut beneath the shadows, with my chest out like a king who could walk through burning metal. If *this* is theatre – the audacity to call a shark a shark – then the theatre must endure. If *this* is madness – my existence, and the recognition that I am still existent – then every character must become as mad as I am: then we'll all be sane.

(Enter DAN. He looks around, unable to find LI. KATHRYN holds her fingers in the shape of a gun, and points it at DAN)

KATHRYN

I know what I've gotta do.

DAN

To what?

KATHRYN

Bang. Bang.

DAN

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

KATHRYN

Oh, I'll wait as long as I must.

DAN

Good for you.

KATHRYN

I'll reclaim my throne from Mother and Nuncle. Then, my revenge taken, I'll lord over my Father's kingdom, for all eternity.

DAN

Say what?

KATHRYN

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 man would ever be able to challenge my rule.

DAN

Well, that sounds like... some fucking terror.

(Enter LI. She accidentally bumps into DAN. DAN grabs LI and lifts her over his shoulder.)

DAN

You're coming with me, spy. Oh, I do believe Proompt is gonna throw your scrawny ass from this ship.

(Exit DAN and LI. KATHRYN looks out upon the waters beneath her.)

KATHRYN

Nature gives us "is," and "seems" makes a terrorist. The orchestra of dissonant instruments commingles into a lapping of ocean waves. I must resist the urge to call out "this is" and add to that dissonance. Let seems be the trammel-net of be. The only emperor is the emperor of the sea. I cannot break. I will not break. I shall not break.

(Beat. A loud gun-shot is heard.)

CRICKET (offstage, crying in horror)

Medic!

KATHRYN

Oh God!

(KATHRYN looks around in confusion, then runs off and exits stage right.)

### 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.)

DAN

Cricket here was accused of conspiracy, then he was convicted, and sentenced. Expeditiously. Terrible optics, I get it, but, there's beauty: words, even imagined, creating firm and unyielding laws.

(KATHRYN enters and is horrified by the site of DEDAI bleeding.)

KATHRYN

(breaking character)

The children! Break! Pause the action!

(to DEDAI)

Dedai, what happened? Your leg is bleeding.

DEDAI

No, it's not.

(KATHRYN places DEDAI on a tall crate along the deck's starboard railing. AIDO hides

behind the harpoon as KATHRYN 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.)

DAN

Would someone shut the kid up?

(LI slips loose from DAN's grasp. DAN grabs  
her again.)

DAN

Where do you think you're going, spy?

LI

I'm not a spy.

DAN

So, Mate Proompt. How do we proceed with this, whaddaya call it,  
offering?

PROOMPT

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

KATHRYN

Break! Pause the action! Injured child!

(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 spy into the  
water. It's dark out there, and God knows where the nearest land  
is. There's a good chance the girl drowns.

KATHRYN

Break! I said... Break!

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.)

KATHRYN (disgusted)

Ew.

PROOMPT (collecting himself)

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

KATHRYN

Break!

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

DAN

You were really gonna throw her 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

I said: break!

(KATHRYN runs over and tries to break up the skirmish, as if awaiting an opportunity

to get involved. 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 (cont.)

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

NADIA (to DEDAI)

I have your lollipop, baby.

KATHRYN

Dedai, move! Dedai!

DAN

Aido! Don't you dare!

(DEDAI stops screaming, and she reaches for the lollipop. KATHRYN reaches DEDAI and pushes her away from the harpoon's line of fire. AIDO shoots the harpoon, and KATHRYN'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 so good. Medic! Where the hell is 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. Do you see the girl, Li?

LI (insincere)

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

KATHRYN

I see her! I see Dedai.

(PROOMPT marches with purpose, heading towards CRICKET and the harpoon. KATHRYN stands up on the crate.

DAN

Katy Beth. Get down off of that crate.

(She jumps off the ship. DAN attempts to grab her, but when he lifts his arm up, he

is only holding her trench coat. PROOMPT begins reloading the harpoon. DAN removes his shirt, and is ready to jump. NADIA grabs onto him tightly.)

NADIA

You're not jumping into the middle of the goddamn ocean, Dan.

LI

There's another whale! It's the momma.

CRICKET

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 (confident)

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.)

NADIA (to PROOMPT)

That's Katy Beth!

(PROOMPT fires the harpoon at the whale. NADIA is horrified, still believing the whale is KATHRYN.)

NADIA (horrified)

No!

PROOMPT

Reload, Cricket!

DAN

(looking at PROOMPT upon the harpoon stand)  
I give up. This guy's unbelievable. 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? The magic of nymphs? The jesting of a 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, shouting aloud:)

Grant me this favor, Captain. You can claim my flesh, but take not the Pilgrim from me.

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

I am ready for my judgement!

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

And, scene.

(Enter KATHRYN, 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. KATHRYN 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 – then exit. KATHRYN opens her eyes, and tracks the flowers.)

KATHRYN

Is it time for my wedding?

JOHN DAVIES

The flowers have arrived.

(KATHRYN falls asleep. JOHN DAVIES attempts to break his arm free and leave. KATHRYN protests:)

KATHRYN

The Mate will stay.

JOHN DAVIES

I still have a wedding to officiate.

KATHRYN

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

(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 keeps her eyes closed.)

KATHRYN

You don't sleep, Mate. If you sleep, who do you imagine will wake me for my wedding?

JOHN DAVIES

Your wedding?

KATHRYN

My wedding. If The Prince doesn't wake by noon...

JOHN DAVIES (concerned)

Why wouldn't the Prince wake?

KATHRYN

Oh, trust me, the Prince can sleep. You're the officiant. So, I'll tell you now: "I DO."

JOHN DAVIES

You? Married? To whom?

KATHRYN

The Princess. Who else?

JOHN DAVIES

Are you sure you're not mad?

KATHRYN

Oh, no. I could never be sure.

(JOHN DAVIES removes his coat, and places it atop KATHRYN. KATHRYN reaches for the pistol on his hip, but he sits up too quickly.)

My arms, as well. That's where the heat makes off.

(JOHN DAVIES lifts her up, and puts her hands through the coat. KATHRYN steals the pistol from his belt, and hides it in the pocket of the coat.)

What's the breaking point, old Mate? When the fire jolts the actor from his track? Or when the smoke consumes the audience's eyes, and they can no longer see the actors for what they cannot be?

JOHN DAVIES

I suspect your question of being misleading. The character is immutable, a passing shadow. It was broken from the start.

(KATHRYN begins to snore.)

Well then. We do our best. In hopes that, if only for a shifting moment, the crystal and the vase shall become one.

(JOHN DAVIES looks on, expressionless and sleep deprived. He notices his gun is missing, and looks around the stage, unable to spot it anywhere on the deck.)

### 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 wears the Sailor Moon cosplay outfit and the Mate's coat, and sleeps upright in the 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 with town... or... Families with families. No. Families come together and build towns, and towns, cities... (he skips ahead) 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 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

You wanna show me the harpoon?

JOHN DAVIES

Below deck?

LI

How big is it?

JOHN DAVIES

The standard. It's authentic!

LI

Is it?

(LI and JOHN DAVIES head towards the stairway)

JOHN DAVIES (cont.)

The prop is a piece of machinery I borrowed from a whaling museum in Nantucket.

LI

(her hopes shattered)

Oh? Right in front of my face... the whole fucking time.

(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 snores.)

VOICE 1

Jib sail ready to loose!

(KATHRYN gasps, and wakes up.)

KATHRYN (firm)

Papa? Enough of this. They say noon is the hour for weddings and revenge.

(She reaches around in her coat pulls out the First Mate's gun.)

VOICE 1

Foremast: Trim the topsails! Loose the mainsails!

VOICE 2

Mainmast: Loose the topsails! Trim the mainsails!

(KATHRYN looks around the stage, until she spots LI. KATHRYN 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 briefly glances up overhead at the sails.)

KATHRYN

The topsails are jumping up and down. They must know what comes after the wedding ceremony.

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. KATHRYN cocks the pistol, and JACK and DAN take a step back and sit down in their chairs.)

KATHRYN

First to three hits wins.

LI

Put the gun down.

KATHRYN

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

The genetic results came back this morning: it's a whale.

KATHRYN

That confirms it?

LI

Does it? It doesn't matter. There's no Greenland shark in Dana Point.

KATHRYN

Ha!

LI

Put the gun down. This isn't Hamlet. This isn't a game.

KATHRYN

No, a game can be won.

LI

Then why go on pretending?

KATHRYN

*Time is all we have, till we have none of it.* A wise man said that. A man wiser than any this city's known. A man who once was, and who will never be again.

LI (scoffing, mocking her)

The King?

KATHRYN (firm)

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

LI

The fix is in.

KATHRYN

The fix is fixed, and has been.

LI

You can have your winnings. Whatever you want! A publication! Funding! I can get you whatever you need to make sure you're a *somebody*.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Keep it.

LI

Put the gun down. You know how this ends. The more you play, the more you lose. The odds guarantee it. You'll lose everything.

KATHRYN

There are still hands to be won.

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

KATHRYN

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, Papa.

(she steadies her aim)

LI (terrified)

Katy Beth!!!

(JOHN DAVIES re-enters from the stairwell. KATHRYN 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)

The gun! 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, who stares back, ready for war.)

KATHRYN (nonchalant)

Second point goes to Li.

(KATHRYN slides the gun towards LI.)

LI (furious)

Your career's as good as over.

(KATHRYN turns away. She looks out over the audience.)

You and I... are through.

KATHRYN

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

(she climbs the railing of the Brig  
Pilgrim)

All will be fine, all will be well, when the Prince and the City  
are one. The Kingdom becomes eternity's ocean; the City, my  
borrowed stage.

LI (derisive)

That's your plan? Turn an entire city into dinner theatre?

KATHRYN

A city of Faith.

LI

An outdated system. A relic of the past. If not from the inside,  
then from the outside. If not us, someone else. The hyenas  
crouch at this city's gates. Nothing matters here. They can  
smell your weakness, and they abhor it.

KATHRYN

(addressing the mast)

*To remain alive, or not to remain alive, that's the essential  
question at stake here.*

LI

You're no Prince.

KATHRYN

Your sailors don't know these words, do they? What's the  
fragment? *To be, or not to be.* You know it?

LI

You have no Kingdom.

KATHRYN

To waken into the new dream, and to learn, perchance, to see all  
the splendid beauty, here amongst the rot.

LI

It's in your imagination!

KATHRYN

Goodnight, Pilgrim. Sweet dreams, Pilgrim.

LI

It's savage!

KATHRYN

Goodnight, for now.

LI

No argument?

(KATHRYN falls backwards off the ship, into the water. A splashing sound is heard.)

LI

I'm done here.

(Exit LI)

JOHN DAVIES

Wait! How will I see you again?

(Exit JOHN DAVIES, in pursuit. JACK begins coughing, harder and harder, until he is forced to kneel upon the floor. DAN rushes over to him.)

JACK

I love her, slightly more.

(coughs)

This universe... it is sick.

(coughs)

She was always so fond of those damned pelicans on your lawn.

(JACK collapses)

DAN

Jack! Jack! Come on, Jack.

JACK

She's not wrong. Faith. That's what this city needs. The desire to remain firm, united, even as the ocean tries to hoard us, grain by grain, within its gulches.

DAN

(misinterpreting JACK's words, DAN is suddenly inspired)

This city needs... a new law, a new mayor.

JACK

Faith, Dan. This city needs Faith.

(JACK collapses)

DAN (raw, emotional)

Jack? No! Jack!

(JACK isn't responsive. DAN lifts him up.)

Not like this!

NADIA (horrified)

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

(Exit DAN carrying JACK's limp body, followed by NADIA. Enter DEDAI and AIDO, from the stairs. DEDAI is carrying Jack's pelican figurine from earlier.)

AIDO

You kissed me!

DEDAI

No, I didn't! You did!

(AIDO lets it go. He takes a step ahead of her, and pulls out a lollypop from his pocket, and presents it to DEDAI. DEDAI is ecstatic. DEDAI is ecstatic. She grabs the lollypop, and immediately unwraps it. She places the lollypop in her mouth and then grabs AIDO by the hand, and they exit.)

**CURTAIN.**

(Enter MADDOX, before the curtain.)

MADDOX

(boring, toneless)

Where have all the actors gone? Have I missed something?

(he checks his pocket watch)

My God, it's already past noon.

(beat.)

Well, that's the camp.

(he begins to walk off, then briefly looks  
back at the curtain)

Until next Tuesday, Pilgrim. Until next Tuesday.

(Exit MADDOX. Lights on.)

**END.**