

THE PILGRIM'S AWAKENING

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 MADDOX, "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. MADDOX 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.)

MADDOX

(to himself, boring and toneless)

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

(tripping on 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 inspects the auditorium, bending forward to get a good glance at the spectators in the first row)

The audience stayed in their seats the whole time.

(he lets out an ever-so subtle fart as he straightens himself, but 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, perhaps with his job; then to the audience:)

Of course, nobody's told me: the Stage Manager and "The Captain."

(Exit MADDOX. 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, belonging to a whale or a shark, which has 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 should 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 another exhibition for 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, and makes a note on a yellow writing pad. She opens a notebook from the bench, flips a few pages, reads, then flips a few more pages, then stops. She perfunctorily tears that page out, and throws it on the floor; the page has no use to her. She flips through some more pages, then stops again. She's come upon something of interest.)

LI (reading)

Brand hasn't been witnessed, outside of collector's circles, for five, six centuries.

(skipping pages)

Shot appears intentional. Depth of penetration. Angle of entry.

(skipping pages)

Fin specimen fresh, more recently severed; spear fragment was embedded in a different wound, healed and much older, clutched by a cobbled mass of scar tissue.

(LI 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. She wears a wetsuit that's 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 peeled-down wetsuit line. KATHRYN is appalled by what she's witnessing. She stops in her tracks, dropping her tank, which makes a loud clank. LI does not avert her gaze from the documents on the bench. KATHRYN's work isn't causal work, but absolute work; there is something personal, devotional, in the notes that are being torn apart. 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* 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.

(she picks up some papers that LI has thrown to the floor, continuing:)

Whales evolved from land-based mammals, and so their skin is smooth like mine and yours. Sharks on the other hand..

(standing up, she indicates towards the sample)

Well, you can see the scales.

(then, confrontational)

Who *are* you? Are you affiliated with the Ocean Institute?

LI (not phased)

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

My business.

LI

You did mention the Greenland shark.

KATHRYN

That was in regards to... it's the only shark known to us that can live for north of five-hundred years; but a Greenland shark, *here*, in Dana Point – 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. Why would it be so *unlikely* for a Greenland shark to end up off the coast of Dana Point?

KATHRYN

(almost scoffing)

Unlikely? 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

When I was a child, I used to imagine the ocean as a uniform, continuous sphere.

LI

It's not that.

KATHRYN

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

LI

Give or take.

KATHRYN

The ocean is much more ordered, dangerous, merciless, and the sea life within it is divided into discrete, unwavering domains. It's not just one giant bubble.

LI (parroting)

It's not just one giant bubble.

KATHRYN

Passing from one loculated zone to the next, would be unlikely; to bypass ten, twenty, and swim from the icy depths of Greenland to the warm shallows of Dana Point, it would be near impossible.

LI

Absurd, then?

KATHRYN

Absurdity: it seems more and more to me, may be little more than how one comes upon something, a point of reference. If I, for example, were to come upon a whale that had scales, I would find that rather absurd. You, on the other hand...

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

LI

When I asserted that this creature *could* be a whale, it was just that, an assertion, an indication of *possibility*. I've come here, to 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

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

KATHRYN

That's ridiculous.

LI

(as if reciting dogma)

What's ridiculous today is the truth tomorrow.

(KATHRYN scoffs, as she starts drying off the washed scuba tank with a towel. LI faces the crowd, like a preacher to the nonbelievers.)

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

KATHRYN

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 who LI is, and what her "standards" and her preference for stagnancy represent.)

KATHRYN (stern)

Who are you?

LI

(observing KATHRYN's ulcer)

Was something... feeding on you?

(KATHRYN remains firm, not breaking eye contact)

KATHRYN

It's a water-ulcer.

LI

Don't take this the wrong way, but... Are you *looking* for this creature?

KATHRYN (ignoring LI)

The human body wasn't designed to remain submerged in water for longer than an hour... let alone 18 hours.

LI

*Really* looking for it?

KATHRYN (ignoring LI)

Our human skin begins to rot.

LI

*Still...* looking for it?

KATHRYN

Why are you here? In Dana Point?

LI

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

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

KATHRYN (correcting LI)

Scuba diving.

LI

Looking for this creature. Or not looking for it... three people reported spotting a shark, or what they *believed* to be a shark, next to some tall ship: *The Brig Pilgrim*.

KATHRYN

I haven't slept in 30 hours. I'm going home.

(KATHRYN grabs the papers on her desk and begins to walk off. LI calls after her.)

LI

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

KATHRYN (turning back, intrigued)

What theory is that?

LI (matter-of-fact)

Proprietary.

KATHRYN (scoffs, annoyed)

Goodnight, lady.

(KATHRYN turns around, ready to walk away; LI taunts her, and KATHRYN becomes concerned, more and more with each taunt)

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

(she becomes sincere, empathetic)

I can help you.

KATHRYN

(turns back, threateningly)

You're the problem.

(then walks off, towards the exit)

LI

(nonchalant)

Agree to disagree. I need you on that ship. I won't be able to I.D. this creature on my own.

(KATHRYN continues to the exit. LI flips through her pad. She begins to read some notes in an attempt to provoke KATHRYN.)

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, KATHRYN reaches the exit, then LI proceeds)

Your father...

(KATHRYN stops)

They say he was poisoned in his sleep, as he slept on the job.

(KATHRYN turns)

They say that when the late great mayor died, his only daughter, the town scientist, had a full blown nervous breakdown – not in a charming manner. They say she's still a bit... *out of sorts*.

(KATHRYN walks back towards LI. She takes a moment, observes the improbable specimen, and then, her indignation turning to strategy, she continues, firmly:)

KATHRYN

A publication. You could get me that. You could, couldn't you?

LI

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

KATHRYN

But you know people.

LI

I'll see what I can do. We'll find a way. We'll make something happen.

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

But I don't mean here. Nothing matters here, in Dana Point, within this city's gates.

LI

No, nothing matters here, in Dana Point. A publication. Outside this city. Where someone might come upon it. Read it, even.

(LI extends her hand. KATHRYN hesitates then extends her hand as well. LI tries to release but KATHRYN holds on tight and pulls her closer.)

KATHRYN

Don't you think of pulling one on me. Don't you even think about it.

(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 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 South Indian woman in her late 20s. DAN is confident and charismatic, and carries himself with the pride of new wealth. In spite of his career and financial successes, 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 dominance over him to assuage her deeper insecurities.)

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 Captain Maddox, is also unimpressive, a far reach from professional. He's a frail-looking man of 20 with a high-pitched, pubescent voice. He is unlike MADDOX in that he aspires to be a true artist, but he is also unlike JOHN DAVIES in that he has not been gifted with the innate artistic sensibility.)

CRICKET

(holding his script against his chest)

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

(he frustratedly checks his card)

The daily life of a merchant 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, about the daily life of a merchant sailor... 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*?

KATHRYN

It's not.

LI

No publication?

KATHRYN

I suspect you understand this process.

LI

So what? What's it to you?

KATHRYN

No publication means no funding. No funding: no freedom.

LI

That's why we're here.

KATHRYN

To instill bias in research?

LI

To remove it.

KATHRYN

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

LI

Pigs often salivate on the day of their slaughter, as they see the farmer approaching. There's danger in becoming 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 at front and rear. Two masts, the foremast and main mast rise up from stage to rafters. At center, there is a stairwell that exits down into the belly of the ship. A large vat of fish guts, six feet by three feet, between the stairwell and the foremast. Several tall boxes against the rear railing. A box of costumes stage right, and another box of costumes parallel to this one, stage left. The sign for THE DANA POINT OCEAN INSTITUTE in the backdrop.*

(Enter CAPTAIN MADDOX. He begins passing out food to "the children." NOTE: The children are the audience.)

MADDOX

(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. MADDOX 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.)

MADDOX

(with as little enthusiasm as possible)

Come morning we'll be serving oat-meal with brown sugar, which might be a little more appetizing to you all, you adorable green-hands.

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

Are you trying to get yourself arrested?

(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 his little ex-girl-fweend?

DAN

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

NADIA

I had lunch with her two days ago.

DAN

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

NADIA

Why the hell would that come up?

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

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

Jack?

JACK

(struggling to remember her by name)

Caitlyn?

KATHRYN

Kathryn.

JACK

Kathryn! Kathryn Elizabeth!

KATHRYN

What are you doing here?

JACK

(holding up his doctor bag)

The law requires a medical doctor be on board for these overnight camps. So here I am. I volunteer every Tuesday.

KATHRYN

Visit the gift shop today?

JACK

Earlier. I must have missed you.

KATHRYN

Another pelican figurine?

JACK

Yes. And what a beautiful figurines it is. And you? What brings you aboard the Brig Pilgrim?

KATHRYN

I'm here on research. On the lookout for an unlikely shark.

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

JACK

(staring at NADIA)  
How unfortunate.

KATHRYN (not following)  
No. Just improbable.

(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 (confused)  
Huh?

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  
What are you? Mocking me?

JACK

I'm not mocking you. Marry me, Caitlyn. Kathryn.

NADIA

He's back, and I suppose that means he's not dead. That can't be a good sign.

(deeply traumatized)

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

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)

Oh. How unfortunate.

JACK

No. Just unlikely. I knew a 'Yes' would be unlikely.

KATHRYN

I do.

JACK

Is that a... *Maybe?*

KATHRYN

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

JACK

So... *Yes?*

KATHRYN

Yes.

(JACK takes medical tape out of his doctor bag and wraps it around her ring finger. JACK sniffs the air, getting a whiff of something foul. JACK and KATHRYN ELIZABETH begin calling one another "fiance/fiancee," but this is not done in a sincere manner.)

JACK (sniffing)

Something reeks.

(KATHRYN looks over at the vat of fish guts)

KATHRYN

I think it's coming from the ship.

(JACK fixates on the auditorium)

JACK

It's the harbor. It's rotting. It has been for years, as I'm sure you're aware of.

KATHRYN

Do you know what your problem is, my over-delicate fiancé? You don't know how to see the beauty.

JACK

How's that, my warm and bubbly fiancée?

KATHRYN

Did you know that a yellow banana, though most appealing to our senses, is already nearing its terminal stage of decay? You have to look at it, head on, and when the harbor looks back at you, have the balls not to flinch.

JACK

And then what, as I stare into those cachectic eyes, oh fiancée, advocate of mold?

KATHRYN

You enjoy the show.

JACK

So, the harbor – just let it rot?

KATHRYN

Take a chip from my father, a man who tried his best, and lost it all, trying to preserve to a city that had no desire to linger on. It's inevitable. Things rot away. Why shouldn't they? It's a sign of a healthy ecosystem.

JACK

Is it though? 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 (off.)

(offstage, booming and dramatic)

Listen!

(LI approaches KATHRYN)

LI

What's that?

KATHRYN

It's coming from downstairs.

PROOMPT

(off. 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 (playful)

I told you it could be a whale.

KATHRYN (playful)

It's not a whale.

PROOMPT

And what else! A lusting! It disseminates like a musk in the darkened breezes. Sea nymphs, I am attuned to your scents! The intoxication! The odors that climb on board a vessel when the magnificent female form invites its sea-dwelling counterpart to come take part in the rule-assaulting games of man and woman's courtship. Oh, the Pilgrim doth awaken! Women, with your long-flowing hair, and your form that jiggles about with laughter, disguise yourselves!

(he looks over at LI)

For the Pilgrim shows no greater animosity than when she encounters for her billowing sails a competing figure, be it nymph, or the slender gaps and curves of woman.

(PROOMPT, again, briefly looks over at LI.)

LI

I'm so fucking turned on right now.

(LI partially unbuttons her shirt.)

KATHRYN (annoyed)

Put your tits away.

LI (playful)

Once you stop acting a boob.

KATHRYN (playful)

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

LI

(lusting after PROOMPT)

My knickers pound, or something pounds my knockers.

(KATHRYN laughs)

KATHRYN

An actor, for an actor? Think twice on it.

LI

No, 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)

DAN

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

It's John Davies. He never breaks character.

NADIA (annoyed)

You think I know who he is?

DAN

They say that even when the Dana Point Theatre...  
(looks around carefully)

Caught a flame...

NADIA

Caught a flame? That theatre burned to the ground, Dan.

DAN (defensive)

He's won awards. When that theatre *caught a flame*, even then, he refused to break character. He improvised against the fires. The audience thought it was just part of his act.

NADIA (horrified)

I really don't care to hear that.

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 First 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, with a visceral disdain for authority. PROOMPT glances over at her, as if he might have a problem to handle. As he glances over, LI begins pressing up her cleavage. PROOMPT ignores her.)

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! Where's my Second Mate? Come forth!

(Enter CRICKET)

CRICKET

Yes, Mate Proompt.

PROOMPT

Delegate to the crew: we set sail. Pacific trade winds by six A.M., 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, nearly vomiting. Exit PROOMPT.)

CRICKET

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

NADIA (disparaging)

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.

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; DAN and KATHRYN briefly lock eyes; DAN confidently smiles at her then he exits. KATHRYN turns to LI.)

KATHRYN

Li, get me to a bed.

(KATHRYN's knees weaken with exhaustion. She places her arm against the foremast and sits criss cross on the floor. She hangs her head; the tricorne hat covers her eyes. Her eyelids close on her, but she fights it off. She grunts as she fights off sleep. NADIA and LI, concerned but not panicked, kneel down to check on her. The lights dim.)

ACT II  
Scene 1

*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.*

(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, which opens immediately, without any pause. Enter JACK. DAN is still shirtless, and has his back to the door.)

DAN (with a very American accent)  
Un momento, por favor.

(DAN turns around, putting his shirt on)

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

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

DAN (nonchalant)  
Room service.

JACK

This is the Brig Pilgrim.

(the ship creaks)

It's a far cry from the Peninsula Hotel in Shanghai.

DAN

(overwhelmed by the memory)

That hotel was worth every penny. Do you remember the shrimp bowl? That thing was the size of a small car. Then the next day we played that haggling game at the street market, and I convinced one of the street venders to sell me a 50-RMB selfie stick for only 12 RMB. The best you could get them to slink down to was forty.

JACK

You always did know how to win a bet.

DAN

Yah. Well. I don't enjoy losing.

(DAN starts unpacking his overnight bag, as does JACK. JACK is reticent but DAN continues his attempts to strike conversation.)

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.

(doing his best to suppress some suspicion)

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.)

JACK

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

DAN

Hey. I'm just getting started, Jack. Two recessions followed by twenty years of deflationary what-ever-you-call-it. There weren't many families that were able to profit off such a thing, this city doing what it did.

JACK

(with accusation towards DAN)

The city is *still* doing what it did.

(DAN and JACK fall into silence. They 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. You know, the one next to the porch is three feet tall. Fucking traumatizing.

JACK

I've bought one for my grandmother that's three and a half feet tall. Do you get yours from the Ocean Institute?

DAN

God no. Not there.

JACK

I thought your firm represents... there's a plaque outside the...

DAN

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

JACK

She sounds... happy.

DAN

She is.

JACK

I never said I wished her to be unhappy.

(A brief pause. JACK finally summons the courage.)

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

(DAN is suddenly very uncomfortable, and does his best to deflect)

DAN

How about some wine?

JACK

I'm on duty.

DAN

Then why the bag of wine?

JACK

I don't know.

DAN

Well, I do.

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

JACK

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

DAN

I concur.

JACK

I said don't say a thing!

(DAN takes a drink. He offers JACK a drink who declines again with a nod of the head.)

DAN

All those years, the women would come and go. We were like brothers, Jack. What I'm trying to say is: it should have never come between us.

JACK

But it did.

DAN

I know it did.

JACK

And it still does. Nadia still does.

DAN

You were really sick, you know. And when you were sick...

JACK

I'm *still* sick, Dan.

DAN

But the immune thing. It's been fixed.

JACK

Managed. But still progressive. Do you know what that means? Every day is a roll of the dice. I'm drunk off todays. I'm no longer a husband to tomorrows.

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

DAN

That First Mate. He's quite a character.

JACK

He is indeed a *character*.

DAN

They say he never breaks.

(JACK assumes DAN knows nothing about the theatre.)

JACK

His name is John Davies. He's from the Dana Point Theatre.

(DAN takes this comment as an insult, as if JACK is implying that DAN lacks sufficient culture to know of John Davies)

DAN (defensive)

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

(DAN catches himself before he says "wedding")

He's quite the character.

(JACK senses an opportunity:)

JACK

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

(he begins to provoke DAN)

Now, if that's not a 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

Care to put your money where your mouth is?

DAN (excited)

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

JACK

(pulling out cash)

I'll be you...

(JACK pulls some bills from his pocket and counts)

Ten dollars... that you can't get him to break.

DAN

Ten dollars?

(DAN laughs, then thinks a moment. He's fearful of losing, even for so inconsequential an amount. After some hesitation, he extends his arm. JACK and DAN shake hands.)

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 (competitive but smiling)

Give me an hour.

## Scene 2

*The First Mate's cabin. 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. 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.*

(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.)

CRICKET (reading)

Went to land this morning at twenty past six, in order to restock supplies following a series of misfortunes I had encountered while trying to haul in a fish to supply my body with its vital nourishment. Inventory of purchased goods: twenty apples, ten bunches of bananas: *numbers, numbers, numbers*. I then paid visit to the local blacksmith and invited the young man to visit me, at his earliest convenience, aboard the Brig Pilgrim.

(he flips a few pages)

I swiftly reprimanded the swindler, reminding him that I was no tyro to the sailing industry, nor virgin to the rake, and that I knew well the standard price for harpoon repair in these parts of Alto California: two dollars and twelve cents, on average, and never higher than three dollars and ten cents.

(CRICKET looks to PROOMPT. CRICKET continually breaks character in an attempt to interact with "John Davies" on a human level but PROOMPT remains fully in character.)

CRICKET

(breaking character, as "the actor")

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

PROOMPT

(as MATE PROOMPT, remaining in character)

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

For the past fifteen years, I've spent nine of ten nights shutting my eyes right here in this chair. The comfort of

curling up all cozy upon some mattress on firm land, the very nostalgia for it is gone from me.

CRICKET (confused)

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

PROOMPT

I spin about when I lie flat.

CRICKET

Spin about?

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

(with a threatening tone)

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

CRICKET (frightened)

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

(fearful, struggling to improvise)

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

PROOMPT

Don't you take me to Mexico, Cricket!

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

Well, the sooner the better.

CRICKET

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

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

PROOMPT

Actor?

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

CRICKET

Listen, brother...

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

Dude? You take me to be some Yankee DOOD-le?

CRICKET

I'm really fucking tired.

PROOMPT

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

(PROOMPT inspects as CRICKET opens his mouth wide.)

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

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

CRICKET

Wait. You actually saw a blacksmith today?

PROOMPT

Name the other members of this troupe. We shall see if they reject this lie or uphold your story of conspiracy against the Pilgrim. The punishment for false accusation and conspiracy is the same.

CRICKET

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

PROOMPT

Your last warning, to address me by formal 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, I SHALL be called MATE!

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

Scene 3

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

(KATHRYN ELIZABETH is asleep upon NADIA's lap. LI sits on top of the desk across from them, sipping from a bottle of wine. Upstage of them, TEACHER 1, TEACHER 2, and TEACHER 3 are tucked into the bunk beds, engaged in idle nighttime tasks: knitting, reading, journaling, etc. DEDAI, the female child, stands next to NADIA, hugging one of her legs.)

LI

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

NADIA

(agitated at LI's phrasing)

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

LI

I 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 ELIZABETH) had been falling in love with, for nearly a year, her response to all this, was to form a deep and lasting friendship with *you*, a complete stranger to her.

NADIA

I know it doesn't make for a good story, but I'm telling you, that's all just something that happened.

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

LI

Why is the kid in here?

NADIA

She said she was feeling sea sick.

LI

We're parked at the dock.

NADIA

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

(DEDAI begins climbing LI's leg.)

LI

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

(LI kicks DEDAI off her leg)

DEDAI

Can I have a lollipop?

NADIA

The lollipops are in Dan's suit case honey. There's a man in Dan's room that Ms. Nadia has no intent to encounter. 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 Dedai these words.

(LI puts on the trench coat.)

DEDAI

(repeating the word she's learned)

Tits.

NADIA

Dedai, don't say that word.

LI

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

DEDAI

I don't have tits.

NADIA

Dedai, I mean it.

LI

No. You don't have tits.

DEDAI

But I'm a girl!

LI

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

NADIA

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

LI

Wringing a contradiction out of some language game. It's a good start. I'll give you that much. But 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.

DEDAI

Can I have a lollipop?

LI

I've said all I can say.

DEDAI

(screaming at the top of her lungs)

I want a lollipop!!

(The shouting wakes KATHRYN.)

KATHRYN

How long was I out?

NADIA

A few minutes.

LI

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

KATHRYN

Don't call me that.

LI

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

KATHRYN (still waking up)

You know why I'm here.

LI

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

KATHRYN

Ignore her.

NADIA

I'd like to hear what you have to say.

KATHRYN

Am I here for Dan? Am I... I'm engaged to my own fiancé, I'll have you know. A nice young man. A doctor.

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

LI (to NADIA)

It could be a coincidence.

KATHRYN (continues)

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

NADIA (gravely concerned)

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

LI

Connecting the dots. A slippery slope.

(NADIA doesn't want to speak about JACK any  
more than she must. She concedes, and lets  
out a long, deep sigh.)

NADIA

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

KATHRYN

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

NADIA

When he was talking about that invisible will or what-have-you, I remember well, he brought up the whale too.

KATHRYN

It's a shark.

LI

A Greenland shark.

KATHRYN

Of undetermined species.

LI

Or a whale of undetermined species.

KATHRYN

It's not... It's not.

NADIA

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

LI

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

KATHRYN

The sample in my lab has scales.

NADIA (innocently)

Maybe some type of whale that has a scale.

KATHRYN (mocking her)

Maybe a shark who's fin hit the mark.

LI (playing along)

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

NADIA

Oh. You're making fun of me? You are, aren't you? Oh, yah, I get it. Nadia's not a scientist like us. She's not college-educated like us two women. So let's pick on her for being the nincompoop in this conversation among the educated, is that right? (then, almost comedically) It's a good thing she's getting married!

KATHRYN

Would you get a hold of yourself?

LI

Now, I'm not trying to say that Kathryn is wrong, or that the First Mate is right...

KATHRYN ELIZABETH

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

LI

Assume, for just a moment here, that the genetic analysis comes back tomorrow and informs us that this creature is, in fact, a whale. Then, what? Look closely enough, and the creature appears to be a whale. Take a step back and it's a shark. From far away, if you're far away as the eyes of this ship's Mate, it's a whale again. Which is just to say: keep an open mind.

KATHRYN

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

LI

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

KATHRYN

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

NADIA (kindly)

Mayor.

KATHRYN (snapping)

That's what I said!

LI (cont.)

The constant need for order.

KATHRYN

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

LI (cont.)

MAKING SENSE of things, at the expense of everything else, perhaps, sometimes, at the expense of the truth.

KATHRYN

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

LI

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

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

KATHRYN (doubting herself)

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.

KATHRYN

You never mentioned you were engaged. Not once did I hear you utter the name Jack.

NADIA

And, godwilling, you'll never hear it again. Six years with that... with that grotesque. And I mean it, he's a grotesque. He's not a man. Not anymore, he isn't. You'd be wise to stay away from Jack.

DEDAI (loudly)

I'm gonna turn into a whale!

(The adults ignore DEDAI)

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.

DEDAI (loudly)  
I'm gonna become a whale!

(The adults ignore DEDAI. KATHRYN is uneasy in her own skin. LI feels like she's close to something important, but won't overtly show it.)

KATHRYN  
I'll find it.

LI  
(even-tempered, to KATHRYN)  
Do you not hear the thunder? The orchestra's tuning? The dragging crescendo of the timpani?

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

LI  
What the hell was that?

CRICKET (offstage)  
Holy shit!

DAN (offstage)  
My bad.

NADIA (looking at the left wall)  
Is that Dan? What the hell is Dan doing in the First Mate's room?

(LI gets up on her feet, and faces KATHRYN. She extends an olive branch to KATHRYN:)

LI  
Are you sure you want to know? You still want to search for it?

KATHRYN  
Why would you ask me that?

LI

Meet me on deck. But first thing's first...

(she adjusts her outfit, tosses her hair)

What is this searching, after all, without abundance?

#### Scene 4

(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! *There are no children aboard the Brig Pilgrim.*

(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. He sees me in my livery and tries to take advantage of my first mate's salary. Then he has the gall to send me off with produce from his self-combusting stock.

DAN

I never heard of exploding fruit before.

PROOMPT

What are you doing in my quarters? Nobody should be in The Mate's quarters without my express permission.

DAN

The other guy let me in.

PROOMPT

The other guy? Cricket? Somebody of Cricket's diverse experience 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. PROOMPT 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.

DAN

Tone it down.

(LI takes a step towards DAN. DAN begins to squeeze and LI chokes. She smiles and continues:)

LI

You're undoing has been yours alone.

(KATHRYN steps out)

KATHRYN

Well, well. Romance isn't dead. It's just on probation.

DAN (spooked)

Jesus!

(DAN, by reflex, begins choking LI even harder, who coughs and chokes, then escapes, and runs up the stairs. DAN and KATHRYN face one another, in silence for a moment.)

KATHRYN

You've been avoiding me. It's fine. Since we're on the subject, 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. One shouldn't leave a play hurting.

DAN

Tell that to the attendees of the Dana Point Theatre.

(KATHRYN is not in a joking mood. She starts to walk off.)

I told you... time and time again.

KATHRYN

You said one thing with your words, and something very different with your body.

DAN (remorseful)

Look...

KATHRYN

Don't apologize. That's what makes you such a great lawyer. Perhaps I should have questioned my own body, instead of interrogating yours. If I loved a dream, is it possible: I never loved you.

(KATHRYN has a moment of doubt)

I have to go.

(KATHRYN begins to leave. DAN grabs her wrist.)

DAN

Now that we're talking, we could talk some more.

(KATHRYN tries to shake loose, but DAN holds tight)

KATHRYN

I need to start looking for my shark.

(DAN catches a hint, and lets her go.

KATHRYN ascends the stairs. When at the top, KATHRYN turns back)

Daniel. 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've noticed the pelican figurines on my lawn.

(JACK laughs aloud, as if she's being ridiculous, but he expects this from her. JACK takes a few steps towards her)

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

JACK

I can't leave. The ship...

NADIA (interrupting)

You can jump.

JACK

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

NADIA

You're a farce!

JACK

You're drunk!

(They kiss.)

NADIA (disdainful)

Nothing.

JACK (disdainful)

Fortunate for you.

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

NADIA

The dream was nice while it lasted.

JACK

That's what happens when you go through life without a ever having a goddamn thought you can call your own. Buried up to your neck in someone else's dreams, aren't you, my little dog?

(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

Your hometown? Beijing?

LI

South of there. A flattened, rural stretch of land. I come from a long line of nobles who became, what else, farm people. Purged. One can only hide for so long. It was a few months after my thirteenth birthday I was *recruited* to Beijing.

KATHRYN

So, you have no family? And that hometown, no longer a home?

(LI looks over the stage, restless)

LI

What do we do now?

KATHRYN

We wait.

LI

It's like watching paint dry. What are we looking for?

KATHRYN

You'll know.

LI

How will I know?

(KATHRYN doesn't respond. They sit and stare off the stage for a few moments. KATHRYN has a moment of doubt, as she looks out over the water:)

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

Fail again, fail worse. Then what? Find something else? 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.

(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

What?

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

What?

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 same 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 honestly don't think I can bear it much longer.

LI

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

KATHRYN

You might not care to find out.

LI

Your fiancé's coming.

(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 grabs his neck and begins kissing him.)

KATHRYN

Look, Jack...

(JACK steps back.)

JACK

Nadia 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!

(JACK shrugs, he doesn't know. KATHRYN continues kissing him. She unzips his pants, brings him to the floor, and mounts him. JACK is still eager to defend himself.)

Ask me a question, something only a merchant sailor would know, something about the Pilgrim. 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?

(KATHRYN moans, JACK moans)

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 pauses)

KATHRYN

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.

(KATHRYN resumes thrusting)

JACK

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

KATHRYN

How's that funny?

(KATHRYN and JACK climax.)

KATHRYN (disturbed)

Look. Jack. I don't think there's any pathway forward in which the two of us end up getting married.

(JACK stands up, appearing wounded)

JACK

No? Oh. Well. If you'd like to think about it...

KATHRYN

What good am I, to them, to them, to them, without my reputation? What benefit to them, thinking?

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 and quotes Catullus:)

*Nunc te cognovi: quare etsi impensius uror,  
Multo mi tamen es vilior et levior.*

(Loose translation: "Now that I've known you, truly, although I burn more intensely, you are much cheaper and lighter to me."  
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 important seems to last long in this city. Not even the lights.

KATHRYN (panicking)

A rolling blackout!

LI

We're never gonna find this creature now.

KATHRYN (defiant)

No.

LI

You should go home. You look like you could use some sleep.

KATHRYN

No! It could be gone by morning. You said it yourself. Where'd the lights go? Bring them back! Bring the lights back!

(she has revelation, then a moment of relief)

Wait! The genetics. We still have the genetics.

LI (hesitant)

I meant to tell you earlier. The genetic results came back while you were – idling – in the shower. The sequence was inconclusive at best, corrupted in other parts.

KATHRYN

You're sure?

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 does, in fact, turn out to be a potato, then the lab is able to assure 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. The actor who refuses to break. The scientist who prods and prods, hoping that something goes awry, and when it does, if even for one repeating instance, she calls this evidence. What else could genetics be, Kathryn Elizabeth, but a performance, a five-billion year-long 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

That didn't sound good.

KATHRYN

What is this? The harbor, has it laid a trap for me?

LI (disgusted)

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

KATHRYN (to the mast)

Help me from here. Hurry yourself, 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 second 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 observe.

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 much much 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 get you to a shower.

KATHRYN

I know the way forward.

LI

There is no way forward.

KATHRYN

I'll give you a hint, Li. 'Tis in the heavens.

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

LI

You called me Li. That's progress. Is Katy Beth back?

(KATHRYN approaches the edge of the ship, pulling LI along.)

KATHRYN

Did something hit me?

(she grabs her head, then charges the audience)

I'm ready to strike.

(LI pulls her back towards the stairwell. She is not as optimistic as KATHRYN appears to be.)

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.)

LI

Oh God. I'm gonna throw up.

(KATHRYN nonchalantly holds up the fish head in the air, too close to LI for her comfort)

KATHRYN

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?

(She passes the fish head to LI.)

LI (nauseated)

I'm gonna blow.

(LI pushes the fish head away. They approach the stairwell.)

Let's see if they have any running water down here.

KATHRYN

I saw a mop bucket in the hallway!

(They exit. The central box of light is all that remains upon the blackened deck. The jangling of PROOMPT's whip is heard, footsteps approaching. The sound of midnight on the open sea.)

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 followed by 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 comes, 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

I can't see a thing. Is it usually this dark?

DAN

Rolling blackout. It 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 water.

(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 as she starts to succumb to his fabricating)

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)

Not many.

PROOMPT (brimming with fury)

How many is *not many*?

CRICKET (terrified)

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 still...

(PROOMPT grabs his whip)

CRICKET

Oh God.

DAN

(loud enough for all to hear)

I'd say we're a good 18 miles out...

PROOMPT

Nautical miles?

DAN

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

PROOMPT

Kernigan? A Mick, are you? With senses admirable. You drunk as well, sailor? Inebriated as old Cricket, here?

DAN

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

PROOMPT

The only trustworthy Micks are the ones who fit that description. Kernigan, you've been promoted to Second Mate.

DAN

You hear that Nadia, I already got a promotion!

NADIA

You didn't really used to be a sailor, did you, Dan?

DAN

I'm playing along, Nadia.

CRICKET

(gazing over the ship)

But... the dock... I can see the...

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...

(NADIA 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.)

KATHRYN

Who stole my clothes then?

LI

Beats me.

KATHRYN

You said you'd keep watch while I was in the shower.

(KATHRYN walks off right, as LI is distracted by PROOMPT.)

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, John Davies. The moment you we're away from Nadia, I pounce; I crack you like an egg.

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

PROOMPT

Cricket, I'm off to *poop*.

(He means poop deck. 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

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.*

KATHRYN

The sails, Li. The sails have a music in them, but the wind refuses to pipe the forth; there's something sour behind her lip.

LI

What's next? Tell me you have a plan.

KATHRYN

Yes. We find the Captain.

LI

The Captain's sleeping.

KATHRYN

Then we find the First Mate.

LI

Are you sure you're feeling alright? I think you're bleeding again.

(KATHRYN checks herself. 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.)

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

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 that 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 approaches the  
railing and looks out over the waters.  
Enter PROOMPT. 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 examines the quality of PROOMPT's clothing, checking under his collar)

KATHRYN

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 out here looking for a shark that finds this vessel a *familiar* lure.

(she looks up, disappointedly)

But a stagnant 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.

(In the sequence that follows, PROOMPT becomes 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 lack of logic.)

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? 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 pushes the powder bowl in anger, which spills upon the floor.)

PROOMPT

This is bullshit! How am I supposed to build from this? A Prince does not jiggle. A man is not placed inside, nor upon the outside of, a shark! Madness upon the stage must be structured, with intention, ferociously justified. The theatre is logical; even in madness, there is the phantasmagoria of logic. This is our tradition. It is so, and for good reason! You... you contain no meaning at all! The vein collapses. Blood turns to clots in the vase.

(he collects himself)

Each of us plays our part in this city. Your father played his, and continues on even now, as our city's late great mayor. As an actor, my labor serves my function. If only the others in this city put as much effort into their roles as I have mine...

(he is suddenly overcome by dread)

Through mankind's darkest hours, the theatre has endured. When the stage goes...

(he is overcome by even greater dread)

Oh, my imagination really can't bear it... when the stage goes...

KATHRYN

Ah, Mr. Mate, you're the mad one on this ship. 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. 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.)

PROOMPT

Stay back!

(KATHRYN approaches him.)

KATHRYN

Get back here. Or fetch me your Captain.

PROOMPT

Leave me! I beg you!

(Exit PROOMPT. KATHRYN turns around and looks out over the bow. She begins to climb the mast. Before she can get far, enter DAN.)

DAN

Katy Beth.

KATHRYN

At ease, sailor. Have you seen my father? He's become a fish.

DAN

Would you get down from there? What the hell is on your face?

KATHRYN

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

DAN (squinting)

You look like a mime...

(She climbs another rung)

KATHRYN

I woke up from that dream...

DAN

A really hot mime.

KATHRYN (cont.)

And you taunt me that I ever dreamt it.

(KATHRYN slips. DAN catches her. DAN kisses her on the lips, then immediately begins spitting and whining powder from his face.)

We had everything we wanted and knew it couldn't last.

DAN

It was more than a dream.

(DAN continues to talk about the relationship, while KATHRYN's mind drifts to her father and her city's decline)

KATHRYN

Something great that came to nothing.

DAN

I'm just a man. I'm not perfect. Sometimes a man has to make compromises in life. Even at the expense of his own happiness.

KATHRYN

Was a man. Had a reputation. Then came to nothing.

DAN

I mean for Nadia. For her stability. Nadia never wanted to say YES to this.

(DAN gestures to KATHRYN, then to himself)

KATHRYN

Did I fall victim to his lies? What he told himself? His kingdom too divided.

DAN

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

KATHRYN

Time consumed by foreign powers. Neglected his most loyal. His only tool: diplomacy, and with no leverage.

DAN

Really, I was powerless. I was the real hero, the real tragedy in all of this. When Jack got sick... He started to say things. He would *do* things, that..

(he stops, hesitant to divulge)

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

(he confesses, finally letting his facade fall:)

It wasn't a dream. I needed this to be a dream.

KATHRYN

(looking up at the foremast, not DAN)

I want it back.

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

DAN

There you are, Spy! Mate Proompt's been looking for you.

(DAN lifts LI over his shoulders. LI doesn't protest; as if she wouldn't mind seeing PROMPT.)

I think he might actually throw your scrawny ass from this ship. And if he hesitates, well, there's this bet, you see, and you're gonna help me win it.

(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 "maddened" 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

What was that?

DAN (off.)

Medic!

(A child crying)

KATHRYN (panicking)

Oh God. The children!

(KATHRYN rubs her makeup off as she 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

Cricket confessed twice to being an actor. He's been demoted.

(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!

(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, the child is sitting down. 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

Will someone shut that 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

There will be no tossing. Help me!

(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 lady drowns.

KATHRYN

Daniel.

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

John Davies. Quit!

(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 (irritated)

This has to end. I'll end it.

(KATHRYN rushes over and infiltrates the skirmish. DEDAI, left alone, stands up on the crate. 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!

DAN

Aido! Don't you dare!

(DEDAI stops screaming, and she reaches for the lollipop. KATHRYN reaches DEDAI and pushes her away from the harpoon's line of fire. AIDO shoots the harpoon, and KATHRYN's right hand explodes in a mist of red; only her thumb and index fingers are spared. She cries out in agony, and looks as if she is about to pass out. DEDAI loses her balance, and off the ship, into the water. LI points down at something in the water.)

LI

Hey, it's a whale!

(DAN looks down and shakes his head in confused affirmation.)

DAN

It's a whale! A little baby.

(NADIA cracks a smile, and she seems somewhat relieved by what she's witnessing.)

NADIA

Dedai really turned into a whale.

DAN

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

NADIA

Dedai said she was gonna turn into a whale, then she fell into the water, and now there's a baby whale in the water.

DAN

She's not a whale, Nadia. Do you see the girl, Li?

LI (insincere)

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

KATHRYN

I see her. I see Dedai!

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

DAN

Wait!

(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?

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 contrivances of a jiggling prince? It matters not. There's only one to blame.

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

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

(PROOMPT kneels on the deck. He holds his whip on high, shouting aloud:)

Grant me this favor, Captain. 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.

(PROOMPT, now JOHN DAVIES, looks back at LI. LI doesn't face him, but continues to look off starboard.)

LI

This city is revelation. This city is the dread and totipotency of frontiers. This city is inevitability: one station along the track, every station an ending. I come from such a place. This city discomforts me. Every city is a memory of a city that's no more. I'm not ignorant to your pain. I had my orders. Gather evidence. Then clean-up: the mitigation of inherent risks. Is it possible a Greenland shark still lurks in these waters? Perhaps. The American army is all that preserves this in-between zone – your flooded stage and fruit.

(Enter KATHRYN, wearing the Sailor Moon Cosplay outfit from earlier. 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

I can't fight the sleep much longer.

(KATHRYN collapses upon the deck. JOHN DAVIES kneels over her, and appears 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.)

Is it time for the 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 done yet. I still have a wedding to officiate. I really must get some...

KATHRYN

I don't care.

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

Wake me by noon. If The Prince doesn't wake by noon...

JOHN DAVIES (concerned)

Why wouldn't the Prince wake?

KATHRYN

Oh, the Prince can sleep. You're the officiant. So I'll tell you now. My answer is this: "I DO."

JOHN DAVIES

You? Married? To whom? Are you certain? I mean, can one ever be certain?

KATHRYN

The Prince is certain, and must be: his kingdom crumbling; the ineluctible spark of something new and hopeful threatening his gates.

(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. The Prince's duty, 'tis a sacred duty.

(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.)

JOHN DAVIES

And what's that?

KATHRYN

To play his hand.

(She lifts her severed hand and laughs)

JOHN DAVIES

This city isn't green. We've nothing left to bargain.

KATHRYN

No. Nothing.

JOHN DAVIES

Then, what, if we have nothing?

(KATHRYN stares into the audience, glances around, making eye contact with several audience members and then continues to DAVIES:)

KATHRYN

Tell me. What is the breaking point, old Mate? When the fire jolts the actor from his tracks? Or when the smoke consumes the audience's eyes, and they can no longer see the actors for what they were conspiring to be?

JOHN DAVIES

Your question is misleading, I suspect. Broken from the start.

(KATHRYN begins to snore.)

The actor... he is transitory; he is an act of transition. The character alone... Only the character is eternal.

(KATHRYN jolts awake, as if this registers with her, then falls back into sleep. 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... 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). Well. With my part said, this ceremony now draws 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 is about to exit, but JOHN DAVIES approaches)

JOHN DAVIES

Wait. How will I see you again?

LI

You won't.

JOHN DAVIES

(a lacking version of PROOMPT, poorly improvising)

Then, begone with that (yawn) tiny, shiny wet bottom. Or the Mate will (yawn) take you... for... a strong and steady... slumber.

LI

(confused, unimpressed)

I wouldn't mind some long and sturdy lumber. You wanna show me that harpoon?

JOHN DAVIES

You mean, below deck?

LI

Tell me. How big is it?

JOHN DAVIES

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

(LI becomes disillusioned. JOHN DAVIES, not noticing that LI has stopped, continues, lusting, down the stairs.)

LI

Everything makes perfect sense in Dana Point. How was I so close? A coincidence?

(doubtful)

No. It couldn't be that.

(collects herself)

Keep an open mind.

(JACK, DAN and NADIA continue to watch the setting of the sails.)

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

Jib sail ready to loose!

(KATHRYN gasps, and wakes up. She reaches around in her coat and pulls out the Mate's gun.)

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

Foremast: Trim the topsails! Loose the mainsails!

SAILOR 2 (offstage)

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 (offstage)

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 (offstage)

Other way around! LOOSE the topsails!

KATHRYN

First to three hits wins.

(LI stares down the gun. She's trembling but remains as calm as possible.)

LI

I'll choose my words carefully. You'll lose.

(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

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

(she takes a deep breath in, plugging her nose)

resistances... This was my childhood.

LI

What do you want? A publication? Funding? I can get it for you.

KATHRYN

All will be fine, all will be well, when the Prince and the City are one. The Kingdom becomes – an ocean – eternity! This City, my borrowed stage.

LI

Is that your plan? Convert an entire city into dinner-theatre? Then what?

KATHRYN

A city of Faith.

LI

The shadow of Faith. Faith, and the hearts of men.

KATHRYN

A city of Reason.

LI

The desire for Reason. There can be no Reason without desire.

KATHRYN

The city's Faith, my authority engenders.  
Their Method, my confidence shall further.

DAN (scoffing)

Tyrant.

JACK (somber)

What better choice...

LI

Speak straight. If you're going to point a gun at me, drop the rhyme.

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

Trim the mainsail!

SAILOR 2 (offstage)

I'm jammed!

(KATHRYN straightens her aim and twists her severed hand, which holds the gun)

KATHRYN

Do you see it? Do you see mine?

LI

What's left of it. If this is what's been festering in you, what you've been hankering for me to see, then go on, play it. But I suspect, Katy Beth, that you don't have the balls.

KATHRYN (desperate)

They're unwell. Incredibly unwell.

LI

Who?

KATHRYN

I have to protect them. I must try.

LI

(tension)

Katy Beth?

(more tension)

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

LI (still in a panic)

The gun! It's a prop?

(DAVIES shrugs, as if to say he's fairly sure it is.)

KATHRYN

First point goes to Li. These flowers are for you.

(She slides the gun to LI)

LI (furious)

You and I – are through.

KATHRYN

It's your turn.

LI

I'm done. Done with this place.

(LI begins to walk off)

KATHRYN

They say she comes from a distant village, far to the south of Beijing.

(LI continues)

They say after the war she prioritized survival, that she spited her own family's legacy.

(LI continues)

They say she withered. A lily blown to the sea.

(LI continues, KATHRYN shouts, more desperate than previously)

What am I, wandering noble, without my city? My only memories, in spite of all my searching, would be ruins. My only belief: in my endless searching.

(LI stops. LI is overcome by emotion. Memories of grief, longing and even anger. She walks back, contemplates for a moment, and then picks up the gun.)

LI

I never had a friend.

(KATHRYN stands on the crate and then shifts gaze as she addresses the mast:)

KATHRYN

*To remain alive, or not to remain alive, that's the essential question at stake here. Your sailors don't know these words, do they? What's the fragment? To be, or not to be?*

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

We're catching too much wind.

KATHRYN

To remain awake, or not to remain awake? To waken into the new dream, or to learn, perchance, to see all the splendid beauty, here, amongst the rot.

(KATHRYN looks out on the auditorium, admiring her city. LI turns the gun about in her hands, inspecting it.)

The angled jetty. Like hands stacked upon hands or a thunderclap of beards. The harsh, yellow motion of our elements. The perpetuation of the sunbathers and all these white sails... And the Brig Pilgrim, in the middle of it all... What life!

LI

Tell them this, you who love to tell your tellings: a scientist paid a visit. And she wasn't friendly.

(DAN approaches LI.)

DAN

Stop!

(LI points the gun at him. DAN is furious but he still isn't sure if the gun is a prop or not; he takes a step back.)

LI (cont.)

And, look. There, in the water. A dorsal fin.

(KATHRYN looks down into the water. LI fires and KATHRYN grabs her abdomen and grunts in pain. NADIA screams in terror.)

DAN (horrified)

Kathryn!

(A gust of wind comes through. The entire ship jerks and KATHRYN falls into the water. A splashing sound is heard. The ship jerks back and forth.)

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

Cut the mainsail!

(DAN stands on the crate with a life preserver)

NADIA

Dan, don't you leave me here!

(DAN doesn't look back, jumps in after KATHRYN.)

SAILOR 2 (offstage)

Cutting!

(The curtain falls down, about quarter to halfway to the stage; everything is still visible)

SAILOR 1 (offstage)

Faster!

(LI makes a note on her yellow pad)

LI

I'm done.

(LI tosses the gun and yellow notepad. JOHN DAVIES picks up the gun and inspects it, then reads something on the pad.)

JOHN DAVIES

An actress? No. With tells so mild, so delicate – she'd be known to me. Wait!

(JOHN DAVIES runs in pursuit of LI. He pops back, and announces with a sense of 'patriotism':)

Glory to our Prince!

(DAVIES exits in pursuit of LI.)

Wait!

(JACK begins coughing, harder and harder, until he is forced to kneel upon the floor. NADIA goes over to him and kneels.)

JACK

Faith. This city needs Faith.

NADIA

This city needs more than that. This city needs a new law, a new mayor.

JACK

Is that what Dan's been feeding you?

NADIA

You think I don't know anything, don't you? You think I don't know that the scientist was here on Dan's account? I had a dream, Jack. In that dream Kathryn lost her finger, and the scientist sowed it back – onto Dan's hand.

JACK (firm)

*This city needs Faith!*

(JACK has another coughing fit)

NADIA

(shielding her face)

Ugh! Would you stop that? You're coughing on me.

JACK

(he coughs harder)

If not the substance, a sign: the Faith to take another step, a step backwards, towards the impasse of those bluffs.

NADIA

Huh?

JACK

Those pregnant bluffs.

NADIA

What the hell are you talking about?

JACK

Glory be to our Prince. Glory, glory...

(JACK collapses, his eyes closing. NADIA is horrified.)

NADIA

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

(NADIA attempt to drag JACK off stage, towards the right exit, but JACK doesn't budge. He appears lifeless. NADIA kneels down, and tries to resuscitate JACK. Desperate, she assumes the prayer position. She hesitates a few moments and then reluctantly:)

Hear us, Oh Prince. In our time of needs, and such improbable needs, here we are: we call to you. If your Kingdom is our prosperity, then let us into your Kingdom. I ask just this one thing of you, Oh Prince: *Lift the Soul. Don't Oppress the Soul.*

SAILOR 1

Mainsail, cut!

CURTAIN.

(Enter MADDOX, before the curtain.)

MADDOX

My God, what time is it? Where have all my actors gone?

(gathers himself)

How was your overnight with Mate Proompt? Did the Mate show you how to stir the cubes of brown sugar into your oat meal?

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

The merchant sailors faced many hardships when they were out at sea, but in spite of their many challenges, they always 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? Yes. I'm sure it is. Well, now. That's the show.

(While MADDOX finishes his monologue, the children come out and MADDOX does his best to talk over them. DEDAI holds a pelican figurine in her hands.)

AIDO

No, I didn't!

DEDAI

Yes, you did! You kissed me!

AIDO

No! You're ugly!

DEDAI

You're ugly!

(She sets the figurine on the stage and they both exit.)

MADDOX

(cont. talking over the children)

Thank you all for joining us this evening. Please be courteous of the other campers on your way out. Watch your step, watch your step.

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

Until next Tuesday, Pilgrim. Until next Tuesday.

(Exit MADDOX. Auditorium lights. END)