

THE PILGRIM PERFORMS

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

PERSONS:

KATHRYN — a marine biologist

DAVIES — a Shakespearean actor

DAN — a trial attorney, fiance to Nadia

LI — a philosophical skeptic from Beijing

JACK — a doctor

NADIA — a teacher of the 2nd grade, fiancée to Dan

CRICKET — an amateur actor

MADDOX — the stage manager, Captain of the Pilgrim

DEDAI — a female child, age 7

AIDO — a male child, age 7

ACT I
Scene 1

Before the curtain opens:

(Enter MADDUX, "The Captain" of the Brig Pilgrim. He is dressed as a mid-19th century merchant sailor. His costume is unimpressive, likely something purchased from a Halloween store. MADDUX is the antithesis of *performativity*. He is toneless and he underwhelms. This is in contrast to John Davies, for whom attention to detail, and the need to connect with his audience, appear to be driven by a deeper, religious zeal.)

MADDUX

(to himself, boring and toneless)

He's coming? He really is... he's

(forgetting his line)

Coming...

(he collects himself, then addresses the audience:)

They say he never breaks character.

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

(aside, unimpressed)

What's a Tony Award?

(continuing, to the audience)

They say that even when the Dana Point Theatre caught fire, he kept on with the show.

(he observes the auditorium, bending forwards slightly)

The audience stayed in their seats the whole time.

(he rips a fart, and carries on as if nothing happened; the audience should believe this is not planned)

Thought the flames funneling down from the stage-left ceiling were just part of his act.

(then, to himself)

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

(annoyed with his job)

Of course, nobody's told me: the stage manager, and "Captain."

(Exit MADDUX. CURTAIN UP.)

Scene 2

The Dana Point Ocean Institute. A marine research center which also functions, in part, as a museum. At center: a lab bench with research papers, notebooks, 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 right wall that overlooks the harbor. The left portion is cordoned off from the lab area, and shouldn't occupy too much space, but must include: a gift shop, with books and pelican figurines for sale; and may also include: a poster for "Two Years Before The Mast" by Richard Henry Dana Jr.; some marine samples displayed behind glass barriers (e.g., the jaw bones of a large shark; a carefully curated arrangement of coral, conches, shells, etc). An exit upstage right, which leads to the harbor; another exit stage left which leads to a wing of the museum.

(As the curtain rises, LI, a tall, thin, modelesque Chinese woman in her early thirties, is seen rummaging through the loose papers and notebooks on the lab bench. She scans through one of the loose pieces of paper on the lab bench, and makes a note on her yellow writing pad. She opens a notebook from the bench, flips a few pages, then a few more pages, and stops. She tears that page out, and throws it on the floor, as if to say, this page is useless to me. She flips through some more pages, then stops again. She tears this page out, and places it on the bench, and calmly jots a note on her yellow pad.

KATHRYN ELIZABETH, a marine biologist, age 30, enters from the upstage right door, wearing a conservative bikini top and a wetsuit that's been peeled down to the level of her waist. KATHRYN is carrying a scuba tank in her arms, and her hair is damp. There is a water-ulcer on her right lower abdomen, just above the wetsuit line. KATHRYN is appalled by what she's witnessing; she stops in her tracks and drops her tank, which clanks loudly. LI

does not avert her gaze from the documents on the bench. KATHRYN walks in a hurry towards LI, — she'd run if she weren't coming off an 18-hour dive. LI casually begins to jot down another note on her yellow writing pad as KATHRYN approaches her.)

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)

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 begins organizing some of the misplaced papers on her bench)

KATHRYN

(still fuming, still unsure why she's engaging with LI)

It's a shark. You can tell by the skin alone. Are you affiliated with the Ocean Institute?

LI

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...

(she collects herself)

It's the only shark known to us that can live for up to five-hundred years, but I mean, dude...

(as in, *get real*. She takes a pause, and looks around the building, as if to confirm 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

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

(almost scoffing)

That would be more along the lines of the absurd.

LI

(not offended, intrigued even)

Would it really be so absurd?

(LI prepares to make a note on her yellow pad.)

KATHRYN

A shark from the frozen arctic, making its way to the shallows of Southern California? Absurdity, it seems more and more, might be little more than a state of mind. If I were to come upon a whale that had scales, for instance, I would find certainly that rather absurd. You, on the other hand...

(LI regroups, and attempts to clarify her argument, remaining calm:)

LI

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

(KATHRYN laughs under her breath, then 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?

(KATHRYN begins to prep her tank for storage. First, she places her scuba tank in the lab bench sink, and starts releasing the remaining air.)

LI

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

KATHRYN

There's only one scientific method.

(KATHRYN continues releasing air from the tank.)

LI

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. But it works for us. It suits our purposes.

(she takes a moment)

We have a saying at B.J.I.A.S.: that *what seems absurd is sometimes closer to reality, and what seems real is often 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 scoffs, as she starts drying off the washed scuba tank with a towel. LI faces the crowd, like a preacher to the nonbelievers:)

LI

In the 1800's there was a prominent ornithologist, a respected scientist, who 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, that all seagulls have white bodies, and would have told me I sounded ridiculous if I would have suggested that there were seagulls that, in fact, have black bodies. He was correct based on his methods, but years later, black-bodied seagulls were discovered in New Zealand, and then in South America, discrediting our ornithologist's entire proof about seagulls and white bodies.

KATHRYN

If anything, that's proof that our methods work. As more data comes in, you update your models. 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 reacts to this statement quite strongly, as if she suddenly realizes what LI and her "science" represent.)

KATHRYN (stern)

What are you doing here?

LI

Was something... feeding on you?

(KATHRYN observes her own abdomen.)

KATHRYN (nonchalant)

That's just a water-ulcer.

LI

Don't take this the wrong way, but...

KATHRYN (ignoring LI)

I'm rotting.

LI

Are you *looking* for this creature?

KATHRYN
(ignoring LI)

The human body wasn't designed to remain submerged in water for 18 hours.

LI

Really looking for it?

KATHRYN
(ignoring LI)

Our human skin begins to rot.

LI

Still... looking for it?

KATHRYN

(suddenly offended)

What are you doing here? In Dana Point?

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

LI

The Brig Pilgrim.

KATHRYN

Huh?

LI

It's nearby?

KATHRYN

Same place as always.

(KATHRYN looks towards the right window. LI spots the ship outside, and walks towards the window. As they continue, KATHRYN stuffs her notes in the lab bench drawer, locks it, then stands up.)

LI

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

KATHRYN

Scuba diving...

LI

Three people reported spotting a shark, or what they *believed* to be a shark, next to some tall ship: this... *Brig Pilgrim*. The ancient creature might have some affinity for that old ship. I'm going to board that ship and hold a watch tonight, and I'd like you there with me.

(KATHRYN begins to walk off. LI turns around, and calls after her.)

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 (scoffs, annoyed)

Goodnight, Lady.

(KATHRYN turns to walk off, but LI grabs her arm)

LI

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

(she collects herself, sincerely)

I can help you.

KATHRYN (sincerely)

You're the problem.

(KATHRYN shakes her arm loose and walks off, once again, towards the exit.)

LI

(nonchalant)

Agree to disagree.

(KATHRYN walks, and LI frustratedly calls after her.)

I need you on that ship. I can't I.D. this creature on my own.

(KATHRYN continues to the exit. LI begins to taunt her.)

They say a trial lawyer left you for his ex. Ouch.

(KATHRYN continues. LI becomes more desperate. She picks up some papers from the lab bench.)

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

(LI hesitates, then proceeds)

Your father...

(KATHRYN stops)

Poisoned in his sleep, was he, as he slept on the job?

(KATHRYN turns)

Gossip is... When the late great mayor died, his only daughter, the town scientist, had herself a full-blown nervous breakdown. They say she's still a little bit... *out of sorts*.

(KATHRYN patiently walks back towards LI. She takes a moment, observes the improbable specimen, and then, her own obsessions getting the best of her, she extends her hand. LI hesitates, then shakes her hand. LI tries to pull her hand away, but KATHRYN does not let go.)

KATHRYN
(firm, as if making a demand)

A publication.

LI
Publishing isn't really our specialty, but...

KATHRYN
But you know people.

LI
I mean...

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

LI
Come again?

KATHRYN
A publication. But nothing here. Nothing matters here, in Dana Point.

LI
No, nothing matters here, in Dana Point.

(KATHRYN pulls LI closer)

KATHRYN
Don't you pull one on me. Don't you even think about that.

(LI laughs off the threat. KATHRYN lets go of her hand.)

LI

We board The Brig Pilgrim 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 few moments, KATHRYN continues on and exits. LI tries to open the locker. It's locked. She hits the locker with her hand, and it opens. She takes out a handful of research papers, and continues to read through them.)

Scene 3

The wharf before the Brig Pilgrim. The Brig Pilgrim rises in the backdrop. A zig-zagging ramp leads up to the ship's main door.

(From right, enter DAN and NADIA. They are accompanied by DEDAI and AIDO, a female and male child, respectively, each about age 7. DAN is a well-built, well-dressed trial lawyer in his early 30s. NADIA, his fiancée, is 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 professional status, he's still a child at heart, reveling in any opportunity to play games or have fun. NADIA is acidic and snappy. She cares deeply for DAN, but never passes up an opportunity to assert her domineering energy.)

NADIA (correcting DAN)

It's a *merchant vessel*. And you haven't been a bachelor in three years, Mr. Kernigan, and you know it. A ring only makes it official.

DAN

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

NADIA (interrupting)

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

DAN

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

NADIA

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

DAN (with charm)

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

NADIA

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

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 and exit. Enter CRICKET, a young actor who will be playing the Second Mate. He is dressed as a merchant sailor; his costume, like that of Maddox, is also unimpressive, cheap. He's a frail-looking man of 20 with a high-pitched, pubescent voice. He is unlike MADDUX in that he aspires to be an artist, but he is also unlike JOHN DAVIES in that he is thoroughly lacking in innate talent.)

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 1980s?

(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

But ask yourself, what if it *were*? No publication. No grant money. No freedom. Your data would be too incoherent for the traditionalists.

KATHRYN

The traditionalists?

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 heroes.

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 (annoyed)

Must it always come back to faith?

(They exit, onto the Brig Pilgrim.)

Scene 4

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

(Enter CAPTAIN MADDUX. He begins passing out food to "the children." NOTE: The children may also 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.

(One of the children spits out their food. MADDUX looks with disgust at the child, or 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.

(MADDUX returns to the stage and grabs a set of child-sized sailor uniforms, then begins passing them out to the children/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.

DAN

At least with the birthday clown they'd have the option to leave... or slit their wrists with a cake knife.

NADIA

Daniel, don't be morbid.

(Enter KATHRYN and LI, stage right, far across-
ship from DAN and NADIA.)

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 looks around the ship, as if she recognizes DAN's voice, but she fails to spot DAN or NADIA)

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.

(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! The children!

(She indicates the children/the audience. LI doesn't respond, as 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... 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
Awww, is big Dan-Dan scared of little Katy Beth Beth?

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

NADIA
I had lunch with her two days ago.

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

NADIA
Why the hell would that come up?

MADDOX
My First Mate, Proompt, will be taking over responsibilities for the evening.

(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

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Jack?

JACK

(struggling to remember her by name)

Caitlyn? Caitlyn Elizabeth.

KATHRYN

Kathryn Elizabeth.

JACK

Kathryn Elizabeth!

KATHRYN

What are you doing here?

JACK

The ship is required by law to have a medical supervisor on board for these overnight camps. So here I am. I volunteer every Tuesday.

KATHRYN

Every Tuesday? I'm connecting the dots. That's why you come into the Ocean Institute every Tuesday afternoon and buy one of those pelican figurines for your grandmother, huh?

(JACK catches site of NADIA and falls into silence. KATHRYN continues:)

I'm here on research.

JACK

(staring at NADIA)

How unfortunate.

KATHRYN

(laughing, confused)

Unfortunate?

(NADIA, meanwhile, locks eyes with JACK.
NADIA is horrified, DAN is nonchalant, even
excited to see his old buddy.)

NADIA (concerned, to DAN)

Is that who I think it is?

DAN (looking at JACK)

Didn't he leave the country?

NADIA (horrified)

I thought he was dead.

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

JACK (panicking, to KATHRYN)

Marry me.

KATHRYN (offended, laughing)

No.

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?

JACK (more panicky, more sincerity)

Marry. Me.

KATHRYN

You're mocking me.

JACK

I'm not mocking you. I'm appealing to you, with every sincerest
bone in my body. Will you marry me, Caitlyn?

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.

KATHRYN

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

JACK

At least four.

KATHRYN (laughing)

Well, then...

(KATHRYN finally spots DAN across ship. She locks eyes with DAN, and begins to panic, as she continues to converse with JACK)

Good enough.

JACK

Is that a... *Maybe*?

KATHRYN

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

JACK

So... *Yes*?

KATHRYN

Yes.

JACK (sniffing the air)

Something reeks.

(KATHRYN looks towards the vat of fish guts. JACK looks out over the audience.)

KATHRYN (to JACK)

I think it's coming from the ship.

JACK

(confident, with a sense of disgust)

No, it's the harbor. The harbor is rotting. It has been for years.

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

KATHRYN

You can't see the beauty, dear fiancé, can you?

JACK

What was that?

KATHRYN

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

Is that it, my warm and bubbly fiancée? 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 to a city that had no desire to linger on. All things rot away. It's a sign of 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.

KATHRYN

Oh, no?

JACK

First time camper? Remember: the year is 1840. Until the sun comes up tomorrow, that's the year we're in.

KATHRYN

So, what if we are?

JACK

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

(JACK nods, and exits down the stairs.
Enter LI, from stage right. A voice calls up with force from beneath deck.)

PROOMPT

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

Listen!

(LI approaches KATHRYN)

LI

What's that?

KATHRYN

It's coming from downstairs.

PROOMPT

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

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

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

times, but even in his humor, there must always be that sense of threat, which, due to his absolute authority, though factitious, is ever-present. PROOMPT's costume, unlike that of MADDOX, is the genuine article. He carries a pistol holstered to his right hip, which may or may not be a prop, and a cat-o-nine-tails whip strapped to his left hip. The whip jangles from time to time 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

I told you it could be a whale.

KATHRYN

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 (annoyed)

Put your tits away.

LI (playful)

Once you stop acting a boob.

KATHRYN (playful)

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

LI

(lusting after PROOMPT)

My knickers pound, or something pounds my knockers.

(KATHRYN laughs)

KATHRYN

For the actor?

LI

Not the actor. But I'll be a sea nymph for a sailor, and I intend to fuck me a First Mate.

(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 coddles the great hull of the Pilgrim is constructed of the selfsame moisture that eats away, even now, at the wood beneath our feet.

(One of the children begins to cry. PROOMPT walks around stage/into the audience, and annoyedly searches for the crying "sailor." NADIA stares into the distance, in a state of panic.)

DAN (teasing)

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

(NADIA hugs DAN tightly)

You're getting worked up over nothing.

NADIA

Shut up, Dan. Hold me.

DAN

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.

DAN

That's John Davies. They say he never breaks character. They say that even while the Dana Point theatre was burning to the ground, John Davies went on improvising against the flames.

(NADIA is unamused)

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) Cricket! My Second Mate! Come forth!

(Enter CRICKET)

CRICKET

Yes, Mate Proompt.

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.

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

CRICKET

Hey you! First Mate's orders: set sail.

NADIA

What are you, new? The Pilgrim never leaves the dock. Take the kids down for me, will you?

CRICKET

Sure thing, um... 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

I'm gonna go say hello to Katy Beth. You should come. She always asks about you.

DAN

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

(NADIA walks towards stage right, then as she nears KATHRYN, begins to run with elation.)

NADIA

Kathryn Elizabeth! Oh, Kathryn Elizabeth! What the hell 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 sternum with a sense of anxiety, as she watches DAN descend the stairs just in front of her. KATHRYN breathes heavier and heavier, then turns to LI.)

KATHRYN

Li, get me to a bed.

ACT II

Three small, dimly lit cabin rooms in a row, each separated by a thin wall.

The Men's Cabin (stage right): Two twin sized beds, one against the left wall, the other against the right. A desk in front of the left bed. The bag of wine, previously held by Li, sits atop the desk.

The Mate's Cabin (center) – this cabin has no electric lighting, as anything anachronistic, as will be seen, has a tendency to offend the sensibilities of Mate Proompt/John Davies. At the center of the room, a tall, throne-like wooden chair. The chair is historic in design, but has been reupholstered, more recently, 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 right wall. An electric lamp on the desk has been broken in half. A candle is lit, there, in its place.

The Women's Cabin (stage left) – two twin-sized beds, to the left and right. A desk to the right, in front of the right bed.

(The act opens with light on The Women's Cabin, darkness on the other two rooms. KATHRYN can be seen sleeping on NADIA's lap. LI is sipping a bottle of wine. DEDAI, the female child, stands next to NADIA, hugging one of her legs.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

[NOTE: FROM HEREON, THIS STAGE DIRECTION, "LIGHTS TO CABIN B," WILL INDICATE THAT LIGHTS FOR ROOM A SHOULD TURN OFF, AND THAT THE LIGHTS FOR ROOM B SHOULD TURN ON]

(MATE PROOMPT is in his upright chair, and his eyes are closed. CRICKET silently reads through a hand-written journal on the desk under candlelight.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

(DAN is alone, in his boxers. He is whistling a chipper whistle-while-you-work sort of melody, and is about to begin slipping on a pair of sailor's trousers. A knock is heard at the door.)

DAN (with a very American accent)

Un momento, por favor.

(The door opens immediately, without any pause. Enter JACK. DAN is still shirtless, and has his back to the door. DAN turns around. DAN remains chipper, while JACK is brooding and uncomfortable.)

DAN

Ah! It's my roommate.

JACK

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

(DAN puts on his shirt, then begins to unpack some items from his overnight bag: a toothbrush, a book, pajamas, etc. JACK, likewise, opens his own overnight bag and begins to unpack, as they continue, a nervous energy between them.)

DAN

Room service.

JACK

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

DAN

That hotel was worth every penny. Do you remember the shrimp bowl? That thing was the size of a small car. Then the next day we played that haggling game at the street market, and I

convinced one of the street venders to sell me a fifty-RMB selfie-stick for only five RMB. The best you could get them to slink down to was thirty.

JACK

Should I remind you of the indignities you committed, at the expense of that poor vender? And for what, to win a ten-dollar bet?

DAN

Nothing of value is handed to you in this life, Jack. There's a cost, you know... to yourself, to someone else. Look around. Take a look around.

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

LI

So, let me get this straight. You come back from India, after the pandemic, and you steal away the man that this one (indicating KATHRYN) 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 makes a note on her yellow pad.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

(DAN continues his attempts to cheer up JACK, but JACK remains solemn)

DAN (chipper)

So... You're a doctor now.

JACK (solemn)

I'm a doctor now.

DAN

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, well...

(DAN catches himself. They continue to unpack their bags in silence.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

(LI stands up and pulls out the black trench coat from under the desk. DEDAI walks over to LI, and begins tugging on the trench coat. LI pushes her away but DEDAI does not relent.)

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 shakes
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 undresses until she is wearing only her underwear and bra. DEDAI stares up at LI.)

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 Dedaï 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.

DEDAI

Can I have a lollipop?

LI

I've said all I can say. Fuck off, kid.

NADIA

(shouting)

How dare you speak that way to a child!

DEDAI

(screaming at the top of her lungs)

I want a lollipop!!

(The shouting wakes KATHRYN.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

(JACK and DAN continue to unpack their
overnight bags)

JACK

My grandmother lives in Ritz Cove.

DAN

That's right she does, doesn't she?

JACK

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

DAN

Look, I'm just getting started, Jack. Two recessions followed by
twenty years of monetary deflation. There weren't many families
in this city who were able to profit off of that.

(DAN and JACK simultaneously unpack pelican
figurines from their respective overnight
bags. Their figurines are similar in size
and design.)

DAN

Whoa! What are the chances?

JACK

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

DAN

You're telling me. The one next to the porch is three feet tall. Fucking traumatizing! I get them from the gift shop across from the Harbor Grill. I go there every Tuesday after my partners' meeting. I'm sure it has a name.

JACK

The shop you go to every Tuesday?

DAN

Yah, that one. 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. You should see the look on her face.

JACK

She sounds... happy.

DAN

She is.

JACK

I never said I wished her to be unhappy.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

CRICKET

(reading from PROOMPT's handwritten journal)

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, fifty onions, ten pounds of salt beef. Total expenditures: two dollars and... thirty-four cents...

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

(KATHRYN is still waking up. NADIA is comforting DEDAI.)

KATHRYN
(still groggy)

How long was I out?

NADIA
A couple of 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
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 stares at LI. LI jots something on her pad. They've clearly discussed JACK.)

NADIA (horrified)
Oh, God.

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.

KATHRYN
He has good taste in cheap crafts. I find that admirable in a man.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

CRICKET
I then paid visit to the local blacksmith and invited the young man to visit me, at his earliest convenience, aboard the Brig Pilgrim.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

DAN
We were like brothers. All those years, the women would come and go. What I'm trying to say is: it shouldn't have come between us.

JACK
But it did.

DAN
I know it did.

JACK
And it still does.

DAN
I know it does.

JACK
Nadia still does.

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

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.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

DAN

I was the victim in all this, I'll have you know.

JACK

Of course, you'd think that! You can reframe any argument if it hoists you up, you and your goddamn ego.

DAN

You were sick, Jack. You were really sick.

JACK

When I was?

DAN

And when you were sick, you were a real son a bitch...

JACK

I'm *still* sick, Dan.

DAN

I know, but the immune thing. It's better.

JACK

Remission. I'm in remission. Do you know what that means? Every day is a roll of the dice...

DAN

Enough!

(DAN gets up and approaches the bag of wine, eager to change the subject)

How about a drink?

JACK

I'm on duty.

DAN

Then why the bag of wine?

JACK

I don't know.

DAN

Well, I do.

(DAN opens a twist-off bottle and takes a swig of wine. He is eager to change the subjects.)

JACK

\Dan...

DAN

That First Mate. He's quite a character.

JACK

He is indeed a *character*.

DAN

They say he never breaks.

(JACK and DAN have a back and forth about John Davies. JACK, being old wealth, assumes DAN knows nothing about the theatre. DAN becomes defensive about his socioeconomic status)

JACK

He's from the Dana Point Theatre.

DAN (defensive)

I know who John Davies is. I'm the one who got him here. He's officiating our...

(DAN catches himself)

He's quite the character.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

CRICKET

(still reading)

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, being the median, and never higher than three dollars and ten cents.

*** LIGHTS TO THE MEN'S CABIN ***

JACK

Never broken. Not a slip. Not a crack on him.

(he begins to provoke DAN)

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

(DAN places the bottle of wine down, and gladly takes the bait.)

DAN

I bet I could get him to break.

(JACK pulls out a ten dollar bill from his pocket and waves it in front of DAN)

JACK

Care to put your money where your mouth is?

DAN (excited)

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

JACK

His act ends at sunrise. If you can't get him to break before then: you fail, you come up short, you lose.

(DAN hesitates, pulls out a ten dollar bill from his own pocket, and slams it on the

desk. JACK and DAN shake hands to seal the wager.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

(CRICKET puts down the journal, and begins speaking to PROOMPT, as the actor, thereby breaking character. PROOMPT however remains in character.)

CRICKET

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

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... her?

(then worried, observing the back wall)

What are all these holes in the wall?

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET (confused)

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

PROOMPT

I spin about when I lie flat.

CRICKET

Spin about?

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

(with a threatening tone)

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

CRICKET (frightened)

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

(fearful, struggling to improvise)

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

PROOMPT

Don't you take me to Mexico, Cricket!

CRICKET

I mean, passing Mexico... Mexico City, by Saturday morning.

PROOMPT

Well, the sooner the better.

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

LI

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

(LI gropes herself)

KATHRYN

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

NADIA

Mayor.

KATHRYN

That's what I said!

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

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 on board... But it seems you've been living here for... weeks? Weeks, or perhaps even months.

PROOMPT

(with a sense of violation)

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.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

NADIA

Calm down, Katy Beth!

(To LI)

And you, stop it! She's been unwell, as you well know!

LI (cont.)

The constant need for order.

NADIA

I mean it!

KATHRYN

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

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

CRICKET

I'm tired and... and... and I'm going to bed!

(CRICKET blows the candle out and gets into bed. PROOMPT walks over to him.)

PROOMPT

Oh, no you don't. You don't slink off to sleep!

(The candle turns back on, and PROOMPT is inches from CRICKET's face.)

PROOMPT

Look into my eyes, Cricket. You're an actor, you say?

CRICKET

(defiant)

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 I went to land to visit the blacksmith?

(CRICKET jumps out of bed, overcome by concern)

CRICKET

Wait. You actually saw a blacksmith today? Does that mean you have a harpoon? Is that what's in the bag? Jesus! Mr. Davies!

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

There's fifty children on board, man.

PROOMPT (full of rage)

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

(PROOMPT whips cricket with his cat-o-nine-tails whip. CRICKET cries aloud in agony.)

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

KATHRYN

The sample in my lab has scales.

NADIA

So that means it can't be a shark?

KATHRYN

No. That means it can't be a whale.

NADIA

I'm confused. It's all so confusing!

LI

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

Yes. But even you'll have to admit, there is a disparity.

KATHRYN

Come on! 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 fiancé, was once the fiancé of your closest friend, Nadia... Would you say that too doesn't make any sense?

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

KATHRYN (desperate)

Nadia? 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.

LI

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

NADIA

(to herself)

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

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

CRICKET

(about to shit his pants)

You misunderstand me, Mate Proompt. I am an actor, this part you understood...

(struggling to not fall into contemporary idioms or usages)

in the um, in the proper, as I intended for you to understand it. I'm an actor, by hobby I am. By career, I am a sailor, like yourself, a sea-man.

PROOMPT

(relieved)

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

CRICKET

It's my first day *aboard* the Brig Pilgrim. I come highly recommended, from um, from the um, the... the H.M.S. Beagle.

PROOMPT

H.M.S.? Her Majesties' Ship. How'd you come to work for the Brits?

CRICKET

I saw an ad (struggling to improvise) in the classifieds.

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

No... in, um, Boston.

PROOMPT

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

*** LIGHTS TO THE WOMEN'S CABIN ***

NADIA

Jack should have been dead by now. I wish he were...

KATHRYN

Nadia. Don't say that.

NADIA

When a man becomes sick, Katy Beth, he either meets his challenge head on, with strength, with courage, or else he turns grotesque. Jack is a grotesque of a man. You'd be wise to stay away from him.

KATHRYN

Why should I believe you? Either of you?

DEDAI

I'm gonna turn into a whale!

(LI and NADIA laugh at the child.)

KATHRYN

Oh body! The seagulls squawk. Oh soul! The wind and the fish will have their way. I'll find it. Watch me, Li. I'll find this shark.

(Exit KATHRYN.)

NADIA

You shouldn't provoke her like that. You really shouldn't.

(Suddenly, a loud banging sound is heard.
It's loud enough that LI loses her balance
and falls from the desk to the floor.)

NADIA

What the hell was that!

DAN (off.)

My bad!

CRICKET (off.)

Holy shit!

NADIA

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

*** LIGHTS TO THE MATE'S CABIN ***

(The First Mate's harpoon spear is stuck
fast in the right wall. Banana gunk covers
the clothes and hair of CRICKET and DAN.
The pile of bananas from earlier has been
obliterated, only the apples remain.
CRICKET is crouching against the left wall.
DAN is pulling on the harpoon-spear,
attempting with all his might to loosen the
object from the wall's unyielding grip.)

CRICKET

Holy shit!

DAN

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

CRICKET (losing his shit)

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

(restless)

He has a gun, you know!

DAN

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

CRICKET

(with the fear of God in his voice)

He's *not* John Davies. He's Proompt, a First Mate who happens to have great authority aboard this ship. Godlike authority. 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? Are we under attack? That'll teach me to buy my dessert bananas from an Alto California savage. Who are you? What are you doing in my quarters without my express permission?

DAN

The the other guy let me in.

PROOMPT

Cricket? Cricket is a well-traveled sailor. He should know better. He'll be punished.

(The sound of wheels creeping is heard.

PROOMPT looks offstage and spots CRICKET in the hallway)

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

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

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

I want the odor gone! Too much sweetness is putting a strain on my nostrils. The sugars dissipated in the air have set the deepest innards of my nose aflame.

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

DAN (aside)

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

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

PROOMPT

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

(DAN limps slowly away. PROOMPT whips DAN upon the back, and DAN 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.)

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.)

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.)

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

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. KATHRYN enters, and watches, but remains unseen.)

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

I thought I was the master fabricator, but you're not so bad yourself.

LI

Do you even know the difference between fabrication and truth?

DAN

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

(KATHRYN steps out)

KATHRYN

Romance isn't dead. No. She's just out on probation.

DAN (shocked)

Jesus!

(DAN instinctively begins choking LI, who coughs and chokes, then escapes, and runs up the stairs)

KATHRYN

You've been avoiding me. It's fine. Since we're on the subject of what is and is not true, I, also, have been avoiding you. What we had. I understand now. It was something temporary, sort of like...

DAN

Like a dream?

KATHRYN

Like a performance. For just us two.

DAN

Don't call it that.

KATHRYN

If we ever tried to make it into something more, something lasting, it would have been different. I should have seen it... sooner, much sooner. I should have questioned myself, not only you.

DAN

I told you, Katy Beth.

KATHRYN

How did you get so good at fabricating?

DAN

Time and time again.

KATHRYN

You said one thing with your words, and something very different with your body. Your emotions can speak volumes, Dan. This one view: a spectacle, a show. I still don't understand; maybe I am a little coo-coo. One shouldn't leave a play hurting.

DAN

Tell that to the attendees of the Dana Point Theatre.

(KATHRYN isn't in a joking mood. She begins to leave. DAN grabs KATHRYN's shoulders)

KATHRYN

Let me go.

DAN

Now that we're talking, we could talk a little longer.

KATHRYN (serious)

I need to start looking for my shark.

(DAN catches a hint, and lets her go. KATHRYN ascends the stairs. At the top, DAN calls after her:)

DAN

It's not easy, you know, ignoring them, the squawks on the street. For what it's worth, I never once thought you were... bonkers.

(KATHRYN laughs, stopping at the top of the stairs, and turns back)

KATHRYN

Dan, what's the legal definition of madness?

DAN

(improvising)

Having thoughts or ideas that are outside the, I don't know, 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.
KATHRYN, unamused, exits. DAN exits into the men's cabin. Enter JACK and NADIA from opposite ends of the hallway. JACK attempts to enter his room, but NADIA instigates:)

NADIA

I had a dream you died.

JACK (turning to her)

Was it a pleasant dream?

NADIA

I know why you're here. I know it's you who's been putting the pelican figurines on my lawn, Jack.

JACK

That's what happens when you go through life, never aspiring to have a single idea of your own. You never could see what was right under your nose, could you, my little chihuahua?

(JACK takes a few steps towards her)

NADIA

I think you should leave, before one of us gets hurt. Probably you.

JACK

I can't leave. The law mandates there be a medical...

NADIA (interrupting)

You can jump.

JACK

Oh, 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 thirty minutes 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

I can see my bed in the moonlight.

LI

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

KATHRYN

If this creature is a creature of habit, the odds aren't awful that it'll return here, sometime tonight.

LI

And what do we do?

KATHRYN

We wait.

LI

For how long?

KATHRYN

As long as we must. Until sunrise.

LI

It's like watching paint dry.

KATHRYN

If you'd rather sleep, then go. There's no reason for both of us to be up here.

LI

If I don't see this creature, with my own two eyes, I will not believe.

(They sit and stare off the stage for a few moments. KATHRYN has a moment of doubt, as she looks out over the water, waiting for an impossible shark:)

KATHRYN

I thought it was something. Then something went missing. And now everything is out of reach.

LI

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

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

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. 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)

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 cannot help but laugh)

LI (defensive)

Man's only explored five percent of the ocean.

KATHRYN

But black holes? Is that even possible?

LI

What do you mean?

KATHRYN

Mathematically.

LI

We don't adhere to mathematics.

KATHRYN

You don't believe in math?

LI (matter-of-fact)

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

KATHRYN

I don't follow.

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 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?

(LI walks off towards the poop deck.
KATHRYN stares longingly into her empty palm. Enter JACK from the stairwell. JACK approaches.)

KATHRYN

Jack.

JACK

Emily!

KATHRYN

Look Jack. I've had some time to think things over, and I don't think there's any pathway forward in which the two of us end up getting married. I... being who I am... I've a reputation to uphold.

JACK

What did she say? It was Nadia, wasn't it? She said I'm here for other reasons, didn't she? I volunteer on this ship, I swear to you! Every Tuesday! I can prove it!

KATHRYN

It's not the proof that's the pudding here.

JACK

Trivia! Ask me a question, something only a merchant sailor would know, something about the Brig Pilgrim.

KATHRYN

I think you should focus on your work. The children: are you not concerned... for their wellbeing?

JACK

What makes it a Brig, you ask? Brig: from *brigante*, related to *brigand* – an armored foot soldier.

KATHRYN

What's your aim here, playing trivia with yourself?

JACK

It has two masts: the main mast, and then, a second mast, called the foremast...

KATHRYN

Ah, yes! The foremast!

JACK

Since it's in front of the main.

KATHRYN

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

JACK

I may 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 (disturbed)

I'm not sure I'm willing to marry somebody who's so... grotesque. I'm sorry if that offends you. I'm not sure how else to say it, how I'm beginning to feel, Jack.

JACK (wounded)

You wanna look for that shark, don't you? Should I go? I should go? Then I'll go.

(JACK takes a few steps towards the stairs)

I've had some time to reflect on things too. You were right, what you said earlier... *the beauty of it all*.

(JACK exits down the stairs. Enter LI from the poop deck, she walks up to KATHRYN. 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.)

LI

Nothing that matters seems to last long in this city. Not even the lights.

KATHRYN (panicking)

A rolling blackout? Not like this! Not now! Please! Come back!

(threateningly, to LI)

We're never gonna find it. The creature will be gone by morning. You said it. I know it's true! Where'd the lights go? Bring them back! Where'd the lights go?

(LI backs off, KATHRYN begins to laugh)

The genetics! We still have the genetics!

LI

I'm afraid we don't. The genetic results came back earlier this evening, while you were idling in the shower. The genetics were inconclusive at best, corrupted in other parts.

KATHRYN

That couldn't be! No! That couldn't be!

LI

The lab couldn't be sure if the sample belonged to a shark, a whale, or a potato.

KATHRYN

A potato?

LI

On the upside, if the object of our investigations does, in fact, turn out to be a potato, then the lab is able tell us, with a high degree of confidence, that it's either a hash brown or a twice-baked.

KATHRYN

A hash brown?

LI

Not that we adhere to genetics.

KATHRYN

You told me you studied genetics. You told me that! You said you studied molecular biology.

LI

Genetics can only confirm what is false, not what is true. Genetics, in this regard, can be said to be little more than a performance.

KATHRYN

What are you talking about?

LI

The actor who refuses to break, the scientist who prods and prods, wishing that something might go awry, and when it does, she calls this evidence. What else could genetics be, Kathryn Elizabeth, but a rehearsal?

KATHRYN

Oh, this city

LI

A five-billion year rehearsal.

KATHRYN

This city will not become my tomb.

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

LI

Oh God! That didn't sound good.

KATHRYN

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

LI (disgusted)

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

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 request 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, as 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. 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

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

LI

Let's find you a shower.

(LI ties a rope around KATHRYN's wrist, avoiding her and her offensive stench)

KATHRYN

There's a shark out there. Can't you sense it?

(she looks up into the sails)
But look at that! The sails in their yards. We err because we cannot err. Nobody ever thought twice upon a floater.

LI

A floater?

KATHRYN

(briefly lucid, touching her head)
What happened? Did something hit me, Li?

LI

Is Katy Beth back?

KATHRYN

(mad again, breaking free, approaching the edge of the ship)
I'm ready to strike!

LI (doubtful)

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

(LI leads KATHRYN by the rope into the light of the stairwell. LI is increasingly offended by KATHRYN's stench.)

KATHRYN (friendly)

Come here, Li!

LI (gagging)

Oh God. I'm gonna puke.

KATHRYN

(lucid, nonchalant, 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 (mad again)

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 from beneath the stage. Enter PROOMPT, via the stairwell. He occupies the box of light, which illuminates his face and costume with a sense of factitious grandeur. PROOMPT "believes" that the Brig Pilgrim is in the middle of the ocean.)

PROOMPT (to himself)

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

CRICKET (offstage, interrupting)

Goddamn it!

PROOMPT

Were those the words? I think not.

(A commotion is heard coming from below.)

PROOMPT

(looking down into the stairwell)

Cricket, have I lost you?

CRICKET

(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. Do you have a flashlight?

DAN

Why would I have a flashlight, Nadia?

NADIA

You know what I mean. Your phone, Dan.

DAN

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

NADIA

That sounds like something I'd say. I can't see a thing. Is it usually this dark?

DAN

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

NADIA

I've never seen it *this* dark.

PROOMPT

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

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

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

DAN

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

(PROOMPT doesn't respond. NADIA is irate. PROOMPT takes out a map and begins to draw on it, calculating their position.)

NADIA

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

AIDO

I see the dock!

NADIA

Fix that while you're at it. Will you?

DAN

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

AIDO

I do.

NADIA

Daniel! He does NOT see it.

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 dock there?

AIDO

The dock! It's there!

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

DAN

Hey Aido. Look up there. Look at the moon.

(AIDO looks up)

DAN

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

(AIDO does as told, as DAN continues:)

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, okay, open your eyes. Tell me. 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! Of course it's not. Tell me this, Aido. Do you know what your eyes do when they don't see anything, and they go to sleep?

AIDO

Dream?

DAN

That's right. They dream about the very last thing they looked at. Now 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. NADIA does as well, squinting and straining to make out the dock.)

AIDO

There's nothing!

(NADIA looks back at DAN with concern and panic)

NADIA

Slow it down, Dan.

(PROOMPT puts his star map away)

PROOMPT

Cricket!

CRICKET

Yes, Mate.

PROOMPT

How many miles do you reckon we've traveled since I bade you *delegate*, to take The Pilgrim out to sea?

(CRICKET looks over the railing and begins to panic)

CRICKET

(fearful)

Oh. Not many.

PROOMPT (brimming with fury)

How many is *not many*?

CRICKET (terrified)

Well, um, we've... we've traveled none.

PROOMPT

The real update, Cricket. Out with it. I haven't time for your jests and rakes.

NADIA

This man is a derelict, Dan. Do something.

CRICKET

We're, um, well, we're...

(PROOMPT grabs his whip)

CRICKET

Oh God.

DAN

(loud enough for all to hear)

I'd say we're a good 18 miles out from the Pacific coast.

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

(gazing over the ship)

But... the dock...

DAN

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)

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.

(PROOMPT looks over the far railing. 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 walk side by side.)

LI

Are you sure you're feeling alright?

KATHRYN

I'm fine. Where's the Captain?

LI

The Captain? The Captain's sleeping.

KATHRYN

Then who's in charge?

LI

I think the First Mate's on duty.

KATHRYN

Oh, that one? Seduce him, nymph, as much as it pleases or discomfits him. Whisper drowsy memories in his ear, then remind him starkly: he's a beggar; he begs at the Prince's pleasure.

(LI attempts to walk right. KATHRYN blocks her, then KATHRYN walks off right.)

LI

The trench coat looks good on you, my Prince. You've got some legs.

KATHRYN

My legs are not your legs, nymph.

LI

It's like watching my own legs walk away.

(They exit, on opposite sides. PROOMPT turns back, and catches sight of KATHRYN's trench coat, mistaking her for LI.)

PROOMPT

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

DAN (aside)

I'll play along, Davies. For now, I'll make the old reality seem a dud. The moment you we're away from Nadia and the children, I pounce on you; I crack you open like an egg.

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

PROOMPT

Cricket, I'm off to *poop*.

(CRICKET gives the Marlin Spear an odd glance)

I want you to assemble the harpoon. When you're finished, mount it, and double, triple check that it's stable.

CRICKET

Yes, Mate!

(PROOMPT exits without responding, after KATHRYN.)

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 (defiant)

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! The scientist said so! 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

You don't call girls stupid, Aido. It's a real rotten thing to call somebody.

AIDO

The scientist said so.

NADIA (to DEDAI)

If your dream is to become a whale, Dedai, 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, or else 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. 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. A tall stand with a bowl of white powder atop it at stage center.

(LI and KATHRYN enter from opposite sides.)

KATHRYN

Have you seen him?

(LI approaches the powder bowl.)

LI

Seen whom? Where've you been?

(KATHRYN walks stage center and looks up)

KATHRYN

The sails, Li. The sails have a music in them, but the wind refuses to hum along it; there's something sour on her lip.

LI

Sure. Find the First Mate. Then what?

KATHRYN

(KATHRYN points up at the sails. LI looks overhead)

We set this ship to breakers.

LI

The Pilgrim hasn't left the dock in twenty years. This. Are we still playing?

KATHRYN

Your game.

LI

If this creature doesn't show up, we *both* lose.

KATHRYN

Your rules.

LI

(frustrated)

I've really had it up to...

(LI takes a step back, places her hand on the stand, shrieks, quickly pulls her hand back; she realizes she's plunged her hand into a bowl of white powder.)

Oh! Ugh! What the hell is this?

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

KATHRYN *(nonchalant)*

Looks like powder, what else? The sailors use it for the ropes. I've a question. If I'm a prince and you're my fool, then does that make me a nymph, by the association?

LI

How's that?

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

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

KATHRYN

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

Only fragments and interpretations remain.

(she recites the simplified "translation" as if
it's real poetry)

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

(cont.)

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'll play myself.

LI

That's for the best. If you played the Prince of Denmark, I might not be able to distinguish whether you were deep in

character or declining further 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

The Prince is you, yourself?

KATHRYN

The self, 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. Now where's the First Mate? I'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.)

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.

(PROOMPT's jangling is heard. Upon hearing
this, LI exits. KATHRYN looks off the rear
of the ship. Enter PROOMPT and DAN.)

PROOMPT

Did you see that? She's doubled! And one of the doubles has changed her disguise. This type of nymph means utmost trouble. I'll follow the nymph in the trench coat, you chase down her doppelgänger.

(PROOMPT points accordingly. DAN exits in pursuit of LI. PROOMPT walks up from behind KATHRYN, and fixates on the black trench coat. He believes KATHRYN is LI, and begins lusting.)

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. He quickly collects himself.)

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, Mate. 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.

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

PROOMPT
Be you nymph or some newfangled prince with jiggling body, I
won't put up with disrespect!

(PROOMPT cocks the pistol.)

KATHRYN
Shoot. The bullet will pass right through me.

PROOMPT
Only if you're a ghost will the bullet pass right through you!

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

PROOMPT
You're mad.

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

KATHRYN
I'm not the mad one on this ship!

PROOMPT
Then what are you?

KATHRYN
I'm out here looking for a shark, one 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 starts becoming more and more offended by the lack of narrative logic in KATHRYN's story. He also becomes gradually more intimidated by her as he recognizes her sense of abandon.)

PROOMPT

And what would a "Prince" need with a shark?

KATHRYN

My father's inside there.

PROOMPT

Inside the shark?

KATHRYN

Aye.

PROOMPT

How did he get there?

KATHRYN

He was placed there.

PROOMPT

Placed there? Inside a shark?

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

Where else?

PROOMPT

Anywhere else.

KATHRYN

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

PROOMPT

What is this family? Greek?

(he thinks a quick moment)

You may be a nymph.

KATHRYN

My mother and 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 *whereabouts*. 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 breaks. He hits the powder bowl in anger, which spills upon the floor.)

PROOMPT

This is bullshit! How am I supposed to play off this? A Prince does not jiggle. A man is not placed inside, or outside, a shark! Madness upon the stage must be structured, with intention, ferocious intention. The theatre is logical, even in

madness there is *always* some logic. This is tradition! You... you contain no logic at all, none whatsoever!

(he collects himself)

We play our parts, you hear, all of us here, in this city, as your father played his part, and now plays the role of our city's late great mayor. As an actor, I too serve my function. If only everyone else in this city performed their roles as well I do mine.

(he takes a whiff of the air, and is repulsed)

What is that stench! Through mankind's darkest hours, the theatre has endured. When the stage goes...

(he is overcome by dread)

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.

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

Shark's got your nose! Ha ha!

(PROOMPT begins choking, and struggling to break free from her grip. During this altercation KATHRYN steals the gun from his holster, and PROOMPT doesn't notice)

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.)

KATHRYN

Now get this ship in motion.

PROOMPT

The pestilence has entered your brain, dear child. Stay back!

KATHRYN

Get me your Captain!

(KATHRYN approaches him.)

PROOMPT

Stay back!

(Exit PROOMPT. KATHRYN holds up the gun she's stolen, then holsters it somewhere out of site, such as in her coat, etc. KATHRYN turns around and looks out over the bow. Enter DAN.)

DAN

Katy Beth.

KATHRYN

At ease, sailor. Have you seen my father?

DAN

Your father?

KATHRYN

He's become a fish.

(DAN overwhelmed by guilt, walks up and kisses her, then feeling the powder on his lips, starts wiping it off in a panic.)

DAN

The hell is on your face?

KATHRYN

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

DAN (squinting)

You look like a mime...

KATHRYN

I woke up from that dream...

DAN

A really hot mime.

KATHRYN (cont.)

And you taunt me that I ever dreamt it.

DAN

It wasn't a dream. Not that it matters now. It was more than that.

KATHRYN

We had everything we wanted and knew it couldn't last. What else could it been, but a dream?

DAN

Something great.

KATHRYN

That came to nothing. What was it, then, sailor, but something we fabricated, the two of us?

DAN

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

KATHRYN (flippant)

For your reputation.

DAN (defensive)

For Nadia. For her... stability. Nadia never wanted to say YES to *this*.

(gestures to her, then to himself)

I made it so that she couldn't say 'no.'

(KATHRYN is taken back by the notion, DAN defends himself, without irony:)

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

(KATHRYN begins to walk away, DAN grabs her)

It was when Jack started to get sick; he began to...

(he stops short of divulging)

Nadia became my responsibility. For better or for worse... Nadia is my responsibility now.

(he confesses, finally letting his facade fall:)

I needed *this* to be a dream.

(DAN rubs his fingers through her hair, then KATHRYN steps back. DAN steps away. Paralysis, then, Enter LI. She accidentally bumps into DAN. DAN promptly turns and grabs LI, enjoying himself, eager for a diversion from his unmasked feelings.)

DAN

There you are, Spy! You're coming with me. Oh, I really do think Mate Proompt is gonna throw your scrawny ass off this ship.

(LI doesn't seem to mind, perhaps content to go. DAN carries LI off and they exit. KATHRYN brushes the white powder to the sides of her face. She has a moment of clarity)

KATHRYN

The curtain peels back. 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 across her 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, then the theatre must endure. If *this* is madness, then every character must become as mad as I am: only then will we all be sane.

(firm, as if everything depends upon this mantra:)

I cannot break. I will not break. I *shall* not break.

(A loud gun-shot is heard off stage)

KATHRYN

A gun?

DAN (off.)

Medic!

KATHRYN

Oh! The children!

(KATHRYN runs off, exiting 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. DEDAI and AIDO are on the floor. DEDAI is on top of a box, near the

ship's starboard railing. NADIA and JACK are not present. Enter KATHRYN)

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?

DAN (quickly)

Cricket got snared by his own precedent. The Mate made him out to be an imposter. He's been demoted from Second Mate.

(DEDAI and AIDO begin wrestling with each other, dangerously close to the harpoon. KATHRYN enters and is horrified by the site of DEDAI bleeding.)

KATHRYN

Enough of this! Break, and be done. Our show is over.

(she gets closer to DEDAI, and notices she's hurt)

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

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

PROOMPT

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

KATHRYN

I said enough! Actors, be done! There's an 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

I said, enough!

LI (mocking DAN)

Is this your master plan?

(LI kisses PROOMPT on the lips.)

PROOMPT

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

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

DAN

Oh, no you don't, Davies.

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

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

KATHRYN
Break! My words are request, but my sword, reality.

(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
Break! If one measures a court, it's by the players who are around it. A student of love must be a student of war.

(KATHRYN runs over and tries to end 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 Dedai!

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

DAN

Get down from there!

(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.)

LI

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

CRICKET

The momma whale is missing part of her fin!

NADIA

Katy Beth and Dedai both turned into whales, isn't that great, Dan? They'll swim back to the beach and reclaim their little human bodies. They'll be fine. I'm sure they'll be fine.

DAN

They didn't turn into whales, Nadia.

NADIA (to LI)

You're a 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 schemings of some jiggling prince? It matters not. There's only one to blame.

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

The sun comes forth, and the sea's bosom sleeps.
(PROOMPT kneels on the deck. He holds his whip on high, shouting aloud:)

Grant me this favor, Captain. Have my flesh, as much as pleases you, 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

Sleep comes for me.

(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 closes her eyes. KATHRYN collapses into sleep. JOHN DAVIES attempts to break his arm free and leave. KATHRYN wakes, and protests:)

KATHRYN

The Mate will stay.

JOHN DAVIES

My work isn't over. I still have a wedding to officiate.

KATHRYN

I don't care. The prince won't miss his own wedding. Wake me by noon.

JOHN DAVIES

I really must...

(JOHN DAVIES struggles to remove his arm from under KATHRYN)

KATHRYN

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. If the Prince does not wake, here's my decision: "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 notices the pistol on his hip, but he sits up 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 furtively takes 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 could never be?

JOHN DAVIES

I suspect your question to be misleading.

(KATHRYN begins to snore.)

Ah, broken from the start. The actor, he's but a passing shadow. The stage, immutable. If the players do their best, then for a passing moment... the vase and what's contained within the vase... 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. 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 empty 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, (stumbling) 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... (frustrated, 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!

(TWO SAILORS, OFFSTAGE, only their voices are heard while the setting of the sails commences. Everyone but DAVIES and LI look upwards at the sails:)

SAILOR 1

Stand by to set sails!

SAILOR 2

Jib ready!

SAILOR 1

Foresail, stand by to go aloft.

(LI approaches JOHN DAVIES)

LI

You wanna show me the harpoon?

JOHN DAVIES

You mean, below deck?

LI

How big is it?

JOHN DAVIES

The standard. It's authentic!

(LI and JOHN DAVIES head towards the stairway)

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

LI (her hopes shattered)

Oh?

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

SAILOR 1

Jib sail ready to loose!

(KATHRYN gasps, and wakes up.)

KATHRYN

Papa?

(She shakes off the remnants of a dream)

Enough.

(She reaches around in her coat and pulls out the Mate's gun. She holds it aloft.)

SAILOR 1

Foremast: Trim the topsails! Loose the mainsails!

SAILOR 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.)

SAILOR 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.

SAILOR 2

Other way around! LOOSE the topsails!

LI (trembling, staring down the gun)

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 (to LI)

First to three hits wins.

LI

Katy Beth? Why? For what?

KATHRYN

This isn't a trial.

LI

Then 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

Stop this! This isn't Hamlet!

KATHRYN

No, this isn't Hamlet.

LI

This isn't a game!

KATHRYN

No. A game can be won.

LI

Then why do you go on pretending?

KATHRYN

Come, now. Isn't this the sport?

LI

We had nothing to do with your father.

KATHRYN

I'm sure that's true.

LI

I sweat it.

KATHRYN

But there is no truth here. And without truth, there can be no justice.

NADIA

Does she have a point?

DAN

Far-fetched.

KATHRYN

The fix is in, Li. The fix is in, and has been.

LI

The odds stack against you. This is the game: the more you play, the more you'll lose. But here me well: I can get you your winnings. I'm your friend, Katy Beth. Tell me what you want! A publication? Funding? I can get you whatever you need to make you a *somebody*.

KATHRYN

All will be fine, all will be well, when the Prince and the City are one.

LI

This is no city. These laws are not laws.

(compassionate:)

And you're no prince.

KATHRYN

The Kingdom will become an ocean; eternity! The City, my borrowed stage.

LI (derisive)

Is that your plan? Turn an entire city into dinner-theatre?

(she takes a step towards KATHRYN)

A city not of logic, but of the desire for logic.

KATHRYN

A city of faith.

LI

It's shade. If not from the outside, from the inside. If not us, then somebody else. The hyenas crouch at this city's gates. They can smell your weakness, and they abhor it.

SAILOR 1

Reef the mainsail!

KATHRYN

Well, Li. Here's the counter.

(She straightens her aim)

You tell me, now. What's in your hand?

SAILOR 2

I'm jammed!

LI

Katy Beth!

(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.)

NADIA

Bravo! Bravo!

(DAN restrains her clapping. Enter PROOMPT:)

DAVIES

A city of faith!

(Without looking at PROOMPT, LI breathes heavily and inquires:)

LI (still in a panic)

It's a prop?

DAVIES (cont.)

Yes!

(JACK begins panting. He is having difficulty breathing.)

JACK

Caesura!

DAVIES (cont.)

This city needs faith!

(LI struggles to catch her breath. LI aggressively stares down KATHRYN, who stares back.)

KATHRYN (nonchalant)

Second point goes to Li.

DAN (annoyed)

This city needs a new law, a new mayor.

JACK

A caesura. But a caesura.

DAN

Pursuant to Article X, Subsection (c), Clause 742
Of City Ordinance 15-785, it may be construed, that...

JACK (losing breath)

My lungs for a farthing. Six wu. A quot.

KATHRYN

Do you hear it? Ah! The harbor is so tranquil in the noontime sun. Do you see the seagulls, out there beyond the jetty, diving for their prey?

DAN

The territory possessed by private
Or public entities shall be interpreted

LI (to KATHRYN)

You and I — are through.

DAN

In accordance with the natural
Progression of the seaweed, as played upon, consumed

KATHRYN

The pelicans plopped upon oils tracing out rainbows in the waters?

DAN (cont.)

Or otherwise eradicated...

KATHRYN (cont.)

The unrelenting urge for new life, and the rather pungent
(she plugs her nose with her bloody hand)
resistances...

LI

There's no Greenland shark in Dana Point.

KATHRYN

This was my childhood, Papa.

DAN

By the indiginous population of
Marine species, including but not limited to
Megaptera novaeangliae, or in plain speak
The Humpback, acting
Without human inducement.

LI

I'm done here. I'm due back in Beijing.

DAN

Said line of consumption
Shall be deemed the determinative expression
Of territorial division, provided that

DAVIES

The Prince shall find it! He's discover it: eternity!

SAILOR 1

We're catching too much wind.

DAN

The consumption pattern reflects
A materially uninterrupted and observable path
Of natural herbivory, notwithstanding the extremity:
The oft-cited pasture-less, anarchic divisor:
The angled breaker.

SAILOR 1

Cut the mainsail!

SAILOR 2

Mainsail: cut!

CURTAIN.

(Enter MADDUX, before the curtain.)

MADDUX

My God, what time is it? How is it already past noon! Where have all my actors gone?

(gathers himself, unbothered; continues through his motions)

How was your overnight with Mate Proompt? Did he give you your cubes of brown sugar? Did he show you how to stir them into your oatmeal?

(he delivers his closing monologue, as if he's delivered it many times before:)

The merchant sailor faced many hardships during his time at sea, but in spite of his constant struggles, he knew how to find the sweetness in life. That's the lesson we'd like you to take home with you: how to find the sweetness in life. Is that the lesson you'll be taking home with you? I'm sure it is. Well, now, then. That's the show! Thank you all for joining us this evening. Please be careful on your way out. Watch your step. Yes. Watch your step. Don't trip on your neighbor's heels now.

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

Until next Tuesday, Pilgrim. Until next Tuesday.

(Exit MADDUX. Lights on. END)