



The Flying Dutchman

a tragedy in five acts

by Christian Lanciai (1996)

*after Captain Frederick Marryat,
dramatization of his "The Phantom Ship" (1839).*

Dramatis personae:

Philip van der Decken
His mother
His father, William van der Decken
Doctor Poots
Amine, his daughter
Father Seysen, Jesuit
Pilot Schriften
Captain Kloots
Mynheer Stroom, supercargo
Hillebrandt, first mate on *Ter Schelling*
Sailors on *Ter Schelling*
Johannes, a playful bear

Mynheer van der Uyl
Three ship-owners
Captain Tromp
First mate Struys
Captain Groots, shipwrecked
An entire shipwrecked crew
Father Mateo, Portuguese Jesuit
The doctor
Captain Barentz
First mate Krantz
A Boer
Admiral Rymeland
The governor of Batavia
A barber-surgeon
The Portuguese Commandant at Tidore
His servant Pedro
Another captain (*on the way to Goa*)
Inquisitors
A knight at Goa
The captain of *Nostra Señora da Monte*
An old sailor
Also indispensable sailors on all ships,
and (in Goa) numerous monks and priests, inquisitors, soldiers and public.

The Flying Dutchman

Act I scene 1. Antwerp.

Inside an old noble merchant's house in decline.

Philip van der Decken, 19 years, and his ailing mother, about 40, looking much older.

Mother For the last time, my son, don't go to sea!

Philip Mother, you don't know what you are asking. You can't demand of me that I should stay at home moulding on land and slowly smother in this rotten society of ignobility which transforms all its victims to petty tradesmen!

Mother Think of your old mother! I will die if you go to sea!

Philip I always thought of you first, mother. Don't you want me once to support you? Don't you want something to become of me? Why have you always kept me isolated here at home?

Mother For your own sake, my son, and for your father's sake.

Philip When will you at last tell me the truth? When will I at last know what's in that locked up room, which you never allowed anyone into and not even yourself?

Mother My son, it was there I last time saw your father.
(*She has a terrible attack coughing blood.*)

Philip Mother, what is this? You are ill! I will immediately send for a doctor!
(*runs up*)

Mother No, my son, don't do that. It will pass, unless it is – death.

Philip What are you saying, mother?

Mother Doctor Poots has always cheated us and is only after our money. He wants to buy our house because he thinks your father's treasure is in here in the locked room. People have so many ideas.

Philip What's in the locked room?

Mother Nothing.

Philip Then why is it locked?

Mother For protection against the truth! (*has another attack with more blood. Philip claps her gently and stays tenderly with her.*)

Philip Shouldn't you go to bed?

Mother It is time now. I have suffered enough. I have done all I could to protect us against your father's fate, but now you also want to go to sea like him. All I lived for was in vain.

Philip What have you in all these years concealed from me, mother? What terrible secrets are you carrying?

Mother Your father isn't dead, Philip.

Philip What are you saying, mother? But he was shipwrecked twenty years ago! He has never come back! How can he then live?

Mother He doesn't live either.

Philip (on his knees) Mother, why all these mystifications?

Mother He was not one of us. He was a Dutchman from Amsterdam. The Dutch are not Catholics. They don't care about religion and do as they like. Your father was licentiousness itself. He did exactly as he liked.

Philip What did he do, mother? Did he do something terrible?

Mother Yes, he did something unspeakably terrible.

Philip Is it not time for me to at last learn something about the truth?

Mother If you can bear it. I never could myself. But it doesn't matter now when I am about to die.

Philip (concerned) You must not say so, mother.

Mother I say it, since that's how it is. I will tell you how it was when your father came home.

He had gone for his third journey to India. That journey would have made his fortune, for he had succeeded in buying his own ship, and he knew how to make a great profit. But such a journey takes eighteen months, and that's a long time for a sailor's wife to wait ashore. It gets really long during winter, when darkness paralyzes all life with terror and cold, and when the storms never cease to roughly scourge us people by the coast. Such a black horrid evening, with the winds howling and screaming in every corner, I was (*goes to the sealed room*) inside this room. I have

never been inside since then. (*opens it and enters*) There is a small altar with the Madonna, and I was as usual kneeling in prayer before it (*goes down on her knees in prayer before the altar*) when the storm started to increase considerably, whizzing almost threateningly. (*The storm starts whizzing.*) I didn't care. It was as usual, or so I pretended. The new threatening character, as if to visit me personally to scare me, I tried to shrug off my shoulders. What's new with a storm? The terror is always the same. But suddenly the windows were thrown open (*the windows are suddenly thrown open by the howling storm*) and the wind came bursting in with the storm in the room. I rose up to close the windows, when a dark and ominous being came through the window dripping wet. (*This happens.*) I immediately recognized him. But he was harrowed, terribly harrowed. It was your father. (*wants to hurry to him to embrace him.*)

Father Don't touch me! For I am not of this world! This one and only visit was granted me, my wife, only to let you know what has happened.

Mother William!

Father Catherine! Compose yourself!

Mother (embracing him with fervour) You are cold like an iceberg! But nothing can cool down a wife's true love! William! Speak to me!

Father I warned you. Now it's too late. You will never more be well after this. When our son has grown up and even he decides to go to sea against your will, then your moment is come. Then I will come back to fetch you. Then you will lose both me and your son. But until then through seventeen years you will drag yourself through a bitter life of illness and suffering.

Mother William! How could you be so cruel!

Father The cruelty is not mine and least of all by choice. It's destiny, the always unjust destiny! Listen now to what happened to me.

You know I was a man who never could give up. The harder the trials I was subject to, the crueller the tricks that destiny played on me, the firmer and fiercer was my resistance. That's how it was by the Cape of Good Hope. I was on my way home with arts and gems, incredible ebony masterpieces and jade, pearls and gold, but the storms at the Cape would not let me by. We struggled for three weeks, and several men went under. The higher I swore and pulled my sails and chew my rudder and held out. But the entire crew wanted to turn back and wait for calmer weather. "Let the weather be twice as horrid!" I swore. "It shall never stop me! For my wife is waiting for me with our little son, who isn't even two years old!"

Then there was a pilot, who told me like a worm: "You'll never get home any more." He said it so maliciously, which turned me totally infernal from rage. He was frightened by my wild anger and told the crew: "Bind him! He is mad! We will all perish if he has his way!"

Then I grabbed him in his collar, pulled him up and hit him wildly, like this, again and again! And the wedding ring on my finger, with a rare large diamond from the Cape, tore asunder his cheeks. Then I threw him away from me so violently, that he rolled over board.

(calmer) That was not my intention. Then I realized I had gone too far. The crew assembled threateningly around me, but they were struck with fear. "Did you hear the last words of the pilot, captain?" my mate asked. "Now we will never get home any more!"

"Damn me if we do!" I cried. "You sail with me, or you follow the pilot! You go down with me into hell, or you go under! Do you understand? You have no choice! Me or hell! Me or destruction! For I never give up! May I be damned, but I can never give up!"

(calmer) And heaven heard me. We are still sailing out there. We are still struggling with the storms, me and my sailors. We hover between heaven and earth, between sea and land, between life and death, but we never come through, neither to any harbour or any coast, neither to any dead calm or any living thing! We are all dead long ago, but we can never die! We are doomed forever by our own obstinacy to fight our way through the vacuum of the eye of the storm! We are lost and can never be saved!

Mother O my husband! What kind of a phantom are you! Why then have you come here?

Father There is only one hope. I had time to write a last letter before I lost all touch with reality. Here is the letter. Read it, and maybe one day in spite of all I can be released from my own curse. You lose everything except hope. Even for the deepest fallen in the extreme darkness of hell there is still some hope left, if not actual then at least as an illusion. *(lays the letter on the table and leaves the same way he entered while the storm thunders and the windows hammer like mad.)*

Mother My husband! Why did you come home if only to bring your curse! Come back! I can't stand it! *(hurries after him to the window. Thunder, lightning and explosion. She is thrown back and struck down to the floor, where she lies unmoving.)*

(Rises slowly.) Illness, misery and death is all that now remains for me – until my son grows up and goes to sea like his father and becomes as damned as he! What kind of life is this turning us thus to such monsters of madness and self-indulgence? O God, how could you judge any man so hard! *(faints)*

Philip Mother! Mother! *(hurries forth)* Don't leave me, mother! I will stay at home! I will take care of you!

Mother (awakes wearied, points at the window) There on the table the letter is still lying unopened. I have never read it. I never had the courage. Read it, my son, and go to sea and fulfil your father's curse and bitter destiny! *(coughs blood again affluently and dies.)*

Philip Mother! *(embraces her convulsively)* Mother! Forgive me! Come back! Don't leave me! Not now! *(bursts out in tears)* Forgive me! *(cries bitterly)*

The letter. Only the letter can save us now. What kind of an accursed secret is that which comes by mail from the other side of the grave? No, I can't touch such a dangerous message! It's not for me! It was for my mother, and she is dead! Should I then destroy it unopened? Wouldn't that be the very summit of cowardice – to refuse

to accept an honest letter only because the sender is deceased? Wouldn't that be some supreme heartlessness? (*tears out the letter*)

Father's voice My beloved Catherine, Hell is howling around me now and forever if not... if not you or my son will come to share my fate. For alone I could never turn back or admit my mistake. Only one whom I loved, you or my son, can make me humble myself to what's human again. Come and search for me if you dare! Then you really love me, and then I will pity humanity and be saved.

Philip Father! You have called me! I will come! I am yours already!

Father (rumbling in the background) You will never find me. It's too late.

Philip It's never too late! The ocean storms will lead me on the right way! One day we will be united!

Father You don't know what you are asking for.

Philip Love will save us both!

(*It blows and storms infernally. Some sudden knocks on the gate.*)

Philip What was that? (*more knocks*)

It's reality knocking on my door. Welcome, reality! (*leaves the room, closes the doors and opens to the guest.*) Doctor Poots!

Poots I beg your pardon for disturbing! I only wanted to inform myself of Mrs. Van der Decken's condition this unpleasant evening. As you know, I always worried about her, and for some reason more than ever tonight.

Philip (blankly) Unfortunately she has just passed away.

Poots Is it true? My poor son! I really am sorry! How did it happen?

Philip She had two great haemorrhages and coughed a lot of blood. I was with her all the time.

Poots (entering, examining the body) Without calling a doctor?

Philip She didn't want to.

Poots Poor thing! She has worn herself unto death. You haven't had an easy life, you two. But don't worry, my son. We shall take care of the funeral. I will contact the priest immediately. And after the funeral it is my highest wish that you come to us to dinner.

Philip Us?

Poots Me and my young daughter.

Philip I didn't know you had one.

Poots She was always safe at home.

Philip Doctor Poots, I am very grateful for your help. It means everything to me at this moment.

Poots I thought so. It's my pleasure and duty, my son. (*They shake hands. Poots starts handling the body.*)

Scene 2. The home of a complacent burgher.

(Philip at dinner with Poots.)

Poots Cheers, my friend! *(raising his glass.)*

Philip *(answers the toast but without sincerity)*

Poots You are on your guard against me, my young friend van der Decken, and you have reason to be, as you only got to know me as a greedy miser, but we have more things in common than you think.

Philip Why have you invited me for dinner, doctor Poots? I was never before admitted to your house.

Poots Don't you wonder why?

Philip That's what I actually wonder.

Poots You wonder, why you never were invited before? No one was ever admitted here. My house has always been closed to outsiders. But you are now like a son in the family.

Philip The table is laid for a third person.

Poots I wondered just when you would come to that. Here is the answer to all your questions. *(rings a small bell.)*

(Enter Amine, doctor Poots' beautiful daughter.)

Poots *(rising)* May I have the pleasure of presenting you to each other. This is my daughter Amine Poots, Philip van der Decken.

Philip *(rises and greets her shyly but with sincerity)* As I told you, doctor, I did not know you had a daughter.

Poots Few know about it, and it has always been intentional.

Amine *(takes a seat by the table)* I regret the loss of your mother, Philip van der Decken.

Philip Where is *your* mother?

Poots She died abroad.

Philip Then we are in the same boat, miss Amine.

Poots Not quite yet.

Amine I still have my father.

Poots And for long, I hope.

Philip Abroad, you said? So you have been abroad, doctor Poots?

Poots More than you think. I was brought up there. Amine is born there.

Philip May I ask in which country?

Poots Zanzibar.

Philip That sounds exotic.

Poots Amine's mother was muslim. She was the daughter of an Arabian prince.

Philip Are you then muslims?

Poots A relevant question.

Amine No, we are Catholics.

Poots But by my up-bringing with an Arabian doctor I had to be a muslim.

Amine Father's only religion is in fact money.

Poots I have had a hard life, van der Decken. As a cabin boy I was sold as a slave by Moorish pirates when they had taken our ship and murdered most of us on

board. My only chance to survive was to play the game. As a slave with a doctor I had to become a muslim if I ever would wish to be free again. As a muslim I was free and became a doctor and made a certain fortune. The proof you see here. (*indicates Amine*) She is everything I have. I managed to give her a protected education, but if Antwerp ever would learn about our muslim background and that Amine's mother was an Arabian princess the fanatics would burn our house and have us banished. I trust your silence, Philip van der Decken.

Philip You can safely do so.

Poots But what will you do now when your mother is gone?

Philip I intend to fulfil my plans and go to sea.

Poots Didn't she leave enough money for you to be able to stay at home?

Philip What business is that of yours, doctor Poots?

Poots I am sorry, but if you go to sea, who will then take care of your house?

Philip No one.

Poots Then it will be plundered.

Philip Have you a better suggestion?

Poots Let it. To us.

Philip But you already have a house.

Poots Not Amine.

Philip What do you mean?

Poots Philip, my daughter is growing up. We know we can trust you. There is no better man in Antwerp for my daughter than you. Are you interested?

Philip But I am going to sea.

Poots The more faithful she will be as your wife.

Philip Doctor Poots, this comes somewhat suddenly.

Poots You are yourself in a hurry to get out to sea. Tell me what you think and feel.

Philip Miss Amine, I could never say no to you.

Amine If you so soon are leaving for the sea, that could be an advantage in our young relationship.

Poots You hear. She is not against it. She could look after your house. It's about killing two birds with one stone. You have lost your mother and have no one who can look after your house while you are away. I have a dangerously beautiful daughter in a dangerous age. She needs a man who can protect her dangerous past. You are like sent to us from above.

Philip Miss Amine, could you love me as I love you?

Amine More!

Philip That settles it.

Poots So tell me now what you inherited.

Philip A considerable fortune. Amine will never want in my house.

Poots What else? There has been much talk in town about the sealed room.

Philip It's not sealed anymore.

Poots Why was it sealed?

Philip My mother was visited there by my father's ghost when he was dead. After that she never again wanted to enter the room.

Poots So he is really dead? His ship disappeared but was never found. His death has never actually been proved.

Philip If he visits my mother as a ghost so that she never again wants to see the room in which he appeared, then he must be dead, doctor Poots.

Poots But rumour has whispered something about a letter which he left with her. Ghosts don't write letters to mortals, or do they, Philip van der Decken?

Philip What do you know about the letter?

Poots So the letter exists?

Philip Doctor Poots, you are trespassing into the most sacred secrets of my family. You can go no further.

Poots (wipes his chin with the napkin) Very well. Let's concentrate on the wedding. In due time everything will be revealed.

Philip Be content with that, doctor Poots.

Amine Father has really been carried too far by his curiosity. Master Philip, I suggest that we wait with our marriage until you have come home from your first voyage, so that you may try me and see if I will be fit enough for a sailor's wife and if you can trust me.

Philip I will gladly take you on trial, Miss Amine.

Poots Betrothal, then?

Philip It looks like it, doctor Poots. *(empties his glass)* Neither I nor Amine seem to have any objection.

Amine I think we understand each other.

Philip That's how I feel too.

Poots (rising and refilling the glasses) Betrothal, then! My sincerest toast to this, my two beloved children!

(Philip answers the toast more sincerely this time. Amine also partake but only by sipping.)

Amine Father, may I speak privately with Philip?

Poots Of course, my dear. You are engaged now. It's not more than right, that you now get to know each other. Pardon me, Philip! *(retires discreetly and closes the door)*

Philip Can you really love me, Amine?

Amine Yes, if you tell me everything.

Philip What do you suspect?

Amine That you are in for a great pain and a terrible destiny.

Philip It's really only a duty.

Amine Then I think that duty is the worst possible.

Philip You almost read me like an open book.

Amine But I can't make out the letters. I can only surmise the contents.

Philip I can't myself understand my task or my destiny yet. I only know that I must go to sea to search for my father somewhere around the seven seas, probably in the storms around the Cape of Good Hope.

Amine You said he was dead.

Philip He is dead, but he lives. That's the problem.

Amine Then I might really be the right person to help you. My mother gave me one single thing for an inheritance. She taught me necromancy.

Philip Does it work?

Amine Only if it has to. What kind of a letter was it, Philip?

Philip A terrible letter. A horrible letter from the other side of the grave.

Amine Let me read it.

Philip No, never, Amine. My mother never again found peace after that letter. I want to spare you that suffering.

Amine But I want to share everything with you.

Philip Even my father's curse, Amine, which none of us has deserved? Only I can save him, Amine, for my mother is dead. You can never save him. Only my mother and I could have done it.

Amine How and from what?

Philip From his doom to forever rage like a mad phantom between life and death without ever finding harbour or peace in neither this life nor the next one.

Amine So he is an unblest spirit, a demon?

Philip Something like that.

Amine Then perhaps I can help him anyway. With the art of necromancy I had many other arts as well from my mother, among them the art of contacting spirits.

Philip Has God himself sent you in my way?

Amine So it seems. Or your mother.

Philip It does seem so indeed. (*A call at the door. You hear doctor Poots open and say: "Come in! Come in!"*)

Philip Who is it?

Amine A most unwelcome guest in this moment.

Philip You react strongly. Who can so disturb you, Amine?

Amine It's that Jesuit. (*Poots suddenly enters with father Seysen.*)

Poots Sorry to disturb you, my children, but you must absolutely meet father Seysen, our Jesuit pastor.

Seysen (all in black, meagre and ominous) I heard that you were engaged. I beg to congratulate. But isn't it a bit fast on your mother's departure, Philip van der Decken?

Philip (with Amine's hand under his arm) On the contrary. My mother would have wished it so. Will you marry us, father Seysen?

Seysen I will be pleased to, but not so fast. The banns of marriage will take a few weeks. And first of all Miss Amine must be baptized and accepted in the only true faith.

Philip My ship will sail in three months at the earliest. We have all the time we need.

Poots My dear Amine, this comes as a particularly happy surprise! Have you really already decided for a wedding?

Amine Yes, father, we will gladly be married, after all the necessary formalities.

Seysen My child, you must be baptized first of all.

Amine I am aware of that.

Seysen (to Poots) She agrees. *(to all)* Then it's settled. I won't disturb you any more. But I will return to carefully guide young Miss Amine into our one and only sanctifying church. Thank you for now, and just don't rush too fast, my children! *(removes himself)*

Poots (after almost having driven him out) That black frock gets on my nerves!

Philip Has he any catch on you?

Poots He always watched me like a vulture his prey.

Philip Is it true?

Poots He views us as the only heathens of the city, although I am formally a Catholic. But I brought up my daughter as a free and independently thinking woman, and she always despised me for compromising and kissing the cross. But I had to. Or else I would never have been allowed to practice.

Amine My mother's blood has never been denied in me, Philip. I will never be a Catholic.

Philip Not even for my sake?

Amine Let my body become catholic then, but never my soul.

Poots Do you now understand my rotten position, Amine? You may not get married if you are not a Catholic! I was not allowed to work unless I became one!

Amine I understand you, father. The whole church is disgraced by general hypocrisy.

Poots Hush! Never say that aloud again! The church has the longest ears in the world. If father Seysen overheard it we would both be burned at the stake!

Amine No, only me, father, for I stand for my views, but you don't.

Poots Say whatever you want, as long as you become Catholic! *(exit again.)*

Philip (takes both her hands to his breast) Will you marry me, Amine?

Amine Yes, Philip.

Philip Then you shall also be married to my curse.

Amine And your father's. And we shall undo it.

Philip Do you think we can make it?

Amine Philip, no one can manage anything alone in the long run. But if you are two you can manage anything.

Philip I believe in that more than in father Seysen's catholic church.

Amine Then you are of the right religion, Philip.

(They kiss.)

(Another call on the door. At once lights are dimmed, and it gets colder and darker. Philip and Amine say nothing but look at each other, as if they both felt the same threat.)

Poots Yes, he is here. You have come to the right place.

Philip It must be for me. But who could know that I was here?

Poots Philip, sorry for disturbing again, but you are visited.

Philip By whom?

Poots I really don't know. He says he is pilot on your ship.

Schriften (entering impertinently, a small abominable one-eyed sailor with a large golden ring in one ear and something of death about him.) He-he-he! (constantly giggling) Philip van der Decken, I presume? (stretches forth a cold white hand)

Philip (accepts it with some aversion) With whom have I the honour?

Schriften I am pilot on Ter Schelling, the ship we shall sail on together! He-he! I come to notify you, that you are accepted on board as second mate. But captain Kloots wants to see you in Amsterdam for signing the contract. The contract with death, he-he!

Philip What do you mean, Sir?

Schriften Schriften is my name. Pilot Schriften. I only mean, that wouldn't it be better for you to stay at home, when you are to get married and everything? (meaningly indicating Amine and giggling abominably)

Philip Since when have you so suddenly become my familiar adviser?

Schriften I only think of what's best for you! Stay home, Philip, before it's too late! He-he!

Amine You seem to have survived many shipwrecks yourself, pilot Schriften.

Schriften Too many.

Amine Then perhaps Philip is in good hands if he sails with you.

Schriften The best possible, he-he! You can't guess how well protected he is through me! But what is his business out there on the sea? There are only darkness and storms and illness and death and what's worse, he-he!

Philip Thanks for your warning, pilot Schriften. You have delivered your message. You may leave now. Tell captain Kloots that I will come.

*Schriften (bowing sardonically) Welcome to the great shipwreck, he-he!
(leaves as suddenly as he entered. The warm light returns.)*

Philip Phew! (shrugs, as if to shake off something nasty.)

Poots Is that the kind of cadavers you are going to sail with, Philip? Then I am almost inclined to agree with him that you should rather stay at home.

Philip What was your impressions of that pilot, Amine?

Amine He was not of this world.

Poots No, he seemed rather to come directly out of the keel-son of some sunken ship.

Philip An extra challenge to my enterprise. I can't back down now.

Amine No, you can't Philip.

Poots But it's against all reason.

Philip Over certain domains, doctor Poots, reason has no power, as they demand higher efforts than only human ones. I will go to Amsterdam tomorrow.

Poots Then we can publish the banns of marriage before then.

Philip (embracing Amine) Yes, nothing can impede our marriage, Amine, not even a devil from beyond the grave.

Poots (satisfied, while Philip and Amine embrace) At least there is reason over this domain of love!

Scene 3. A harbour office in Amsterdam.

Captain Kloots (busy writing, when there is a knock) Enter!

Philip (enters)

Kloots Welcome, Philip van der Decken. All your papers are ready, and it's an honour for us to have you on board the *Ter Schelling*. You couldn't have had a better recommendation than your father's almost legendary good reputation. He was one of the best sailors on the seven seas.

Philip Do you know anything about him?

Kloots Only that he disappeared with men and all outside the Cape of Good Hope seventeen years ago. Not a trace was ever found of his ship, and no survivor ever appeared to tell the tale. Everything else is legends.

Philip What kind of legends?

Kloots You will hear them all and everywhere as long as you sail on the seven seas until you are fed up with them, and still you will want to hear more.

Philip And have you obtained any new information about the pilot?

Kloots By your express request we have done some research about him. We know nothing of him except that he is indispensable. He knows everything about all the most dangerous waters and fairways in the world. Therefore we can't do without him.

Philip So you know nothing about his background?

Kloots Only that he survived many shipwrecks. Most sailors don't survive the first, after the second the chances are fifty/fifty, but our pilot breaks all records.

Philip Could he have sailed with my father?

Kloots It's impossible to say, since he doesn't know his own age, but it's not impossible, maybe even probable. You must ask him yourself.

Philip That's the most remarkable thing about him. He could be both an old tough and well preserved sixty-year old sailor and a young severely knocked about thirty-year old buccaneer.

Kloots There is one more thing you should know about him. Every ship he sailed with has testified to the same experience. He has a strange power over any crew. All sailors obey and follow him blindly although they fear him and feel the same disgust let alone abhorrence of him as you and me. *(pause)* Do you understand? Who makes him his enemy gets the crew as enemies as well. Yet he never instigated any mutiny.

Philip I understand. Have you any idea how he can have such a spooky and powerful influence?

Kloots (almost whispering) They say he can get the better of the Flying Dutchman.

Philip The Flying Dutchman?

Kloots The phantom ship.

Philip So we have to get into the subject of legends anyway. What do you know about the Flying Dutchman?

Kloots (normal again, but looking away) Really nothing. The legend says, that any ship that has an encounter with the Flying Dutchman must perish.

Philip But if all ships meeting with the Flying Dutchman founder, how can anyone know anything about the phenomenon? There must be some survivors?

Kloots Yes, even in the worst shipwrecks there is usually one or two survivors, who can tell about what happened.

Philip So you can meet the Flying Dutchman and survive even if the shipwreck is absolute?

Kloots Evidently.

Philip Could Schriften be such a person?

Kloots Philip van der Decken, you are newly married and own a fortune. No one understands why you go to sea. That gives rise to rumours. The rumour says, that your father was the Flying Dutchman, and that you wish to search for him to save him. If there is any truth to this rumour, you couldn't find a better pilot than Schriften.

Philip Is he also an expert on the Flying Dutchman besides all the world's most risky waters?

Kloots Therefore he holds any crew in his hands. Therefore he is dangerous. Therefore we must keep ourselves on good standing with him.

Philip I understand. Thank you, captain Kloots.

Kloots We sail in eight days. You can still change your mind and stay at home. I would advise you to do so.

Philip Captain Kloots, my wife and I are perfectly agreed on this matter. I must to sea and follow my destiny.

Kloots What do you expect to find? What are you getting away from?

Philip Certainty. I want to cure all uncertainty.

Kloots About what?

Philip My father's fate. I must know what happened to him.

Kloots And you think you can find that out?

Philip I am certain of it.

Kloots Philip van der Decken, when you start pulling threads to a mystery, you end up with thousands more. They will gradually drag you down into a bog, which is the eternal and limitless vastness of the sea. You will learn this by yourself eventually from the sea itself. It's your own funeral. I don't think you will ever learn anything about your father. If you ever could, it would possibly be by such wreckage as Schriften. But believe me. Your father is dead. You will only find him at the bottom of the sea. The Flying Dutchman is just a legend.

Philip That's what I have to find out.

Kloots As I said, it's your funeral, and at sea the only churchyard admits only total disappearance with never any grave. *(returns to his work)* Eight days, Philip van der Decken. If you don't show up, you have my sincerest blessings.

Philip (rising) Thanks, captain. I will show up. *(leaves. Captain Kloots carries on his work without comments.)*

Act II scene 1. On board the *Ter Schelling*.

Hillebrandt, first mate, stands by the rail watching (the audience) with his spy-glass.

Captain Kloots joins him.

Kloots (removes his hat, dries his front) What do you think, Hillebrandt?

Hillebrandt Not a cloud in the sky, captain.

Kloots And not a breath of wind in the sails. I don't like this. Any weather is welcome, just not dead calm! *(angry voices in the background)*

Hillebrandt Still we have storms enough on board.

Kloots I wish someone would be sensible enough to throw that supercargo over board!

Hillebrandt No one dares.

Stroom (in the background, with a shrill and angry voice) Captain, I must protest! Now it's happened again! All my documents have been upset in total disorder! *(Appears, a ridiculous man dressed as a land-lubber with an absurdly long wig, which is awry)* Is this a ship, or is it a circus?

Kloots You make it a circus, mynheer Stroom.

Stroom Me? Are you accusing me? The only proper and orderly man on board? When all chaos emanates from your cabin and that baboon Johannes, who alone is responsible for all sabotage on board!

Kloots He is no baboon, mynheer Stroom.

Stroom But he is disorderly! *(Philip joins them.)*

Kloots (to Philip, like to a man you can trust) What has happened now, second mate?

Philip Johannes got scent of the honey in mynheer Stroom's cabin and broke in.

Kloots So now mynheer Stroom has all his documents smeared with honey?

Stroom It's a scandal! Never have I been so humiliated! I shall write to the trading company and complain!

Kloots You have already done so in a number of documents. But they are now obviously all smeared together by your own honey. With what will you now write your new lamentations? Ink or honey?

Stroom I protest against this shameful treatment!

Kloots Yes, you have already done so a number of times actually daily ever since we left Amsterdam. But if you protest against the natural life at sea, why did you not then remain ashore?

Stroom I am paid to guard the interests of the trading company! But I am not paid to be forced to struggle with dreadful monsters!

Kloots All the others on board find Johannes the most pleasant possible of all comrades. Only you call him baboon and monster. No wonder he doesn't like you.

Stroom He is a security risk to everyone on board! He sabotages the whole journey! He is a pest and a nuisance!

Kloots (calmly) Mynheer Stroom, you are hysterical.

Philip Here is Johannes.

Stroom (panicking immediately) Help! Save me! (runs away when Johannes, a playful bear, shows on stage. The sailors gather around Johannes.)

Sailor 1 Right so! Get at him, Johannes!

Sailor 2 Tear asunder all his ridiculous wigs!

Sailor 3 How can a supercargo be so stupid as to bring honey into his cabin with a bear on board!

Sailor 4 Dance for us, Johannes!

(A sailor brings a concertina and starts playing. Johannes starts dancing awkwardly on his hind legs, as bears do.)

Sailor 1 More! More!

Sailor 2 Let's make Johannes our supercargo!

Sailor 3 No, let's make him captain!

Sailor 4 All accidents on board come from the supercargo, but nothing can really happen to us, since we have Johannes on board!

(The sailors are having a good time with jokes and a party, but Hillebrandt continues watching the horizon with his spy-glass.)

Hillebrandt Captain, I see a cloud.

Kloots Where?

Hillebrandt And it's not a cloud that just disappears. *(offers the spy-glass to the captain)*

Kloots That's the danger with this static weather on these latitudes. It always means the opposite coming up. And if then a small cloud appears on the horizon just hanging there and refusing to go away, then there will be no minor storm.

Philip Is it serious, captain?

Kloots It can't be more serious.

Schriften (appearing like from nowhere) Yes, it can always be even more serious, he-he! *(giggles)*

Kloots Where is the supercargo, pilot?

Schriften He has locked himself up in his cabin. He will probably stay there now for a week until he gets his documents in order again. Isn't it a beautiful cloud, Philip van der Decken?

Philip Why do you say so?

Schriften Because I know what the cloud means, he-he! *(giggles)*

Kloots Hillebrandt, what do you think about the cloud?

Hillebrandt We can do nothing until it starts blowing. We can only lie here and wait for the worst.

Kloots Strange that we haven't sighted one of the other ships since we left the Cape.

Hillebrandt We kept rather close to the coast. We almost foundered. The others perhaps kept further out and were blown further north.

Kloots It's possible. But I don't like the aspect of that cloud.

Philip It seems to be some fog coming from the east.

Kloots It's worse than that.

Hillebrandt And the sun will soon be gone.

Sailor 1 A ship! A ship!

Hillebrandt Where?

Sailor 1 Over there! (*points straight out to the audience*)

Philip It's really a ship.

Hillebrandt It can hardly be discerned.

Kloots It should be heading towards us.

Hillebrandt If we are lucky we will have an encounter just before dark.

Kloots It comes with the cloud.

Schriften (*slyly*) It comes with the wind! It comes with the darkness! It comes with the storm!

Kloots What nationality?

Hillebrandt (*in his spy-glass*) We can't see yet. It's rigged very hard. They seem to be in trouble, as if they struggled with difficult seas.

Kloots But it's dead calm.

Hillebrandt Not over there. And it is coming here.

Schriften We are stuck. We can't get away.

Philip Are they pirates?

Schriften No, Philip van der Decken. It's better than that.

Hillebrandt It's coming on fast.

Kloots Can you see what kind of sails?

Hillebrandt It pitches, heaves and sets very heavily. Topsails and main-yards are furled, and the yards point to the wind; she has no sail set, but a close-reefed fore-sail, a storm stay-sail, and trysail abaft, but they make a hell of a speed.

Philip But how could there be storm out there so close to us and dead calm here?

Schriften Philip van der Decken is naïve.

Kloots No, here is something out of the ordinary. There is something wrong with the weather and the sea, which don't behave as they should.

Schriften (*slyly*) Everything has its explanation, he-he! (*giggles*)

Kloots Have you seen this phenomenon before, pilot Schriften?

Schriften No, but I know what it means.

Hillebrandt What does it mean?

Schriften You shall see.

Hillebrandt (*in his glass*) I can now see the whole ship. The sailors struggle frenetically on board. They are having a hard job.

Philip May I see? (*is given the glass*)

Kloots Why will you not tell us, Schriften, what you know?

Schriften Because it is too late anyway.

Philip They are beating up against the wind.

Hillebrandt Can they do that?

Philip They are bringing the wind on the other tack. And they manage it perfectly.

Hillebrandt They must be very skilful seamen in that case.

Schriften The most skilful in the world.

Kloots Are they English?

Schriften No, they are Dutch.

Kloots Do you know their ship?

Schriften Yes, I know their ship. They turn and sail away and disappear, but after them comes that which is worse.

Hillebrandt You don't mean...

Schriften Yes, I do mean. (*turns to all*) But we have a chance! We didn't have to meet them! (*It suddenly grows dark.*)

Philip (*removes the glass*) Now they are gone. And the sun is down.

Kloots What ship was it, pilot *Schriften*?

Schriften That I will tell you all! No one ever recognizes her! It is like any ship, but if you meet with her in the open sea and decent weather you can recognize her, for then they want to send over a sailor! He then has letters which he wishes to hand over. If it goes that far, everyone on board will know that they all must die!

Hillebrandt (*terrified*) No, not that!

Kloots (*dead calm*) He just fantasizes. (*to Philip*) Sailors' yarns. The man is unaccountable.

Sailor 1 We don't have to be afraid of the Flying Dutchman, since we have Johannes on board!

Sailor 2 Yes! What happened to the music? (*The concertina gets going again.*)

Sailor 4 Dance for us, Johannes! (*Johannes dances.*)

Philip Do you mean, pilot *Schriften*, that we just have seen the Flying Dutchman?

Schriften Can you doubt it? Not I.

Philip And how did you recognize him?

Schriften I if anyone should recognize him.

Hillebrandt (*shocked*) No, it can't be that bad.

Schriften Can't it, mate? Don't you know the symptoms? Now all the sailors just want to forget all about reality! Johannes and the dance and the music are not enough! Soon they will have the gin! (*It starts blowing severely.*)

Kloots Now it begins, just in time for the night. Never did a storm arrive more inopportunistly.

Hillebrandt Can we make it, captain?

Kloots Yes, if everybody helps.

Schriften Captain, after having seen the Flying Dutchman no one is interested in helping any more. Everybody knows what it means. It's the same thing every time. All who see the Flying Dutchman are contaminated by his doom. It's like a deadly disease which immediately fatally affects every member of the crew. Look at your crew! They are already intoxicated by their fate! They laugh and joke and dance and sing, for they know they are doomed to perdition and that there is no way out! And they know that the captain who brought them all to doom is called van der Decken! (*indicates Philip*)

Kloots (*uncertain*) Many are called van der Decken. Philip, what do you think of this? Was it a real ship or a supernatural apparition?

Philip I can't explain the vision in any natural way. But then I am also just on my first voyage.

Schriften No one saw them more clearly than you, Philip van der Decken! Did you not see the terrified, gloomy bleak-faced sailors? Did you not see the great skipper high in the aft with the wild angry stare of his hollow eyes and with only his damnation left in life for all humanity?

Philip No, I saw no faces. It was too far away.

Kloots (wipes his front) Many are the yarns that I laughed at before, but this is to say the least not very funny. *(Suddenly there appears a ghostly light over the scene.)* What is it? Is it the ship again?

Philip No, captain, it's only the moon.

Hillebrandt We know that the storm is coming, but we don't know from where. The wind has already veered round five points and seems to insist on coming from varied directions.

Kloots Philip, go down and get me some schnapps. I can't face this ordeal without it. *(Philip leaves.)*

Hillebrandt More of us could need some clearance of the brain.

Kloots Yes, what we need now is Dutch courage. Hard a-port! Flatten in forward! Brail up the trysail, my men! Be smart! We must clew up the topsails, while the men can get upon the yards. See to it forward, Mr Hillebrandt! *(The sky is cleft by lightning, immediately followed by thunder.)* Now we're in it.

Hillebrandt We are driven south, captain! We can't hold up against the wind!

Kloots If we are driven south, our next stop is hell.

(Thunder and lightning. Booming storm seas and bolting wind machine, with darkness constantly getting thicker.)

Schriften (shrilly) Not even the devil can have mercy on anyone who has met the Flying Dutchman! *(A terrible crash is heard.)*

Hillebrandt Captain! Captain!

Kloots That was the mainmast going by the board! Attention! Now everything happens at lightning speed! Clear the wreckage from deck here! Our lives depend on if we can get the rig into the sea! Or else it will only pull us down into a deeper grave than the Flying Dutchman's!

Schriften That man has no grave. All we do is for nothing.

Kloots Shut up, you demon, and start working!

Schriften (insolently) What for? We are all lost anyway.

Kloots Hillebrandt, do you see this one-eyed demon of a fatalistic pilot? You could think he gets some sort of perverse joy out of an eventual shipwreck. Pilot *Schriften*, is it your intention to put all the shipmen's lives at stake?

Schriften They already know they are all lost.

Kloots Put him in irons, Hillebrandt! The man is a dangerous maniac!

(Hillebrandt approaches Schriften to execute the captain's order, when a terrible roar explodes and it gets completely dark – for the moment. Violent seas and breakage.)

Sailor 1 Captain! Captain!

Sailor 2 He is unconscious.

sailor 3 The sea flung him on the rail.

Sailor 4 Has he broken his skull?

Sailor 3 Almost.

Philip('s voice) How is it, mate?

Hillebrandt I have broken my arm. The compass is ruined. Where is the pilot?

Sailor 1 He went down under deck.

Hillebrandt How is the captain?

Sailor 2 He almost cracked his skull. He is still unconscious. He has at least had a concussion of the brain.

Sailor 3 Now he comes to.

Sailor 4 But he is rather groggy.

Hillebrandt Was the ship struck by lightning?

Philip Almost. You had better go down. I can take the helm. Clear the decks! Get the rig over board!

Hillebrandt That's great, Philip! Carry on, and you save the ship!

Philip I just hope that pilot was swept overboard.

(Schriften appears with the supercargo.)

Schriften Look what I found under deck!

Stroom (shrilly) I protest!

Schriften A scarecrow to challenge the Flying Dutchman and even Satan with!

Sailor 1 And here is the pilot with the booze!

Schriften (shrilly) It is enough for all! We have broken the locks to the liquor store! Let the music play! Where is Johannes?

Sailors (laughing and drinking) Dance, Johannes! Dance for the supercargo! Dance with the supercargo! Pour some liquor into the supercargo, so that he stops howling! Where is the captain and first mate?

One sailor They are both gone to wreckage.

Schriften There is only van der Decken left to run the ship. Wasn't the name of the Flying Dutchman van der Decken? It doesn't by any chance happen to be, Philip van der Decken, that you are his only begotten son and of the same kind of grid? Maybe it's you yourself who are the curse of this ship?

Sailor 1 Shut up, Schriften, and drink with us!

Sailor 2 Dance with the bear!

(Schriften starts to dance mockingly for Philip with a gin jar in his fist. All are laughing at his grotesque performance, which has outdone even the bear.)

Philip (aside) This is going too far.

Schriften No, Philip van der Decken, it can never go too far!

Sailor 3 Give the Flying Dutchman's son something to drink!

Sailor 4 Drink yourself, by golly! It's too late to be sparing now!

Sailor 2 If we anyway are sailing away ourselves we might as well do it gloriously!

Sailor 1 You mean, rather happy and drunk in death than sad and gloomy in life!

Sailor 2 No, rather drowned in the bottle than in the ocean! Ha-ha-ha!

Sailor 3 You mean, if you drown in the bottle you can forget about the sea! Ha-ha-ha!

Sailor 4 We'll end up with our whole ship in a bottle! Ha-ha-ha!

Schriften Whatever you do, don't stop drinking, as long as you can! When we all frisk about in the sea we only get cold drinks!

(The jars are passed around, the sailors drink their fill, while the grotesque dancing continues, but the music grows constantly more unmusical. All laugh rowdily at Schriften and Johannes while they constantly grow more unmanageable.)

Philip (to himself) The sea is calmer here. We must have drifted past the Table Bay and into False Bay. Who was it that said, that blown into False Bay you can only be shipwrecked?

(A deafening crash. All that remains of the rig and the masts collapse in a rubble.)

Various voices We are going down!

Help!

It was a sandbank!

We are in False Bay! We are lost!

(More deafening noise and crashes, mixed with the brawls of drunken sailors and blasphemous oaths. The last light disappears. All is but darkness, howling storm, the roar of the sea with thunder and rumbling without hope or pardon.)

Scene 2. Antwerp. Philip's house.

(Amine sitting and grieving. Doctor Poots tries to comfort her.)

Poots It's no use, my child. All we can do is to give up hope. You must understand that he can't come back any more.

Amine He would never leave me in uncertainty. If he really was dead he would visit me as a ghost and let me know it. As long as he doesn't he must be alive.

Poots It's of no avail, my child. See, here comes the ship-owner mynheer van der Uyl. Have you any news?

Amine Have you heard anything about Philip's ship?

Uyl (dead serious) Bad news, I am afraid. It is now confirmed that *Ter Schelling* has foundered.

Amine No!

Uyl Various jetsam has been found in False Bay east of Cape of Good Hope, where many ships have foundered. The evidence for the shipwreck of *Ter Schelling* is her figurehead, which some Hottentots brought home to their tribe. They also had a bearskin, which only can be traced back to Captain Kloots' of *Ter Schelling* tame dancing Turkish bear. There are no other bears in Africa.

Poots No survivors?

Uyl No, none have manifested themselves from *Ter Schelling*.

Amine But if the bear survived, Philip could have survived.

Uyl The bear didn't survive.

Amine Did the Hottentots take it alive or was it dead?

Uyl We don't know for sure.

Amine There you are! So Philip could still be alive!

Poots Amine, my daughter, no one survived the shipwreck, not even the bear.

Amine If the bear maybe survived so maybe also Philip survived!

Poots (to Uyl) She is hopeless.

Uyl Let's not take her last hope away from her, even if it will remain unfulfilled forever.

Poots Amine, try to get it into your little stupid stubborn head! Philip is not coming back! He is dead! The house and his money are now ours!

Amine Father, it's not proved yet. I will never see you anymore until you have proved that he is dead or that you have accepted that he is alive! Understood?

Poots Take it easy, little girl.

Amine Did you match our marriage just in view of that he could perish at sea, so that you could get hold of his fortune and house by me when he was gone? Was that your planned intrigue?

Poots My daughter, how could anyone foresee his shipwreck at sea?

Amine I repeat my ultimatum. You prove his death or accept his life. Understood?

Uyl I have brought my message. I had better leave.

Amine Out with both of you! I never want to see either of you again!

Poots My daughter, I didn't mean any harm!

Amine Bullshit! Egoism always means harm to others! (*drives them out*) Dirty old men! Vultures! Hyenas! Graveworms! Scorpion muck! (*bursts into tears*)

O Philip! How could you desert me, who trusted you and believed in you! Now I never shall have certainty, and hope, the supreme self-deceit, becomes all that I have left to live for. (*falls sobbing into a divan. Enter Philip slowly from the outside, somewhat aged.*)

Philip Amine! Why are you crying?

Amine (reacts very slowly and carefully) Philip! It's you!

Philip Yes, Amine. It's me.

Amine Why have you come here? To tell me that you are dead?

Philip No, to tell you that I am alive.

Amine But *Ter Schelling* foundered. There were no survivors. They only found the skin of a flayed poor bear.

Philip That bear saved me.

Amine (starts believing what she sees) You mean that you really are alive? It's not just your ghost? (*falls into his arms, and they embrace.*)

Philip Do you believe me now? I found an English ship outside the Cape. They brought me directly to Antwerp. Therefore I was in time before all Dutch news.

Amine It isn't true!

Philip Yes, Amine, it's true. I have come back to you, to our family and to our child!

Amine Philip!

Philip I can't be more alive than I am!

Amine (takes his face between her hands) But you have aged.

Philip The shipwreck was a nightmare. No one made it beside me.

Amine (embracing him again) So you have a bear to thank for your life!

Philip Or else I would have drowned. He was the only member of the crew who was not mortally drunk.

Amine Drunk?

Philip They all drank themselves unaccountable after having seen the Flying Dutchman.

Amine So you met him?

Philip At some distance.

Amine And the shipwreck followed?

Philip As a direct consequence.

Poots (entering disturbing) What kind of a strange man have you let into the house? (*Philip turns around.*) Philip van der Decken! (*terrified by fear.*)

Philip A little aged but alive and richer by a useful experience.

Poots (still paralysed) Well, I say! (*gets life suddenly*) Mynheer van der Uyl! Come back immediately! (*rushes out*)

Amine Good riddance!

Philip At least he hasn't sold your house.

Amine But he sold his own and moved here.

Philip What a knave!

Poots (entering again with Uyl) Look for yourself! Alive and well!

Uyl I can't believe my eyes! Van der Decken! We had information that *Ter Schelling* had foundered with no survivors!

Philip I fear that I am not the only survivor.

Uyl How did it happen? No, don't tell me, wait until tomorrow, and you will meet the company, and you will tell them all! Many want to hear about the end of *Ter Schelling*. Come to our office tomorrow morning.

Philip Will I have a new ship?

Poots So eager to get out there into the storms again, Philip?

Philip I left so much undone. I only had time to begin.

Uyl Have patience, van der Decken! Stay home with your wife for some months first!

Philip I had nothing else in mind.

Uyl See you then tomorrow! Good afternoon! (*leaves with Poots*) Think of the devil... (*exeunt*)

Philip Now we are alone, Amine. (*They embrace again.*)

Amine Will you really leave again so soon?

Philip I must.

Amine But you will tell nothing about your father to the company?

Philip Of course not.

Amine Good. It's your and my secret.

Philip And now I am home on permission. Let's take care of this moment, Amine.

Amine In such a moment there is room for an eternity.

Philip And our moment is long. At least a few months.

Amine Philip! I thought you were dead! I thought it was your ghost! And then you are alive and well without a scratch, just a bit older and worn, but more Philip than ever! This happiness is more than I deserve!

Philip No, Amine. We both deserved it, worked and suffered for it. But it's brief. Let's take care of it. (*They retire.*)

Scene 3. At the company the following day.

A ship-owner So you mean to say, van der Decken, that the storm arrived after a long period of dead calm?

Philip We saw it coming but couldn't understand from where. We were first forced to the south and then into False Bay.

Ship-owner 2 Was then the ship quite unmanoeuvrable?

Philip The mainmast was broken like a match immediately. Then we were lost.

Ship-owner 3 Couldn't the captain do anything in the crisis? Captain Kloots was after all one of the best captains we had.

Philip The captain was flung by a wave so hard against the rail that he might have broken his skull. He was lost and couldn't do anything anymore. And the first mate broke his arm in the same disaster. He could neither give clear orders.

Uyl But wasn't the crew interested in saving the ship?

Philip The crew was then led by a one-eyed pilot called Schriften, who by opening the liquor store lured everyone to give up.

Uyl Just like that?

Philip He had a very bad influence on the crew.

Ship-owner 1 What kind of a man was this pilot Schriften? Does anyone know?

Ship-owner 2 A very experienced pilot with invaluable knowledge of all the most dangerous fairways our company is sailing in.

Ship-owner 1 But this pilot appears to at the same time have had some interest in seeing to it that a ship in crisis foundered. Why?

Ship-owner 2 That is perhaps the mystery in this shipwreck. Pilot Schriften had the highest possible merits and recommendations with an impressive career of rich experience. He was perhaps the best pilot in Holland on the seven seas.

Ship-owner 1 Why did he then worsen the chaos on board the *Ter Schelling*? Have you any idea, Philip van der Decken?

Philip None at all. It's unexplainable. His acting struck me with surprise and fear.

Uyl And you alone survived to tell the tale. Everything really depends on if we believe you or not.

Ship-owner 3 Tell us again about how you were saved.

Philip Alone in the sea I felt a furred animal under me. It was the tamed bear of captain Kloots from Turkey, who could dance. I found and caught his necklace, and he calmly swam ashore with me. On the shore he shrugged and went away, but I fainted on the warm soothing sand. When I woke up there was a Hottentot with the

wig of the supercargo van der Stroom on his head and the bear's skin across his shoulders.

Ship-owner 1 Both these pieces of evidence have been identified, the bearskin and the wig. I don't think there is any reason to doubt van der Decken's tale.

Ship-owner 2 You didn't notice anything special before the storm, no unusual phenomenon, nothing that could have inspired the crew with panicky superstition?

Philip No.

Uyl That's enough. Philip van der Decken, we must believe you. No one contradicts you, and the evidence we have confirm your story. You could possibly doubt pilot Schriften's incredible attitude and way of conduct. No sailor ever contributes to his own shipwreck.

Philip I admit that is the most unexplainable and maybe decisive detail in the shipwreck.

Uyl You mean she could have been saved without him?

Philip His attitude and action was that of a man who enjoyed and even relished sailing all his crew and ship to death, as if it was like a debauchery of a party, which he enjoyed like an orgy. Yes, he turned the wrecking into an orgy. It was monstrous.

Ship-owner 2 There is only one explanation. He must have gone mad.

Philip So said the captain. His last words were the order to put Schriften in irons. O yes, there was one thing more. Before the storm broke out he actually observed that there was something very extraordinary about the weather and the sea, which he could not understand.

Uyl We are satisfied, although it's a difficult loss and tragedy to swallow and really understand. At your own request you shall have a new ship as soon as possible. It will be the *Batavia* sailing in two months. Your rank will be second mate.

Philip What's her destination?

Uyl India.

Philip I accept.

Uyl That pleases us. It's our apprehension, that you most probably have shown great strength and character in a situation in which all others on board completely lost their heads after the accident of the captain and first mate. That's probably also why you alone have survived. Therefore we will show you renewed confidence – but only as second mate.

Philip (bowing) I thank you.

Uyl That is all. You can go. (*Philip goes*)

Well, gentlemen, what do you think?

Ship-owner 1 That man will end up a captain.

Ship-owner 2 Surviving a shipwreck around the Cape is practically impossible.

Ship-owner 3 Shouldn't we have allowed him to be first mate?

Uyl Not yet. He is young. He will have time.

Ship-owner 1 But can you understand this case of the pilot?

Ship-owner 2 With his knowledge and experience, the pilot rather than Philip van der Decken should have survived.

Scene 4. At home.

Amine I am afraid of my father. Ever since Philip came home he has behaved as if it was his life's greatest disappointment that Philip survived *Ter Schelling*. Now Philip is ill in fever, and my father is eager to nurse him.

Poots How is the patient, my dear?

Amine He is better today.

Poots I have here a powder which definitely will bring him out of the crisis. Mix it with a little red wine and give it to Philip, and he will wake up in the morning as a new man.

Amine You are kind, father, to be so concerned over Philip, but I can take care of him myself.

Poots But he is my son-in-law, and I am the best doctor in town. What would then be more natural than that I would show him the best care of my profession?

Amine Give the powder to me, and I will mix it for him.

Poots That's my girl! It's in the best interest of us all that he will be fit in good time for his next voyage.

Amine (mixing the powder in red wine, to herself) Something is wrong. The powder is black but doesn't make the wine muddy but is completely dissolved. I mustn't give Philip this drug.

Poots My daughter, what are you waiting for?

Amine Sorry, I am just tired after waking too much by Philip's side.

Poots Of course. Let me bring up the red wine to him.

Amine (puts swiftly the glass away, pours another and pretends to mix the powder in it) Just a moment, father, and it will be ready. Is it cinnamon?

Poots No, my girl, it's one of my most miracle-working Arabian decoctions.

Amine It sounds dangerous.

Poots It's only dangerous if it is abused. In the secure hand of a doctor it is exclusive beneficial. *(takes the glass and moves upstairs)*

Now then, Philip, soon the crisis will be over! Now you will sleep, and then life begins! *(goes upstairs)*

Amine (takes forth the other glass with the drug) Something makes me suspicious of some mischief. But why would my father wish Philip any harm? He has his own fortune and doesn't need Philip's inheritance. But much often wants more. Could father be so blinded by greed that he actually would wish Philip dead? *(Poots comes down.)*

Poots We are all set now. The medicine is administered. If my diagnosis is correct it will work wonders. But every doctor, even the best one, could sometimes be wrong.

Amine Is he asleep?

Poots No, not yet.

Amine Then I will go up to him and wake. *(goes straight up and forgets the other glass)*

Poots (all alone) Could she suspect anything? Never in my life. The last person a girl could think anything ill of is her father. She is only excited. And when Philip is gone I will be conveniently at hand as the only one who can comfort her. But what is this? *(catches sight of the other glass)* Evidently she poured a dram for herself as well. I could need one myself to calm my nerves. So, Philip! Here's to your final departure! *(empties the glass)* Aaaaaahhh! That was nice! I am sorry, Philip, that you didn't founder on your first voyage, and I have no patience to wait for your second. I want your house and gold now, before my daughter gives birth to your children, for after that I'll never have it! *(pours himself some more wine from the bottle nearby)* You get thirsty from this. But it will pass. Philip will only pass away once, and then it's over. Then I am alone again with my only daughter. *(drinks)* The deuce how you get thirsty and sleepy from this! Maybe I could use a nap. *(lies down in the sofa. Yawns)* Yawn! Who sleeps doesn't sin, said the murderer after having accomplished the perfect murder! *(falls asleep. A bell on the door. Poots doesn't awake. The bell sounds again. Amine comes out.)*

Amine Father, will you answer? *(comes all down)* He doesn't hear. Where is he? What is this? *(sees the empty glass)* He has taken his own drug! But where is he? *(finds him in the sofa. The bell is ringing again.)* Father, wake up! There is someone at the door! *(shakes Poots, who falls down to the floor without awakening)* Heavens! *(The bell again.)* What have I done to deserve this? *(hurries to the door and opens. It's father Seysen.)*

Seysen I am sorry to disturb. I only wanted to hear about the patient's health.

Amine Oh, father Seysen, there has been a terrible accident! Come in!

Seysen What is it? Is the patient dead?

Amine Philip is getting better. But my father...

Seysen (sees the situation) But what has happened?

Amine I was sitting with Philip when you called at the door. When you rang again I came down to see why father didn't open. I saw him lying in the sofa. I came down to try to wake him up. Then he fell unconscious to the floor...

Seysen (has quickly examined him) My lady, your father is dead.

Amine That's what I feared!

Seysen He must suddenly have had a stroke. He was lying in the sofa, you said?

Amine He was not there when I went up. He talked with me then. But when I came down he was lying in the sofa.

Seysen He must have felt tired and gone for a nap. Typical. And wine he has been drinking as well, it seems.

Amine How's that?

Seysen Here is an empty wineglass beside the sofa.

Amine (faints)

Seysen Poor girl! It's been too much for her.

Philip (shows himself) What's the noise down there?

Seysen Philip, how is it with you? You should be in bed! Your father-in-law is dead, and your wife has passed out.

Philip (hurries down) How is she? Amine, wake up! It's me, Philip! *(takes care of her)*

Amine (wakes up) Philip!

Philip Do you need anything?

Amine Ask the priest to come back later.

Philip You heard, father Seysen?

Seysen Yes, but this is most improper. Your father, Amine, died without the extreme unction. I must at least be able to give him a posthumous absolution, although he was no good Catholic.

Philip Father Seysen, show then at least some respect to the deceased's only child and leave when she asks you to!

Seysen As you wish, mynheer. *(leaves, but shuffles the glass with him.)*

Philip Well, Amine, now we are alone. What has happened?

Amine My father tried to murder you.

Philip What are you saying?

Amine He gave me an Arabian powder to mix in your red wine. I did as he told me, but when he wanted to give you the glass I gave him another glass. Then he came down and I went up. While I was sitting by you he emptied the glass with the drug. And he died.

Philip Good heavens! But did he want to murder me?

Amine He was rich, Philip, but wealth makes the wealthy blind. He also wanted your money. He could never forgive you that you didn't founder with the *Ter Schelling*.

Philip And he couldn't wait for my next shipwreck.

Amine There mustn't be any more shipwreck now, Philip, when I am to have a baby.

Philip You can't rule over the sea, Amine. But the first shipwreck is the hardest to survive. We have greater chances in the future.

Amine You must live for me and my child, Philip.

Philip You know that for me nothing is more worth living for. But first we must have the body out of the house. Does he deserve a decent funeral?

Amine He was my father, Philip, if even he might have loved me a bit too much.

Philip You mean he was jealous of me?

Amine He had lived alone with me almost all his life.

Philip He shall have the most decent possible funeral. I had better fetch father Seysen and a doctor, to have it all done correctly.

Amine Yes, now you can fetch him and all the society vultures. Now they can prey on my father.

Philip Don't you like father Seysen?

Amine I can't trust him. My father cursed his intolerance and superstition.

Philip We must need father Seysen to get your father in the ground, though.

Amine But let it be his last service to us. I can't stand his nosing around here.

Philip As you wish, my love. *(embraces and kisses her)*

Amine You suddenly seem quite recovered.

Philip The good effect of that wine which your father gave me transcended all his wildest expectations. *(kisses her)*

Act III scene 1. On board the *Batavia*.

Captain Tromp We have been very lucky with the weather on this journey, number one.

Struys Yes, captain, unbelievably lucky. Everything has been to our favour, and the lucky weather has followed us almost all the time.

Tromp Above all our mission has been successful to transfer two hundred and fifty men to Ceylon and Batavia! And now we have only the home voyage left. In comparison with the distances we have made there is only now a stone-throw home to Amsterdam.

Struys Is it Saint Helena over there?

Tromp That's correct. But I see something over there.

(puts his spy-glass to his eye. Philip comes up.)

Struys Are you better now, Philip van der Decken?

Philip Yes, thanks, first mate. I have never felt better on the whole journey.

Struys Judging from your washed-out appearance in the beginning of the journey one could believe that you expected all the world's disasters to befall us. But we have been lucky all the way.

Philip And nothing could please me more. But what is that over there?

Tromp (removes his spy-glass and gives it to Struys) It's a small boat with a number of strained people on board, probably shipwrecked. They are heading towards us, and we must pick them up.

Struys (watching) Yes, they are obviously shipwrecked.

Tromp Heave to! Make ready for salvage!

A sailor How many are they?

Struys Only one boat with at least seventeen persons, only men.

The sailor Shipwrecked indeed. Then we are also sailing in the stormiest waters of the Atlantic. Saint Helena has no good reputation.

Struys But they are alive. They have survived. As long as there is life there is hope.

Tromp Lay to the lines!

Philip (calling down the rail) Have you strength enough to get on board?

Voice (outside) With salvation in sight you still have strength for anything!

(The shipwrecked come climbing on board.)

Captain Groots (meets the captain of Batavia, reaches forth his hand) Captain Groots of the *Pamir*.

Tromp Welcome on board. This is *Batavia* on the way to Amsterdam.

Groots What luck!

Tromp Have you been drifting around for long?

Groots After two weeks we at last sighted Saint Helena when you showed up. Better a ship on the way home than Saint Helena!

(All the shipwrecked come on board, being greeted and well taken care of, among them the old father Mateo.)

Mateo (greeting the captain) Father Mateo, Portuguese Jesuit from Japan.

Tromp Welcome on board. You have a story to tell, captain Groots. May I offer you my cabin? (*They go down.*)

Philip What is a Portuguese Jesuit from Japan doing among shipwrecked Dutchmen?

Mateo It's a long story, my son. But the worst in all my experience was this last shipwreck.

Philip What happened?

Mateo All my countrymen were killed to the last man in Japan. They would have killed me too if I hadn't given myself over to the Dutch, who also were my enemies but who wouldn't kill me. Instead they sent me out of the country since they meant that I worked against their interests. On the same ship was one of the worst villains that ever impoverished a colony. He was the only one on our ship who went under, as if the meaning of the doom of the Devil ship was that he alone and no one else would be punished.

Philip The Devil ship?

Mateo Yes, what is generally known as the Flying Dutchman.

Philip Have you seen it?

Mateo Yes, three days ago. I have never been so scared in all my life. All bloodthirsty Japanese were nothing to this horrible ghost ship.

Philip What did it look like?

Mateo Don't speak of it! We never saw it.

Philip But you said just now that you had seen it.

Mateo We saw a shadow of it, nothing else. It was extremely unpleasant. It was in the middle of the night with a full moon, and heaven was clear. We carried only topgallant yard, and I went up on deck to enjoy the blindingly beautiful night. You must know, that nothing can be as beautiful as a night in the tropics on the sea with a full moon. Then only two cable lengths from us I saw like a big ball of fog. And we couldn't sail away from it, although we made good speed. It sort of followed us. And then we heard voices from the fog. I immediately alarmed the guard, who alarmed the mate, who woke up the captain. First we thought we were pursued by pirates, but it was completely ordinary seamen. Their voices echoed across the water.

Philip So you heard them but didn't see them?

Mateo Everybody heard them as clear as on board.

(*voices from without*) Keep watch there afore, do you hear?

Ay ay, captain!

We can't see the foot ahead of us in the thick!

Ship on the starboard bow!

Good, strike the bell! (*A bell tolls.*)

Make the gun ready, just in case!

Ay ay, captain!

All clear, captain!

Fire!

(*Boom! The sound of a ship's gun, like a thunder clap.*)

The captain's voice has of course been Philip's father.

The Jesuit falls silent.)

Philip Well, and then?

Mateo That was the worst of it. We heard the gun shot, and in the same moment the fog and the voices and the ship vanished, as if consumed by the air.

Philip So you actually saw the ship?

Mateo We saw faint but clear fog contours of its bulk in the moonlight water.

Philip (to the other shipwrecked) Does the priest speak the truth?

The shipwrecked We all saw the same thing.

Every word is true.

We all heard the gun shot and the voices.

Even the captain.

Everything is true.

Mateo I didn't understand anything but was just scared. Then these gentlemen explained to me that there was a phenomenon called the Flying Dutchman which no one ever could explain or understand but which always brought bad luck.

Philip And then followed the storm?

Mateo No, the ship sprang a leak without a storm. There was no explanation. No one could find or stop the leak, so we had to abandon ship. The president of the Dutch trading-emporium in Japan was already with us in the sloop when he insisted on going back on board to save a coffin with diamonds and pearls and other gems. When he went back on board the ship turned over and suddenly went down. We had to quickly row away from there not to be sucked down with it. We waited in case he would surface again, but he never did.

Philip And he was an awful villain, you said?

Mateo One of the very worst. It was we the Portuguese who discovered the seaway to India, China and Japan. We had an important colony in Japan and converted many to Christianity, when the Dutch came there to share and steal the honour. This president defamed us to the Shogun, so that he started a war of extirpation against us the Portuguese. This led to an extensive civil war in all Japan, for many Japanese were already Catholics. 75,000 men died on both sides, but the Shogun and his pagans prevailed, whereafter four hundred Christians on Japan were persecuted and tortured to death. Responsible for this was first of all the president of the Dutch trading-emporium.

Philip (to the others) Is it true?

One sailor It is true. The president was a rich and cruel miser.

Another But his policy was good for Holland and us Dutchmen. And he became exorbitantly rich.

Philip And then he met the Flying Dutchman, and he immediately lost everything, both his life and money, while you all survived. Isn't it a remarkable justice made by a phantom ship?

Mateo Yes, perhaps you could say so.

Philip Come, my friends! I invite you all to the ship's cargo of Portuguese Port! You can need it all! (*The shipwrecked cheer.*)

Mateo My son, my story seems to make you glad?

Philip You can't imagine how glad. But it's mostly because I will soon now come home and meet my lovely wife.

Mateo There is a typhoid epidemic in Holland.

Philip What are you saying?

Mateo We heard it from Dutch ships by the Cape. I don't mention it to worry you but only to prepare you.

Philip Thanks, father. We can all then need to strengthen us with the blessed catholic portwine of your homeland.

Mateo Are you a Catholic?

Philip Yes, the only Catholic on board.

Mateo You are then not Dutch?

Philip No, but I have my family in Antwerp.

Mateo Parents and brothers and sisters?

Philip No, only a wife and maybe a child.

Mateo God be with your wife in that case, my son. (*lays fatherly his hand on Philip's shoulder as they all go down together.*)

Scene 2. At home.

(*Philip comes home.*)

Voice (from upstairs) Is it the doctor?

Philip (is dismayed, rushes up, is met by father Seysen.)

Seysen Oh, it's you.

Philip What is this, father Seysen? The house in decay, the shutters locked, and where is my wife?

Seysen Be careful, my son. Let's take it easy and go down and talk. Your wife is very ill. A third of the population has perished in this epidemic. I expect the doctor here at any moment.

Philip How is she?

Seysen Her crisis is just culminating.

Philip (almost dares not ask) And the child?

Seysen There the problems started. Your child was stillborn.

Philip And she has been ill since then?

Seysen Collect yourself, my son. But thank heavens that you are back. Did the journey go well?

Philip Almost too well.

Seysen No ghost ship this time?

Philip What do you know about it?

Doctor (enters) Good day, good day. Is this the man?

Philip (rising) Yes.

Doctor Thank goodness you are home. It could save her life. (*to Seysen*) Is she still unconscious?

Seysen Yes.

Doctor I will immediately go up to her. (*goes modestly to his work*)

Seysen Your wife has been rambling much during her illness. She is carrying a heavy burden which has to do with your worries. The problem of your father causes her an extreme suffering.

Philip Who could suffer more than my father?

Seysen So you believe your mother's hallucinations were real? You really believe in a phantom ship?

Philip Father Seysen, coming home together with me I have a Portuguese Jesuit who experienced this ghost ship himself. He will be my guest while I am at home. Can you doubt the words of a Jesuit?

Seysen Yes, until I see and hear him.

Philip I ran home before him to immediately see my wife. He foretold that my wife could be stricken by illness. He should be here any moment. (*enter father Mateo*) Here he is. (*rising*) Welcome, father Mateo. This is your home. You were right. My wife is severely ill. The doctor is with her now. Thanks for preparing me.

Seysen (rising) So you have seen the ghost ship, father Mateo?

Mateo Who are you?

Seysen Father Seysen, the confessor of the family.

Mateo I belong to the Jesuit order. (*They greet each other.*) Yes, I have experienced the ghost ship.

Seysen Do you mean it was of the devil or of God?

Mateo At least was supernatural. There is no doubt about it.

(Doctor returns down from Amine.)

Philip How is it with her?

Doctor She is asleep. She can make the crisis. But take it easy. Don't surprise her, master Philip, but just let her gradually know that you are home. She must not run the risk of any shock.

Philip Thank you, doctor.

Doctor For nothing. I will be back. (*leaves*)

Seysen From what I have heard from the mouth of Mrs. Van der Decken I have reason to believe that the ghost ship is of the devil.

Philip What makes you draw such absurd conclusions?

Seysen Only one thing. All who meet with this phantom ship founder and perish.

Mateo Only one man perished in our crew, and it was the worst crook of all Asia.

Seysen So the ghost ship brought him with her to hell.

Philip Father Seysen, you are jumping to conclusions.

Seysen Philip, we know nothing. It could all be imagination or hallucination. I hope it is, or else it must be of the devil. Christ has nothing to do with damnation and perdition.

Philip Exactly what did you learn from my wife?

Seysen All that you told her.

Philip Which is?

Seysen Your father's visit to your mother. The letter. Your mission. All.

Mateo Excuse me, do I understand this correctly? Is the Flying Dutchman your father, Philip?

Philip Yes, father Mateo. That's the reality I have accepted and which therefore it is my duty to remedy.

Seysen Therefore, father Mateo, Philip feels urged to roam about the seven seas as long as he lives chasing this phantom to end the eternal curse of the phantom, while his wife has to stay home and worry to death and suffer her miscarriages alone.

Mateo I see.

Seysen Is it Christian?

Mateo What would *you* do about it, father Seysen?

Seysen Keep Philip at home with his wife to make a happy family.

Mateo A reasonable and constructive solution.

Philip Should I then ignore and forget all about my father?

Seysen And are you then sure that this cursed ghost ship is your father? How do you think you will ever meet him? How do you expect to help a phantom who can't help himself?

Philip If I can't nobody can.

Seysen Then you must let this ghost ship and its phantoms, whoever they are, go to hell, Philip. Or else you will never find any peace or happiness yourself. You will only end up a living phantom yourself.

Philip Father Seysen, you can't rule over me. I rule myself over my destiny and can only myself decide what is the right thing to do.

Seysen You forget your wife. It's more about her life than your own. She will die without you.

Philip I always come back, and she knows it. She will not die without me.

Seysen It's about your souls, Philip. When her father died I brought with me the glass that he had emptied to analyse what he had had. He was a notorious drug dealer, and he was not a good Christian. Now the glass proved that he had actually only had some red wine, but I know he was a muslim, and he died a pagan without anyone's blessing. Your wife is his daughter, and she could have inherited dangerous arts and thoughts from him. Some of her ramblings pointed in that direction.

Philip (rising, furious) Father Seysen, no one asked you to come to my house. You have always been prying here without anyone's authority. My wife never wanted you here. It's rather your presence here that has made her ill than anything else. Out!

Seysen Philip, you don't know what you are saying.

Philip Get out, or I will throw you out!

Seysen (backing) As you wish. *(leaves)*

Mateo It's never wise to provoke a priest, Philip.

Philip Do you also believe that my father and his afflicted ship and crew are of the devil?

Mateo I didn't know it was your father.

Philip Answer my question!

Mateo I can't answer it. I only know what I experienced for myself, and however supernatural it was I could neither ascribe it to God or to the devil. But it certainly wasn't of Christ.

Philip You may stay in my house, father Mateo, on condition that you never bring on any superstitious talk about the devil.

Mateo I will not bring on any talk of the devil.

Philip To me all those who fear the devil and who with the devil for an excuse murder so called witches and heretics are nothing else than godless devils themselves! And I refuse to let such people into my house! And father Seysen is one of those superstitious maniacs!

Mateo Calm down, Philip. I am not of that kind.

Philip I hope so for your own sake, father Mateo. Now I will go to my wife. (*exit*)

Mateo (sighs) In this matter there is more than anyone could have dreamt of in his wildest philosophy that could have existed between heaven and earth.

Doctor (coming) Where is father Seysen?

Mateo Driven out by the husband.

Doctor And where is the husband?

Mateo With the patient.

Doctor He mustn't be! (*rushes up to her*)

(A scream is heard from Amine. Then everything is quiet.

Mateo holds his breath. Then the doctor returns, slowly.)

Mateo (can hardly shape the words) Is she dead?

Doctor (calmly) No, she is restored.

Mateo (dumbfounded) Completely well at once?

Doctor No, but a true husband was the only medicine she really needed. Come, my friend, let's go out into the sun. We are as little needed now as father Seysen, for the loving couple now have each other. (*takes friendly around father Mateo and goes out with him.*)

Scene 3. The same.

(enter Philip and Amine)

Amine When I lost my child I knew it had to do with your destiny. Philip, I can't keep you home against your will. The main task and duty of my life is to support you in your mission and if possible to give up and sacrifice everything to make you achieve it.

Philip Amine, I don't know what I want. The egoist in me would stay at home with you and make a decent family with children and grandchildren, forget and abandon all things difficult just to live for you and our happiness. But it doesn't work. It would be too one-sided. Just as strongly my father's destiny keeps drawing

me out to sea and the storms beyond the Cape and its mystery. These two forces are equally strong and oppose and neutralise each other, so that I am left hanging in the middle, like an undecided donkey caught between two haystacks.

Amine And that solves nothing. Both priests are completely agreed that you should stay at home and forget about the phantom. I would wish so too, but I am not convinced that it is right.

Philip You are too good, Amine.

Amine I have been thinking very much about it. My mother gave me extraordinary gifts for an inheritance, Philip.

Philip The Arabian princess from Zanzibar?

Amine Yes. That I am her daughter we can never ignore.

Philip Did she know any art that could solve my dilemma?

Amine I think so. She knew the art to invoke the dreams of truth. If anyone found himself faced with an impossible choice, she could with a certain drug put him to sleep with such dreams that he when awakened would know the certain answer. Are you willing to try such a method?

Philip Father Seysen would condemn it as witchcraft.

Amine It's not about father Seysen now. Both priests are gone. I know what drugs would be needed. The drug collection of my father's is preserved completely intact. It's only for us to set forth.

Amine Are you yourself willing to take that risk, Amine? Imagine if the answer is I have to get away and stay out there?

Amine I think the chances are about the same for both possibilities. It could also happen that you will have no dreams at all. In that case the priests were right, and your father's destiny and all phantom speculations could be dismissed as of no consequence. And then I would be able to keep you at home.

Philip Let's get going, Amine. The sooner, the better.

Amine All is already set. You only have to lie down. I will prepare the elixir.

(Philip lies down. Amine prepares a drug concoction with great meticulous care.)

I will explain to you exactly how it works. This drug puts your body to sleep at the same time as it opens up and reveals your entire subconscious to you. The direct encounter with the deepest secrets of your subconscious could be shocking. You are faced eye to eye with the absolute truth about yourself and the very worst you have to expect. Both extremes of your personality and destiny are brought to confront each other. Whatever you experience will be the truth.

Philip Go ahead, Amine. I am ready.

Amine Here is the draught. Just relax. You will lose all physical senses and awareness while all the strings of your soul will wake up and resound, like as if suddenly brought to some resurrection or awakening after a lifetime of sleep. That's actually all that will happen.

(She administers to him a green potion. He drinks it greedily and loses conscience almost immediately. Total blackout.)

Scene 4.

(A single light on Philip where he lies. He rises slowly, and the light follows him up to the helm aft of a ship. He takes the helm. The wind machine starts whining slowly, gradually accompanied by the increasing roar of storms, which grow to a hurricane with thunder.

Lightning. New total blackout.

New spotlight on Philip. He is now alone on a raft with roaring seas around him. He looks worryingly around. A single hand is seen taking a grip of the raft. A second hand turns up. You see the arms. It's Amine in a light nightgown with her hair at full length: she has never been more beautiful.

Amine Philip van der Decken, what do you fear? Is not your life protected by higher powers? Have you not alone survived more shipwrecks than anybody else?

Philip I only know that my life is in constant danger.

Amine What is not in constant danger? All safe homes, all safe ships, all assembled fortunes, all insurances, it's all illusions and lies constantly threatened by burglary and fire, bankruptcies and natural disasters, but nothing can harm you, for I am always with you, Philip. No matter how far you go away I am always here beside you safer than you are yourself, in your own heart.

Philip You are then my guardian angel, Amine.

Amine And that of your father and your destiny. With me by your side you can't fail. You shall save your father, Philip, release him from his dilemma of being undead between life and death and stuck in an alien dimension and let him free, and you shall come home to me again. All will end happily.

Philip It almost sounds too good to be true.

(The storm increases again. It blows and roars, and thunder strikes again. New spotlight on the helm. There in reeking storm stands William van der Decken, a frightening but impressive figure.)

Father Furl the mizzen! Get to work, boys, before the entire rig blows over board! This is worse than Cape Horn! Tie the topgallant yard harder, so we don't lose speed! This is a storm for real! *(The raft approaches the ship.)*

Philip Father! Father!

Father Who calls me? We can't salvage any shipwrecked now! I am sorry!

Philip Father! It's your son Philip van der Decken!

Father Is it possible? Have you greetings from your mother?

Philip She has passed away, father! Her last words and thoughts were of love and faithfulness to you!

Father My son, only you can save me now!

Philip That's why I am here!

Father Come aboard! Come aboard!

(The storm grows with the thunder and lightnings as Philip reaches the ship and starts getting up to his father. Suddenly another figure rushes forth from behind the father and hurls Philip away with him from the father.)

The man No, Philip, that's not our pleasure!

Father (desperately) Come back! Come back!

Philip Let me go, you demon!

The man I will never let you go until you give up, he-he!

Philip (struck with terror) Who are you?

Schriften (shows his terrible face) Don't you recognize me, he-he, Philip van der Decken! (giggles abominably)

Philip Schriften!

(Total storm, thunder, lightning and roaring blasts of terror until finally new total blackout, while the storm blows over.)

Scene 5. At home.

(All lights on showing Philip again as when he went to sleep.)

Philip (twitching in his sleep, as if by nightmares) No! No!

(wakes up in a twitch and cold sweat)

Amine (embracing him) All is well, Philip. I am here with you. You are back again.

Philip Thank God for that!

Amine First you slept very calmly in a beauty sleep, and a quiet smile was even spreading across your face. Then something happened, you were in trouble and started twitching ever more violently, until you woke up. What happened?

Philip Amine, you are my good angel. My father expects me to come and release him. But there is also a wicked angel.

Amine Who is it? Is it father Seysen?

Philip No. There was no priest in the dream. But I was just going to release my father and unite with him in prayer when that terrible pilot from *Ter Schelling* showed up and thrust me down into the abyss.

Amine That one-eyed pilot called Schriften?

Philip The very one.

Amine Do you think he is still alive?

Philip No one survived the *Ter Schelling* except me, and that bear, which was slaughtered by a Hottentot.

Amine But if you and the bear survived, also the pilot could have survived. Was he not an unusually experienced man?

Philip Yes, extremely. The East India Company thought it strange that I as a greenhorn would survive and not the pilot.

Amine Something tells me that he survived and is waiting for you, lurking. He has something to do with your father but I can't imagine what.

Philip Amine, your drug and art only gave the result, that the terrible apparition of Schriften doubled the problem.

Amine What was my part in your dream?

Philip You brought me to my father. Then you disappeared.

Amine Yes, that is my task. I will lead you to your father, and you will find him and release him, as surely as I am alive. For some reason that pilot Schriften is the only hindrance, which you must deal with without me, because I don't understand it.

Philip Neither do I.

Amine Go, Philip, settle the mystery, resolve all problems, release your father, and come home to me afterwards, for I shall always be waiting for you.

Philip Is that your last word?

Amine Yes, Philip, dead or alive I will always help you, wait for you and be faithful to you.

Philip (embracing her) Have I really deserved such a good wife?

Amine You forget that I am not even Christian.

Philip But you are baptized, and we are married in church. That should be enough, shouldn't it?

Amine But my soul is always free, Philip. No priests or ideology or sect can fool me out of my soul's freedom.

Philip Your mother must have been a very special kind of woman.

Amine Not just that, Philip. She also helps us from the other side of the grave.

Philip How could we then possibly fail?

Amine In spite of all we have a wonderful life to take care of.

Philip That's indeed what it looks like, Amine, well spiced with dangers.

Amine I love strong spices.

Philip You make the Flying Dutchman appear like a delicious stew.

(They laugh and embrace and kiss. Father Seysen and father Msteo suddenly enter, become aware of their disturbing, sign to each to be quiet and discreet and try to pass by unnoticed.)

Philip (jolly) Excuse our lack of delicacy, but we are actually married.

Mateo We are the ones who should apologise for disturbing.

Seysen We couldn't possibly know what you were up to.

Mateo At the same time it's such a joy to see Amine so well and completely restored from her difficult illness.

Seysen No joy could be greater.

Mateo It almost seems as if you were prepared to refrain from further perilous adventures, Philip!

Seysen Perhaps you will really stay at home now?

Philip (hesitantly, looking first at Amine) Gentlemen, I have arrived at a definite decision. I will stay home – unless I am expressly called out again by some special messenger.

Mateo (satisfied) A very wise decision.

Seysen Such a messenger could hardly be sent from above but possibly from hell.

Philip No hell in my house, father Seysen. Keep quiet about your devils.

Seysen You can never be too sure.

(A dark figure has unnoticeably arrived from the other direction. Amine is the first to notice him and gives a small cry of dismay.)

Schriften (appearing completely) Excuse me, he-he! I didn't intend to frighten you!

Philip (fearstruck) Schriften! You are alive!

Schriften You too! He-he!

Mateo Who is this man?

Philip (still upset) It's the pilot from *Ter Schelling*!

Schriften At your service, my friend, he-he! I come as messenger with a letter directly to you from the company, he-he! (*bows and delivers a letter.*)

Philip (tears the letter from him) How on earth did you survive *Ter Schelling*?

Schriften How did you survive yourself, Philip van der Decken?

Philip I was washed up on land by the waves.

Schriften (slyly) And would not another also have been washed up in the same way – he-he?

Seysen (serious) What does the letter say?

Amine Don't open it, Philip!

Philip You know that I must. (*slits it open, eyes it through.*)

The company offers me a position as first mate on *Vrouw Katerina* with the next fleet to India. Are you on the same ship, *Schriften*?

Schriften I rather saw that I wasn't, Philip van der Decken, since unlike you I am not on the hunt for the Flying Dutchman, he-he!

Amine How did you enter the house?

Schriften I have fulfilled my errand and beg your leave. I beg your pardon for the disturbance, he-he! (*leaves immediately*)

Mateo Was he that devil pilot you spoke about?

Philip (severely) Don't call him a devil, father *Mateo*. He is a human being like you and me. Yes, he is the pilot I thought and hoped was dead.

Mateo Do you view this as – your calling?

Amine (crying on Philip)

Philip *Amine*, we can't avoid it.

Amine I cry mostly because I may not follow you. If you had an offer as a captain you would have been able to take me with you. Now you may not.

Philip I am sorry, *Amine*.

Mateo What do you think of this apparition, father *Seysen*?

Seysen It's really extraordinary that he should turn up exactly as *Philip* promised to stay at home unless he had a special calling. *Philip*, I can't advise you in this mysterious coincidence. I can neither dissuade you from going nor urge you to take the calling seriously. What do you mean, father *Mateo*?

Mateo This abysmal spirit...

Philip (severely) *Mateo*!

Mateo I am sorry, but this pilot with such bad news gave me cold shivers, as if he was from that ship himself...

Philip It's not death that has called me, father *Mateo*. It is duty.

Amine Duty is the best excuse for stupidity.

Philip *Amine*, what do you mean?

Amine My mother always said that about all dutiful Europeans, whom she despised for their vanity.

Philip I must go, *Amine*.

Amine I know. I am with you as long as I live.

Philip (embracing her, to the priests:) You will have to take care of her again.
Mateo I will soon be going back to Portugal.
Seysen I shall answer for her with my life.
Amine Ask the priests to leave, Philip.
Philip Pardon us a moment, gentlemen. *(The priests understand and leave.)*
Amine I don't trust father Seysen, Philip.
Philip He only means well. You have none other.
Amine Ask at least Mateo to remain. He understands me better.
Philip I will try.
Amine And promise to take me with you on your next journey, Philip.
Philip Gladly. If I do well as first mate I must be given a ship of my own next time.
Amine You need me against Schriften.
Philip I need you against the whole world, Amine. *(embraces her tenderly. You can then see the priests standing outside listening.)*

Act IV scene 1. On board the *Vrouw Katerina*.

Krantz Captain, we are being overtaken.
Captain Barentz So what?
Krantz The whole fleet has left us behind. We might never see it again.
Barentz If we never see them again it's because they are sailing themselves away. If they don't sail themselves away they will wait for us at the Cape. These new-fangled undisciplined youths of a racing mind will only hurry themselves to death. They stress on and think time is money and get out of their minds if they lose one day, but time isn't money. Money is safety. We sail perhaps slower than all the others, but there is no safer ship in the Dutch fleet. I took over the *Vrouw Katerina* after my father, she is only twenty-eight years old and still in her greenest prime, and she has never failed. If she gets behind sometimes she has also sometimes been the only one to reach the destination whole and in safety.
Krantz Also the first mate means that she is too heavy laden and has too many troops on board.
Barentz That testifies to her safety. No other ship can bring so many troops and full cargo at the same time.
Krantz First mate means that a storm could be fatal.
Barentz Does he indeed? Then he doesn't know the *Vrouw Katerina*. No storm bites on her. *(It starts blowing.)* Now we'll perhaps see what she is good for.
Philip (coming up) Captain, it is starting to blow.
Barentz What are you saying, number one? Thanks for the information! I had no idea! You may be the best sailor on board, Philip van der Decken, but your captain is actually more experienced than you.
Philip But aren't you pressing too much sail for an eventual storm, being as heavily loaded as we are?

Barentz You don't know the *Vrouw Katerina*, Philip van der Decken.

Krantz Captain, I mean that first mate is right. We should lessen the sail-area in order to maintain stability and security.

Barentz Mate Krantz, you are almost as good a sailor as number one, but not even together you stand comparison to my experience. We will not take down one single sail. (*sees something*) See there! That old bulk surpasses us! She is full-rigged!

Krantz (*catches sight of the ship*) Some daredevil!

Barentz But she sails expertly. She is hardly rolling at all and keeps a straight course without difficulty. She must be a capital sailor at all events: look there, a point abaft the beam. Mercy on me! how stiff she must be to carry such a press of canvas!

Krantz She is overtaking us fast.
(*The shadow of a big full-rigged beautiful ship passes by.*)

Barentz What ship is it? I don't recognize her.

Krantz It must be in our fleet.

Philip Captain, the seas are already high as mountains, and we roll up to the rail. But that ship is hardly touched by the storm.

Barentz It almost seems strange. Could she be an Englishman?

Krantz No Englishman sails that smoothly.

Philip What do you mean, Krantz?

Krantz Nothing.

Philip You know something.

Krantz No.

Philip What do you deny?

Krantz Everything.

Philip Haven't we met before on some journey? There is something about you that reminds me of something.

Krantz (*looking at him*) I can't help you, Philip van der Decken.

A sailor Captain, it's calming down.

Barentz Have you noticed? We are getting into smooth sailing. Then we must be close to the Cape. There is no sea more capricious than around the Cape of storms. No sign of the ship that sailed us by?

Philip It disappeared with the storm.

Barentz I'll be damned! In full storm she carried all sails, and we didn't!

Philip Krantz, do you know anything about the ship we saw?

Krantz Do you know anything yourself?

Philip It could only have been the phantom ship the Flying Dutchman.

Barentz What are you saying, Philip van der Decken? Have we met that calamity?

Philip I am afraid so, captain.

Barentz It never happened to *Vrouw Katerina* before! Would we then all be lost? We are several hundred men, women and children!

Philip God forbid, captain.

Barentz And now the sun is shining. The sea is getting calm, and the wind is going home. We are only a day or two from the Cape. No, it can't have been the ghost ship. Then the weather wouldn't have been this beautiful.

Philip I hope I am mistaken, captain.

Barentz I am sure you are.

Krantz (quietly) Captain, I feel an uncanny smell.

Barentz What is it?

A sailor There is smoke from the cargo-hold.

Barentz Would we have fire on board? Impossible!

Philip Captain, do you remember the coffins with the bottles of vitriol? For safety we placed them on top. In the storm they could have broken loose and rolled around. In that case the bottles have broken and...

Barentz By my soul, you are right! Dare we open the cargo-hold, Krantz, and have a look?

Krantz We could open a hole big enough to let down a pipe from the pumps to spirt water with, if the fire isn't already too widespread.

Barentz Take a look!

Philip Captain, a burning ship must immediately be abandoned before something explodes.

Barentz You are right. Open the board! Check the fire! Put it out immediately if it can be put out!

(The board is opened. Thick smoke belches out.)

Krantz Captain, the fire has spread all over the cargo and is moving aft! We have no time to put it out!

Barentz Do we have enough lifeboats?

Philip Our sloops and launches are not enough, but we can rapidly build rafts.

Barentz Get going! Tear down whatever is needed for the rafts! *Vrouw Katerina* must be abandoned! Women and children first in the sloops! Then the launches! Then the rest on the rafts! I will be the last to leave the ship! *Vrouw Katerina*, forgive us! It's not our fault! It was the storm!

(Frenzied work is commenced on evacuating and demolishing the rig to build rafts, etc.)

Scene 2. A desert shore.

(Enter a sorry lot of a shipwrecked crew: captain, mates and crewmen with ruined faces and clothes.)

Barentz Krantz, sum up the situation.

Krantz 36 saved out of 300.

A sailor At least something.

Barentz But worst of all was the loss of the ship! *Vrouw Katerina*, my darling, my mother, my wife, my only child! *(falls down on the beach, shaking his hands against the sky, like in a desperate prayer for mercy.)* But did you see how beautifully she was

burning? Never has a ship made a lovelier fire in the middle of the sea! Never has a ship triumphed so in beauty at her very death! It was the death of love!

Krantz (to Philip) One could think he was Tristan at the loss of Isolde.

Philip (to Krantz) Mind you, that he has lost mother, wife and child, all in one person.

Krantz Like a poor family their only cow.

Philip Captain, wouldn't it be wiser to bewail the 264 dead, mostly women, children and indispensable soldiers?

Barentz (rising) It wasn't my fault that the rafts disintegrated!

Krantz No one blamed you, captain.

Barentz It wasn't my fault that the rafts were not well enough lashed! We were in a hurry!

Krantz The sea was choppy, captain.

Philip It didn't help although the stocks were well bound together.

Barentz Alas, all those children! All those women! All those colonists! All those soldiers! I can never face Holland anymore! I have lost my life's only love! I will never go to sea anymore!

(A boer appears.)

Boer Excuse me, are you shipwrecked?

Philip Yes. Where are we?

Boer Cape of Good Hope. We saw you land with all kinds of debris. But it hasn't stormed that much. What happened?

Philip The ship caught fire.

Krantz Vitriol in the cargo.

Philip The rollings smashed the bottles.

Boer How unfortunate! Which ship was it?

Philip The *Vrouw Katerina*.

Boer Then you belonged to the fleet that kept waiting for you by the Cape for two weeks?

Philip (and Krantz looking at each other) Has it sailed on?

Boer They couldn't wait any longer. You were assumed lost.

Krantz Then we are marooned.

Barentz Good! I stay here.

Boer You are lucky though. There's a ship on her way to Holland weighing anchor tomorrow.

Philip Krantz, obviously we can go home at once. This will be a short voyage.

Krantz I don't mind.

Boer (to Philip) I seem to recognize you. Haven't we met before?

Philip I have been at the Cape before. The first time was after the shipwreck of *Ter Schelling*.

Boer That's it! And you were the only one who made it.

Philip No, there was one more – a one-eyed pilot called *Schriften*.

Boer We never heard of such a fellow, especially not after *Ter Schelling*.

Philip He showed up in Holland recently.

Boer Strange. If anyone else than you survived the *Ter Schelling* we ought to have noticed him, especially if he was one-eyed. But you all look rather worn out and washed out. Come, follow me! (*shows the way*)

Barentz (after his exit) I will never go to sea again!

Scene 3. On board *The Lion*.

Admiral Rymeland Gentlemen, I am sorry, but we have to take advantage of your qualifications. We left Amsterdam two months ago and haven't even reached the Azores yet. Cold, fatigue, bad food and constant bad weather has made us almost unmanageable since only a fourth of the crew can work. The captain of the ship is dead, the second mate is dying, and even our fleet commander is dead. I understand this must be a disappointment to you, since you after the shipwreck of the *Vrouw Katerina* have been looking forward to coming home, but necessity has no law. We are compelled to interrupt your home voyage. We need you.

Krantz (to Philip) We almost reached Teneriffa anyway.

Philip What is your destination, mynheer Admiral.

Rymeland The spice islands of the East India Company, the Moluccas, by the Cape Horn.

Philip Do you think that is a shorter route than by the Cape of Good Hope?

Rymeland We are speculating on it.

Krantz We don't have to do the Cape again, Philip!

Philip What rank do you offer us?

Rymeland Gentlemen, I understand from your story that you are good officers and reliable seamen. You, Philip van der Decken, would be given the command of the *Dort* as captain, the commander's ship. And you, mynheer Krantz, would be my second.

Krantz (bowing) I am at your command.

Philip I am also, but I request the privilege of writing a letter home to my wife, which will follow the ship home that took us on.

Rymeland Request granted. Welcome on board, gentlemen.

Scene 3.

(*Philip and Krantz by the rail.*)

Krantz What a hell of a journey, Philip!

Philip You said it.

Krantz But how the hell will it end?

Philip It could only end badly for the Admiral.

Krantz As I see it, it could only end badly for us all.

Philip But only the Admiral is responsible.

Krantz Many innocents have already paid for him by their lives.

Philip Especially commander Avenhorn.

Krantz You said it.

Philip But what can we do about it? Nothing!

Krantz Only mutiny. And the sooner we mutiny, the less suffering. If the Admiral knew that I had gone over to you he would hang me in the yard-arm.

Philip I can't take part in any mutiny, Krantz.

Krantz Philip, the entire fleet depends on us. It's only we who can sail. The Admiral has only sabotaged the entire journey and caused unnecessary casualties, and that is all he has done. Everybody looks up to you and me. Only we can save the fleet.

Philip That's why we mustn't make mutiny.

Krantz Sooner or later we will be forced to.

Philip Still we haven't sailed far from the Bay of Disconsolation, where we marooned commander Avenhorn.

Krantz The Admiral marooned him! No one else!

Philip Something tells me that we will never get out of the Strait of Maghellan, that our ships will get stuck here in the shadows of these mortally black icebergs, that our bones will rot in disconsolate bays like the commander's, and that the Admiral will drag us all down in his damnation and perdition.

Krantz Philip, we have each other. We can trust each other. And every sailor on the five ships of the fleet know that they can trust us!

Philip That doesn't help the Admiral.

Krantz One word from you, and we hang the Admiral in the yard-arm!

Philip Never!

Krantz (resigned) Then even more of us have to die.

Philip I am afraid so. Only if the Admiral oversteps his authority can we turn against him. Only if the command breaks the law can we get rid of the command.

Krantz But that is what he has done all the way!

Philip Yes, but unfortunately within the limits of the law. We have to wait out our bait, Krantz.

Krantz In the meanwhile he waits on us. He waits for the slightest excuse to put us in irons. Why do you think he let you sail first through the strait? To let you founder so that he could get clear and pass you by! He only wants to put us all out except his own ship and himself!

Philip But what is this, Krantz? Haven't we sailed in the lead all the time?

Krantz Certainly.

Philip Look for yourself. Now the Admiral's ship is ahead of us.

Krantz It's really his lantern. But how could it be?

Philip It doesn't make sense. Why would he sail ahead of us? His ship is deeper and runs far greater risks.

Krantz But there he is now in front of us.

Philip Does he want to prove that we are disobeying orders?

Krantz It would seem so. But we ought to have noticed when he bypassed us.

Philip Exactly. This is most remarkable.

Krantz Whatever he does, he doesn't seem to know what he is doing.

Philip He always knows what he is doing. That's why he always does it wrong. He is infallible. Therefore he has now chosen to sail to hell.

Krantz Is he blind? Doesn't he see the mountains? Is it his intention to run aground?

Philip So it seems. Or else he has fallen asleep by the helm.

Krantz Not he. He never steers himself. He only commands others.

Philip But he steers awfully close to the rocks. He keeps a straight course on land.

Krantz Shall we awake him with a gun shot?

A sailor Captain! We hear the surf! We are going very close to land!

Philip I know. We follow the Admiral's ship.

The sailor If that is the Admiral's ship he leads us all to hell! He is steering straight at the rocks!

Philip Yes, he is. Give a shot with the gun.

The sailor Yes, captain!

(A cannon is fired. At once the salute is answered but from the opposite direction.)

Philip What is this?

Krantz It was the Admiral's gun.

Philip But behind us!

Krantz Who the hell is then ahead of us?

The sailor Captain! Look! The ship steers straight towards land – AND IS SAILING OVER IT!

Krantz I don't believe my eyes!

Philip (to himself) Father, when will you at last teach me to recognize you?

Krantz Sorry?

Philip I only sent a prayer.

Krantz Too late.

(Grounding. A terrible rumble, even from the Admiral's ship from behind, which founders simultaneously. Chaos on board. Sails and ropes come tumbling down.)

The Admiral's ship grounded at the same time.

Philip So here we sit in the middle of the Strait of Maghellan – only four miles from our marooned commander Avenhorn.

Krantz He will have company ashore now.

Philip I smuggled some shotguns to him, blankets and food for three months. He can defend himself. He will manage.

Krantz Then he will probably make the process short with the Admiral.

Philip Alas, what's the matter with us humans? Why can't we associate without hate immediately being planted, cultivated, harvested and then used only to kill?

Krantz Search me. But it's lucky then that there is a kind of higher justice.

Philip Is there?

Krantz (indicating the direction of the lost ship) The Flying Dutchman.

Philip Come, Krantz. Let's see what we can do. Maybe we can get our ship afloat.

Krantz Even if we can, the Admiral's ship will probably stay stuck where it is.

Scene 4. At home

Amine (reading a letter) "My beloved Amine, We had just passed the Azores when we met a Dutch fleet of five ships, which had suffered so great losses of men by storms and head-wind, that they recruited us 36 survivors from the *Vrouw Katerina* by force. Yes, my darling, I suffered yet another shipwreck with even larger losses than the last one and again after the apparition of my father's lost ship. We already rejoiced to be able to come home when this new voyage of destiny took hold of us, which will bring us to Batavia by the Strait of Maghellan this time – the Admiral imagines, that only because we pass the date line from west to east the journey around the world will be shorter than if we go in the other direction. There is probably no difference to speak of. So don't expect me for another year or two, for only God knows what will be the meaning of this sudden new journey. I have though won a new reliable friend maybe for life called Krantz. He will be second mate on Admiral Rymeland's ship *The Lion*, while I am given the command of *Dort* – my first own ship. That's the only good news I guess in this rather regrettable letter."

My darling Philip, where are you? Two years have passed and I expect you home every day! My despair grows from day to day, and soon I will be desperate. I get no comfort here at home from those disgusting black frocks that I never can get rid of and who only spy on me. The worst one is that Jesuit you brought with you, who lives at our cost and never goes home to Lisbon. He and father Seysen have become so good friends that I fear it's a conspiracy against me that ties them together. Philip, I must know where you are!

(falls down with clasped hands)

There is a way. My mother taught me the art. I must use the same method on myself that I used on Philip, although it is dangerous. But I am desperate. *(mixes the drug)* This is witchcraft, but I have no choice. Anything is better than not knowing!

(drinks and lies down on the sofa.)

Scene 5. Batavia.

(Philip before the governor.)

Governor My friend, my impression of all the testimonies I have heard is that you and mate Krantz were recruited by force on a most unfortunate journey, which only grew worse all the time, and that only you and Krantz managed to turn the ill-fated journey on the right bow. But I must have more exact information as to the strange end of Admiral Rymeland and Commodore Avenhorn.

Philip Mynheer Governor, I will try to be both brief and precise. The problems started outside Argentine, when the Admiral refused to let the fleet make the land in spite of increasing epidemics of scurvy on board. The commodore defied his order, brought our ship to the coast and made a successful raid with the Spaniards, which saved all our lives. The Falklands were then our agreed meeting-place. There the

Admiral arrested the commodore, although he acted more wisely than the Admiral, when the majority of all men on the rest of the fleet were ill. In the Strait of Maghellan the Commodore was marooned with victuals for only two days. In secret I also provided him with weapons, blankets and extra victuals for three months. The Admiral ordered me to go first through the strait. The Admiral's ship and mine grounded at the same time. The Admiral gave me the whole blame. We could get our ship afloat, but the Admiral did nothing to his own situation. Everyone can testify to this. During a walk ashore the Admiral was surprised by the Commodore, who had been marooned only four miles from our position. We found them both dead under a precipice. They had died together fighting each other.

Governor Whereupon you took command of the fleet and brought it safely to Batavia.

Philip We were pursued by Spanish ships outside Chile and Peru, but we sank them.

Governor We are not at war with Spain.

Philip They attacked us.

Governor So you were obliged to sink them. In the eyes of the Company you have deserved the highest honour and recommendation, Philip van der Decken. I hope you will bring as many other ships safely to port as the *Dort* and the other three ships of your fleet.

Philip Thank you, Governor.

Governor That's all, Captain van der Decken. You may tell mate Krantz that he will probably also be promoted.

Philip Thank you, Governor. (*bows and leaves.*)

Governor That's the kind of sailors Holland needs!

Scene 6. At home.

(*Amine still lying in the sofa. Enter father Mateo with father Seysen.*)

Mateo Vrow Amine! (*finds her in the sofa*) It smells strange. (*sniffs*)

Seysen What do you mean about the smell, father Mateo?

Mateo A sweet intoxicating scent like of an oriental drug.

Seysen That's the kind of arts and habits I have been warning and suspecting her of.

Mateo But it's a nice smell. There can't be any harm in that, father Seysen?

Seysen It is intoxicating, father Mateo! See how she lies sniffing! She has taken an oriental drug to sleep and perhaps dream forbidden dreams! I know what that kind of witchcraft is about, father Mateo!

Mateo Shouldn't we wake her up, then?

Seysen No, let her dream. In time she will be awakened by reality.

Mateo See, she moves!

Seysen She turns around like in some erotic enjoyment. She is not decent, father Mateo, not even in her sleep!

Mateo See the whiteness of her arms! She enjoys and suffers at the same time. Never have I seen such seductive little feet.

Seysen Father Mateo, control yourself!

Mateo Forgive me, but it's the seductive scent.

Seysen I will not forget this! I will leave now! (*leaves promptly*)

Mateo (*tries to wake up Amine*) Vrow Amine! Vrow Amine! Wake up!

Amine (*wakes up*) Why did you wake me up, father Mateo?

Mateo You must not dream such dreams!

Amine What do you know about my dreams, father Mateo? I was with Philip in Batavia. Is that forbidden?

Mateo No, you are in Antwerp!

Amine Yes, now! But I was with Philip. I found him in Batavia. He is at last on his way home.

Mateo How do you know`

Amine I visited him in the dream.

Mateo Vrow Amine, this is serious! There is a smell here of dangerous drugs! Have you been using artificial means to indulge in erotic dreams?

Amine No, I have only visited Philip.

Mateo In dreams or in reality?

Amine In reality by the dream.

Mateo And what does this smoke mean?

Amine I took a draught in order to sleep.

Mateo What kind of draught?

Amine That's my secret.

Mateo Vrow Amine, I warn you!

Amine And I warn you! What are you doing here anyway by my bedside, you dirty old man?

Mateo Vrow Amine, I am your confessor!

Amine Whom I never chose myself! Philip brought you here, and for his sake I have supported you for almost three years! But now you are forcefully intruding on my private life!

Mateo Vrow Amine, for God's sake! Father Seysen can testify...

Amine Did you bring him in also while I was sleeping?

Mateo We came together...

Amine And what did you do with me while I was sleeping?

Mateo Vrow Amine, we didn't touch you!

Amine Then why this prying intimacy? How come you have been sniffing on me? Father Mateo, all of Antwerp shall know about this! You might as well go home to Lisbon at once!

Mateo Vrow Amine, show then some mercy and tolerance! I shall tell everything to father Seysen!

Amine Do so! Tell all Antwerp! Tell everybody exactly how I smelt! Everyone will be very interested in the erotic experience of a Jesuit!

Mateo Vrow Amine, for God's sake! (*runs out of the house*)

Amine Yes, run home to your god of sanctimony, you silly old fool! He is only a devil like all other idols and imagined magic symbols of worship! Father, your religion at least was rational! But these black frocks only serve hell! Well, at least I got rid of one of them!

Scene 7. On board the *Utrecht*.

Krantz Well, Philip, how does it feel?

Philip For the first time in my life, Krantz, I dare to openly confess myself a happy man.

Krantz Me too, Philip. I am happy with your happiness, happy with my task as first mate, happy with your wife and that she is with you on board, and that your deserts have been rewarded.

Philip We had a long and adventurous journey of trials, Krantz, but they are over now.

Krantz But what was it really with those two dirty old men and phoney priests?

Philip My wife shall tell you about it herself. We are rid of them now.

Krantz Did they really intend to report her to the inquisition?

Philip They only threatened, Krantz. Cowards only threaten.

Krantz But here she is, fresh like a pearl of dew, joyous like a happy bride and light as a laughing sunbeam! Welcome on deck, Madame!

Amine Thank you, mate Krantz! What calm weather we have today.

Philip It's dead calm for the first time on our journey.

Amine Are we already on level with the Cape of Good Hope?

Philip Soon, my dearest.

Amine The weather is so beautiful that you are tempted to go swimming.

Krantz We just compared your situation in the clutches of the priests with Susannah in her bath.

Amine Don't talk of those disgusting eunuchs, mate Krantz. If you are not normal sexually, then your unnaturalness could easily make perversion amount to monstrous grotesqueness.

Krantz So you still don't know what the dirty old men did to you?

Amine I never saw any of them anymore. Father Mateo was laughed out of Antwerp and quickly ran home to Portugal by the command of his own scandalized order – all Antwerp giggled at his reputation and pathetic weakness. I never let father Seysen into our house anymore, and when Philip came home he saw to it that father Seysen was finished. That idiot was sent to Dutch Guayana, a tropical swamp of fevers and one of the most horrid places on earth.

Philip Good for him. Antwerp will never forget the two sexually starved and perverted priests who together forced themselves on a widow.

Amine They never touched me, Philip.

Philip But they sniffed you. That's almost even worse.

Krantz In Holland the Calvinists are even worse, though. There you don't laugh at moral digressions. In Antwerp at least there is a sense of humour.

Philip I promise you, *Krantz*, that it is worse to be laughed at than to be executed. You can die with honour, but the two parasites pestering *Amine* lost everything and especially their last shadow of honour and in addition were sentenced to stay alive.

Krantz Still I think I would prefer to be laughed at than executed. Death is without return, but the loss of honour could maybe only do you some good sometimes, since it's mainly only vanity and delusion.

Amine Have you been to China, *Krantz*?

Krantz Yes, I have been to Macao. The Portuguese are not easily handled on the Chinese Sea.

Philip That's why we have a small troupe of soldiers for cover of the supercargo. If we don't get a market in China, the English will steal it.

Amine I look forward to Ceylon and Batavia.

Philip The Cape comes first, though.

A sailor Captain!

Philip What is it?

Sailor A small boat in sight!

Philip Shipwrecked?

Sailor No, it looks empty.

Sailor 2 There is a lonely man in it!

Philip Here, *Amine*, you will immediately get acquainted with the gravity of life at sea. He could be the only survivor of a shipwreck and will surely have much to tell. – Get the boat in lee, and get on board the passenger!

Sailor 1 Yes, captain!

Amine Do you think he might have met your father?

Philip On these latitudes everything is possible.

Krantz There is something wrong here. Sorry about my misgivings, but it could also be a deserter or escaped convict.

Philip (calling) Is he armed?

Sailor 1 No, he seems flayed by the sun and in a bad shape. He has nothing in the boat.

Philip Lay him on the gangway and let the barber-surgeon examine him.

Sailor 1 Yes, captain.

Amine I just hope he isn't dead.

Krantz Seamen don't die easily, lady *Amine*.

Sailor 1 This one is alive all right.

Barber-surgeon ('s voice) Give him some water!

Sailor 2 (outside) Wake up, sluggard! (*throws water on the shipwrecked*)

Barber-surgeon At least he is alive.

Sailor 1 He wants to speak with you, captain. He is asking about the ship.

Philip Is he Dutch?

Sailor 1 Yes.

The shipwrecked('s voice) Let me walk by myself.

Barber-surgeon (entering) He says he was on a ship that capsized in a hard squall. He had just enough time to release the yawl from aft. He says the entire rest of the crew went under.

Philip Does his story hold water?

Barber-surgeon He appears to be a very experienced sailor. He is in a very bad condition, and in his state anyone would have had it. But he is already on his legs.

Philip Could he come here?

Barber-surgeon Bring on the shipwrecked!

(Some sailors enter with Schriften.)

Schriften Captain van der Decken! We meet again, he-he! *(giggles more abominably than ever)*

Krantz Do you know this man, captain?

Schriften And Mrs. Van der Decken as well! What a pleasure, he-he!

Amine (faints)

Philip Bring Madame down to the cabin! *(She is swiftly brought out.)*

Take care of the shipwrecked! Give him what he needs. Look to it, barber-surgeon!

Barber-surgeon Yes, captain. Take him down to the sickbed. He must have shadow and rest. – Is all well, captain?

Philip Yes, thank you, barber-surgeon. You can go. *(They leave with Schriften.)*

Krantz How is it, Philip?

Philip That man is like a revenant. Every time he appears in my life it's like a shock. Krantz, we were both on the *Ter Schelling* when she was wrecked, I as second mate, he as pilot. He literally organized the shipwreck. No one survived except me, but he, whose name is Schriften, suddenly appeared in Antwerp one year later. I never learned how he survived, and in the Cape colony they denied that anyone else had come ashore from *Ter Schelling*. Now he appears for the third time – from nowhere.

Krantz We have to watch out with him. Has also Amine seen him before?

Philip Yes, twice, both times when he came as messenger to our home in Antwerp with the company's promotions.

Krantz He should have a fascinating story to tell.

Philip No one could ever comprehend him. He gets into control of people, but they never get the better of him.

Krantz His revolting awesomeness is fascinating.

Philip That's the least thing you could say.

Krantz What will you do with him?

Philip Put him ashore in the Cape. His presence is unendurable to me.

Krantz He must belong to the Company. Surely some ship could take him back to Holland. *(Amine appearing slowly.)*

Amine No, Philip, let him come with us.

Philip Amine!

Amine He is part of our destiny. If we make resistance it will only get worse.

Philip Can *you* endure him?

Amine With difficulty.

Philip Then we leave him at the Cape.

Krantz Perhaps he would himself like to return to Holland.

Amine Let him decide for himself, Philip. Whatever his meaning in life may be, it has something to do with our destiny, and we can't spite it.

Philip As you wish, my love.

Krantz You have some secret of destiny that I don't understand.

Philip The less you understand of it, Krantz, the better for yourself.

Krantz Then it must be something horrible.

Philip At least it's difficult enough.

Krantz And is this one-eyed sea monster mixed up in it?

Philip We don't know, Krantz. He could be the joker in the game.

Krantz A difficult game in that case.

Philip Yes, perhaps worse than any weather game.

Krantz No, Philip, nothing could be worse than that, especially here around the Cape.

Philip You don't know what you are talking about, Krantz, and that's your fortune.

Krantz You speak in riddles.

Philip Life is a riddle and the greatest of riddles which no one ever will understand, while all you can do is to follow its course in the vain hope of ever finding some sort of orientation to go on in the riddle to new unsolvable mysteries.

Amine I am afraid, Krantz, that we are only in the beginning of our journey.

Krantz Well, to say the least, your mystifications actually adds to the attraction of it. I am looking forward to what will happen next.

Scene 8. Amine at the rail.

Amine So this is India, the legendary and mystical land of myths and tales, where the only law is spirituality. Yes, we have come so far without adventures and passed the Cape without storms, although we have a one-eyed pilot on board.

Schriften (*stealing up to her side. She shrugs in fear. He makes an effort at prudence.*) My lady, that ship over there will sail back to your own country in a few days.

Amine Yes, I know. What do you mean?

Schriften Madame, I wish you well. You must believe it, no matter how I look, and whatever experience your husband has of me as a sailor. I ask you to return home with that ship and stay there until your husband will come home again.

Amine I don't understand. Why this interest of yours in my future?

Schriften I see beyond the horizon and can feel a peril threatening you which could import a terrible death if you continue.

Amine I must share my husband's dangers.

Schriften This threat I feel is only about you and not about your husband. I wish you no harm, my lady. I only want to save you.

Amine From what?

Schriften From both your own and your husband's destiny.

Amine Can you?

Schriften I am trying.

Amine (looking at him) You seem to know more about our destiny than myself. What do you know that we don't know?

Schriften Don't inquire, madame. It serves no one.

Amine Who are you?

Schriften A sailor.

Amine That's no answer to my question.

Schriften I need an answer to *my* question, madame. Will you go home or challenge destiny?

Amine I can't desert my husband in his difficult task.

Schriften Difficult task! Humbug! He has nothing to do with the sea!

Amine Why do you want to stop him?

Schriften I don't want to stop him in anything he does.

Amine Mynheer *Schriften*, twice you have come as a messenger of evil tidings to our house. On both occasions you separated my husband from me so that he almost didn't come back. When you sailed with him on the *Ter Schelling* you rather contributed to her shipwreck than helped my man to handle the crisis. I must consider you a saboteur and almost an evil spirit. What do you want?

Schriften I don't want to sabotage for your husband. And I want to save your life.

Amine But you want to obstruct my husband in his mission.

Schriften Why do you believe that?

Amine So you know about his mission! How come then that you know something about what only he should know?

Schriften My lady, you know about the matter yourself, and even holy men have discussed it. What is known to a man of the church can never remain secret within the church.

Amine So you even know the devil priests of intolerance and superstition Mateo and Seysen?

Schriften I haven't said so. And they are no devil's priests. They only do as well as they can.

Amine So you know them. How do you know them?

Schriften You forget, my lady, that I have been to both Antwerp and Amsterdam. And our conversation is derailing. I have conveyed my warning. I beg of you to let me know if you will return home or continue your course towards death. I insist that I only am trying to save you.

Amine My husband's destiny is my own. I am part of him. It would be unnatural of me not to follow him.

Schriften Madame, I venerate you. But remember, that you will always have the possibility to change your mind and get off, until it one day could be too late. Your husband is coming. I had better leave. (*leaves*)

Philip (coming up) What did *Schriften* want?

Amine He wanted to save my life. He asked me to return to Holland at once and wait for you there. He wanted to save me from your destiny.

Philip What does he know about my destiny?

Amine Perhaps he sees things that mortals don't see.

Philip Would he then not be mortal?

Amine Is your father mortal, Philip?

Philip I don't know. That's what I have to find out. And if he isn't mortal I have to save him from the terrible dilemma of his horrendous immortality. That's all I know.

Amine I follow you, Philip, whatever *Schriften* says.

Philip At least he apparently doesn't wish you any harm.

Amine Nor you, Philip.

Philip Why then does he persecute us?

Amine For some reason, Philip, he wishes to free us from your destiny.

Philip Would he then have any interest in that my father remains condemned?

Amine We are closing in on the mystery, Philip.

Krantz (calling) Ready to cast off, captain!

Philip (calling) Great, *Krantz*! Weigh anchor! – Batavia next, my beloved.

Amine With *Schriften*.

Philip With the curse and blessing of our destiny. (*kisses her*)

Act V scene 1.

Philip We are approaching dangerous waters, *Krantz*.

Krantz Yes, it should be the most notorious hurricane area in the world.

Philip Have we passed the Andamans and Nicobars yet?

Krantz We should be very near them, but this darkening weather would indicate that we already passed them.

Philip What does the barometer say?

Krantz It's constantly going down.

Philip Then we must immediately send down the small sails and topgallant yards. We will strike top-gallant masts. All heavy cargo must be transported down, and we must lash the cannons.

Krantz I have already ordered all this.

Philip Excellent, *Krantz*. You are the ideal first mate. You read my thoughts before I thought them myself.

Krantz We'll manage the storm, captain. Not even *Schriften* has done anything to trouble our journey.

Philip I have also almost been worried about his placidity. Not even a hint at the crew, no complaint or expression of dissatisfaction, for some reason he has disciplined himself.

Krantz Maybe out of respect of Amine.

Philip That's actually how it seems, Krantz.

A sailor Captain! A heavy squall!

Philip Let it come! – Or else he is brooding on some evil plan. His passivity actually worries me more than his evil.

(Heavy storm blast. Maximal wind machine. Thunder and lightning.)

Krantz Do you think he can invoke bad weather?

Philip No, I don't think so. Man has always in his vanity imagined he could rule nature and influence weather and wind, but Schriften is not that stupid.

Sailor 1 Captain! A ship to windward!

Sailor 2 It runs before the wind!

Philip Do you think they can see us, Krantz?

Krantz It's hard to say. The sea is white of foam which should ruin the sight more to them than to us, since the light is behind them. We see them only as a shadow, but the risk is they can only see the whiteness of the foam and storm.

(A ship in full sail is seen coming straight on.)

Philip You mean they could ram us?

Krantz Chances are minimal, but the risk is there.

Sailor 1 Captain! They are not changing course! They are coming straight on us!

sailor 2 They can't see us!

Krantz They are only a pistol-shot away! Our storm stay-sail is torn asunder! We can't steer!

Philip Helm up!! Quickly! It's our only chance!

Krantz They are breaking straight at us! They can't give way even if they see us!

Sailor 1 Helm is up, captain!

Amine (coming up) What's the excitement?

Philip Go down under deck, Amine!

Amine I am not afraid. But what's that ship steering straight at us?

Krantz They can't see us or can't give way.

Philip (applying a megaphone) Ship ahoy!

Krantz (calling and waving his hat) Ship ahoy!

Philip They don't see us.

Schriften (has unseen come up) Maybe they want to ram us intentionally?

Sailor 2 Captain, the ship is not responding. We can't fall off, since the foresails are torn and blown away.

Philip Then we are lost!

Sailor 1 Ten ells left! They will cleave us in two!

Philip Prepare to jump over to them when we collide! Amine, hold fast to me!

Sailor 2 Here it comes!

(The ship comes straight on but glides through them. This could only be made on film or on a theatre with a film screen. You can make a great shadow sweep across the stage while at the same time the ship on the screen passes over.)

Krantz How is this possible?

Sailor 2 The ghost ship! The ghost ship!

Amine Philip! Behold your father!

(You see a brief momentary glimpse of the aged hollow-eyed captain up to the left aft on the passing ship.)

Schriftten *(clenches his raised fist in fury against the sight)* Go at last to hell, you damned accursed devil! *(William van der Decken and the ship vanish at once.)*

Amine Philip, it's over.

Krantz The ship just disappeared. It glided through us and disappeared.

Sailor 1 Did you mark the indifferent crew on board? They grinned as if they thought it was funny!

Krantz Yes, they smiled scornfully at our terror and the confusion they caused.

Philip I saw him, Amine, I saw him! And he saw me!

Amine You were rather like each other.

Krantz Captain, you have more experience of this ship than I. What does it mean?

Philip You experienced it yourself in the Strait of Maghellan, Krantz. You know what it means.

Schriftten Shipwreck, destruction and death, he-he!

Philip Now he begins!

Krantz We can manage the storm, Philip! That's not the worst of it!

Philip What is the worst?

Krantz The dispiritedness of the men! That's what we have to fight!

Philip Down with the rudder! Let's run before the wind like the ghost ship! This storm is just a trifle! Extra rum rations to all, if we only make the storm!

Krantz We make the storm, Philip!

Sailor 1 Did you hear that, boys? The captain offers rum, if we only put some effort to it!

Sailor 2 What are we waiting for?

Sailor 3 Up aloft! Ahoy!

Philip Course north-northwest!

Sailor 4 Ay ay, captain!

Philip Amine, do you think you could administer the rum?

Amine Of course. *(goes down)*

Philip Well, Schriftten, this time there will be no shipwreck!

Schriftten No, but there will be something else. Ships can burn and go aground, for example, he-he!

Philip Not on the Indian Ocean in this weather.

Schriftten Tomorrow is another day, captain, he-he!

Philip Thanks anyway for not aggravating the crisis.

Schriftten I bide my time, captain, I bide my time!

Philip Why did you clench your fist at my father?
Schriften It's a thing between him and me. That's by the way the least you can do. All the others did nothing. Is that better? (*leaves with a menacing grin*)
Krantz What is he up to, captain?
Philip Never mind. The storm isn't over yet. (*also Krantz leaves*)

All suspect that this ship never will reach a harbour again, but no one dares to say so, since all know it. But I have seen you, father, and you have come closer. For each time we get closer to each other. It could only lead to conciliation and that I at last may embrace you. We shall find peace in the end, father, with or without that *Schriften*!

(*The storm grows worse, the howling of the wind and thunder are maximised, and the scene is drowned in storm clouds and fog.*)

Scene 2. The raft.

(*When the fogs clear you see the raft glide in on the scene. Only Schriften is awake by the helm. A casual sail is hanging on a provisional mast. Most in front are Philip and Krantz. The others are more or less done for.*)

Philip (*wakes up, groggy*) Where am I?
Krantz (*tired*) We are still on the same raft.
Philip Krantz, tell me that everything was a nightmare.
Krantz Nightmares you always only have alone. I am with you in this reality. So it is not a dream.
Philip Can't we wish it to be and become a dream?
Krantz It will surely be a dream, if we only die first.
Philip I must not die as long as Amine lives.
Krantz We don't know that she lives.
Philip Tell me again where we are, Krantz. I keep forgetting it all the time.
Krantz We are under the sun of the Equator somewhere around New Guinea. We had passed Celebes and were close to the Moluccas when we had really bad weather.
Philip And then we foundered?
Krantz Yes, we foundered on a sandbank, where we had to abandon ship.
Philip Was that how we ended up on the raft?
Krantz Yes, that was how we ended up on the raft.
Philip But wasn't it larger?
Krantz It was double its present size, and we also had all our boats.
Philip What happened? Remind me!
Krantz The sun is obscuring our brains. That's how it is in the tropics.
Philip That's why it's so important that we don't lose our memory. Tell me how it was.

Krantz We were attacked by Malayan pirates. Your crew and the troupes then rowed away with the ship's treasury, and the pirates pursued them, while you remained on the raft with Amine, and I followed you.

Philip They caught up with all the boats?

Krantz Yes. The pirates killed all our men and disappeared with the treasury.

Philip But that was only half the disaster.

Krantz Yes. We never reached land. We went too slow, so most of us that were left decided to cut the raft. We were against it.

Philip We had built the raft in two parts, so that it easily could be cut if necessary. Wasn't it so?

Krantz That's how it was, But we were on the sailing part while Amine and the victuals were on the other. While we slept our own men cut the raft, and here we are now. The raft is lighter and sails better, but we don't reach land anyway.

Philip Amine hid some water and crusts for us, Krantz, when the others pleased to throw the supplies over board.

Krantz They only think of themselves.

Philip I can never forgive them. They separated me from my wife without asking me.

Krantz They knew you would never agree to it.

Philip I just hope she has it better than we.

Krantz She could hardly have it any worse.

Philip Krantz, I have a plan. (*whispers*)

Krantz It would be a bloody revenge. But they would be on their guard.

Philip (*whispers*)

Krantz Philip, I understand your vengefulness although I can't share it. But you are still the captain. I have to obey orders.

Philip So we'll do it.

(*They are already lying by the mast, but unnoticed they cut the main sheet, and suddenly the whole sail falls over the crew. Only Schriften is not covered.*)

Now!

(*Philip and Krantz grab sabres and cut down everything that moves under the sail. You see bloodstains appearing everywhere.*)

Over board with them, every one! They are traitors all! Here's for Amine! To the sharks with you! To hell with you!

Schriften (*has watched it all with some amusement and starts helping*) Now the raft will be very much lighter indeed!

Philip I would have preferred you going over board as well, Schriften, but you always get away.

Schriften Trust me.

A sailor Captain! Spare me! I had no part in it!

Philip Bring him out! Who is it? Well, spare him.

The sailor Captain, all these misfortunes are no fault of ours. Everything happened after that damned ghost ship rammed us.

Schriften Quite right.

Philip Blame the ghost ship! I blame your greed and short-sightedness! You have all died because you only thought of yourselves!

Schriften Aren't you also only thinking of yourself, Philip van der Decken?

Philip What are you saying, you water snake?

Schriften You are blinded by your missing Amine. Therefore you don't know what you are doing. Never have I seen such a brutal order be executed, and yet I thought I had seen it all.

Philip They were all traitors, thieves and murderers blinded by greed!

Schriften No, they were all just human. But you are chasing an inhuman being, and therefore all these inhuman accidents befall us.

Philip What do you mean, you devil!

Schriften Stop chasing the Flying Dutchman, and you will find happiness and your wife again.

Philip Avaunt, tempter from hell!

The sailor But he is maybe right.

Philip (to the sailor) Shut up, or I'll throw you over board!

(to Schriften) You could as well claim, you one-eyed reptile, that all accidents started after we took you on board! Each and every time you entered my life it has been like a prelude to unsurveyable misfortunes! What do you really know about the Flying Dutchman?

Schriften Only that he is not *my* father, he-he!

Philip (grabs hold of him) If you never have had anything to do with him, what right have you then to try to persuade me and my wife to abandon our devoted mission?

Schriften The right of reason, captain!

Philip You tried to persuade my wife to go home when we were in India! But she refused! You try to persuade me to give up the hunt for the mystery of my father, but I refuse, because he is my father, and I am the only one who can feel responsibility enough to be able to save him from his most involuntary situation, whatever that is! Is that unreasonable? And you have separated me and Amine although we refused!

Schriften No, I haven't. I only wanted her not to be involved in your destruction!

Philip What kind of destruction?

Schriften That you want to save your father.

Philip Is saving another's life or soul a destruction? Can it ever be? Is that reasonable? Only you have destroyed my life constantly again and again by introducing all my set-backs and catastrophes just for my good will of trying to settle the case and mystery of my father, and you have had no reason at all for that! Talk about reason! I am tired of your curse, which is worse than that of my father! My only destruction was that I ever happened to meet with you, damned inhuman monster of ill will! *(lifts him up and throws him far out into the sea. He screams and disappears with a loud splash.)*

(cries) Return now from the dead if you can! *(shakes his fist after him)*

Krantz Philip, calm down. You have had a sunstroke.
Philip No, at last I have done something sensible and reasonable!
Krantz You don't know what you are doing! You are raving from hunger and thirst!
Philip No, Krantz, I am mad after the loss of Amine! (*breaks up in tears*)
Krantz (*takes care of him. To the sailor:*) He is all washed up and finished.
Sailor Now at least we have enough water and crusts.
Krantz Drink, Philip, for God's sake!
Philip Well then, let me drink, and then let me die. (*drinks and collapses*)
Krantz We must reach land soon.
Sailor With so much unloaded it goes much easier now.
Krantz But what's over there?
Sailor A sail! We are saved!
Krantz Yes. It's a small Malayan pirogue. If we are lucky they are friendly.
Sailor It must come from Ternate.
Philip (*wakes*) Where am I? What has happened?
Krantz (*to the sailor*) We must get him away from the sun. He is balmy again.
Philip Where is Amine?
Krantz We are on our way to her, Philip. She might have arrived at Ternate.
Philip Alas, I'll never see her again! (*falls into a swoon*)
Krantz He is really finished.
Sailor Yes, and we also soon.
Krantz If this is our salvation it almost came too late.

Scene 3. Tidore.

Commandant What are you saying?
Servant It's perfectly true, your excellency!
Commandant It must be a mermaid they have found then?
Servant No, a white woman quite alone.
Commandant With the cannibals of Papua?
Servant Yes. They have nourished her like a mother and now brought her here.
Commandant Is she from Portugal?
Servant She seems to be Dutch.
Commandant Beautiful?
Servant There is nothing wrong with her.
Commandant Well, bring in the miracle so that I may take a look at her!
Servant Yes, your excellency. (*leaves*)
Commandant Here you live alone and starved in exile as chief of the most extremely remote colony of Portugal with only monkeys and cannibals around. And then comes a deserted white woman drifting by on a raft. It sounds like some kind of hallucination!
Servant (*enters with Amine*) Here she is, your excellency.

Commandant Madame! (*bowing fawningly but very politely as to a Queen.*)

Amine Are you the Portuguese commandant here on Tidore?

Commandant At your service, Madame.

Amine I am wife of captain van der Decken on the *Utrecht*. By an accident we have been separated. Have you heard of any shipwrecked from that ship?

Commandant Has it foundered?

Amine We stranded on a sandbank and had to evacuate on boats and a raft in two parts. The boats were attacked by pirates who killed all on board. Only we on the raft survived.

Commandant You are alone then?

Amine No, my husband and some others were on the raft. But one night when we slept the two parts of the raft seem to have been separated. I haven't seen my husband since then.

Commandant Where was this?

Amine Off New Guinea.

Commandant And so you drifted ashore on Papua.

Amine Yes.

Commandant And no one has offended you?

Amine I was better protected by the cannibals than by my own countrymen.

Commandant Does that include your husband?

Amine Of course not.

Commandant You will be equally protected here. We will treat you like a princess. You can regard our entire colony as your court. All will be subject to you, and most subject of all will I be constantly guarding your safety. (*kissing her hand*)

Amine (*withdrawing her hand*) I only want to find my husband.

Commandant No hurry! Enjoy the paradise while you are in it! Perhaps you will find another man as good as your husband. He is probably dead anyway.

Amine Your intentions are not honourable, mynheer.

Commandant There is even a priest here who could marry us.

Amine I would gladly confide in him but rather concerning my funeral than any marriage with you.

Commandant (*calling*) Bring on the priest!

(*softly*) I beg your forgiveness if I insulted you.

Amine I assume you haven't seen any white woman for very long, judging from your behaviour.

Commandant Your guess is correct, - madame?

Amine Amine van der Decken.

(*Exactly as she tells her name the servant arrives with the priest, who starts.*)

Mateo Amine!

Amine Father Mateo! (*Both are highly surprised and alarmed.*)

Mateo What are you doing here?

Amine What are you doing here yourself?

Commandant Do you know each other?

Amine All too well.

Mateo (to the commandant) I was the guest in the house of this lady in Antwerp for some years.

Amine But how did you get here?

Mateo I was sent from Lisbon as missionary to Formosa. From there I came here.

Amine I am searching for my husband. He was captain of the *Utrecht*, and I accompanied him.

Mateo You should have stayed at home.

Amine Maybe, but now I am here. We lost the ship and were separated when a raft broke into two. From Papua I was escorted here by friendly natives.

Commandant Cannibals!

Mateo Let me handle this.

Commandant I know you, goat in sacred robes! Never will I allow you to be alone with her!

Mateo (ignores him) *Amine*, come with me to Goa. From there you could easily get home to Antwerp. If your husband lives he will also come home.

Amine But he must be here among these islands.

Commandant No Dutch ship has been sighted in these waters, and neither any shipwrecked.

Mateo Come with me to Goa. I will be your lifeguard and friend.

Commandant Dirty old priest!

Mateo Don't mind him. He has been here alone too long.

Amine Mynheer commandant, it seems to be wisest to follow this Jesuit to Goa. I would rather trust him than you.

Commandant Believe me: he will never let you go!

Amine (smiling) Believe me: I have learned to handle him and thrown him out before. Take me to the ship, father Mateo.

Mateo There is one for Timor this week.

Amine Then we shall be on board. (*Mateo escorts her out*).

Commandant By all the most holy sacraments of hell! There I lost my chance! And it will never come back! Damned be my life in this infernal paradise! (*bursts into tears of despair and self-pity.*)

Scene 4. On the way to Goa. Storm.

Mateo Vrouw *Amine*, I beg you to forgive me the awkward unpleasantness I caused you in Antwerp.

Amine It's forgotten since long.

Mateo At the same time I wish to assure you that I really had no shameful intentions.

Amine (smiles) But you gave me a good reason to drive you out.

Mateo But what were you really doing?

Amine You know very well. I was only dreaming.

Mateo It was more than just dreams.

Amine You always spied on me, father Mateo, and are doing so still.

Mateo I only try to understand you.

Amine A man can never understand a woman.

Mateo I am not a man. I am a priest. I am above my sex.

Amine No man or woman is above her sex and least of all a priest. To try to rise above the laws of nature is supreme presumption and can only lead to your fall.

Mateo You yourself have a reputation of haughtiness, Amine, especially here on board right now. The sailors are afraid and pray to their saints' pictures and evoke the protection and grace of the virgin Mary, but you show their faith only scorn and disdain, as if it was all superstition.

Amine Is it not superstitious to pray to pictures and worship goddesses?

Mateo Amine, I always suspected that you never really left islam.

Amine You may suspect whatever. I have nothing to do with your suspicions.

Mateo Still you are converted and baptized and married in the holy Church. Do you mean to admit that you still are an unbeliever?

Amine Unbeliever, father, is an ugly word which is used by muslims about Christians, like the Jews call non-Jews *Gojim*, like we call all non-Christians heathens. It's a deprecatory word. Don't use it in my presence.

Mateo But which religion is really yours?

Amine I embrace the divine universal presence. Isn't that enough?

Mateo No, Amine, it's not enough. You must also embrace his only begotten son and the holy spirit. Or else you are not embraced and protected by the Church.

Amine Does that make me a heretic?

Mateo Yes, in the eyes of the Church.

Amine I never embraced any religion, father Mateo, since I only found hypocrisy in them all. My father embraced islam only to make his living and to win the hand of a princess. My mother was born muslim but scorned the prophet and enjoyed the blasphemies of the *Arabian Nights*. I never met any Christian who wasn't a greedy sanctimonious hypocrite who only loved himself. You and father Seysen were two of the worst when you sniffed on me to by my scents find an excuse to report me to the inquisition.

Mateo But it did smell funny, vrouw Amine. You had taken witchcraft drugs.

Amine In that case all medicine is witchcraft. You know nothing about drugs, father Mateo. My father was the greatest medicinal expert in Antwerp.

Mateo You haven't answered my question. Will you say yes or no to Christ and the Church?

Captain (interrupts) Go below deck! The storm is increasing!

Mateo If we are to founder we might as well remain.

Captain How do you know we will founder?

Amine No, captain! We will not founder. I am a captain's wife. I know about these things. (*indicates her heart*) We already made the storm. The worst is over.

Mateo Answer my question, Amine!

Amine Father Mateo, it was the founder of your religion who said, that who isn't for us is against us. May then an ordinary human being be neither for nor against?

Mateo You only wriggle about.

Amine No, father Mateo, I must owe you an answer forever. (*leaves with calm*)

Captain A brave girl!

Mateo She is brave by her cold-blooded indifference to danger, which makes her dangerous.

Captain What do you mean?

Mateo (*in confidence*) She is in touch with supernatural forces!

Captain (*annoyed*) Shame on you, father! What do you try to frighten me with? The Flying Dutchman? We haven't even seen him, and everyone who hasn't seen him must ignore all such supernatural nonsense as humbug. (*leaves*)

Mateo Amine, Amine, one day I will learn who you really are!

Scene 5. Tidore.

Commandant (*in a bad temper*) Bring on the two unchanged blackguards!
(*Philip and Krantz are brought in as prisoners.*)

So, you imbecile parasites of Dutch satanists, you have taken arms against the Portuguese sovereignty! Do you know that it immediately condemns you to being shot without questioning or pardon?

Philip Señor Commandant, with all respect, we are shipwrecked Dutch sailors who were drifted ashore on Ternate. The king of Ternate forced us to take part in a war against Tidore. When the fleet from Ternate retired we voluntarily remained on Tidore and surrendered to you. That should be enough evidence for our innocence.

Commandant Shipwrecked? From which ship? At once!

Philip *Utrecht.*

Commandant It's true that such a ship stranded on New Guinea, and it seems credible that you as Dutch come from this ship. The captain was a certain van der Decken. Do you know him? (*Philip and Krantz look at each other.*)

Krantz Yes, he was the captain.

Commandant Did he perish or survive?

Krantz He probably perished with most of the crew.

Commandant How did you get away?

Philip We left the *Utrecht* in three boats and two rafts. The boats carried the ship treasury. These were attacked and plundered by Malayan pirates, and every man on board was killed. Only we on the raft got away.

Commandant Do you have any evidence that the captain perished?

Krantz No.

Commandant What were your ranks?

Krantz I was third mate, and this man was pilot.

Commandant (satisfied) Gentlemen, I offer you freedom on only one condition. I want you to attest a certificate confirming the death of Philip van der Decken.

Philip Why?

Commandant (angry) Because I want to!

Philip But no one has seen him dead. We can't know this for sure.

Commandant I don't care! The only important thing is that he is dead on paper! Choose for yourselves! Freedom or death!

Krantz So you actually compel us to make this strange testimony?

Commandant You seem to understand that you have no choice. (*enter servant*)

Servant Your excellency, another shipwrecked Dutchman has been found.

Commandant Dead or alive?

Servant Very much alive. He seems not to have taken part in the attack by the people of Ternate.

Commandant Bring him on! No, by the way, I will speak with him myself first. Where is he?

Servant He is kept in the arrest.

Commandant Good. Keep these gentlemen watched in the meanwhile. (*leaves*)

Philip Why does the commandant want us to attest to the death of our captain?

Servant The captain's wife drifted ashore here, and the commandant went mad about her.

Philip Is she still here?

Servant No, she got away. She went to Goa by Timor with a priest. (*Philip gives a sigh of relief.*) But the commandant thinks he can have her back if he can prove that her husband is dead.

Krantz He seems rather desperate.

Servant She was the first European woman he has seen here during his assignation, and she happened to be a beauty.

Commandant (outside) I must ask you to identify your two shipmates. They claim to be pilot and third mate. (*enter commandant with Schriften.*)

Schriften (diabolically cheerful) Captain van der Decken! And mate Krantz! What a happy surprise, he-he! (*giggles worse than ever.*)

Commandant By all bloody saints! Is this captain van der Decken?

Schriften Yes, and first mate Krantz from *Utrecht*. We foundered together, didn't we? He-he!

Commandant So you have deceived me, gentlemen! So this is the live captain Philip van der Decken I have in front of me, husband of my future bride! (*Philip wants to attack.*) Hold him! (*He is arrested.*) It doesn't help, captain van der Decken! You can't avoid your destiny! This is even better than if you only had attested to the captain's death. Now I can organise your death myself and prove it to my beloved Amine!

Philip Señor Commandant, you must be out of your mind. Even if you kill me Amine will never marry you.

Commandant (beats him) Hold your tongue! You have nothing to say, you worthless bastard! It's your own fault if you put your wife adrift among all the wildest islands of the world! She promised me to marry me if I could prove your death!

Philip She said so only to get rid of you.

Commandant (checking his rage with difficulty) Get them out! Lock them up! Shoot them! Dig them down, both of them! And then give me the head of the captain!

Krantz Señor commandant, if you murder us without cause you shall never know where the gold of *Utrecht* ended up.

Commandant (to Krantz) I spare you if you tell me.

Krantz Only captain van der Decken knows.

Commandant Then we will have to torture him! Unto death, if necessary! Take them away! (*Philip and Krantz are brought out.*)

(*to Schriften*) And you, you sacramental toad, what are you grinning at? Do you think this is funny? Take him away! He has ruined my day! (*Schriften is taken away.*)

O God, now I will never again see a woman again! (*buries his face in his hands, more desperate than ever.*)

Scene 6. Goa.

Amine (reads a letter) "Madame, I very much regret your husband's untimely death. He fell into our hands when he from Ternate took part in the attack by the Dutch friendly people of Ternate on our colony, and it was with difficulty we could save his life badly wounded. He then took part in an expedition with us and his own mate Krantz to New Guinea, where he was seized by a serious attack of fever and went under. His last words were of tender concern for you. His mate sailor Krantz and his pilot mynheer Schriften send you their deepest regrets and confirm that what I write is true. I am very sorry. I wait for you. I love you.

Your most humble servant,

Jesus Maria Salvador de São Pedro e Paulo de Belem,

Commandant of Portuguese Tidore."

That fool! He lies! But obviously Philip was on Ternate, the next island, just a stone's throw away. (*There is a knock.*) Come in! (*enter father Mateo*)

Father Mateo.

Mateo Are you happy with your apartment?

Amine Yes, thank you, it is much better here than in the monastery.

Mateo Have you come to terms with your hostess?

Amine Very well. She is kindness itself, and her son is very affectionate.

Mateo A ship just arrived from East India.

Amine With news?

Mateo Yes, unfortunately. A Portuguese called Pedro was in the Commandant's service and confirms your husband's death.

Amine Where is he?

Mateo I took the liberty to bring him here. Come in, Pedro. (*enter Pedro*) Tell us what you know of Philip van der Decken.

Pedro The Commandant promised to spare his life if he showed where the gold from *Utrecht* was buried was hidden on New Guinea. He sailed there with captain van der Decken, mate Krantz, two ships and a Portuguese crew. But we were all would be buried on New Guinea.

Amine Also Krantz?

Pedro Yes.

Amine But the Commandant didn't come back while you were there?

Pedro No, I left before.

Amine Then there is still hope.

Mateo No, Amine, there is not. That commandant was the devil himself, and you know it. He never intended to let Philip and Krantz get out of his hands alive.

Amine You don't know Philip.

Mateo And you don't know the world.

Amine (showing the letter) The Commandant has lied to me himself! He wrote that Philip was dead before he went with the expedition! All is just lies!

Pedro Madame, forgive me, but they were two Dutch prisoners against two armed Portuguese war-ships with troupes.

Amine All is just lies! He uses Krantz and Schriften as witnesses, but none of them would lie to me, not even Schriften!

Pedro I am just saying how it was. I am not lying.

Amine But you haven't seen them dead! No one has seen them dead! Out with you, both of you! (*drives them out*)

Philip, you are alive! I know it! I feel it! But I have to get certainty! There is only one safe way. (*takes out her drugs and makes a concoction*) Philip, if you are on the other side, then come to me from the dead! If you are alive, I will find you alive! (*takes the potion. The door is opened cautiously, and Mateo and Pedro are seen spying on her.*) Philip! Where are you? (*throws away the glass. Philip is seen far above the stage to the left, spying like from a rig.*) Philip, I see you! You are on the way to Goa! You have made it! But where is Krantz?

Philip (to himself) Alas, Krantz, my best friend and brother of destiny, who shared a thousand dangers with me only to not make it through the last one! You organised cleverly the mutiny against the conceited commandant with the help of the golden treasure, which you left the greedy colonialists to fight about while we got away, only to happen to a tiger on Sumatra! Who is there now in life for me but Amine, and who knows if she is still alive? Hold out, Amine! I am on my way to Goa! (*The light on him fades out – he disappears.*)

Amine (in trance) Philip! You are alive! You are on your way to me! I thank my father and mother for their arts! But poor Krantz! Shall I then invoke him from the other side? No, then I risk to get the commandant as well.

Mateo (breaking in, furious) Witchcraft! Pedro! You are my witness! You witch of Satan, now you are stuck and proved guilty! You invoke spirits from the other side of the grave!

Amine (wakes up) Father Mateo! You have spied! As always!

Mateo And I have a witness! You are not getting away this time! You practise pagan witchcraft!

Amine (down on her knees) No, I was searching for my husband Philip in the world of dreams, the world we all have in common, the most sacred of all worlds, where you always can get into touch with those you can't meet!

Mateo You witch! You are incorrigible! You confirm your culpability yourself! You persist in your sin! Pedro! Get some priests from the inquisition on the other side of the market!

Pedro Father Mateo, she is a suffering captain's wife and miss only her husband!

Mateo Do as I say! Or else you will be complicit in the crime!

(Pedro leaves perturbed.)

Amine Inhuman priest, have you then no decency in your soul? Can't you understand anything? Are you completely empty in your head?

Mateo Abusive insults won't help you, bitch!

Amine Father, are you representing a religion? In that case it's the religion of only stupidity and ignorance itself of only vanity and conceit!

Mateo You are even blaspheming!

Amine No, I tell the truth! If you call yourself a representative of Christianity and do what you do in the name of Christianity you are complicit in all the premeditated murders that Christianity has on its conscience!

Mateo (crossing himself) We don't kill! We save people from hell when necessary by purifying them from heresy by the holy stake!

Amine You brainwashed murderer, have you no better argument?

Mateo You talk with the devil's own tongue!

Amine May a lone deserted woman, betrayed by her own, then not defend herself?

Mateo You shall defend yourself to the holy inquisition! *(Pedro arrives with two inquisitors in long black robes and cornets: only the eyes are seen.)*

Amine No one can defend herself against the inquisition, and you know that very well, you false priest who murders in the name of God!

Mateo Mark well her blasphemies! Take her out! This sailor saw it all and can testify with me to the witchcraft of the witch! She shall be prosecuted!

(Her hands are fettered behind her back.)

Amine I knew from the beginning, you pathetic eunuch in holy disguise, that you as a perverted monster only wished me harm! Now you will have your way with me! You can never get me, but instead you will have the satisfaction to see me die!

Mateo (crossing himself) She doesn't know what she is saying! Take her out!

Pedro Do you know what you are doing, father Mateo?

Mateo Shut up! Will you be an accomplice?

Pedro I haven't done anything.

Mateo I could report you for a crime of omission if you don't testify against her about what you saw!

Pedro We did wrong to spy on her.

Mateo Or else we would never have known the truth!

Amine That's all I sought! I only wanted to know if my husband was alive!

Mateo He is dead!

Amine No, he lives! (*She is taken out by the inquisitors.*)

Mateo Pedro, you testified yourself that he couldn't have had any chance.

Pedro And do you think he will leave you in peace if he is dead and you kill his wife?

Mateo Come to your senses, man! Are you possessed by the devil like Amine?

Pedro I thought you had seen the Flying Dutchman.

Mateo That's a totally different issue. This is a hysterical imaginative woman who practises witchcraft without knowing what she is doing!

Pedro Father Mateo, you have gone too far.

Mateo No, it's she who has gone too far! (*drives out Pedro and leaves himself.*)

Scene 7. The Inquisition Tribunal.

Inquisitor 1 What is your name?

Amine (bound like before) Amine van der Decken.

2 Where do you come from?

Amine My husband is a Flemish Catholic from Antwerp, but his parents were from Amsterdam. I was born on Zanzibar but was brought up in Antwerp.

Inq. 1 So you are of Arabian descent.

Amine Yes, through my mother. But my father was of Jewish origin.
(*All are terrified.*)

Inq. 1 But still he was a Catholic like you?

Amine Yes, but never thoroughly, like myself.

Inq. 1 What do you mean?

Amine I mean that the church I was baptized and married in as a Catholic is not the same one that is prosecuting me, from which I detach myself.

Inq. 2 (lower) Well answered.

Inq. 1 What do you know about your husband?

Amine He was captain on the *Utrecht* of the East India Company, which was lost outside New Guinea.

Inq. 1 How did you arrive here?

Amine My husband and I were separated after the shipwreck by other misfortunes. Father Mateo brought me here with the promise that I would be able to go on home to Antwerp.

Inq. 1 Have you any fortune?

Amine No, for it belongs to my husband.

Inq. 1 What do you own yourself here in Goa?

Amine Nothing except what is in the care of father Mateo.

Inq. 1 Do you know why you are here?

Amine I am here because of false accusations by father Mateo of something I didn't do.

Inq. 1 You know very well that father Mateo and the sailor Pedro both were witnesses of irregularities on your side.

Amine My conscience does not accuse me of having done anything evil.

Inq. 1 So you are not aware of your crime?

Amine I have not committed any.

Inq. 1 So neither do you confess anything?

Amine No.

Inq. 1 Then we must torture you.

Amine You can't force any confession out of me since I haven't committed any crime.

Inq. 2 You said that you detached yourself from another church than the one you were baptized and married in. Could you more closely define the church you will have no part in?

Amine That church which sticks to superstition and persecutes free thinkers.

Inq. 2 What do you mean by superstition?

Amine To believe in witchcraft.

Inq. 2 You don't believe in witchcraft then?

Amine No.

Inq. 2 The witnesses say that you invoked the spirits of deceased and that you had contact with your husband across the Indian Ocean. Is that not witchcraft?

Amine No.

Inq. 2 What is it then?

Amine Something natural, like some people can see beyond the horizon or into the future. Remote viewing is a natural gift for some.

Inq. 2 Who are the free thinkers you say that the church is persecuting?

Amine For instance jews, muslims and so called heretics.

Inq. 2 How would you define the heretics you say the church is persecuting?

Amine For instance those who refuse to worship relics, saints and the virgin Mary.

Inq. 2 So you believe in the sanctity of relics, saints and the virgin Mary?

Amine No, I believe only in God.

Inq. 2 And Jesus Christ?

Amine What about him?

Inq. 2 Do you believe in him?

Amine As what?

Inq. 2 As the only begotten son of God.

Amine No.

Inq. 2 I am sorry, but then you have excluded yourself from the community of the Church, and the Church can only save your soul by the stake, since you once received the sacraments of baptism and marriage. I am sincerely sorry.

Amine Hypocrites!

Inq. 1 I warn you. Abuse can only aggravate your case.
Mateo My child! My child! Come to your senses!!
Amine There is my slayer! Father Mateo, your grief is a mockery which only makes you pathetic!
Mateo We only want your best! We only want you out of here!
Amine It's easy. You just have to release me.
Mateo It's not possible unless you confess your sins!
Amine Father Mateo, I have no sins to confess. You know that who brought me here. All the sins I am punished for are your own.
Mateo Well then, let's assume it is as you say. Let's assume that your contact with your husband was natural and that he lives. Would you then not like to see him again?
Amine You know very well that's all I desire in life.
Mateo So let us then save you!
Amine How?
Mateo By your confession to your misdemeanour!
Amine How could I confess to any offence I didn't commit?
Mateo Don't you love your husband then?
Amine More than anything.
Mateo Then sacrifice your pride to him!
Amine I sacrificed everything for him. I will gladly sacrifice my life for him. But, gentlemen inquisitors, if I confess myself guilty of a crime I didn't commit, will I not then be burned at the stake for my confession of guilt?

(silence)

I see through you all, and I curse the church you represent, and may that curse and damnation affect all who in the name of that church persecute and murder innocents!

Inq. 1 Do we need to hear any more? She is obstinate! She refuses to confess to her crime although it is proved!

Amine Prove that it was a crime! Prove that the spirits of the deceased don't exist! Prove that I saw wrong when I saw that my man was alive! Prove me to be wrong, and I will confess that I was.

Inq. 2 Assuming that these spirits you were in contact with were evil spirits and not the deceased ones you were searching for, assuming that you were mistaken – is this possible?

Amine Father Mateo can testify himself that it is impossible to be mistaken when you meet a spirit. He has himself met the Flying Dutchman. If I am guilty of witchcraft for meeting with spirits, he is as well.

Mateo (furious) The witch tries to drag me down into her own perdition!

Inq. 1 Is it true, father Mateo, that you actually have met the Flying Dutchman?

Amine He can't deny it, since he was together with a whole ship's crew on the occasion. Wasn't *Batavia* the name of the ship?

Inq. 1 We will have to investigate father Mateo's case later. I hereby declare Amine van der Decken proved guilty of witchcraft by associating with evil spirits, since she admits it herself. Take her out! (*Amine is taken out, looking at Mateo.*)

Mateo Can nothing save her?

Inq. 2 You yourself, father Mateo, brought her here and had her condemned. Do we discern some trace of regret of your pious zeal?

Inq. 1 We need her for the great autodafé. We must fill the quota.

Inq. 2 You had better look over your own house, father Mateo. It might be your examination next time. (*The inquisitors break up.*)

Mateo (the last one left) What have I done!

Scene 8. The autodafé.

(*Pompous procession. Sumptuous display and organ music. Church bells. A podium for the inquisitors and a throne for the high inquisitor by the cathedral. The prisoners are brought in pinioned accompanied by priests and monks. Amine as the worst criminal is brought in last. Finally five corpses are brought in with coffins behind them. All monks and inquisitors are dressed in black robes as Dominicans. Inquisitor 1 ascends a tribune and preaches:*)

Inq. 1 Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! We are gathered here today to commemorate the memory of the passion of Jesus Christ by this universal manifestation of justice and mercy. Our holy inquisition is like the ark of Noah with that distinction, that as all wild animals that entered the ark also left it as wild animals, so has the wild wolf souls that entered the inquisition come out again as pious lambs. That's also the case with the five who passed away during the process of inquisition exercises, the burning of whose bodies with the living will ensure them the same eternal beatitude as the living. With great dolour the Holy Church delivers those to the holy fire whose hardness of heart and gravity of their crimes has made it possible for the Church to forgive them, so that they by this death by purification still may enter paradise. Those who change their minds and confess their crimes in the last moment will be strangled before the fire is lit. Thereby our Holy Church alleviates the severity of the mundane justice and law by granting the condemned that mildness and mercy that they will be punished with death but without any letting of blood. May the decency and morality of the church law be executed. Bring forth the condemned to the stakes!

(*Seven condemned are brought forth and fettered by the stakes, Amine in the middle.*)

Philip (s voice in the crowd) No! (*Turbulence where he is. He breaks forth and rushes to Amine.*) Amine! Amine!

Amine Philip! Philip!

(*Turbulence. All priests, monks and soldiers try to stop him.*)

Philip She is innocent!

Mateo Philip van der Decken! And he lives!

Inq. 1 Stop him!

Amine (crying loud all over the square) There you see that he lives! Can you have more concrete evidence?

Philip Amine! Don't leave me now! Not after all this!

Amine Philip!

(Knights brutally strike Philip down just as he reaches Amine.

Blood gushes forth from his mouth.)

Philip! They have killed him!

Inq. 1 Order! Order!

Inq. 2 Take him away! Who is it?

Inq. 3 Obviously Philip van der Decken, her husband.

Inq. 4 How inconvenient!

Inq. 5 Seize that raving man! He doesn't know what he is doing!

Pedro (steps forth) I will take care of him. *(to Amine)* He isn't dead. Amine, forgive us, for we don't know what we are doing!

Inq. 2 The man is unaccountable! He doesn't know what he is saying!

Inq. 3 Imprison him!

Pedro Now I see what you all are good for, holy inquisitors! You are just inhuman executioners in the business of grabbing the money of credulous people! You know that this lady Amine is a rich captain's wife, and only because of that you have brought her to the inquisition to execute her just to be able to seize her property! And the same accounts for all the three hundred victims that are to be burned here today!

Inq. 1 Silence him!

A knight You dare talk thus to the priests? *(kills him brutally)*

Inq. 2 Take care of the captain! Take him to the hospital and confine him with the other bedlamites! *(Inquisitors take care of and carry out Philip.)*

Inq. 3 Burn the corpse with the other corpses!

(Pedro is gathered to the other corpses.)

Mateo (desperate) Amine! All this is your own fault! If you had followed my advice this would not have happened! Still it's not too late! Repent! Confess your guilt!

Amine You piteous fool, would I humble myself to your murderers and beg them to strangle me instead? Remember this day, Mateo! It will haunt you as long as you live! There is only one thing in my life I have to regret: the day my husband saved you from death and gave you a safe retreat and refuge in our home! Nothing brought me any unluck in my life except the acquaintance with your hypocrisy, which if anything taught me to damn and despise your christian church forever! Don't forget me! My curse is worse than that of the Flying Dutchman!

Mateo Amine! For God's sake!

Amine Who do you think you are kidding? You are all lost in your own self-destruction!

Inq. 3 Silence her! *(Inquisitors gag her.)*

Amine Amine! Amine! Still it's not too late!

Inq. 1 Yes, father Mateo, now it is too late. Light the fires!

*(The fires are lighted. There is thick smoke. The victims start screaming heart-rendingly.
The whole scene is swept into smoke and darkness.)*

Scene 9.

Father Seysen alone.

Seysen (reading a letter) "My friend, brother and colleague. This is the last letter I will write to you, for I feel that I am now dying. All since the terrible autodafé, when our Amine was burned at the stake, I have been suffering from chronic sleeplessness and incurable anguish. I have tried to atone for my recklessness by taking care of the poor Philip, who never again will be fit as a captain. After his breakdown the asylum was the only thing for him, where I now for two years have tendered him day and night. His hair is all white nowadays, and sometimes his past brilliance shines through like the sun through storm clouds, but it will quickly pass, and he will sink again into the past and vanish into the realm of shadows, like a shadow of what he once was. I have now given up hope that he will ever get well again, at the same time as I now give up the struggle against my own destiny, my own curse, my own madness and the overwhelming bitter aftertaste of a failed and wasted life.

Your despondent brother,
Mateo."

A bitter tale of only tragedies and sufferings thereby only grows bitterer. Who will now take care of Philip? And what can I do? I am afraid, that the only thing to do is to contact Philip's relations and let them carry through their claims on his house and his fortune. That's all I can do. *(leaves despondent)*

Scene 10. On board the *Nostra Señora de Monte*.

Thick fog.

Various voices Where are we?

You can't see nothing!

We must be close to the Cape!

Never have I seen such a fog at the Cape!

I have.

But you are also old.

(A red light breaks through.)

What is it?

The sun!

It's the evening sun! It's sunset! She is setting red! Then we'll have a storm.

Not another one!

We've had enough!

The light is increasing.

(The red light gets more intensive, as if the world was on fire. It grows brighter and stronger.)

Never have I seen anything like this!

This is most irregular!

(Slowly the silhouette of a ship emerges in the background.)

Captain (drunk) Holy Saint Anthony, this is terrible! I have seen sinking ships, but I have never seen it happen backwards! Is it only me who is drunk, or is the entire reality gone absolutely bonkers?

Sailor 1 Captain, it must be the ghost ship.

Sailor 2 It must be the ghost ship!

Captain My lord, my maker and holy virgin Mary, woe me that I ever left my hammock this morning! *(goes down. Below deck:)* Where is my Madeira?

Voice (from the other ship, which now is risen completely and is lying close by.) Ahoy there!

sailor 1 They are putting out a boat!

Sailor 2 It's coming here!

Sailor 3 Whatever you do, don't let anyone on board!

The voice Hallo, good fellows! Give us a rope from forward!

Sailor 1 (to those closest) Never in my life!

Sailor 2 Let's pretend we don't exist.

Sailor 3 Perhaps they will leave us alone.

The voice You could have given me a side rope, mates.

(An old sailor comes climbing on board.) Where is the captain?

Sailor 1 What do you want?

Old sailor Have you no captain?

Sailor 2 He is gone hiding.

Old sailor Are we then dangerous? I am sorry, but we have had some very rough weather. Or else we wouldn't have troubled you. It almost seems as if we would never get around the Cape. The matter is, that we have some letters, that we would like to send home. Perhaps you could have the kindness to take care of them?

Sailor 1 Never in my life!

Sailor 2 Don't touch them!

Sailor 3 I am sorry, but I hope you will find another ship.

Old Sailor I can't understand this. No ship wants to receive our letters. Why are people so heartless? Can't they empathize with our situation? I don't know how many years we've struggled at this cape, there must be some kind of a curse on us, as if we were lost beyond the time dimension, and every ship we meet and contact is more unfriendly than the last. What is it with you? Are you not human? Don't you have wives and children of your own? Aren't you longing home for them like we? But we haven't seen our own for many years. You may though. Sailors should help each other, especially if they are in need. Or else it simply must get only worse.

(appealing) Please, I must insist. *(holds forth the letters and wants to give them over)* Can't you receive them? It's just ordinary letters, and most of them are love letters. There is nothing wrong or risky about them.

Sailor 3 We are sorry.

Sailor 1 Take the letters and throw them over board!

Sailor 2 We must ask you to immediately leave our ship.

Old sailor But this is tremendous. But I think you are only superstitious from fear of the unknown. You don't know what you are doing. You don't see your own good. I am just an ordinary sailor from an ordinary ship who just happened to have had the bad luck of getting stuck in struggle with a storm for I don't know how many years...

Sailor 3 How long have you been out?

Old sailor We don't know. The problems started when our almanack blew over board. Our chronometer can't be fixed, and we can never locate our latitude any more, for we can't perceive the right declination of the sun for the day. Our compass is only misleading, and our only sextant was smashed by a falling coffernail...

Philip (grey, worn and torn steps forth) Let me see your letters.

Old sailor Who are you?

Philip A passenger on my way from Goa to Holland. Like yourself, I have been out longer than I am aware of myself. *(The sailor takes out the letters and shows them to him.)*

Old sailor This is from our second mate to his wife in Amsterdam. She lives by the Waser Quay. It has been sealed for several years. We haven't been able to send it on.

Philip The Waser Quay isn't any more, my friend. It was demolished some years ago, and there is now a large dock.

Old sailor (surprised) It isn't possible! How will we find her then? And here is a letter from the collector skipper to his father, who lives by the old market.

Philip The old market is also gone. There is now a new church.

Old sailor (astonished) What? I can't believe it! And here is my own letter to my sweetheart Vrow Kesler with money for her to buy a new necklace.

Philip (shakes his head) I am very sorry. I remember an old lady with that name. She was buried thirty years ago. She waited for her betrothed until she died.

Old sailor (upset) Impossible! You are pulling my legs! I left her young and blooming! You must mean someone else! And here is a letter to the house Stiz & Co, who owns our ship.

Philip There was a firm with that name many years ago. But it was bankrupt, and the house isn't any more.

Old sailor This is too much! You are making fun of an old seaman! Whatever do you mean by that? How can you jest so cruelly? Our letters are written with our heart's blood and tears, and you...

Philip Who is this letter for?

Old sailor It's from our captain to his son.

Philip (calmly) It's for me.

Old sailor What do you say?

Sailor 1 Don't receive it!

Sailor 2 Don't open it, for God's sake!

Sailor 3 Philip, give it back!

(Sailor 1 snatches the letter from Philip just as he is opening it and throws it with all the other letters over board.)

Old sailor No, you can't do that! That's the very top of meanness! To refuse to accept heartrending letters and even to throw them over board unopened! (*cries*)

Philip (*wants to comfort him*) Brother...

Old sailor Don't touch me! I don't want anything to do with you! You are crueller than all the others! That time might come when you yourselves wish your families to know something about your situation! Now they might never learn, just like ours! (*leaves*)

Philip (*catches him up*) Brother!

Sailor 1 Let him go!

Sailor 2 The sooner he leaves our ship, the better!

Old sailor (*to Philip, still hurt*) What do you want?

Philip I think I should come with you and talk with your captain.

Old sailor About what? He is not very cheerful. He is only gloomy and sullen and never gets any better.

Philip I could have something to bring him.

Old sailor Come on then. But you can't be his son. You must be as old as he.

Philip How old did you think his son would be?

Old sailor A small playful child.

Philip Show me the way, my good man. This journey is my last anyway. (*They leave.*)

Sailor 1 (*flabbergasted, like the others*) What do you think of that, mates?

Sailor 2 Perhaps it was real letters to real persons.

Sailor 3 Well, we'll never see that passenger again.

Sailor 4 We had better get lost.

Sailor 1 Go down and wake up the captain. I think the danger is over.

Sailor 2 Do you think the passenger sacrificed himself for us?

Sailor 1 I suspect so.

(All is again enveloped in fog.)

Last scene.

When the fog clears it's the same scene.

But it is on board the ship of the Flying Dutchman.

The old sailor comes on board with Philip. The crew on board is silent.

In the far aft captain William van der Decken is standing, an impressive but ominous figure.

The dialogue is sensitive with many pauses.

Old sailor Captain, I bring a passenger on board. (*pause*)

He says he wanted to speak with the captain.

Captain It's me. (*pause*) Come forward, young man. (*pause*) What do you want with the captain?

Philip My name is Philip van der Decken.

Captain My family name. Also the name of my son. But you are an old man. Could you be a relative?

Philip My father was William van der Decken.
Captain That's my name. (*touches him, feels his cheek*) Are you real? Or just a ghost figure?
Philip We are both real, father.
Captain Hold it! Only one person could rightly identify you. Pilot!
(*Enter Schriften.*)
Philip Schriften!
Schriften (*quite serious*) Yes, Philip, the game is over now. You have reached as far as I, and we meet for the last time, at the end. I am very sorry that I couldn't save your wife. After her death I decided not to obstruct you any more.
Philip This is my first journey since then. But who are you?
Schriften I have reconciled myself with your father, in order for you to reach the same reconciliation. I was his pilot.
Philip Were you then the unfortunate fellow whom he threw over board blinded by rage?
Schriften Yes, and like he got the chance of release by you, I got the chance of revenge by you. My intention was to by any means make you desist from your decision to save your father, so that he would go on forever spreading terror and destruction to every ship he met on the southern oceans. Many ships have gone under, Philip, and uncountable innocent sailors have been sacrificed for nothing, for his rage and my vanity, especially during all those years you were locked up in the asylum of Goa.
Philip I was imprisoned by the shock of my grief. You were really evil then, Schriften. But now you are different, as we at last meet on your home ground where you are yourself.
Schriften Your wife converted me. I saw it coming. I saw that she alone could cure my infinite thirst of revenge. I tried to save her by sending her home, but she preferred her destiny for your sake. When she died my zest for revenge was lost. I returned to your father's ship to be reconciled with him and wait for your arrival here.
Philip Let me see it. Let me see you shake hands.
(*Schriften and Captain shake hands emphatically.*)
Captain The rest is up to you, Philip.
Philip (*throws himself in his father's arms*)
Captain My son! I never thought you would come!
Philip It's over, father! Now it's over!
(*The crew is cheering, also Schriften, and light breaks on the stage.*)
Captain No more shipwrecks on my way, Philip.
Philip We are home, father, we are home!
(*Enter mother.*)
Mother Welcome home, William van der Decken!
(*They embrace.*)
Captain Amine! Only you are missing now!
(*Schriften enters with Amine and gives her to Philip.*)

Philip Amine! I thought I would never see you again!
(*They embrace and don't let go of each other.*)

Amine As you see, life is full of surprises.

Philip What was it that father Mateo used to say? "In this story there is more than anyone could have dreamt of in his philosophy that could exist between heaven and earth."

Amine Thank heavens for such a world!

Gothenburg, Easter – 5.5.1996,

translated in Ladakh 22-29.8.2017

Other works in English by the same author:

<https://issuu.com/lanciai/docs/hastings>

"The Birth of a Nation" – 1066 and all that.

https://issuu.com/lanciai/docs/the_diplomatic_deceiver

"The Deceiver" - an enquiry into the strange case of the murder in the cathedral of Canterbury

"The Legend and the Truth" – the plight of Sir William Wallace.

https://issuu.com/lanciai/docs/legend_and_the_truth

"Some Queens of England" – the Tudor story.

<https://issuu.com/lanciai/docs/henry>

"One Man's Right" – the strange case of Charles Stuart

<https://issuu.com/lanciai/docs/charles>

"Dead Poets" – the Byron, Shelley, Keats saga.

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"The Forest" – a poem on a fairy tale