

The Mutineers

Dramatization of the mutiny on the Bounty 1789

by Christian Lanciai (1992)



Already as a child I was deeply fascinated by this true story of the tragedy of a ship and its crew brought on an epic adventure of destiny leading them all where none of them had intended to go and even less ever dreamt of. Of course, it is very difficult to put such a vast saga into a comprehensive dramatic form, there are so many personal destinies and stories involved, and just as every one of them is vital and indispensable for the great whole, it's impossible to do them all justice by completing their stories. This is actually just a sketch, ever since it happened the debate about what really happened and whose fault it was has been going on presenting constantly new books and films on the subject, from the first casual account after the first visit of a ship to Pitcairn Island after Bounty, to the versions by Jules Verne and the great trilogy by Nordhoff and Hall, still the most ambitious effort to comprise the whole thing, to the first films with Errol Flynn, Clark Gable and Charles Laughton, and to new findings and films as late as in the last decades. This is a story that you can never finish, never get through with, never completely understand and never forget or leave aside. It is of timeless concern, and if I have made any point at all in this effort to give it a comprehensive form, I think my conclusion that it was all actually like a natural catastrophe that couldn't have been avoided, and that the greatest mistake committed was to blame anyone for it, maybe could bring us closer to some further understanding. Today we are more prone to

accept that shit happens. You can never fully understand destiny, and this was definitely a matter of destiny. Humbly I step aside to raise the curtain to my small effort to present at least a beginning to an idea of this matter of destiny.

Dramatis personae:

On board the Bounty:

Lieutenant William Bligh, captain
Mr. John Fryer, master
Mr. Fletcher Christian, master's mate
Joseph Coleman, smith
William Cole, boatswain
James Morrison, boatswain's mate
John Samuel, secretary
John Mills, constable

Midshipmen:

Peter Heywood
George Stewart
Edward Young
Robert Tinkler
Thomas Hayward
John Hallet

Doctor "Bacchus"

Doctor Thomas Ledward
David Nelson, botanist
William Peckover, constable
William Purcell, carpenter
Charles Churchill, master-at-arms
William Elphinstone
John Norton, guard
William Brown, gardener
Charles Norman
Thomas MacIntosh

Sailors:

Alexander Smith
William McCoy
Matthew Quintal
Thomas Ellison
Isaac Martin (American)
Thomas Burkitt
Matthew Thompson
John Williams
Richard Skinner
Henry Hillbrandt
John Sumner
John Millward
William Muspratt
Michael Byrne (fiddler)
John Smith, cook

On board the Pandora:
Captain Edwards
Lieutenant Parkin
Other sailors on the "Pandora"

In Portsmouth:
Vice admiral Lord Hood
Mr Graham, lawyer
Captain Manly
Captain Bentham
Twelve judges

On Tahiti:
Hitihiti, chief
Maimiti, his niece
Minarii, local chief
Tetahiti, ditto
Tehani, later wife of P. Heywood
Other natives of Tahiti

To Pitcairn:
Natives:
Te Moa
Nihau
Tararu
Hu
Taurua, wife of Ned Young
Balhadi, wife of Alexander Smith
Moetua, wife of Minarii
Nanai, wife of Tetahiti
Hutia, wife of Tararu and J. Williams
Sarah, wife of M. Quintal
Prudence, wife of John Mills
Jenny, wife of Brown
Fasto, late wife of J. Williams

Others:
Barrister John Graham
Edward Christian
King George III
Sir Joseph Banks
John MacArthur

The action takes place on board the "Bounty",
on Tahiti, in other parts of the Pacific Ocean,
in Portsmouth, England, in Australia and on Pitcairn Island,
during the years 1787-1810.

Act I scene 1. On deck, December 1787.
The whole crew is gathered in perfect order.

Fryer Lieutenant Bligh is in a bad mood.
Christian No wonder. Head wind for almost a month.
Fryer It could be worse.
Morrison Bad weather, Mr Fryer?
Fryer Yes, the worst weather there is, bad weather on board.
Christian (explaining) Mr Fryer has been sailing with lieutenant Bligh before.
Fryer He is a perfect sailor but has one weakness. He can't take adversity.
Christian All sailors must be able to take some head wind, Mr. Fryer.
Fryer Four weeks is not just some head wind, Mr. Christian. After four weeks Mr Bligh is in a bad mood.
Coleman Is that why he makes us stand here waiting for him?
Fryer If we don't wait him out it will become worse, Mr Coleman.
(The cabin door is opened and lieutenant Bligh appears in full uniform.)
Bligh (to his butler, following him) It can't be helped, Mr Samuel. Those bloody rebels must be isolated from the rest of the world, and even if they rob us of America they shall not take the rest of the world away from us. No one must ever rule the seas except ourselves. Mr Fryer!
Fryer Yes, Sir.
Bligh Is everyone present?
Fryer Yes, Sir.
Bligh My compliment. The alignment is in perfect order. Men, I have some entertainment for you in this ghastly weather for a change. What do you say about that?
Some Welcome, Sir! *(All sound positive.)*
Bligh I thought so. The thing is, that we are out on a special mission. We have a challenging task ahead of us with which we must succeed at any price. All the future and glory of the British Empire depends on it.
Fryer (to Christian) Here we go again.
Bligh With us on board we have some botanic expertise by Doctor David Nelson and his assistant gardener Brown.
Mills Are we to import some gardens to England, Sir? *(mirth)*
Bligh No, John Mills, not all the way. Only half the way.'
Heywood I thought we were heading for the South Seas, Sir.
Bligh We *are* going to the Sough Seas. That's where we will fetch our gardens. In the South Seas and especially on Tahiti there is a rare plant called Bread Fruit. Its fruit tastes like bread. We have some food problems with our negro slaves in the West Indies, who can't tolerate English food. So we will transplant bread fruits from the South Seas to the West Indies.
Christian Do negroes eat bread fruit, Sir?

Bligh They had better. Or else they will starve. Or else we will have continued problems with our plantations in the West Indies. In brief, the negroes must eat bread fruit, for that's the only way.

Fryer If I got it right, Sir, we are here to ship bread fruit plants from the South Seas to the West Indies so that the negroes will be able to feed on them to continue working for the British Empire. Is that correct, Sir?

Bligh Fryer, you have managed to sum up the whole enterprise.

Fryer (to Christian) No wonder we have bad weather and head wind from the start.

Bligh That is why I left the cabin to the entire disposal of only bread fruit plants. That is why special conduits have been constructed not to let one drop of water ever go to waste.

Mills And the cargo, Sir? Why so much junk on board?

Bligh Exchange, Mills. The natives will sell anything for nothing. We will be generous and overwhelm them with junk so that they quickly and smoothly will fill up our Bounty with bread fruit plants. The shorter our stay on Tahiti, the better for the expedition.

Christian Why, Sir?

Bligh Why? That's obvious! Time is money, Mr Christian. Only on Tahiti we will risk losing our invaluable time.

Smith (from among the sailors) We'll do that in all weathers if the wind is adverse.

Bligh Correct. That's why we must avail ourselves of all winds that come from the right direction. That's why we must not idle on Tahiti when the wind is right.

Christian One question, Sir.

Bligh Go ahead, please.

Christian How did you intend to go to Tahiti? By the Cape of Good Hope or by the Cape Horn?

Bligh Cape Horn.

Christian And if it's blowing like now?

Bligh It had better not blow like now. And all winds sooner or later change direction, Mr Christian.

Christian Certain winds keep blowing the same way all the year around.

Bligh We go by Cape Horn, Mr Christian. Any more questions?

(silence)

No more questions. Then we will with some good hope look forward to a new wind and a good start on our enterprise. I wish you all good luck, gentlemen.

Some Thank you, Sir. *(Bligh leaves. The men start dispersing.)*

Fryer (to Christian) Well, what do you think about his enforced rhetorical optimism?

Christian He means no harm but takes himself too seriously.

Fryer And overdoing it.

Christian It's a dangerous course to follow especially for oneself.

Fryer Lieutenant Bligh is the perfect navigator and seaman if ever there was one, though.

Christian Certainly. No doubt about that. A certain course could be dangerous all the same no matter how well you navigate.

Fryer At least we know our destination.

Christian Its immediate destination, yes, Mr Fryer, but not its final destination.
(*leaves*)

Fryer No one ever knows for certain where he is going, but England and lieutenant Bligh at least imagine themselves to know.

Scene 2. Doctor's cabin.

*(On film you can do the environment justice –
a shitty cabin overloaded with boxes of liquor and candles.)*

Doctor (standing with his glass lifted) I assure you, gentlemen, that without my blessed wooden leg I wouldn't be able to walk at all. That's why I actually never missed the leg I lost.

Heywood How did you actually lose it, doctor?

Doctor Quite fast and easy, my son. Boom! Boom! – And it was gone. I didn't feel anything and almost didn't notice it.

Nelson But you must have been taken by some surprise.

Doctor Not because of the disappearance of the leg. But there were many surprises as a consequence. Of course, there was some bleeding, but there always is in wartime.

Peckover Was it the French or the Americans?

Doctor It was those American rascals. It's their tactic to steal without it being noticed until afterwards when it's too late to do anything about it. That's how they stole the colonies away from England, and then they just took my leg. To tell you the truth, gentlemen, I am almost thankful for it. It was so expertly done without any pain. Maybe England should be equally thankful.

Nelson To the Americans for taking your leg?

Doctor No, to the Americans for jumping over board from England. It was much easier for England to sail without them, the ship getting so much lighter, and we getting rid of so many fuzzy troublemakers.

Heywood But tell us about the leg! What happened next?

Doctor Boom, boom! it sounded. And then it was just gone. Still the numskulls had to saw off another piece, like cutting a stob after having cut down the tree, and what trouble that gave them! Their sweat was pouring, they grinned badly trying their hardest to saw off the bone, which just wouldn't succeed, labouring like awkward bunglers, and I was lying there watching and feeling sorry for them. Finally I just couldn't bear patience with their fumbling any longer. "Don't just stand there torturing yourselves," I cried to them, "have some brandy!" (*mirth*) They

looked at me and understood that I was serious about it, so they obediently took some brandy, and then suddenly it was easy for them.

Peckover Everything gets easier if you only have some brandy. You knew your business, Bacchus. Of course, you yourself could not feel anything just because you had more brandy than blood in your body!

Doctor I assure you that I hadn't had more than usual. I could even stand up and keep my balance after the Americans shot off my leg!

Peckover That's what I always said: old Bacchus is the champion in keeping up the balance and pace in smooth liquor consumption!

Doctor I can assure you that I never transcend my exact daily prescription. And when sometimes there is a special occasion for an exception, (*empties his glass in a moment of solemnity,*) the main thing is to keep the balance anyway. (*singing with solemnity*)

Bacchus must now his power resign,
for his balance is out of power,
angels now take over,
so all the fault is their design.
(*Cheers. They drink.*)

Nelson Still you were not always that happy with your wooden leg, Bacchus.

Bacchus No, by golly, I wasn't, and that's why I changed it. The old one always gave me a nauseating taste of wood and galled feet. But old Purcell knows his trade. There was never an abler carpenter at sea. He fashioned my new leg exactly according to my way of walking, and that's why I never have to stumble any more. (*Storm whinings outside. The lights start swinging.*) If you, Nelson, would lose yours I warrant that you are absolutely safe. I will cut it myself without your noticing it, and Purcell will give you a new one better than the old, and no Americans will be able to shoot it off for you.

Heywood Things seem to start moving.

Doctor Still we haven't had much yet. Our naval battle hasn't even started.
(*Great acceleration of the storm and rocking action.*)

Peckover This is hardly because of the rum or the brandy.

Nelson No, it certainly isn't. But it might be because of lieutenant Bligh.

Bligh (bawling outside) All men on deck! Take in the sails! Go for it!

Peckover At last he got some wind.

Doctor We had better leave our unopened jars and start concentrating on the billows.

Peckover Get up, Heywood, and start moving! You are a midshipman! This is for you!

Nelson We old veterans are privileged and may stay in softer backwash.

Heywood I had better leave you, not to make the captain angry. (*leaves*)

Doctor He will be angry anyway, my son, you can count on that. Well, back to business. Where were we?

Peckover The brandy. (*They carry on.*)



Scene 3. On deck, a moonlit night by Teneriffa.

Christian It's been a hard journey. It will be a relief for the men to at last get ashore for a change.

Heywood How long do you think we will anchor here?

Christian We must renew our supplies of fresh water and meat. All our ale was ruined in the storm, and we will at least have to wait here long enough for Bacchus to get his load of brandy on board. The welfare of the entire expedition might depend on that.

Heywood But why do we keep so far from the shore?

Christian Ask lieutenant Bligh. Here he is.

Bligh (coming up to them from the dark) We have had some difficult days in the storm, Mr Christian.

Christian Yes, Sir. I just told midshipman Heywood it will be nice for the boys to get ashore...

Bligh Bounty needs repairs. All hands are needed on board. No one gets ashore except those who fetch supplies.

Christian But, Sir...

Bligh I said that all hands are needed here. No one is let ashore except those who have to bring meat and water. Is that understood?

Christian (subjected) Yes, Sir.

Heywood How long do we lie here, Sir?

Bligh Maybe five days. Not more. (*leaves*)

Christian Five days! And no one is allowed ashore! It's inhuman!

Heywood Maybe he has his reasons.

Christian That doesn't help. It's still short-sighted and inhuman. He is only mean and petty and imagines that one saved day could be of vital importance to the success of the entire journey, while the men really deserved some good and vital rest...

Heywood Does lieutenant Bligh have any catch on you, Mr Christian?

Christian He fawns on me since I am of better family than he is and have better contact with the crew. He imagines that he could be of importance to my career by hinting at the possibility for him to give me ships of my own in the future, while he thereby only offends Mr Fryer, who is my superior. But this inhuman measure against the crew is a blow to them all by which he can't gain anything except antipathy. It's only stupid, which makes me angry.

Heywood Could protests help?

Christian No, Heywood, they never help. But this stupidity bodes no good for the future.

Scene 4. Bligh's spare cabin.

The dinner is served with silver and sherry.

Bligh Welcome, gentlemen. I hope there will be no wants in your appetite in spite of some revolting daily routines. (*is seated, ties a big napkin around his chin and starts serving himself. The others, Fryer, Christian and Heywood, are seated with less enthusiasm. Mr Samuel is the servant.*)

Christian (is seated) The daily routines are actually revolting enough to cause a loss of appetite for the rest of the day. And something tells me that it doesn't necessarily have to be so.

Bligh (immediately aggressively defensive) Any complaints, Mr Christian?

Fryer Lieutenant Bligh, with respect, but is it necessary to cultivate the crew's discontent?

Bligh (turning to Fryer with the same aggressive defensive) Any complaints, Mr Fryer?

Fryer All are complaining and have reasons for their complaints, but none dare complain to you.

Bligh So there have been no complaints, have there, gentlemen?

Heywood (boldly) Yes, the sailor Thomas Burkitt.

Bligh (rudely) He got what he deserved. He had reasons to complain, but that gorilla can take anything, and he got away cheaply.

Christian The question is, Mr Bligh, if it was fair to give him two dozen for such a trifle.

Bligh (shrilly) Such a trifle! He complained!

Fryer He complained on behalf of the whole crew of the unfair punishment for two stolen cheese, which no one had stolen whereupon you punished the entire crew with cut rations of cheese. He had reasons to complain.

Christian And all know where the cheese went.

Bligh (shrilly, like before) Are you accusing me? *(The other three look at each other.)*

Christian Sir, we just wonder about the wisdom of your policy against the crew at length.

Bligh What the devil are you talking about, you incompetent imbeciles! Don't you know that the only way to keep a crew in order at sea is to treat it firmly by setting examples! Or else daily mutinies would be the order of the day in the royal navy!

Fryer We are not questioning the necessity of discipline, Sir.

Christian It's the unnecessary meanness and pettiness. No crew will get better or more cooperative by being cheated on their food.

Bligh But they are all just ignorant clouts the whole lot of them! They are only trash! They are barbarians! What do you think will happen if you caress them? They will turn into wild animals! They will only keep calm at bay if you inspire fear in them.

Christian But they are also human.

Bligh Are they, Mr Christian? If you believe that and treat them as such you will never be a captain or at least never competent as such.

Christian I would rather remain a good second like Mr Fryer all my life than become an inhuman captain.

Bligh Inhuman? Listen to that! Do you think around the world missions could be ventured without violence, without hard discipline and without absolutely perfect order?

Christian Order and discipline does not have to exclude humanity. On the contrary, order will be easier to maintain if you are human.

Bligh Listen to that! He talks as if he was captain already! You will never become captain with that attitude, Mr Christian. A captain must be a ruthless dictator who never loses his initiative. Or else he will never reach home with his ship. Until you learn that you will never be a captain. I will see to that.

Christian (rising) Thanks for the dinner.

Bligh But you haven't even touched it! Sit down and be nice and come to your senses!

Christian I am sorry, but I have lost my appetite. *(leaves)*

(The others are silent and don't touch their food.)

Bligh What a squeamish chicken brain! Has he got dames on his brain and become soft?

Fryer I also ask your leave with thanks for the dinner. *(rising)*

Bligh Have you also gone soft, Mr Fryer? Then run along home to mummy! *(Fryer leaves.)* And what about you, midshipman Heywood? Will you also throw away expensive food that you got for nothing?

Heywood I can't forget today's flogging of Thomas Burkitt, Sir.

Bligh And so you developed a sensitive stomach! What touching sensitivity! Still Burkitt's punishment was nothing but child's play.

Heywood What do you mean, Sir?

Bligh Morrison faked the floggings. He refrained from flogging hard. He is also getting soft. Poor thing, he suffers from noble blood.

Heywood (rising, offended) While you, Sir, are a boorish bully and the only one on board who doesn't see that a large part of your barbaric crew are educated gentlemen! *(leaves)*

Bligh (the only one left) He as well. Am I then stuck with the most effeminate and delicate crew in the world? The devil take them! I have a job to do, and if they wreck it for me I will flog them to bloody slices of meat as sure as I am alive! Samuel!

Samuel (entering) Yes, Sir.

Bligh Next course! *(Samuel attends. Bligh dines with a good appetite and also eats the left portions of the others.)*

Scene 5. On deck.

Mills What's the matter now?

Stewart Captain has gone mad.

Smith It's for those pumpkins.

Churchill I would like to rub the captain's and Mr Samuel's faces with all those rotten pumpkins!

Bligh (coming up on deck in uniform) Are all men present, Mr Fryer?

Fryer They are, Sir.

Bligh My dear crew, I have some matter of truth to tell you all. This is no floating holiday resort. You are not in any position to complain about the food. Is that clear?

Elphinstone But the pumpkins, Sir.

Bligh What about the bloody pumpkins?

Elphinstone They are rotten, Sir.

Bligh They are not any more rotten than you all are! Don't they come directly from the gunroom, what? Can't you eat your pumpkins, you soft-blooded herrings? What?

Mills It's not fair, Sir.

Bligh What is unfair?

Mills That we are forced to eat pumpkins instead of bread.

Bligh What's so unfair about that?

Mills We only get one pound of pumpkin for two pounds of bread.

Bligh Unfair! Just listen to that! He thinks he is right! Don't you get it, you chicken brains, that no one can be right on board except me! There is no judge on board except me! There is no other authority! If Mr Samuel gives you one pound of rotten pumpkin for two withdrawn pounds of bread, it's by my express orders! Do you understand?

Young (to Stewart) The pumpkins were brought on board in Teneriffa for the captain. He couldn't eat them all by himself, so they started rotting. Then he offers them to the crew and charges them by withdrawing the bread.

Stewart (to Young) What a boor! What did we do to deserve such a bugger?

Young We served the crown faithfully.

Bligh What's the mumbling over there? Speak up!

Young I only said, Sir, that we faithfully served the crown.

Bligh Right you are! Carry on that way! That's the spirit! Serve the crown faithfully and eat your pumpkins without complaining or throw them over board. It cannot get more simple. You have no choice, for you have no other captain and will get no other until the journey is completed. It's very simple.

Fryer Sir, the complaints will be noted and brought to the notice of the admiralty when the journey is over.

Bligh Much will happen before then. That's all! Resume your duties!

(turning to Christian, friendly) Well, Mr Christian, why don't you join us any longer in the gunroom for dinner?

Christian Sir, doctor Bacchus doesn't go there any more.

Bligh Is that the only reason?

Christian Mr Fryer doesn't go there any more.

Bligh So you don't want to dine alone with me?

Christian No, Sir.

Bligh Cheer up, lad. There will be better times. You will get hungry again and find your appetite again. *(walks off with retained complacency)*

Christian (to himself) No, Sir, under such a captain as you I could never find my appetite again.

Act II scene 1. The small cabin of doctor Bacchus.

Doctor Carry in the patient carefully and slowly. That's it. Don't drop him, for then he could go into pieces in such a state of frozen stiff.

Christian (has with some others carried in Tinkler frozen blue and put him on the table.) He is lucky to be alive.

Bacchus Alive! Not even captain Bligh could kill a British sailor, no matter how hard he would try! He is alive all right, you bet! And he intends to stay alive and go on living, like all the tortured victims of the local tyranny, just to for the rest of his life be able to cultivate his hatred against the foolish lieutenant upstart! There, my boy, *(knocks Tinkler on his front)* was it cold up there at the top of Bligh's blasted hell of sails by the whirlwind? Do you think he forgot all about you up there all night by mistake? Fetch the brandy, for goodness' sake!

Heywood What had Tinkler actually done?

Christian Nothing, that is, he had many accomplices. They played at cards, drinking and singing, having it nicely for one time's sake. Bligh happened to

overhear their joy and sent down Churchill. Tinkler was the only one not to reach his bed in time. He was brought up, Bligh lectured him and sent him up to the top. Up there in the middle of the night at these latitudes the temperature is below freezing, and Tinkler as usual had nothing on but his shirt.

Heywood It's inhuman.

Christian Yes, if Bligh forgot him on purpose. We had to bring Tinkler down by tackle and ropes.

Bacchus Watch him, he drinks! A sure sign of health! As long as he can drink he can live! Have some more, my boy! No human warmth is more efficient! There, his cheeks will soon be getting red instead of blue! In a few hours he will be ready to get up there again.

Christian It's not funny, Bacchus. John Mills was flogged for making himself popular. Purcell was put in irons for knowing his craft, and Ned Young, an officer, was flogged for Skinner getting lost ashore.

Bacchus I know. It's not even funny any more.

Christian Ned Young will never be the same again. He comes from a better family than Bligh's and is young and vulnerable. Bligh has raped his soul by his sadism.

Bacchus Hard words, mate. Let God judge him, and you won't have to do it yourself.

Christian I am not judging. I just observe the amount of unnecessary human damage a stupid man is able to cause by sheer autocratic pettiness.

Bacchus Unfortunately I can promise you, Mr Christian, that once it has started it will carry on running off until it has run out. Unfortunately I am familiar with human nature.

Christian How will it end?

Bacchus It will continue getting worse until it ends.

Christian How?

Bacchus Nobody knows, and that is maybe fortunate under the circumstances. Let's concentrate on saving what lives we can in the meantime and rejoice at each one coming back alive. You did very well in climbing up there to bring him down. That saved his life. I have never seen anyone so cooled off and still alive.

Christian You are no longer dining with captain Bligh.

Bacchus Neither are you.

Christian Following you.

Bacchus I noticed early that the captain's appetite kept ruining that of all the others. If there is anything I don't wish to lose it's my appetite on life.

Christian I think Tinkler wants to say something.

Bacchus How does it feel, young man?

Tinkler (smiles, slowly sitting up) Blue but whole.

Bacchus Take some more brandy, then. (*gives him the bottle. Tinkler makes good use of it and smiles with the others.*)

Tinkler It was a close shave, but I can still take some more.

Bacchus Have some more, then.

Tinkler It was almost worth it. (*drinks with relish. Bacchus and Christian blink to each other.*)

Bacchus You see what I mean. Against the natural force and health of youth even captain Bligh is powerless.

Scene 2. On deck. A lovely day.

(All men are called on deck again. They are annoyed and feel jaded.)

Mills What has he figured out now to torture us with?

McCoy It's probably some ridiculous detail again.

Smith It seems there is a quarrel between him and Mr Fryer.

Mills Long live Mr Fryer!

Smith Here comes the great sourpuss.

Bligh (shows up, is very determined) Mr Fryer, this is entirely on your responsibility and not on mine. It is your lack of cooperation and good will which forces me to bring on the whole crew.

Fryer No matter how hard you try, Mr Bligh, you can't turn a minus into a plus.

Bligh That's not the issue here! The issue is to make odds and ends meet for the entire journey!

Fryer The only financial risk is you yourself, Sir, who puts into your own pocket what you steal from the crew and then keeps cooking the books.

Bligh Shut up! It's not me! It's Mr Samuel! He only obeys my orders! You must sign his accounts! Do you want the whole crew to suffer if you don't?

Fryer Captain Bligh, I only wish to attest to the truth.

Bligh Then sign!

Fryer (to the lot) My men and sailors, captain Bligh wants me to affirm that Mr Samuel's fake accounts are correct. According to Mr Samuel's figures you have had three times more bread and meat than what you actually received. If I don't sign there will be even harsher rationing.

Bligh Sign, or it will be on your responsibility that the whole crew will starve! Sign or I will flog the entire crew to raw meat!

Young (to Smith) It's downright blackmail.

Fryer Lieutenant Bligh, my signature on your false documents is worthless, since they will remain false none the less. I will sign for the sake of the crew, but with the crew I will bring this matter to the authorities as we come back home.

Bligh They will laugh at you! Sign!

(*Fryer signs in a moment of tense silence*)

Fryer The whole crew are my witnesses.

A voice (among the crew) Land ahoy!

Bligh (with a gasp) It must be Tahiti.

(*All run for the railings.*)

Smith It's really an island.

Young A paradise island.
Quintal At last we are there.
Bacchus It's just an island like all the others. Don't trust your eyes, my boys.
Ellison (the youngest) Shouldn't we believe our own eyes?
Bacchus Yes, but not your senses, because they will endanger you on these latitudes.
Mills Hold on, boys! Here starts the adventure! Here we will come ashore!
Fryer Oh lovely sight, what made you take so long?
Purcell The moment of freedom is coming.
Tinkler Is it true? Does that island really exist?
Christian Yes, Tinkler, you will not be freezing any more.
Churchill The whole island is full of warm and lovely young ladies longing for us men.



Nelson Imagine that I once more would arrive at this paradise. It was captain Cook's favourite place, Mr Heywood. He wished to die here.
Heywood Is Tahiti better than England?
Nelson A difficult question, my boy. At least it's easier than England.
Bligh (to himself) A troublesome journey is over, but the worst part of it remains. All too well I know, that when the men have been able to recuperate here for some months they will be even more difficult to rule on the way home.
Christian What is your enticement, enchanting island? It's not just sirens everywhere and beyond singing so softly and sweetly that they could seduce all humanity. There is something vibrating in the air with irresistible seduction. Perhaps

all civilization is a lie with its artifice, its power madness and absurd vanity, the preposterous boastful luxury and grotesque self-importance of Bligh, the base greed of our advanced world of comfort and all its wars and arguments about nothing, while the actual truth very well could be found intact here beyond time, science and geography in the nutshell of a virgin South Sea island and its unimpeded freedom of nature and life? Europe is governed by vicious treacherous politics of only unsound self-destructive egoism and pettiness, as if it no longer was possible for realms to expand except by constantly increasing foul play and trickery. Maybe there is an answer here on Tahiti to the anxious dilemma of our poor civilization and humanity of its throttling strait-jacket of wicked politics, greed, lies and universally established dishonesty.

Bligh What thoughts does the island bring to you, Mr Christian?

Christian That at last the men will be able to recuperate. They will need it.

Bligh So will you, Mr Christian.

Christian Can you relax at all, Mr Bligh?

Bligh A captain may only relax when he is rid of his crew. Honestly speaking, it will be a relief to be without them for a while. It will be so much easier to handle bread fruit plants and natives than these low brutal Englishmen.

Christian You are biased, Mr Bligh. All men can be taken from their better sides.

Bligh Not when it comes to discipline, order and command. A slave who is favoured will not work. He will rebel.

Christian We English can never be slaves, Mr Bligh. If we are treated like slaves we rebel.

Bligh You are not yet captain. Leave the discipline and navigation to me, who is responsible.

Christian I only wish to activate your antennae.

Bligh No antennae are needed here. No softness, please, and emotionalism is forbidden. There is no space for that on a ship at sea. All you need is a firm hand and leadership in absolute control, or anything might bring you off course.

Christian You are afraid, captain Bligh.

Bligh Of what?

Christian Of one day finding yourself in a situation in which you no longer can take yourself seriously. (*leaves*)

Bligh What the devil does he mean?

Scene 3. Doctor's cabin.

Smith Come on, doctor! It's not dangerous!

Bacchus (obstinate) No, I don't want to!

Young The native girls won't bite you!

Bacchus It's not them I am afraid of.

Heywood What then could you possibly be afraid of?

Bacchus (getting shy) I dare not tell.

Stewart Out with it!

Bacchus (cautiously) There is no brandy ashore.

Young (relieved, heartily with the others) Is that all?

Bacchus (offended) All, you say? That is all the world!

Smith But don't you have liquor enough on board?

Stewart Bring some bottles ashore!

Bacchus (terrified) But if anyone breaks? Every drop could save a human life!

Heywood I know, doctor. Only bring a few bottles of wine ashore and save the brandy.

Smith We shall care for the bottles like if they were wee babies.

Young I will see to it that not one bottle will break!

Bacchus But...

Heywood I promise, doctor, that your wine will taste even better ashore.

Bacchus (starts brightening) Do you really think so?

Smith It's a sure thing! Among all the charming native girls! In the wonderful warm weather! Under permanently blue skies! In the very heart of paradise!

Young In the eternal spring and sunlight!

Bacchus (closing up again) That's just what I am afraid of.

All What?

Bacchus The paradise. It wasn't made for me. It could be fatal for me.

Stewart My dear doctor, you can't just reject the most beautiful paradise in the world to prefer sitting here mouldering in your humid darkness with only your bottles for company!

Bacchus (angry) It's not the most beautiful place in the world!

Young What is it then?

Bacchus Just an island like all the others, an island with innocent natives, who are there only to trick virile Englishmen into damnation and all England with them. On that point I agree with captain Bligh.

Smith Don't get captain Bligh mixed up in this.

Stewart He can't know what a paradise is.

Young Leave the devil alone with his own political hell.

Heywood But you, doctor, knows all about the nature of any paradise, for you have an understanding of noble liquors.

Bacchus Perhaps in some aspects you could be not altogether wrong, my boy.

(All express their liking.)

Young Good! When will we leave for the shore?

Bacchus Tomorrow. I must be given some time in peace and quiet to select the proper bottles. But don't forget your promise! They must be cuddled like wee babies! All future hopes and possibilities rest with these tiny little but the more invaluable babies.

Smith He means bottles.

Stewart Nursing bottles for grown-ups.

Bacchus (solemnly) It's no laughing matter! Any bottle might break!

Smith (laughing with the others) Sure, doctor! Just rely on us!

Young It's the most vital interest of us all!

Bacchus I am afraid I'll have to trust you, then, laying my life into your hands.

Smith It will be as safe with us as any bottle! *(They all laugh.)*

Scene 4. Ashore.

The meeting between Hitihiti and captain Bligh.

Hitihiti Welcome, o sons of the sun and the north! But where is our friend, the divine brother of the sun and the friend of the gods, our captain Cook?

Bligh My father could not join us on this journey, Hithiti, but he sent me, his son, instead.

Hitihiti Are you then captain Cook's own son, captain Bligh? Why didn't you tell me so already the first time you were here with your noble father captain Cook? You are also different like the sun and moon, he as a tall, athletic and slim, commanding and impressing man, and you rather roundish, fat and simple... but you are welcome. All our world is at your disposal. And what can we do for our splendid and divine, handsome brothers from the north?

Bligh We wish to collect bread fruit plants.

Hitihiti Bread fruit?

Bligh Yes, bread fruit plants, this simple plant which is illustrated here. *(shows a design)*

Hitihiti Only that?

Bligh Yes.

Hitihiti How banal and simple. Why?

Bligh We don't have that plant in Europe and wish to cultivate it there to taste its fruits.

Hitihiti How many do you need?

Bligh As many as possible. As many as our ship can take.

Hitihiti As I said, all our world is yours. Take as many as you will. They grow everywhere on Tahiti. I thought you came here mainly for the beauty of our daughters to make love with them.

Bacchus (coming up, slightly tipsy) Don't listen to that braggart, noble chief. He is just pulling your legs.

Hitihiti (to Bligh) What is your fat friend saying?

Bligh He talks nonsense. He has been drinking.

Bacchus Lieutenant Bligh, have we come all the way here to the South Seas only to serve this noble and generous chief of an innocent people with lies? If you are captain Cook's son, I am the only veritable Adonis!

Bligh Don't come here disturbing our sensitive relationships with the Polynesians, Bacchus.

Bacchus It's you who are disturbing them with your deceitful conduct. You impose on them the tall story that captain Cook is still alive and that you are his son only to take advantage of their hospitality. That's not fair play.

Bligh Stop now, Bacchus. *(to some of the men)* Get the drunkard back on board.

Bacchus First I must beg to tell you that I saw you through from the beginning, you lout. You are a cheap and vulgar lout, a boorish ruffian without manners, a lowborn bully, and I can promise you all, Englishmen, that your journey here was nothing to what your journey home will be. On the way here this captain showed that he could be rough and mean and cruel. On the way home he will methodically implement all his brutal threats.

Bligh That's enough, Bacchus! You are drunk!

Bacchus No, I am perfectly sound and speak the truth, and I haven't drunk more than my usual ration! But you, captain, are a con man and deceitful impostor! *(is suddenly seized with cramps and pains in his stomach, collapses)*

Hitihiti What was it with the old man?

Bligh A fit. It will pass.

Nelson (examining Bacchus) He is seriously ill.

Bligh Yes, that was obvious indeed.

Tinkler Doctor Ledward, Hayward and Morrison have fallen ill in the same manner. They and the doctor ate of a red fish that could have been poisonous.

Nelson No liquor, heart failure or cerebral haemorrhage then but food poisoning. To such an old man that could be lethal. We will nurse him here on shore.

Bligh Take him on board!

Nelson Do you want to hasten his death, captain Bligh? *(Some men carry away doctor Bacchus.)*

Bligh I regret the incident, great Hitihiti. The old man overstrained himself. Now we can get back to business.

Hitihiti You are all welcome, and all mine is yours. You can stay here and make love as long as you wish.

Bligh Thanks, Hitihiti, but we will not stay longer than necessary.

Hitihiti And how long is necessary?

Bligh Until we have had enough bread fruit plants on board.

Hitihiti I beg your pardon for an old chief's ideas, but don't you think yourself that such an extensive mission for some bread fruits would be a bit – silly? I mean, to come such a long way with so many men just to fetch a very simple plant?

Bligh To us, Hitihiti, the plant could be of vital and enormous consequences.

Hitihiti Have it as you will. It's of no bother to us, and I will have nothing to do with it. On the contrary, it will be an honour for all of us to help you collect this plant.

Bligh I am very much obliged to you for that. My sincerest thanks.

(They exchange presents and other tokens of friendship, and everyone, both sailors and natives, cheer or express their liking and appreciation of the occasion.)

Scene 5. By Bacchus' grave on Point Venus.
An elevated ground by the sea at sunset.
Nelson, Peckover, Heywood and Christian.

Nelson You were his best friends on board and perhaps the only ones to appreciate him not only as a clown.
Peckover He deserved a better caretaker than captain Bligh.
Nelson Captain Bligh did what he was supposed to do and without flaw.
Christian But without any empathy or feeling, as if he was burying a dead whore.
Heywood Still it was great of the captain to undertake the funeral ritual after the doctor's hard lecture on him.
Christian Yes.
Nelson Now he is lying here, we shall never see him again, and Bounty is without a doctor.
Peckover Life on board will definitely become more difficult without him.
Christian Especially if his prophecies will come true.
Nelson Fortunately Morrison and Hayward survived.
Heywood Yes, they were young enough.
Peckover Only the best, the oldest and the most indispensable had to go.
Bligh'(s voice, at a distance) Why are you still standing there loitering? The burial is over! We have work to do!
Peckover Back to hell on board.
Christian The bread fruits must to the negroes.
Heywood Only the doctor stays on Tahiti.
Nelson He doesn't know how lucky he was.
Peckover Think of us, Bacchus, when captain Bligh starts flogging us to slices of red meat.
Christian He wouldn't dare. The discontent on board is alarmingly growing.
Heywood Come, let us go, before our captain gets furious again.
Christian That he will soon be anyway. *(They leave the grave, after those who had caps or hats have done them on again.)*

Act III scene 1. On deck of the Bounty.

Tinkler No one thought hell would break out so totally and so soon.
Young It was unavoidable.
Stewart The captain asked for it, according to his treatment of us, keeping us starving although Tahiti is the land of abundance.
Christian Quiet, boys. He is coming.
Bligh (appearing sullen, determined and hateful, together with Fryer) Hayward shall have a month for this, and then we will flog him to death.
Fryer Is that wise, Sir?

Bligh It's not a question of what is wise. It's a question of what is fair.

Fryer Justice according to the letter could sometimes be unfair, Mr Bligh.

Bligh (bawling) Are you defending criminal maniacs? Can you defend criminals against the law, Mr Fryer? (*Fryer is silent.*)

(*to the crew*) Well, what do you know about this, you bloody bandits and thieves?

Morrison What do we know about what, Sir?

Bligh No play-acting. No one is innocent. I know. Three have escaped ashore under Thomas Hayward's night watch. He was sleeping. Who helped them with the boat?

Christian By your leave, Sir, but Churchill, Muspratt and Millward could actually have managed the boat by themselves, and it could have been done without anyone noticing.

Bligh Shut up, you damned bastard and thief! All three of them must be caught dead or alive! And whoever tries to run away again I will keep confined in irons in the keelson all the way home to England! Is that clear? My God, what a kindergarten you are! Am I not spoiling you, don't you get all you need, don't I care for you like a nanny, and what are you doing? You steal from me and run away from the ship, you impotent bastards!

Young Sir, allow me some important information.

Bligh What have you to tell us, you soft-hearted weakling?

Young Nothing of importance, except what everybody knows except yourself, since it's in your interest to deny it. You don't want to know the truth, Mr Bligh, since you profit by distorting it. No crew member has been stolen from on board. No one has taken any bribe from Tom Ellison in order not to reveal that he had a piglet from his sweetheart, Mr Samuel confiscated the piglet anyway...

Bligh (bawling, flushing red) Are you drunk, Sir? Are you not aware that Bounty has to take charge of all your presents from land for future exchange with other islands? Don't you see that Bounty needs all that she can get to survive an adventurous voyage home? Don't you realize what's good for all of you? Do you want to fill the belly of a cannibal? Are you out of your mind? Are you such a confounded idiot that you can't see what's best for all of us?

Heywood Sir, you and I have our families back in England to return to, but most of these men have nothing else to come home to than being hired on another ship like this. You keep them without human rights and rights of property like prisoners on board while Tahiti is lying there with all the loveliest abundance of comfort available. Is such an absurd cadaverous discipline really a necessity?

Bligh You can see for yourself what my so called cadaverous discipline has resulted in. By my spoiling them with mildness three men have deserted. They must be got back and be punished! Any other protests? (*silence*)

You, Peter Heywood, who is on good terms with the chief, are hereby commissioned to bring them in. Borrow his fastest canoes, and return with the deserters! Or else you will be punished as well as that worthless imbecile of a midshipman Hayward!

That's all! You may all return to your duties! (*leaves with Fryer*)

Young Our captain is mad. He should be put away in irons.
Christian No mutiny sentiments, Young. That won't help.
Young What will help then?
Christian Patience until we reach back to England. Then nothing can save him.
Young He lives by our good forbearance and uses it to torture us to death!
Christian Patience, Young. No hell lasts forever.
Young I am not so sure. A temporary hell is enough for an eternity. (*leaves*)
Christian (alone) Only Bligh himself is blind to the hell he is constantly expanding, and in his blindness he keeps making it worse. How is it possible that sheer human pettiness could be so blind and hopeless? Doctor Bacchus was right. Bligh's grave, which he is digging out himself, threatens to become the grave of the entire journey and us all.

Scene 2. On shore, a finer native cabin.
 Hitihiti with his family.

Maimiti (barging in) The whites are leaving! (*crushing into Hitihiti's arms and crying*)
Hitihiti (comforting her) When?
Maimiti In a few days! After tomorrow!
Hitihiti Perhaps there will still be time to finish your dictionary, Peter.
Heywood We will have to work day and night.
Maimiti (crying in her father's lap) He mustn't go! He mustn't go!
Hitihiti My daughter, if the gods demand that they must go, they must go. And even you must accept it, no matter how much you love your divine man.
Maimiti I can't! I can't! (*enter Christian*)
Heywood We just heard the sad news.
Christian No one regrets it more than I.
 (*Maimiti rushing up into Christian's arms, he embraces her tenderly*)
Maimiti I will never let you go!
Christian My love, captain Bligh may separate our bodies but never our souls.
Maimiti I will die and cry my eyes out of grief!
Christian You mustn't. One day I will return.
Heywood How do the others react?
Christian They all feel it like a disaster. But everyone was expecting it. All since the three deserters were caught Bligh has worked hard on weighing anchor as soon as possible.
Heywood To be able to continue flogging as many of us as possible to death as far away from Tahiti as possible?
Christian To stop more seamen from escaping.
Heywood Perhaps several of us already made a family.
Christian I am aware of it.
Maimiti I am yours, Christian, for the rest of my life and never anyone else's!
Christian You are free the moment I leave you until I get back.

Maimiti You will never be free of me.
Christian As you wish. *(They embrace.)*
 The captain expects you tomorrow night, Heywood.
Heywood I will be there. I promise not to abscond.
Christian No, since you have a family to return to. But for all those poor devils who don't have anyone waiting for them and who found someone here to love the home voyage will be the worst of hells.
Heywood For very obvious and naturally human reasons.
Christian We still have an entire day to be together tomorrow, Maimiti.
Maimiti Then we shall make love.
Christian Yes, my love, I promise you that.
Maimiti Give me a son!
Christian And if it's a daughter?
Maimiti As long as you give me your soul and heart I will be satisfied.
Christian You already own it all.
Maimiti Thank you.
Christian But you shall have more.
Maimiti I always want more.
Christian The short day tomorrow will be an eternity.
Maimiti The short day tomorrow will be my whole life and future.
Christian I love you.
Maimiti My god, come back!
Christian Tomorrow.
Maimiti Forever!
Christian Tomorrow. *(lets her go)* You have one day, Heywood.
Heywood I will use it well.
Christian Until tomorrow, my love. *(takes care of Maimiti, embracing her again. They kiss. He leaves.)*
Hitihiti My daughter, I have a certain feeling that he is serious.
Maimiti By leaving?
Hitihiti No, by having given you his soul.
Maimiti In that case I will keep it well.
Hitihiti Do so, my daughter, for he always comes back.
Maimiti *(brightens up)* Do you think so?
Hitihiti Yes, because I have a certain feeling that he is the true son of captain Cook.

Scene 3. On deck.
 Bligh walking to and fro.

Bligh You must treat those incompetent greenborns like little children! Well! At last they are back!

Christian (entering) Sir, reporting that everything went well and that the mission was carried through with success, in spite of the loss of two axes and one anchor.

Bligh (darkening) And what happened to the axes and the anchor?

Christian Sir, we were attacked by the natives.

Bligh Were you! And you went scared like rabbits and threw the axes into the sea and forgot all about the anchor!

Christian Sir, we were violently attacked and were lucky enough to get away alive. Those natives are thieves and not at all like the more cultivated Tahitians.

Bligh (furious) I send you ashore to get some water, you are provided with perfectly applicable rifles for protection, and what do you do? As soon as natives show up you bungle everything and run for your lives and leave the most precious instruments of Bounty for them in sheer panicky cowardice!

Christian Sir, we had your express orders not to use the weapons, and we defended ourselves as well as we could without weapons. If we had fought for the anchor or taken back the axes there would have been bloodshed and casualties.

Bligh That doesn't help the loss of the anchor and the axes! Why didn't you make yourselves respected by the natives? Why didn't you just gun them down?

Christian Sir, we had your express order not to use the weapons.

Bligh By the way, some coconuts are missing on board. How many have you taken, Mr Christian?

Christian I don't write down what I eat.

Bligh You were on guard when the coconuts were stolen.

Christian How do you know so precisely that coconuts were stolen when there are mountains of them between the guns on deck? Has Mr Samuel counted each one?

Bligh I always notice when something is stolen whether you report it or not.

Christian Surely you wouldn't consider me mean enough to be able to steal, like certain others on board?

Bligh What do you mean by that?

Christian I mean, Mr Bligh, that with your methods of placing the coconuts in glaring visibility to everyone, by rationing the water for the sake of the bread fruits, by your infernal trick of the bailer, forcing everyone to climb up the rig to the top to fetch it and then return it back to the top if they are to have any water at all unless they want to die of thirst, that you by such methods force your men to steal your coconuts placed as strategically as possible for temptation.

Bligh Nothing is more important than the bread fruits. That's the whole purpose of the voyage. They must have priority.

Christian Are they more important than your men?

Bligh You avoid the issue, Mr Christian. Who stole the coconuts?

Christian How could I know?

Bligh It happened under your watch. Do you want to be keelhauled?

Christian Keelhauling is forbidden according to law. Flogging will also eventually be prohibited as a result of your sadistic abuse of this bloody barbarism.

Bligh You force me to take measures which will make the whole crew suffer, Mr Christian.

Christian The responsibility is yours.

Bligh Mr Samuel, all grog rations are immediately withdrawn. And instead of a pound of yams per man you will from now on issue only half a pound to all messes. Is that clear?

Samuel Yes, Sir.

Bligh If you protect thieves, Mr Christian, you are a scoundrel of a thief yourself. You only make it worse for yourself and all the others. (*Christian leaves without a word.*)

Bligh (bawling to all present) You are all vicious scoundrels and thieves, you bloody worthless bogies! Those natives on Tahiti turned you all into monkeys! But I will remake you into men! And you will have a homeward journey back to England which you shall never forget, you spoiled vicious thieves and incompetent sloths and conspirators! (*leaves in fury to disappear under deck*)

Mills What happened to him?

Martin It's probably the sun.

Young How can Mr Christian bear it?

Heywood He can't. But fortunately he is better at self-control than the captain.

Young What would happen if he lost it?

Heywood When a self-controlled nature finally no longer can take it any more anything might happen. A human volcanic eruption could be worse than a real one.

Young Then I hope his self-control will last.

Heywood That would be the best thing for us all, in spite of all.

Scene 4. Midnight on board. All is quiet and still in the moonlight.

Tinkler Deep is the night. It's impossible to sleep. What's the matter with your moonlight, o moon, that keeps us so unblest and unrestful? What is the meaning of your strain, which is so devastating and fatal to the soul? Why can we have no peace when your dark light is beaming so infernally without mercy that one just have to watch you and lose oneself in your relentless magic, fascinated unto perdition by your unfathomable mystery of lucid magic, which is enough to bring about the fall of all mankind? O moon, your lies confound me and enslave all humanity in your seductive mystery of a light that is no light and only shines in darkness but spreading no actual light, only inveigling the world in a faint mystery of the lurid light of beguiling dreams. Without you all human vanity would really just be vanity.

Heywood (passing by) Is it Tinkler? Are you also sleepless?

Tinkler It's impossible to sleep on a night like this.

Heywood Did you hear that Bligh called us all thieves today?

Tinkler It's not the first time. And he may be right.

Heywood Do you mean...

Tinkler Yes, I was one of the thieves. Me and two others stole four coconuts, and Bligh, that arch pedant, noticed the theft. But I will never give away the two others.

Heywood So because of you we will have to do without grog rations and our yams cut down to half.

Tinkler You have to admit that Bligh asked for it. He keeps us starving, he uses infernal tricks to make us thirst, and he places all his coconuts on deck in view of everyone. You have to admit that it smells asking for a theft just for the pleasure of starting to mess with us more than ever, as he so frequently has promised.

Heywood It does appear suspicious.

Tinkler Sleep well, Heywood. I tie myself here to the mast.

Heywood It's impossible to sleep below in these doldrums of suffocating heat.

Tinkler No doubt there will be others as well having some heat tonight. So long.
(*vanishes*)

Heywood He can sleep at any time anywhere under any circumstances and in any position, like a cat. If only you could sleep!

Christian'(s voice) Is it Heywood?

Heywood Yes.

Christian (*appearing from nowhere*) Thanks God for someone to talk with!

Heywood What's the matter?

Christian Just the usual thing. Just the old ordinary despair without end.

Heywood You really look awful. What has happened?

Christian I can't take it any more, Heywood.

Heywood How so?

Christian This despair. This outrageous torture. This painful methodical hopeless human destruction from the side of Bligh. How can he be so base, so infamous, so extremely humiliating by just being condescending and patronising? He scolds me in public and then invites me for an intimate dinner, as if nothing had happened, as if this procedure was a standard order of the day – strike your victim down in abject disgrace, and then pretend you are his friend. How can you be so deceitful and capricious as chief responsible for your crew and ship and go to such extremes in double standards? Why are there no laws against mental cruelty at sea?

Heywood Don't ask me. But Bligh definitely favours you. Everyone is aware of that.

Christian Why then does he torture me? Why does he execute me in public by insufferable denigrations of abuse to only fawn on me when he is alone with me? What does he mean? What is his game? Does he know himself what he is doing? Is he aware of his aberrations at all?

Heywood I don't think so.

Christian He is a bully of the worst kind, he enjoys humiliating people in public and wallows in his mental sadism. I can't stand it any longer. His mental torture is worse than any physical.

Heywood What do you mean?

Christian It's as if he enjoyed it like a sport to go to any extremes to bereave us of our souls. If he succeeds in violating a soul so that it reacts he rejoices like from a

victory, while his physical violations are just brutal sensual indulgences. I can't endure another day of this.

Heywood What will you do?

Christian I will ask you of one thing.

Heywood Tell me.

Christian (*laying his hand on his shoulder*) My friend, if anything should happen to me, would you then visit my parents in Cumberland and talk with them about me?

Heywood You don't intend to do away with yourself, do you?

Christian Not quite. I will probably survive, but it's not certain that I will come home any more to see my parents. I ask you of this favour, just in case... Will you do it for me?

Heywood Certainly. You can always rely on me.

Christian I know you are honest. I couldn't have trusted anyone else.

Heywood Try to get some sleep now, Fletcher Christian.

Christian In this moonlight and heat that drives you mad? Impossible.

Heywood I couldn't sleep myself.

Christian Farewell, Peter Heywood.

Heywood (*more quiet, as if to warn*) There are others moving about.

Bligh (*appearing from the darkness, showing himself in the moonlight*) Up so late, Mr Christian?

Christian A full moon always kept me out of sleep, and I am not alone.

Bligh You too, Heywood?

Heywood Yes, Sir.

Bligh What are you standing here conferring about?

Heywood Nothing really.

Bligh From your guilty looks one could suspect you of some conspiracy. (*laughs dryly*) I know. Jokes aren't funny by moonlight. Go to bed now. Even if you can't sleep the body needs rest, and it's good to lie down. (*walks away to his quarters*)

Heywood Do you think he overheard us?

Christian What does it matter? He won't see me any more anyway.

Heywood What is your plan?

Christian Never mind. I will not harm anyone in any case. (*taps his shoulder like a friend*) Goodnight, Peter. Bligh is right. All rest is good even without sleep. (*leaves*)

Heywood Goodbye, Fletcher Christian. (*alone*) He seems quite desperate but at the same time in full control. A strangely unrestful soul but perhaps more moonstruck than all the rest of us, and still maybe the only one capable of ruling his madness. But what is really happening here with us on this hopeless journey of steadily increasing intolerable mental torture?

Tinkler The moon is claiming its tribute.

Heywood Tinkler?

Tinkler Yes.

Heywood Did you hear?

Tinkler Every word.

Heywood You eavesdropped!

Tinkler No, I just happened to hear. Still, it was just innocent talk.

Heywood I hope so. What do you think about it?

Tinkler That more are moonstruck than you and I. Even Bligh came up interfering.

Heywood What do you think about Christian?

Tinkler No idea. Bu he seems upset.

Heywood What will he do?

Tinkler Hopefully nothing. Or else we will see tomorrow.

Heywood Do you think he is desperate? Do you think he could do something stupid?

Tinkler He certainly is desperate, but he would be the last man on board to do anything stupid. Sleep well, Heywood.

Heywood Go to blazes, Tinkler.

Tinkler I wish I could, at least back to the palm trees and their soothing shades.
(Heywood leaves.)

She keeps on shining and beaming like mad and dominating with demanding brilliance. What does she ask of us? What is her demand? Some sacrifice? Some show of madness? Her power is beyond the will and sense of man. When all human vanity is wasted the full moon will still be there with its sucking power to a higher reality than the one we suffer from. Go into hiding, o moon, before anything happens that we will all regret. I never considered you with greater misgivings than now, when your power is at its fullest and your attraction at its most irresistible. Why are there no clouds? This full moon is the very climax of indecency! (*leans to the mast and appears to go to sleep*)

Christian (*gradually reappearing*) O night of despair without any mercy or end! When will you ever come to an end! What are you, o world, o cursed ship of fools of quarrelling idiots, that any decent man at all could put up with you! I have had enough. Let the petty and quarrelsome torture each other to death and kill one another forever, but let me out of hearing and seeing their pettiness! The animals may growl, but man was born to think and to learn wisdom in peace far above the level of animals, yes, as far above strife as possible! But the majority of humankind drag themselves back down to the depth of animal instinct and even to a lower level than of any animal. I can't support that endless quarrel any more, the incurable pettiness, the tyrant's condescending humiliations and his revolting, disgusting efforts at intimacy. Let me just disappear and abscond from this scene of everlasting degradation. (*puts his leg over the railing to climb it and disappear*)

Tinkler (*invisible*) Take the ship instead.

Christian (*at once*) Who said that? (*silence*)

Who is there? (*silence*)

Was it God's or the devil's voice or an ordinary human being's? No one is awake, and the ship is dead. (*looks around*) Not a soul in sight. Was it my own conscience? Maybe a voice from the deepest corner of my unconscious nightly world of dreams? But I heard the thought as clearly as if it had been spoken, as if I generated it myself. It's a new thought that hasn't been tried before. Mutiny? To take the law into your

own hands and do justice by force? What is the alternative? If I leave, many will charge the captain for this on top of everything else, which will only augment his cruelty, and a revolt of the most tragic and savage kind could then be inevitable. I can save lives, since I stand between Bligh and the crew and could negotiate with both. I could have most of them under me, and as leader of the mutiny I could at the same time save captain Bligh's life. I am the only one capable of balancing the conflict between the captain and the crew. Fryer is a coward, Bligh's lackeys are abjectly good for nothing, all wise and educated members would support my line of conciliation, and we could hold all the wild ones at bay, who only wish to stamp out the brains of the lieutenant to the drainage. Let it happen. It's worth a try. I can't sleep anyway, so I might as well make myself useful. It will soon be day anyway. *(comes up to Thomas Hayward, who sleeps on duty)*

Here is Thomas Hayward sleeping off his watch. He should have guarded the ship now. He has been flogged before for sleeping on his watch. If the commander had any idea of what is going on now while Hayward is sleeping! But he and Hayward shall know nothing until it is all over.

Who is moving over there? It's Burkitt. He has been out of tune all since his punishment. He will be the first one. Burkitt! Come here! But be quiet!

Burkitt Yes, Sir?

Christian Could you please go down and wake up Thompson, Churchill, Quintal and Martin and tell them that I must talk with them? Then come up to me all five of you. But don't wake up anyone else.

Burkitt Yes, Sir. *(leaves)*

Christian (passing Coleman, who is sleeping) Here sleeps Coleman. He has the keys to the arms chest. Coleman! Wake up! *(wakes him up)*

Coleman (groggy) What, Sir? Have we drifted aground?

Christian No, but I have the watch, and an enormous shark is circling the ship. I would like to shoot it. Could you give me the keys to the chest?

Coleman All right, Sir, if only I may go on sleeping...

Christian Of course. *(Coleman hands over the keys and goes directly back to sleep)*

(During the following light gradually appears very slowly but steadily)

The arms chest. I have all the ship's weapons in my hand. *(reaches the arms chest)*

But who is lying here sleeping on the chest? It's that detestable informer Hallet. Many would like to throw him over board. Shouldn't he as well be on watch?

(feigning righteous ire) Thomas Hallet, we are drifting across unknown waters close to Tofoa, there could be reefs and cannibals anywhere around us, and you just sleep on your watch! *(wakes him up brutally)*

Hallet (scared out of his wits) Oh, Mr Christian, please don't report me to lieutenant Bligh! He would never forgive me! I'll never sleep on my guard again! It was the first and last time! I promise! I beg you on my bare knees!

Christian It was hardly the first time, but let's hope it was the last, for your own good! Now get out!

Hallet O, thank you, Mr Christian! *(disappears in great fright)*

Christian That was the arms chest. Here are my friends.

(enter Burkitt with Churchill, Thompson, Martin and Quintal)

Welcome, but keep still. Here is the arms chest. Here is the key. We are taking over the ship. *(All five brighten up.)*

Churchill And throw captain Bligh to the sharks?

Christian Slow down there, Churchill. Bligh comes last. First we are taking the ship. We wake up Williams, McCoy, Alexander Smith, Hillbrandt, Millward and gunner's mate John Mills. We put guards by the hatchways, and then, Churchill, we can quietly go down to convey the interesting news to the former captain.

Churchill I know some more who are sure to be with us.

Christian Who?

Churchill Ellison, Skinner, Brown and Sumner.

Christian Good. Make them come too.

Quintal How about Ned Young the midshipman?

Christian Let the midshipmen sleep. They have a rank and should not be involved in a mutiny, for their own sake.

Churchill Let's go, boys!

Christian Thompson, you stay here guarding the arms chest. The rest of us must arm ourselves and proceed to action.

(Quietly and smoothly the mutiny is organised without difficulty. Two guards are placed at every hatchway while other mutineers without a sound are brought up and armed. Christian gives orders to every one. Finally all sixteen mutineers are present, armed and strategically set.)

Christian (quietly inspecting it all. Everyone is waiting for his orders.) Churchill, Burkitt and Quintal, let's now go down and wake up the captain. *(They go down. After a while:)*

Bligh('s voice, strained) What's this? Have we foundered? Are we attacked? Why are you armed? What the hell is going on? *(crying out loud)* Help! Help!

Churchill('s voice) Shut up, you fat swine of a dictator, it's your turn now to dance for the cat-o'-nine-tails!

Christian('s voice, calmly) Take it easy, Churchill! Just pinion him!

Bligh (yelling) This will cost you your lives! I shall flog you all to slices, you bugs of cowardice! I shall send the whole fleet to hunt you down, and you shall all hang in the yard-arms!

Churchill Shut up, you fat monster of a bedbug, or you will end up with heart failure!

Bligh Christian, Christian, have you finally gone out of your mind? You must have had a sunstroke! This is absurd! This is a nightmare!

Christian (calmly) Take him up on deck.

Bligh (yelling) What the devil has caught you all, you madmen! How can you lay hands on me, your own fatherly captain?

Churchill Shut up, you gasping chatterbox, or I will stick the towel into your throat! *(They bring up Bligh in only his shirt and breeches, pinioned. The shirt is white but loosely on and wrinkled, the breeches are beige. He resists only from vanity.)*



Ellison There is our fat man!

Mills At last we shall have the outstanding pleasure to flog our so much longed for captain to death! Every single lash he has given us we will now gratefully return to him! It should be about two hundred and fifty! With the cat-o'-nine-tails! It's not more than fair! Measure for measure!

Christian Calm down, Mills. Many are still sleeping, and we will have many against us. Mr Bligh, may I ask you to stand with your back against the mast. (*takes the rope Bligh is pinioned with and a bayonet from Churchill.*)

Bligh What do you intend to do with me?

Christian Only what's right.

Bligh Then you started badly with the greatest wrong you could have committed.

Christian Your persistent wrongs, Sir, have forced us to take the law into our own hands. Or else you would sooner or later have caused someone's death. My wish is to save everyone's life.

Bligh (cynically) You and your friends have already committed suicide.

Christian But so far we are still alive. If I hadn't done this, lieutenant Bligh, someone would sooner or later have murdered you.

Bligh Never. No one would have dared.

Christian No one? Can you read anything else than fanatical hatred in the faces of these fifteen men who only want to see you dead? I assure you that I am the only one of them who wants to save your life.

Bligh You can still save yours, Christian. Save your life and end the mutiny.

Christian How do you turn back history, Mr Bligh? The mutiny has already taken place.

(Mr Fryer is brought up completely and neatly dressed.)

Fryer Mr Christian, can't you see that what you have done is the most unfortunate thing that could have happened?

Christian More unfortunate than saving everyone's life?

Fryer What will you do to save captain Bligh's, mine and all the other innocents?

Christian Mr Fryer, I give you the cutter.

Purcell (being brought up) Mr Christian, the cutter is rotten. It wouldn't float for an hour. Give us the launch instead!

Churchill The launch! Never! Then the tyrant would reach England immediately!

Fryer Mr Christian, what was really your purpose with this demonstration?

Christian My intention was to put Bligh in irons and take him to court in England.

Bligh In irons, you imbecile naïve bastard! You wouldn't dare put me in irons! You would get all England against you!

Churchill Christian, we can't just lock him up. That would be ridiculous. We must do away with him. The whole crew demands it.

Christian The whole crew, Churchill? And what about all those who are still sleeping suspecting nothing? We don't know yet how many we have against us, but it could be more than we could guess. No one must be harmed who is innocent. Those who wish may follow Mr Bligh in the launch.

Fryer I want to remain on board.

Christian Mr Fryer, I know you. You would just do anything to recapture the ship and reinstate Bligh. You go with the launch.

Bligh For the last time, Mr Christian, come to your senses! Your piracy has no chance of success. The whole English fleet will chase you on every sea until every one of you is brought to trial and executed. The world is not so large and free any more that anyone can hide from justice indefinitely. Liberate me, let all return to normal, and I promise to forget all about it and not punish anyone. That is your last chance.

Bligh Mr Bligh, what you call justice we call oppression, humiliation, sadism and intolerable inhumanity. No one is guilty of this mutiny except you yourself. It's a natural consequence of your brutal attitude and methods. You must accept your new command of the launch, and that's more than you deserved.

Bligh You were born to be a criminal fool, and as such you will die, and you bring half a crew with you into your perdition by your miserable lunacy! Don't imagine that anyone of you will be spared!

Christian I spare your life.

Bligh That does not oblige me to spare yours!

Churchill And such a baboon you want to spare, Fletcher! If he is allowed to live, he will only live to see us all hanged without exception! We demand that Bligh be flogged to death here and now!

Mills It's not more than right!

Burkitt If we don't kill him he will kill us!

Ellison (with a great sabre) Let me finish him!

(Ellison is the youngest on board and arouses some mirth with his huge cutlass and suggestion.)

Christian That's right! Get at him, Ellison!

Ellison (dancing to Bligh and swinging his huge sabre) So you thought you could fool us indefinitely, you big fat lurch! You thought you and Samuel could starve us indefinitely! You thought you could steal any number of coconuts and pigs from us! But your fat diet is finished now, your fatty honour! You have done yourself in and must now wobble home alone on your own fleshy feet! *(All laugh, and even the most aggressive forget their hatred.)*

(It's now broad daylight, and all have been taken up on deck by the mutineers. Among the neutral stand Morrison, Heywood, Stewart and others.)

Christian Mr Bligh, we are prepared to give you a chance and possibility, which is more than you ever gave us. The launch is yours, and you may take along whoever you wish. It's only eighteen miles to the nearest island, and you will have enough food and victuals. That's all I can do for you.

Bligh Besides food we need weapons to defend ourselves against cannibals.

Christian Fire arms are excluded. You may have some cutlasses.

Bligh And we need a sextant and Purcell's tool-chest.

Christian The chest belongs to Purcell. He decides where it shall be.

Bligh Purcell, you old trouble-maker, are you coming with us, or do you prefer staying among these lawless and demented pirates?

Churchill He stays with us. He has also had some taste of Bligh's inhumanity. Put Bligh and Purcell together in the launch, and they will not stop quarrelling until the launch is capsized. *(mirth)*

Purcell (furious) If I stay with you, you bloody scumbags and dirty old villains, I will not give in until I have squeezed the last drop of life out of everyone of you! I would like to see if anyone dares to try to hinder me from leaving this damned ship for good!

Quintal Let him go. Let him and Bligh kill each other.

McCoy That's fair enough.

Smith (comes with Thomas Hayward and Hallet) Here are two miserable beggars and whiners who did everything they could to worsen the journey for us so far. Look at those buggers! I demand that they accompany the captain. *(Hallet and Hayward fall on their knees and beg for their lives.)*

Hallet O please Mr Christian, let me stay! It's all Hayward's fault, that wicked sneak! I was also against Bligh all the way no matter what I reported to him!

Hayward Mr Christian, Hallet is the liar! I never sneaked to Bligh! I was always on your side! All the journey I have been slandered and backbitten by everyone else! It's the other midshipmens' fault!

Christian Get down into the launch, both of you! You follow Mr Bligh and Mr Samuel as their most reliable spies and accomplices.

Bligh We can't do without a sextant, Mr Christian.

Christian You will have my own sextant, a book with nautical tables and a compass with medicines, clothes and food. You will also have Mr Purcell with his expert handicraft and instruments. That's all I can do for you.

Bligh You have done more than enough anyway to end up in the gallows with all your pathetic mob. I leave my ship voluntarily, Mr Christian, only to obtain the great pleasure of sending the entire English fleet out to hunt you down.

Christian Fortunately the world will never be that consummate in its order, that an honest man would not be able to hide away from all its injustices and abuse.

Bligh You are a lost man, Mr Christian, a doomed loser and dishonoured by yourself forever. I deplore your absolute wasting of your decency and possibilities.
(*spits on deck at him*)

Christian Release Mr Bligh from his ropes and let him down into the launch.

Bligh (before he leaves the ship) For the very last time, Mr Christian! Revoke all this stupidity and criminal nonsense, and you will get everything back. Think of my wife and children!

Christian Sir, you should have given them some thought before starting to let blood of your crew. If your family had seen what we have experienced, they would as little want to have you back as we.

Bligh (with a bellow) Damn you and your cursed lot! (*goes over board*)

Christian Mr Fryer, I regret that you have to follow Mr Bligh, but unfortunately we cannot trust your loyalty.

Fryer That will instead be trusted the more by captain Bligh. I feel a deep sorrow for you, Mr Christian. You and the other mutineers suffered great wrongs from Mr Bligh, but this action of yours makes it impossible for you to ever have your rights. I sympathize but can't defend you. Farewell, (*gives him his hand*)

Christian (grasping it) Farewell, Mr Fryer. Take care of the launch.

Fryer I am sure, and we are looking forward to conquering the whole Pacific Ocean with it. (*goes over board*)

Christian (catches sight of Heywood, Morrison and Stewart) Do you also consider me a doomed and lost pirate? (*after a moment*) You may remain on board, if you want.

Morrison Fletcher, I might have suffered more than you from Bligh's sadistic indulgences, since I was given the abominable task of executing them. But I can never agree with a mutiny against England.

Christian Against England or against captain Bligh?

Morrison Unfortunately Mr Bligh represents England in this case.

Heywood We must fetch our belongings.

Christian So you and Stewart also go with Bligh?

Stewart Yes.

Christian All right. You can fetch your things. – Doctor Nelson and doctor Ledward, we would invite you to stay on board.

Nelson Mr Christian, we can all testify to Mr Bligh's violating all limits to decent discipline on board, but we can never sympathize with your blind blundering method to cure the illness.

Ledward Even I will follow the captain, Mr Christian.

(More and more are eager to follow Bligh.)

Christian Peckover? Cole? Elphinstone? John Norton? Even you?

Norton Fletcher, I built you a raft which gave you the opportunity to get away if you wanted to. I never sanctioned a mutiny.

Christian I couldn't get away unnoticed. There were too many men on board, and suddenly the mutiny was a plain fact.

Norton I am sorry, Fletcher, about the unintended turn of events. *(goes over board with the others.)*

Christian Tinkler? Are you following Bligh although you hated him?

Tinkler Even I was awake all night. *(lowers his voice)* Do you remember the voice that suggested taking the ship?

Christian Tinkler! And you follow Bligh?

Tinkler Bligh will reach England, and after that you will have no chance against him. I will be your advocate in England, if needed.

Christian God be with you all, Tinkler. *(Tinkler goes over board.)* Has anyone seen the midshipman Edward Young? Where is he?

Churchill I think he sleeps.

Christian If he sleeps it's good for him. He is in that case the only one to have slept this night. Don't wake him up.

Bligh (calling from outside and below the stage) I give you two years, Mr Christian! You will have two years to live on! Then you will all be hanged in the yard-arms!

Burkitt You are not in England yet, you bawling braggart of the worst villain on board! You seem to believe that you'll only have to row five rounds to reach England! *(puts a rifle to his shoulder and takes aim)*

Smith (warding off the aim) No, don't shoot. He will never reach England anyway. Don't you see how overloaded the launch is already, and even more want to go down with it!

Nelson Morrison! Stewart! Heywood! Coleman! Hurry if you want to come along! *(gets over board)*

Bligh (outside) The launch can't take any more. We are nineteen, and it was made for twelve.

Coleman (coming up with his things) Let me through! I must home to England!

Christian Let the launch veer astern, Smith,
(Morrison, Stewart and Heywood come up with their things.)

Heywood (rushing to the railings) No! Don't let the launch drift away!



Bligh Too late, boys! We are loaded! We can't take a single soul more! But I will do you all justice when I get home to England!

Stewart They are sailing away from us!

Morrison They are loaded so deep that they could sink in any moment. Lucky we not to be in that boat.

Heywood Do you really mean that, Morrison?

Morrison (*buries his face in his hands*)

Churchill Bear off and turn one of the swivels on them! Give them a whiff of grape!

Burkitt (*raising his long gun again*) That bully shall blyme never get away alive! As long as he lives no one in the world will be safe from him. (*aims, but Smith intervenes again.*)

Smith We are free Englishmen and no murderers!

Burkitt If we spare him we will only live to regret it.

Christian Disarm him!

Burkitt Free Englishmen, you said! No devil shall bully me any more! (*resists, there is some fighting, four men are needed to disarm Burkitt.*)

Christian Thomas Burkitt, I must remind you that naval law is still in force even with a change of captain.

Burkitt I see that we got a new captain Bligh over us.

Churchill Don't be a damned fool now, Burkitt! The tyranny is over! We are free now! And Tahiti lies ahead!

Burkitt (*incredulous*) Tahiti?

Churchill Is there anything hindering us from returning to our ladies on Tahiti now, captain Christian?

Christian I assume, master Churchill, that most on board are of the opinion that there is hardly anywhere else we could go.

many Hurray! Long live captain Christian! To Tahiti! Back home again! Hurray! (*etc.*)

Christian (taking the helm and changing course) Let's preliminarily go back to Tahiti. But I also have some serious words for you. (*Young shows up, yawning.*) Where have you been, midshipman Young?

Young (yawning) What the devil is going on up here? Are you having a party? You make noise and dance as if there was at least a carnival. Did I miss something?

Heywood (laughs) Have you slept until now?

Young I would have slept longer and better if you hadn't started your noisy hullabaloo! What the devil has happened? Has the captain cooled off since he no longer has the leading yelling voice? (*Everybody laughs.*)

Christian Midshipman Young, captain Bligh has left the ship together with eighteen men. You can still see the launch some miles astern on their way to Tofoa.

Young Didn't he feel like continuing? (*The men laugh.*)

Christian We have no obligations to him any more. We have mutinied.

Young Mutiny! Great God! And I slept over it! Why was I kept out of it? Why didn't you wake me up?

Heywood We did try to wake you up, but you slept like a log.

Young Have you also mutinied?

Christian That's what I wanted to get at. There are nine men on board who did not participate in the mutiny and who maybe rather would have followed captain Bligh than remained. If these nine men don't work against us they must not be treated worse than ourselves.

Thompson (calling) Are they reliable?

Christian That's what we must examine.

Morrison (stepping forth) I did not partake in the mutiny although I would have had reasons enough to do so. I regard it as a misfortune which cannot be undone since it was unavoidable. We are now all in the same boat, and we simply have to cooperate to survive. I am certain that none of us nine will do anything to work against you.

Thompson (sullenly) You had better not.

Christian You are right, Morrison. I wonder if any one of you realize our position. Captain Bligh gave us two years, but already within a year England will send out ships to find out what happened to the Bounty. If any of us mutineers ever will be found by an Englishman he will infallibly be hanged. We can never return to England. We have lost our country, our families, our roots and everything that meant some security for us. Instead all we have is the vastness of the Pacific Ocean. It's the world's greatest ocean, and only by that fact we have a possibility to manage and survive. But we must be careful and have a firm and secure hand at the helm. Burkitt

and Williams have already expressed some discontent with me. If you desire any other leader of the ship than me, I am ready to immediately leave the helm.

Smith No one else will do! Vote!

Brown We want Christian for our captain.

(All raise their hands and finally also Burkitt and Williams.)

Christian Thanks for the confidence. Unfortunately I must insist on absolute obedience. But I will promise you one thing: No one will be punished without very good reasons.

(general positive response)

A captain must have a crew of qualified seamen. Edward Young, you are now master. For your mate I appoint George Stewart. Peter Heywood, you will be boatswain and Morrison gunner. Alexander Smith, you are now gunner's mate.

Churchill And I?

Christian Churchill, you were always the perfect master-at-arms and will have the honour of remaining so. No one can manage that better than you.

Churchill As long as I am respected and feared... As long as I can do without Bligh, it's all right.

Christian Excellent. Go to your duties. The ship is waiting to be taken care of. Just because Bligh is gone we must not let her down. Ned Young, you stay here.

Mills Sir, an important question.

Christian Well?

Mills What shall we do with the bread fruits?

Christian (after a quick thought) Throw them over board.

(Many cheer and go at it immediately.)

Well, Young, what do you think of the situation?

Young I have no objection.

Christian I have placed nineteen men in the most awkward situation in the world. Only one of them deserved it.

Young The other eighteen made their voluntary choice.

Christian Not all. The worst would have preferred to stay, but I forced them down into an overloaded vessel.

Young As Morrison said, the mutiny was unavoidable at length and also justified.

Christian I only wanted to depose Bligh, put him in irons and bring him to trial in England. But a mob forced me to become a pirate. It was very close that I would also have become a murderer. Our position is desperate, Edward. We are cut off from all civilization forever, and I have the uncertainty of the destiny of nineteen men on my conscience.

Young Don't take it so hard. This ocean is rather spacious. Let's make the best of it and at least survive.

Christian Yes, that's about all we can do: try to survive by hiding away to every trace of civilization. That's our only chance.

Young I am on your side, Christian.

Christian Are you? The tragic thing is, Edward, that we as gentlemen are a minority to all the worst ruffians of Bounty. All the able seamen joined the mutiny except the blind fiddler Michael Byrne and Muspratt. All the better educated except you and me and those who involuntarily were left on board followed the brutal captain.

Young You are the most cultivated man on board, and you have to be the leading pirate to this mob of ruffians. Is that what you mean?

Christian Yes, Edward. I am the most unhappy and unfortunate captain in the world. That's why I urgently need your support, yours, Heywood's, Stewart's and Morrison's. You anti-mutineers are now my only friends on board, except Brown and Smith.

Young I am with you whole-heartedly whatever happens. I share your destiny, Christian, even if it ends up in the gallows.

Christian (pats his shoulder) That if anything I think we shall be able to avoid, Edward. The Pacific Ocean is so far vast and free and greater than the whole British Empire.

Young That's what I mean. But where shall we go?

Christian (crying out loud over the whole ship) Set the course away to Tahiti!

One sailor after another (from different directions) Way to Tahiti!

Scene 5. Tahiti.

By the hut of Hitihiti, the family at dinner by the fire in a good mood.

Only Christian and Maimiti are missing.

Hitihiti We are very happy to have you back again, Peter. But what happened to captain Bligh?

Heywood (clearing his throat) We met captain Cook and his ship close to Tofoa and had new orders from him. Captain Bligh followed captain Cook with half of the crew on new expeditions, while Fletcher Christian was ordered to find new unknown archipelagos to colonise. We tried on the way here on Tupuai but failed. Now Christian does not need so many men around him any more, so those who want to may stay here and wait for the next ship.

Hitihiti That means, Peter, that you at last can become one of us and maybe stay with us for the rest of your life. You can take a wife here on Tahiti and grow your own garden, just like all the rest of you, like Stewart, Morrison and Coleman.

Stewart We are indeed looking forward to it.

Morrison Not I. I will wait here every day for an English ship to turn up, and if there will be none, I will build one of my own and sail home.

Hitihiti Why then did you not follow captain Cook or Bligh or Christian?

Heywood (intervening) Morrison had an argument with Christian, didn't like Bligh and was not allowed to follow captain Cook.

Morrison That's a fair diplomatic view of it.

Stewart But here is Christian and Maimiti. *(They enter with arms around each other.)*

Hitihiti Welcome, my young and blooming love couple! All Tahiti is rejoicing over Bounty returning with so much love and with so many beautiful young men!

Christian Thanks, good Hitihiti. We are happy that we could come back, and me especially, so that I could fetch my beautiful Maimiti.

Heywood When are you leaving?

Christian Tomorrow morning.

Stewart Is it already settled?

Christian Yes. Eight men follow me with six of our native friends.

Morrison Do you all bring your wives?

Christian No, not all. Only twelve women come with us.

Heywood Only!

Stewart Who are the three doing without?

Christian Three of our native friends. But they are happy all the same.

Heywood I really hope you find your dream colony.

Christian It will be difficult to find, but the sea is limitless, and we have plenty of time. But you will never see Bounty again, my friends.

Morrison What are your plans?

Christian As soon as we find a suitable island we destroy Bounty, so that all our traces are deleted. My first duty in life is to save the lives of those who agreed on deserting Bligh. Those who wish to take the risk of remaining on Tahiti may eventually have themselves to blame. For them I feel no responsibility, but for the others, those eighteen in the open boat...

Young Don't think of it, Christian. They chose it for themselves.

Christian Also for you innocents who remain here I have a responsibility. I must ask you, that as soon as a British ship is sighted, you must immediately report to its captain. You are innocent and have therefore nothing to fear. Only those who keep away will risk to get compromised.

Heywood We will, Christian. Anything else?

Christian No, nothing else. Just live and live well, take care of yourselves and of Tahiti and its friendly people, and make the best of it.

Morrison We can hardly do anything more than that.

Christian Those who follow me are constantly getting fewer as our destinies become more uncertain. At the same time I can do less and less for all of Bounty's men.

Heywood Do you regret the mutiny?

Christian A difficult question. I have pondered over it for a long time. The worst thing is, my friends, that whatever destinies we will face, I don't think anything would have been any better under captain Bligh. Maybe I did right after all, but I admit that my responsibility is tremendous. Farewell, my friends. Forgive me, if you can. *(rises with Maimiti)*

Stewart For us there is nothing to forgive. It's England who should forgive you. But England will never understand that you only tried to do what was right under extremely difficult circumstances.

Christian Thank you, George Stewart. Come, Maimiti. The others are waiting for us.

Hitihiti (to one of the neutrals) What does mutiny mean?

Morrison (thinking carefully) A crisis situation demanding an action, that usually involves great danger.

Hitihiti Then you are all very brave men.

Young (rising) Thank you, Hitihiti, for the party.

Hitihiti Thank *you*, my son. I wish Bounty the happiest possible journey.

Christian Thanks, Hitihiti. We'll need it. (*leaves with Maimiti and Young*)

Hitihiti He seemed sad. Are there new crises on their way?

Morrison You never know, Hitihiti.

Heywood At least they are over for us who remain.

Hitihiti I sincerely hope so, Peter. We don't like to see people worried or sad, for if one is dejected it's easy for everyone to become dejected.

Stewart We shall never be sad here on Tahiti, o Hitihiti.

Hitihiti That's the spirit! (*They continue their pleasant gathering.*)

Scene 6. A desert beach of only rocks and sand.

Bligh's 17 men come slowly in, staggering in a more than miserable condition, their clothes are rags, they are emaciated and sick, and few can stand on their feet.

Bligh (unrecognizable, unshaved, in rags but unbroken) Just don't fall asleep! We still have a fourth of our journey left, and we are only here to renew our forces! But you won't get them by lying still! We must work to get food! Two expeditions will immediately leave to get oysters, fresh water and berries. Purcell, you take along Elphinstone, Cole, Fryer and Hallet along the shore to the west. Tinkler, Lamb, Smith and Samuel follow the coast to the east. Dismiss!

(*The second group rises slowly. Purcell, the strongest of the men after Bligh, doesn't move a limb.*)

Well, Purcell, get going!

Purcell You can send someone else, Sir. I am the oldest and worked hardest on board.

Bligh What is this supposed to mean, Purcell? Another mutiny?

Purcell I am just telling you how it is.

Bligh Do I have to force you up on your feet? If Mr Comfort doesn't choose to follow a simple order Mr Comfort will remain here as we sail on!

Purcell Put me in irons then, Sir, if you can.

Bligh (takes out a cutlass) On your feet, man!

Purcell You know very well that it was only by your own fault that you lost your ship, and we all know that, no matter how loyal we have been. As you tortured me

on board, you have continued to torture me in the launch, just because I am older than you and tougher than you and knows my craft better than you. Only because of that you have kept me at hard work ever since we left Tofoa with your damned protective splashboards. I have been toiling day and night with your damned constant reparations...

Bligh And what do you suppose I have been doing? Taking it easy? Been on a holiday? For God's sake, man, we must all work ourselves to death to survive, and I haven't slept for seventy-two hours! Who has been sitting at the helm almost all of the time and brought you across the Pacific Ocean through storms and pouring rains for a month? Do you think I worked less than you? Mr Purcell, if you refuse to help providing food you are a worthless scumbag! Is that clear?

Purcell No matter how much of a scumbag I am, I will never succeed in reaching your level in that matter, although I am as good a man as you.

Bligh Are you? Let's see if you are! Defend yourself, if you are a man, Mr Purcell! (*gives him another cutlass and is ready to fight*)

Purcell (accepting the cutlass with astonishment, rising) Do you mean a duel, Sir?

Bligh Exactly, you lousy scoundrel, who doesn't want to work! (*attacks. Purcell can't defend himself, runs away, loses his sword and disappears*) Come back here, you coward! (*Purcell returns not without second thoughts*) Well, poor scarecrow, are you still as good a man as I?

Purcell (at a loss) No, Sir.

Bligh Then go and fetch some water, and work like a man!

Purcell Yes, Sir. (*goes off with the other three*)

Bligh What a bloody hell of a sad affair this is! I have never seen a more useless company! When they go fishing they scare off the fish, when they are to catch birds sleeping on the ground they clamp in like hippopotamuses and cannot catch even one, when they fight they run away with their tail between their legs, and when I fall asleep they find some other mischief to do calling up all cannibals against us, as when Fryer set fire to a whole landscape. What bunglers! If I ever reach England with you, it will not be thanks to any help from you! And everything is that damned Fletcher Christian's fault, whom I even treated like a son!

Ledward Take it easy, Sir. We are not home yet.

Bligh But we shall get home, even if I have to take that open launch across the entire Indian and Atlantic Ocean into the bargain, just for the extreme pleasure of seeing that bastard mutineer hoisted in the gallows! There is no sea on this earth where he will be left in peace for my revenge!

Ledward Sir, take it easy, sit down and rest. Even you will need some sleep.

Bligh After eating, Ledward. First we must have food, and our sleep must not take too long, for we still have nine hundred miles left to Timor.

Ledward One thing at a time, Sir. Now it's time for rest.

Bligh I'll try, Ledward. (*sits down among the other rugged beggars around a starting camp fire.*)

Akt IV scene 1. On board the Bounty.

Mills We will never find land. Christian is devoted to wishful thinking.
McCoy Allow him that licence. He will have to give up in the end.
Martin We should take away his command and force him to give up. Or else he never will.
Williams But the island might still be there.
Mills It's only thanks to you, Williams, that we won't get what we want. You are duped by Christian's dreams just like the three sheep.
Williams It's you who give up too easily.
Smith Are you so incredulous, mates, that you give up without sensible reason?
Mills We have been searching for that island now for three months, and it still doesn't exist.
Martin We don't want to spend the rest of our lives going blindly around at random at sea. We want ashore and have fun with more beautiful girls.
Smith Each one of you have your own wife. What more do you want?
Brown (at a distance) Land ahoy, Sir! (*All are alerted.*)
Christian (coming up) Land? Where?
Brown (appearing) Over there, Fletcher. It must be some rocky land, because it is very far away, and the sight is very clear.



Christian Could it really be Pitcairn? If it is it is far off the chart. The better in that case. A desert island placed wrong on the chart, an island that isn't where it should be, a lost island, a ghost island – what could be better for us? – Young, set the course directly for this new land.

Young We will be there before sunset, Fletcher.

Christian Good. *(to Smith)* Tell Minarii and Tetahiti that I wish to speak with them.

Smith Certainly. *(disappears. The others also retire to resume their private affairs.)*

Christian An elevated isolated desolate island beyond all fairways and marked completely wrong on the chart – could it really be a refuge safe enough for us and for my infernally tormenting gnawing conscience? I fear that we will only import the problems we want to get rid of wherever we go. But let's dare the experiment. We have after all nothing to lose. *(The two native chiefs enter, two stately and handsome Polynesians.)*

Tetahiti and Minarii, we are approaching the land we have been searching for for months. Well ashore I intend to burn our ship, and I wanted to explain to you why.

Minarii We already know why. Christian and his white brothers are escaping. You are afraid and want to conceal that you are afraid. But what are you afraid of?

Christian You never learned the truth. No Polynesian ever learned the truth. The truth is that captain Bligh was a great liar and a cruel tyrant. He lied when he said that he was captain Cook's son and that captain Cook was still alive. Captain Cook was murdered on Hawaii by natives many years ago. We took over the ship by force from captain Bligh since his cruelty made life on board unbearable.

Minarii I see. You killed him and took the ship.

Christian No, Minarii, it wasn't that simple. I just wanted to do him justice. I only wanted to commit him and bring him home to England. But my fifteen helpers in the rebellion on board didn't want to allow me. Instead we left Bligh in an open launch in the open sea together with eighteen others who wanted to follow him.

Minarii So you gave the tyrant a chance. That's more than we would have done.

Christian Now we are reaching the island I have been searching for, and I have told you all this to make certain that I have your loyalty. Are you our friends or enemies, now that you know the truth? If you don't accept our procedure against Bligh, I am willing to bring you back to Tahiti.

Minarii It would have been easier if you had killed Bligh at once. You took a risk by allowing him to live.

Christian We English don't kill when it isn't necessary.

Minarii But you are too tolerant and patient and allow bad blood to grow worse instead of letting it. To let Bligh live was a dangerous injustice in an adverse direction.

Christian Are you with us?

Tetahiti We will never fail you, Christian. You know it.

Christian And you, Minarii?

Minarii We are with you as long as you don't turn against us.

Christian I will never do that. You have become our brothers, you have won a friendship for life among us like foster brothers, at least you with Brown, Minarii, and you, Tetahiti, with me.

Minarii Then we are agreed. (*shakes hands with him. So does Tetahiti cordially.*)

Brown (at a distance) The surf in sight!

Christian (calling back) Make ready the boats! Let's go ashore!

Scene 2. The launch.

An open boat with only one square sail. The eighteen men are in an even worse condition than in Act III scene 6. Bligh sits at the helm. All the others are lying about more or less half dead. The wind is howling, the weather terrible and the deep sea roll violent. The scene impression is close to something like the Flying Dutchman.

Bligh (after a while) Courage, boys! I think we now have the worst behind us!

Nelson (more than half dead) Whether the worst is behind us or still ahead of us doesn't matter much since we are still in the middle of it.

Cole Mr Nelson, don't give up yet. We can sight land any moment.

Nelson Well, one thing is certain. On the open sea you can sight land any moment, but you never do it until you do it.

Elphinstone But when you do it you do it.

Bligh Quite right, Mr Elphinstone.

Ledward Sir, I made another observation.

Bligh Well?

Ledward This sea is so endless and so vast and so violent and infinite that I sometimes feel like doubting that it is real and that even we are quite real.

Bligh (considering it for a moment) That's a new and very strange thought, Mr Ledward. I must assure you however that at least the sea is real. There can be no doubt about that.

Ledward Thank you, Mr Bligh. (*to himself*) He is sitting there in the aft like a crowned scarecrow. For forty days he has been sitting there and taken us across the ocean of Styx in spite of even Charon's horrifying omnipresence. Who could doubt that he could sail us like this across all oceans back to England? None of us eighteen who are still alive. But we will die if we don't reach Timor tonight.

Bligh (suddenly bending over in horrible cramps, vomiting atrociously)

Fryer How is it, Sir?

Bligh (with greatest difficulty) That fish! That damned liver! Who said that a dolphin's liver never could be poisonous?

Elphinstone You don't kill a dolphin, Sir, and even less you must ever eat it.

Bligh Would you rather have died of hunger, you sanctimonious vegetarian? Take the helm! (*leaves it to Elphinstone while he continues to be dreadfully sick a long while. The few ones awake exchange worried looks.*)

Fryer Mr Bligh, you have slept least of all. Lie down. We can't afford to lose you.

Bligh It will pass. I will just have to recover a little.

Cole You look more sick than anyone else on board.

Bligh And you, who are so old, is still looking shamefully well. Take it as a compliment.

Cole I do, Sir, but please lie down.

Bligh I am afraid I must.

(Bligh lies down in the boat and everything returns to normal: general apathy close to death. Only Elphinstone is upright by the helm and awake, but he has a strange and worrying expression in his face.)

Elphinstone We will be home soon. By God, nothing is impossible I can already feel the taste of the ale in the pubs of Portsmouth. We only have a few days left, and then we will be home and do not have to listen any more to the beguiling song of the sirens across the eternally rolling seas. A few days, unless something turns up on the way, like for instance those mountains over there. Yes, I see them quite clearly. There's no doubt about it. Green mountains and lush dales, waterfalls like bride's veils and beautiful people on the beeches. It must be Tahiti. Yes, we have returned to Tahiti. We have come round a full circle to the journey's end. Here we shall reunite with the mutineers and sail back home with the *Bounty* as if nothing had happened. The whole mutiny and our nightmare journey in the launch is just a dream which we have to wake up from, a nightmare that must have an end. Reality is just a mirage, which has to be seen through and disposed of. It's important to see the difference between water and land. Now I will stealthily change the course so that no one will notice. *(turns the rudder)* What a surprise to the boys when they wake up tomorrow and find themselves resting by the friendly motherly wombs of the virgins' caressing tenderness! But hush, William Elphinstone! No one must notice that you changed the course. Not until we are across the sea of the eternal nightmare and safe in the harbour of eternity in the bottomless depth of peace, lost forever from the deceitful dreams of this momentary reality, must anyone know that I changed the course.

Ledward (lifts his head, notices that something is wrong, but it takes some time for him to get it.) Is something wrong, Elphinstone?

Elphinstone Land, Mr Ledward. But don't tell Bligh.

Ledward Land? Where? *(looks confusedly around)*

Elphinstone Straight ahead.

Ledward (searching in vain) I see nothing.

Elphinstone Don't you see the green forests, the high mountains, the rich virgin country?

Ledward I see nothing.

Bligh (awakes drowsily, notices immediately what has happened) What's this, Elphinstone? Why have you changed the course?

Elphinstone Land, Sir.

Bligh Land? Where? *(looking in vain)*

Elphinstone Straight ahead. It must be Tahiti.

Bligh (exchanging a glance with Ledward) William Elphinstone, go and lie down. You are tired. I take over.

Ledward You are mortally sick, captain.

Bligh I feel better now. *(takes the helm. Elphinstone obeys nicely, goes up in front and lies down.)* What luck that I woke up. Is it long since he altered the course?

Ledward I don't know, Sir. I was unconscious like all the others.

Bligh Yes, and even Elphinstone was unconscious though wide awake, like a sleepwalker or zombie. Did you see his empty eyes?

Ledward Yes, Sir.

Bligh His condition has withstood everything, but not his mind. Lucky for us not to have worse madmen on board. Sleep, Mr Ledward.

Ledward And you, Sir?

Bligh Don't worry. I will not sleep any more.

(Ledward goes to sleep like the others. Wild-eyed, emaciated, grotesquely dressed up in rags with a pair of ruined breeches for a turban, Bligh steers at the helm while the storm is howling and the weather constantly growing worse until all fades into darkness.)

Scene 3. Tahiti.

Heywood's happy family and Stewart's.

Stewart How long do you think we may remain this happy?

Heywood So far there is no limit to our prospects. Our happiness is invulnerable at the moment. So let us just live for the moment.

Stewart Can you so easily forget Christian and his men and Bligh and his men?

Heywood Occasionally I can't help thinking of them. What chances do you think Bligh has?

Stewart Christian has greater chances than Bligh.

Heywood But Bligh has England, power and justice behind him. Christian is lawless, and time works for Bligh.

Stewart If Bligh reaches England, then woe betide the South Seas.

Heywood Yes, that's the only thing threatening our paradise.

Tehani Peter, a white man is coming. I think it's Churchill.

Stewart Undoubtedly he has new problems with Thompson.

Heywood That Thompson...

Churchill (enter, on edge) Help me, somebody!

Stewart Help yourself, Charlie! What has Thompson done now?

Churchill He is completely mad. His fear of the natives has made him lose his head. By mistake he shot a father and his little daughter to death.

Heywood Have you escaped from him?

Churchill What else could I do! I can't nurse him any more! I can't bear with his paranoia any longer!

Stewart Where is he?

Churchill I don't know, probably chasing me. He would never forgive me that I let him down alone with the natives.

Heywood So he could come here at any moment and start shooting around at our families?

Churchill No, he is not that mad. He would only try to kill me.

Stewart Are you sure that you are not imagining, that you inspired by his exaggerations would believe that you are as persecuted by him as he feels persecuted by the natives?

Thompson (outside, bawling) Where are you, damned traitor!

Churchill There's your answer.

Stewart Hide, Charlie.

Heywood (calling) He is not here, Thompson!

Thompson (like before) Where is he then?

Heywood We haven't seen him.

Stewart Don't come here, Thompson! We have our guns loaded and will shoot if you come any nearer! We know that you killed an innocent father and his baby!

Thompson They were just natives. Where is Churchill?

Churchill Let me go out and speak with him. Or else he would come here and be a danger to everybody.

Thompson Are you sure Churchill is not hiding with you?

Stewart Drop your gun, Thompson! Or else we'll shoot!

Thompson In that case I will shoot first. *(starts shooting)*

Churchill (rushing up and out) Don't shoot, Thompson! There are babies in here! I am still your buddy! *(Thompson enters on stage outside the hut.)*

Thompson So there you are, you treacherous villain! Here's for you! *(shoots him down in cold blood)*

(Enter natives with stones and clubs.)

Native Kill the murderer of babies! *(Thompson can't defend himself. He is clubbed down and stoned to death by the natives.)*

Stewart And you said that nothing but Bligh could threaten our paradise.

Heywood Thompson was the worst of the mutineers. His bad conscience brought him into a labyrinth of persecution mania. Finally he turned dangerous to his vicinity. Poor Churchill! I think it's the presence of Bligh I feel in the curse of the death of these two.

Stewart You mean that Bligh drove them to become mutineers and to kill each other?

Heywood That's about it.

Stewart We must do something.

Heywood (going out to the natives) It wasn't your fault, my friends. We will take care of the bodies.

Native Your brother murdered Churchill!

Heywood Yes, he did. Leave the grief to us. *(The natives leave.)*

Stewart Two white losses. We are getting fewer all the time.

Heywood When Morrison finishes his yacht we will become even less. Most of us wish to follow him to New Holland.

Stewart And what's really our future here? The constantly increasing grief and melancholy of our lost or departed friends seems to become more and more dominant. The worst thing is the emptiness they left behind and the increasing worry and uncertainty about their destiny. We were all once a happy family of ship comrades, Peter. Why would that yokel Bligh, the very father of the family, make such an effort to destroy it? Why was he so intrinsically self-destructive?

Heywood I don't think he was aware of it himself. He was a stupid pedant. He was only a skilful expert within very narrow frames and completely unpsychological. We are lucky to have our wives.

Stewart Yes, that's lucky, because that's all we have.

Tehani (who escaped with the child under the bloody intermezzo, now returning) Peter! Peter! A ship! A ship!

Heywood (rising, like also Stewart) A ship? Where?

Stewart (catches sight of something) By Jove, there is really a sail in sight.

Heywood He keeps far out from land. If it is an Englishman he will go to Matavai.

Stewart Do you think it really could be?

Heywood Almost two years have passed since the mutiny.

Stewart Do you remember what Christian told us? To immediately report to the captain if there was a British ship.

Heywood That's exactly what I will do.

Stewart I will join you. *(They leave the scene. Tehani is left with her little daughter.)*

Tehani I hope indeed your father will be back, little darling. *(fondles the child)*

Skinner (outside) Heywood! Stewart! Have you seen the ship?

Heywood What do you think about it? We think it could be British.

Skinner Do you really think so? After all these months! *(The three men come back in eager discussion.)*

Stewart It will hardly reach shore before evening.

Skinner And Morrison, who just left Tahiti with his finished schooner!

Stewart Is it true? Is the schooner ready?

Heywood Who followed him?

Skinner Almost everyone. The last mutineers followed him with Norman, McIntosh, Byrne and Muspratt. The five would try the impossible and get to Batavia.

Stewart And the mutineers?

Skinner They would be left on the way on some unknown island at their own pleasure.

Heywood And you?

Skinner I am happy to remain to confess my guilt to my countrymen. I took part in the mutiny, and I share the guilt of having left Bligh and his men to the waves. All since then I have suffered terrible remorse of a bad conscience. May God forgive me, and may England hang me.

Stewart Why didn't you go with Morrison, Richard?

Skinner I didn't want to. I had to make atonement. But who lies here? Thompson? Churchill? Have you shot them down?

Heywood Thompson shot Churchill. The natives killed Thompson. We are to bury them.

Skinner Now tonight?

Stewart We might just as well.

Skinner How terrible! But why did Thompson kill Churchill?

Stewart Why did Christian mutiny? It's the curse of captain Bligh. And he has probably sent the ship coming here just to hang such innocents as you, Richard. Run away and hide while you can.

Skinner But I was not innocent. (*Heywood and Stewart look at each other.*)

Stewart Let's bury the corpses, Peter.

Heywood Yes, that's all we can do for the moment: bury our memories.

Stewart Stay here, Richard. We will be back. (*They go to take care of the bodies.*)

Skinner The price of paradise and happiness is guilt. You can't be happy without feeling terribly guilty, because most people are not. They live in misery and suffering without end. Guilty are those who let the unhappy suffer without interfering. Happiness is indifferent to unhappiness, and that's the crime of happiness. What is a paradise like this our Tahiti to the hell of the rest of the world? We acquired our happiness by force but abandoned our chief to unhappiness. At length it's always unhappiness, misery and misfortune that prevail. Welcome then, my misfortune, for I would rather submit to you again than remain here in the paradise of happiness with constantly gnawing feelings of guilt and an increasingly bad conscience.

(*It darkens as the ship out there throws anchor at a far distance.*)

Scene 4. On board the Pandora.

Natives come climbing on board,

greeting the crew under poor but cordial communication.

Captain Edwards Do you think we will find what we are looking for?

Lieutenant Parkin Probably not. Who of them would have been so stupid as to remain on Tahiti?

Edwards Yet we must be prepared.

Parkin Absolutely.

(*Heywood comes on board with two natives. He looks like them. The natives and the captain make awkward efforts at communication.*)

Heywood You can speak English, Sir. I am myself English and former midshipman on the Bounty. I would gladly show you around ashore.

Edwards (*immediately changing from hearty friendliness to cruel enmity*) Put him in chains at once!

(*The lieutenant and others immediately overwhelm him and put him in irons.*)

Heywood Sir, you misunderstand the situation. I was not one of the mutineers.

Edwards (hard) So why did you then not follow captain Bligh? It might interest you and the other mutineers to know the happy news that he arrived safely back in England.

Heywood That is really a relief and good news to hear, Sir. But I and several others here were innocent in the mutiny and were forced against our will to remain on board. Lieutenant Bligh himself refused to accept any more men in the launch.

Edwards (to the lieutenant) Bring midshipman Hayward. (*lieutenant leaves*)

Heywood Midshipman Hayward? Is it Thomas Hayward?

Edwards One of those who survived the ordeals with captain Bligh. One of the nineteen you abandoned in an open boat in the middle of the Pacific of whom many died.

Heywood Who died?

Edwards How could I know?

Heywood Sir, these natives are my friends and brothers. You make no good will to you or to England by using force on me in their presence. Look how upset and scared they have become. (*The lieutenant brings Hayward.*) I ask you to free me of these chains. They are completely unnecessary.

Edwards (ignoring him) Well, Thomas Hayward, do you recognize this man?

Hayward (with cold) Yes. It is midshipman Peter Heywood from the Bounty.

Edwards (cold and cruel) Put shackles also on his feet and bring him down below.

Parkin Yes, Sir. (*His tenants put shackles on Heywood.*)

Heywood Sir, this is a misunderstanding! I am no mutineer, and neither are the others on Tahiti!

Edwards (cold) Who are the others on Tahiti?

Heywood George Stewart, Joseph Coleman, and (*with lowered voice*) Richard Skinner.

Edwards Where are all the others? Where is Fletcher Christian? Where is Bounty?

Heywood James Morrison has with some others sailed towards Batavia with a schooner they built themselves to proceed from there back to England. Two of us are dead.

Edwards And where is Fletcher Christian with the Bounty?

Heywood I don't know, Sir. No one of us knows.

Hayward Captain Bligh saw you and Fletcher Christian talk secretly with each other on the night of the mutiny, Heywood. You stand no chance.

Heywood Captain Bligh if anyone knows me to be innocent. You asked Fletcher Christian yourself to be left on board, Thomas Hayward, but he knew your character and declined your further services. You were always falsehood impersonated, Thomas Hayward.

Hayward You will be hanged in public anyway in London, whatever your family might think about it, Peter Heywood.

Edwards Quiet, midshipman Hayward! Bring down the prisoner! He will have justice in England. Until then he is prisoner under martial law.

Heywood (is taken away by force) I am innocent!

Edwards Well, lieutenant, what do you think now of our prospects?

Parkin With some luck we could get one mutineer after another. At least four were evidently stupid enough to remain on Tahiti.

Edwards And that schooner on its way to Batavia it will bring me a pleasure to overtake. There must be several interesting pirates on board.

Parkin We will not have room for them all in the keelson.

Edwards Then we will have to furnish a special prison for them on deck, like a big cage. (*Stewart comes climbing on board.*)

Stewart (merrily) Hello, Englishmen! Welcome to Tahiti!

Edwards Here comes the next one. Take him! (*Four guards seize Stewart.*)

Stewart (shocked) What's this? What do you mean?

Edwards Justice waits for you in England. Shut up until then. Bring him down!

Stewart (shackled and handcuffed, brought away by force) I am no mutineer!

Edwards (ironically to the lieutenant) Evidently they are all innocent.

Parkin (with same irony) Like lambs.

Scene 5. The prisoners in the "Roundhouse" or "Pandora's Box".

All half-naked, shackled hands and feet, 14 of them.

Storm and darkness outside and everywhere around them.

Ellison Don't give up hope yet, boys! The ship is still sailing!

Hillbrandt It's only we who are going down.

Burkitt There is only one thing I regret in all my life.

Heywood Well?

Burkitt That I didn't fire that shot into Bligh's front when I could.

Sumner That we didn't fire and sink that damned launch with the swivel while we could!

Millward You talk like a mutineer, John Sumner.

Parkin (outside) Quiet in there!

Stewart At least we don't have to sit in the keelson and rot any longer.

Millward Do you mean to say it's better rotting on deck blown through by all storms?

Stewart Lieutenant Bligh was careful about hardening the sailors enough.

Morrison Don't complain. We are still alive and afloat.

Burkitt To our own unfathomable misfortune.

Skinner It's not more than right.

Hillbrandt (annoyed) Are we to sit here like galley slaves with hands and feet fettered without even being able to shit when we want to and have to?

Skinner No, for we are to be hanged.

(*Dark silence.*)

Heywood Shut up, Richard Skinner. Even if some of us were guilty of taking part in the mutiny, not all of us were.

Hillbrandt Try to convince England of that. The court martial will put as much credit to it as captain Edwards.

Millward Bligh would never speak a word of defence for the innocent.

Burkitt We shall all be hanged together.

Morrison Is that the justice you want, Burkitt? Do you want to see Ellison hanged with you? Do you want us, who were forced to stay on board against our will, like old Coleman here, to be hanged like lawless pirates?

Coleman Captain Bligh knows who were innocent. He must have us acquitted.

Hillbrandt He will not have a single one of you acquitted. He will let you all die like rats, and he will enjoy it, he and Thomas Hayward, who betrayed you all to save his own neck.

Heywood Don't make our situation even sadder than it already is, Hillbrandt.

Stewart You haven't left widows and fatherless children on Tahiti.

Millward Why don't the natives come and save us? What is keeping your wife's fine family with all their chiefs in all villages away from doing anything, Heywood, while we are tortured to death by our own?

Heywood They really wanted to release us, but in such a process they would all be killed with us. They know that we are innocent and good men, and they consider captain Edwards and this British ship a rapist in their paradise. But they can do nothing.

Burkitt Have they tried?

Heywood I dissuaded them. They would only have been massacred, and we as well.

Millward Just as well, and then to have done with it. Perhaps they would find occasion at least to massacre lieutenant Parkin and captain Edwards while they were at it. They would need to.

Heywood Were not Churchill and Thompson enough? Aren't all our lives and fates enough? Aren't the seven who died after the voyage of the launch enough? Isn't the outlawry of Christian and his men enough? Do you want more human sacrifices, John Millward?

Burkitt The more, the better.

Stewart Even Ellison, Burkitt? Even Ellison?

Burkitt (after thinking) No. Everyone except Tom Ellison.

Sumner We could have had it worse.

Muspratt But we also could have had it better.

Millward It will all come out even.

Morrison To be honest, I don't think we could have had it worse.

Stewart These damned storms and icy winds! If only our prison at least could keep out the winds and the waters, so at least we could stay dry!

Parkin (outside) Quiet in there!

Burkitt That Parkin! If he wasn't our supervisor we could at least keep up some spirits.

Sumner What spirits?

Burkitt Our good spirits that he daily works on destroying by his sadism! He enjoys tormenting us!

Millward So does captain Edwards.

A sailor (calling outside) Surf ahead!

Another (outside) Luff the helm, for God's sake, luff!

(A terrific crash is heard, as if the whole theatre was crashing.)

Burkitt What the devil are they doing out there?

Stewart They are running the vessel aground, Burkitt.

Morrison Captain Edwards is committing shipwreck.

Millward These misguided pirate hunters don't know how to sail.

Sumner And what about us, who would have known better?

(Chaos, cries and panicky noise outside, above and all around.)

random voices Help, we are going down! The tackling is collapsing! We are stuck! We are flooded! *(panic outside getting worse all the time)*

Help, help! Go to the boats! We are sinking! Man over board!

Captain Edwards (when the crisis reaches a climax) Abandon ship!

Random voices (answering from different directions) Abandon ship! Abandon ship!

Abandon ship! (The panic continues irrevocably all around. No one enters.)

Millward They will let us drown like rats.

Sumner That at least is better than to be hanged.

Muspratt Sing your last shanty, Tom Ellison. We are going down.

Byrne And I don't even have my violin any more.

Hillbrandt You will play the harp instead and in heaven, Michael Byrne.

Ellison And I will dance to it.

Sumner You will dance merrily forever, Tom Ellison. You don't have to hang.

Heywood The water is coming in. We are sinking fast.

Morrison She is going down by the aft.

Stewart Is this tolerable?

Morrison No!

All fourteen (start yelling and screaming and tearing their chains) Help! Help!

(They keep on with it for a while. Finally a sailor enters and starts unlocking the fetters.)

Sailor Even if I am going down with the ship I will release you first! Swim for your lives, boys! Pandora has hit the Great Barrier Reef!

(General dissolution. All are deeply thankful to him and save themselves one by one while the total panic all around in the thickening darkness continues.)

Scene 6. The shipwrecked on a desert island.

Heywood How many of us are missing?

Morrison All have been saved except four.

Heywood Who are the four?

Morrison Stewart, Sumner, Hillbrandt and Skinner. I saw Stewart die, Peter.

Heywood How did he die?

Morrison When Pandora went down there was a yard shooting up from the water. When it fell it hit Stewart in his head. He never came up again.

Heywood Our best friend. Now Peggy and her daughter will never see or know anything more about their father.

Morrison Maybe it's best that way. And Skinner didn't have to hang.

Heywood He maybe even died happy, when he was so well prepared for his death.

Edwards (*entering in correct and strict uniform in spite of the shipwreck*) Attention! The situation is now clear. Thirty-three members of the crew and four of the prisoners have been lost by drowning. You ten prisoners remaining are still prisoners. Every attempt for an escape or any resistance will be severely punished. I am here to bring you alive to court in England, and I intend to carry through my duty. We have a long voyage ahead of us since we have to sail more than nine hundred miles across open sea to Timor in open boats, but captain Bligh went through tougher ordeals before us. It's best for you that you cooperate and help us reach our destination without further casualties.

Morrison Captain Edwards, what happened to my schooner?

Edwards No one knows. Maybe it managed. It could cross much shallower water than the Pandora and is perhaps ahead of us. Perhaps it even has found the rest of the mutineers? We shall see. In any case, it has been very useful in our search for the mutineers on every island and will continue be of use. We must now think of ourselves and prepare for our long voyage to Timor. To the boats! (*All start moving.*)

Scene 7. The Court Martial.

Twelve judges under Vice Admiral Lord Hood's chairmanship.

Ten accused: Peter Heywood, James Morrison, Joseph Coleman, Thomas McIntosh, Michael Byrne, William Muspratt, Charles Norman, Thomas Burkitt, Thomas Ellison and John Millward.

Seven witnesses from the Bounty: John Fryer, William Cole, William Purcell, William Peckover, Thomas Hayward, John Hallet, John Smith.

Other witnesses: Captain Edwards and lieutenant Parkin.

Three lawyers: Mr Graham, Captain Manly and Captain Bentham, all marine officers.

Hood May I ask the accused to rise as their names are called.

Thomas Burkitt. (*He rises and sits down again, as then all the following.*)

Michael Byrne. Joseph Coleman. Thomas Ellison. Peter Heywood. Thomas McIntosh. John Millward. James Morrison. William Muspratt. Charles Norman. You are all accused of participation in the mutiny on the Bounty on April 28th 1789 according to paragraph 19 in the naval law: "If any person in or belonging to the fleet shall make or endeavour to make any mutinous assembly upon any pretense whatsoever, every person offending herein, being convicted thereof by the sentence of the Court Martial, shall suffer death." All ten of you remained on the Bounty after the mutiny. Some of you took active part in the mutiny in arms, others were forced to remain on the Bounty against their will. In most cases your guilt or innocence is obvious, but there are two border cases: Peter Heywood and James Morrison. You

have read the account of captain Bligh. He defends no one of those who remained on the *Bounty*, and he names Peter Heywood as Fletcher Christian's closest accomplice. Concerning James Morrison the witnesses are contradictory: some saw him armed, others saw him unarmed.

Morrison There is a third border case.

Hood Whom do you suggest?

Morrison Thomas Ellison. He was just a young lad when the mutiny took place.

Hood Unfortunately all witnesses are agreed that he took arms against lieutenant Bligh. There is no doubt about his complicity.

Morrison But he was just a boy!

Hood Nevertheless, he chose the wrong side when he should have chosen right.

Heywood May I ask why lieutenant Bligh himself hasn't been called as a witness?

Hood He has been sent out to correct his failure. He is collecting new bread fruit plants on Tahiti.

Heywood And has left behind a mortal accusation against me after having sent my mother to her death by it.

Hood Is it true that you on the night before the mutiny had a conversation with Fletcher Christian?

Heywood It is true.

Hood Mr Bligh has asserted that he heard you say to Fletcher Christian: "You can count on me." You must realize that this is aggravating.

Heywood He hadn't even thought of any mutiny at that moment yet. He wanted to desert the ship on a raft made for him by John Norton. He asked me to look up his parents in Cumberland if anything should happen to him. I promised to fulfil his wish. That was all.

Hood Did anyone else hear this conversation?

Heywood Yes, the midshipman Robert Tinkler.

One of the judges A good story without witnesses. John Norton is dead, and Robert Tinkler has gone missing after a shipwreck in the Caribbean. Can anyone else confirm that you were not one of the mutineers?

Heywood The botanist David Nelson also knew that I wasn't.

The judge Also Mr Nelson is dead. (*Silence.*)

Hood James Morrison, lieutenant Thomas Hayward accuses you of having been armed during the mutiny. Why would Thomas Hayward lie?

Morrison Everyone knows about that who was aboard the *Bounty*.

Ellison I know. Hayward was crying like a baby. He begged Mr Christian on his knees to be allowed to remain on the *Bounty*. But he had to clear out together with the other two other worst cowards and parasites on board.

Hood Mr Morrison, do you mean that Thomas Hayward would accuse you only to protect himself?

Morrison As already stated, everyone on board the *Bounty* knew what Hayward's character was worth.

Ellison Hallet was crying also.

Previous judge Back to Fletcher Christian's raft. Do you seriously think, Peter Heywood, that the court could believe such a romantic story? Isn't it rather exactly something like that an intelligent midshipman would make up to save himself from the gallows?

Heywood Robert Tinkler can verify my story.

The judge How convenient then that he is missing, probably dead. But we shall wait until it is confirmed whether he is alive or dead.

Hood Until then the court is adjourned. You, James Morrison, had probably no part in the mutiny. Your petition has been submitted to His Majesty who will decide on the matter. Also you, William Muspratt, have good chances. Concerning three of you there is no hope. That's all for the present. The court martial is adjourned.

Morrison There is still hope, Peter.

Heywood Hardly for me but perhaps for you.

Morrison But you are innocent.

Heywood Captain Bligh has decided that I am not.

Millward Captain Bligh's inhumanity sentenced us all to death from the beginning. His inhumanity has brainwashed all England into murdering us. We were only simple sailors who tried to defend ourselves against a brutal superiority. But the superiority is like a machinery without a soul that kills without thinking, like a war machine that no one can stop.

Hayward (shaking his fist against them) Serves you right, mutineers!

(He has no word for an answer. All observe him in silence. The court room, a larger ship's cabin, is evacuated.)

Act V scene 1.

Fletcher Christian's cave on Pitcairn by the abyss of the so called Rope.

(The scene can only be rendered justice on film.)

Christian O life of only languishment and anguish, what are you, life, except a languishment forever! How lovely and appealing is not the abyss for a contrast and alternative to all the suffering of human misery! A step from death, just one small movement, and you are free from all of it, you lost, unblest, unhappy and tormented man! Thanks, death, for your existence! Only death can make me feel alive and give me any sense of freedom! It's a comfort to have that opportunity at any moment to be able to abandon yourself directly into death, so that nothing may remain of your consumed and wasted, lost identity.

But the ship from England never turns up at the horizon and never gives me allowance to escape from this forfeited life. I must live on as chief responsible for these eight mutineers, of which five are hopeless cases of inveterate hoodlums. They already ruthlessly turned our friends from Tahiti into slaves, two of them died poisoned by Hutia, who was married to Tararu, so that only four are left of our brothers from Tahiti. Williams tired of his fat but loyal boring wife, desired Hutia,

whereupon poor Fasto, Williams' wife, considered herself a failure as a wife and went down the precipice, this abyss called the Rope, and died. Among our fifteen grownups, already three are dead, and the four coloured can never accept a slave life to five white hoodlums. What can I do then? Read the Bible, live on in spite of all and meditate on the release and possibility of death as maybe even the salvation of my soul from the unbearable burden of my guilt. I brought my chief and benefactor to his ruin, stole his ship to first of all avoid the risk of bloodshed, but did I actually do right? That I shall never know, for I shall never know what became of Bligh and his eighteen comrades in the open boat. Yes, I did the right thing for the moment, but the consequences turned out inestimable. If the nineteen men I left abandoned in an open boat all died there in the open sea, I certainly did wrong like some condemned and ruthless murderer without a conscience damned forever with his reputation hopelessly destroyed and branded as a criminal's forever. That uncertainty of how they managed or went under makes my life the more unbearable the longer I remain alive.

Is that you, Edward?

Young Yes, Fletcher. McCoy and Quintal have become quite impossible. They insist on a vote as to who shall own what on the island.

Christian They dig their own graves.

Young But we can't stop them.

Christian What shall we do? What do the others say? What does Martin, Mills and Williams say?

Young You know. The only uncertain factor is Williams.

Christian I don't think Williams is so stupid as to allow the land of our native friends to be taken away from them. We must give them their vote. We are after all democrats.

Young They want it already today.

Christian They shall have it. Tell them to come to my house this afternoon. I think I will be able to talk some sense with them.

Young I hope so, Fletcher. (*leaves*)

Christian They don't want the natives to own anything on the whole island. They want to take their land away from them, their houses and pasture-grounds. Still all of us nine whites are married to native girls. What is this crazy and self-destructive racism? If they can't realize that their racism must lead to their own destruction, they almost forfeited their own right to live. Well, maybe I can still talk some sense into them.

Scene 2. At Christian's.

Smith You are crazy! You don't know what you are doing!

Martin Are we not free men? Don't we have the right to do what we want?

Mills You can't seriously mean that those blacks are as good men as we are.

Quintal The difference is simple. We are gods and they are animals. (*enter Young*)

Brown Will Christian come?

Young He is coming.

McCoy The sooner we have this matter settled, the better.

Young Where do you stand, Williams?

Williams Why don't you guess.

Smith The least we can demand is to let our coloured friends have their own say on the issue.

Quintal Perhaps you would like to let them have a vote? (*laughs rudely. Christian comes.*)

Christian (has heard the last) Honestly speaking, Quintal, that would be fair, since the matter concerns them.

Martin Never in my life! It has never happened before that they were allowed to have a say in our private matters! They never even wanted it themselves!

Christian Tetahiti is my best friend. Minarii is Brown's best friend. And you want to make them our enemies.

Mills No, we just want to be consistent!

McCoy Vote!

Christian So what you are demanding is a total confiscation of all tillable land used by our four coloured friends without any consideration of their families or their friendship?

Quintal Te Moa and Nihau have no families and have accepted to be our slaves.

Martin Minarii and Tetahiti are so proud that they need be taken down to earth.

Christian And do you think they will agree with being robbed of all they created on the island without any reaction?

Quintal If they react it will be worst for themselves.

McCoy Vote!

Christian (with a look towards Williams) You shall have your vote. But never think that Minarii and Tetahiti can be kept out at length. Well, well. Who support that the island should be divided only between ourselves in nine parts? (*Five raise their hands, all except Smith, Young and Brown.*)

You as well, Williams?

Williams You might as well accept that we whites always must be superior to all coloured, Christian.

Christian You don't know what you are doing. You are harebrained fools without a conscience.

Quintal Don't preach morals to us, Christian. We know very well what we are doing. We are just being consistent.

Brown You are deranged. Do you think the Polynesians can observe what you are doing without any consequence? Do you really think that they have forgotten, Jack Williams, that you took Hutia away from Tararu and that she poisoned him only to get rid of him? Do you think they have forgotten Hu, who died with Tararu for sharing his meal? Do you think, Matt Quintal, that Minarii just will kindly consent and turn a blind eye to the fact that you burned down his house?

Quintal He had better.

McCoy The matter is settled. We have voted, and all land is ours. There is nothing more to say. (*rising to leave*)

Williams (rising) Concerning Hutia, she doesn't tolerate insults. No one knows how Tararu and Hu died.

Smith But all know how Fasto died.

Williams (lowering his head, angrily) Don't mention Fasto!

Brown She threw herself out of the Rope because you deceived her with Hutia.

Williams She collected eggs! It could have been an accident!

Young Like the deaths of Hu and Tararu?

Williams Enough! (*leaves in fury*)

Martin You sanctimonious pharisees of double standards! You despise the natives as much as we do but pretend to be civilised Englishmen, as if you never even mutinied on the Bounty!

Christian Never forget, Isaac Martin, that one of us, Edward Young, actually never took part in it.

Young Never try to persuade an American of what is obvious, Fletcher, if you are an Englishman. An American will always be a rebel even against truth.

Christian I appeal to you. Let's forget this vote. Let's continue living in peace with each other and with the natives. Don't you realize, that this could lead to bloodshed, bitter enmity and a local civil war?

Quintal The blacks wouldn't dare to stick up. Come, lads. Let's go. (*leaves with Mills, Martin and McCoy.*)

Smith They are insane.

Brown But what can we do? Let those without sense go to their own perdition.

Young They actually dig their own graves.

Christian The worst thing is, that this will Minarii and Tetahiti never be able to forgive me.

Young It's not your fault, Christian.

Christian No, but it's my responsibility.

Brown No, it's only their responsibility who effected this. We have no part in it. They may take away the land of our coloured friends and take the consequences themselves. We have nothing to do with their inhumanity.

Smith Take it easy, Fletcher. Brown is right. Those five may themselves deal with those four. The four of us are neutral. Come, Brown. (*leaves with Brown*)

Christian But all this is a result of the mutiny, which I effected.

Young You are taking too much on yourself, Fletcher. You are only responsible for Maimiti and your children.

Christian And our common fate, which I brought you all into?

Young (sitting close to him) Have you ever tried to see it from the other side, Christian? Who really provoked the mutiny? Who gave you a motive to mutiny? Why was the mutiny so incredibly successful, when normally it is practically impossible to mutiny on a British ship, since all its crew members are so good Englishmen? There is only

one possible answer to all these questions: the reckless brutality of captain Bligh. And imagine if he and his eighteen followers actually made it. Imagine that he really reached England and tore up heaven and earth to, as he promised, get all damned mutineers hanged? In that case some or several ships would already have had several years to search the Pacific to hang mutineers. Think of Churchill and Thompson. Think of all those who remained on Tahiti. Think of little Tom Ellison. Think of the remorseful Richard Skinner. Think of the completely innocent Heywood, Morrison and Stewart. Think if they all were hanged by captain Bligh. It's quite possible.

Christian You come up with theories.

Young My theory is as realistic as that captain Bligh really would have foundered with all his eighteen men. And you know what an expert seaman Bligh was.

Christian Ned, I was never afraid of the mutiny. You are right. Then I could really have done the only right thing, and who knows? Maybe I really saved Bligh's life at the cost of a number of others. But now I am afraid. In this situation I don't know any longer what's right. We are white like Quintal, McCoy, Williams and the other hoodlums. Our four native friends will regard us all nine as one group. Brown is wrong. The four of us can't remain neutral, as little as those who remained on the *Bounty* can do so. According to law, those who remain on board of a ship taken by mutineers are as guilty as the mutineers. You are right. Heywood, Morrison, Stewart and the others could have been hanged with the guilty ones, although I can't believe it. Ellison perhaps, the most innocent of us all, but no one else. But what are we to do now? We must do something, but what?

Young Let's sleep on it.

Christian It will not do. You go home and sleep on it.

Young And what about you?

Christian I will probably stay up.

Young Just don't torture yourself by brooding.

Christian You know that's what I always do.

Young I leave you in peace, Fletcher.

Christian I am afraid that's all you can do. (*Young leaves.*)

(The light is dimmed.)

Christian We burned *Bounty* to never feel tempted to risk returning to civilisation. We kept hidden here and put out all fires whenever a ship was sighted while it kept away from the steep and unfriendly shores. For several years we have managed by total isolation, but now that splendid isolation is broken from the inside by sheer egoism, evil and the force of passion. The explosion will hit ourselves, and there is nothing I can do. I can only resign. (*takes up a big book: Bounty's Bible.*)

Of *Bounty* and England all we have left is *Bounty's* old Bible. Could it help?

(sits down alone reading)

Tetahiti (outside, after some while) Christian!

Christian Tetahiti! Come in!

Tetahiti (enters somewhat hesitantly) What are you doing, Christian?

Christian I am reading. But you are not disturbing at all. What can I do for you?

Tetahiti What have you done?

Christian What do you mean?

Tetahiti What have you whites agreed on?

Christian So you heard something. What have you heard?

Tetahiti Brown told Minarii that Mills, Martin, McCoy, Quintal and Williams decided that only the whites may own land.

Christian I am afraid it's true.

Tetahiti Minarii says that you, Brown, Smith and Young agreed to it. Is that also true?

Christian It's only true that we were voted down. They were five against us four.

Tetahiti So it's true. You agreed to it.

Christian Sit down, Tetahiti.

Tetahiti No, I stand. I was your best friend, Christian.

Christian You still are.

Tetahiti No, I can't be, for we four have been betrayed to five cruel beastly animals, and we were betrayed by our best friends.

Christian No one regrets the situation as much as I, Tetahiti, but still everything could be remedied.

Tetahiti Not as long as the five monsters are alive.

Christian What will you do, Tetahiti?

Tetahiti That is neither for me or you to decide. Minarii will decide. But you can no longer trust me, Christian, since none of us four coloured can trust any white man any more.

Christian Don't do anything stupid, Tetahiti.

Tetahiti We looked up to you as gods. That's why we followed you from Tahiti. For your sake we sacrificed everything we had on Tahiti. Now it pleases our gods to cruelly take away from us everything we have here. And you, one of those cruel white gods, tell us not to do anything stupid. We will not do anything stupid, Christian. Your stupidity will come over your own heads. (*leaves*)

Christian What is he up to? Maimiti!

Maimiti (enters) I am here, my love.

Christian Are the children asleep?

Maimiti Not yet, but I try to make them.

Christian Go to Moetua and Nanai tomorrow and try to find out what their men are thinking.

Maimiti If Minarii and Tetahiti have evil plans not even their wives will find out about it.

Christian Do you think they have evil plans?

Maimiti At least against the five lazy parasites. Minarii and Tetahiti are warriors.

Christian Take care of the children, Maimiti, and forget the folly of the grown-ups. Whatever happens, none of the children must suffer.

Maimiti You are a good father, Christian. I will go to look after the children.
(leaves)

Christian The children are our only joy and the only thing we have to live for. Anything may happen as long as the children may continue being children. O God, if you exist, then at least protect the children!

Scene 3. A dark glade in the forest. Dusk.

Te Moa You have summoned us, *Minarii*. Here we are. But why?

Minarii The whites have had a meeting. That's why we also must have a meeting. Speak, *Nihau*.

Nihau I can't suffer any more. I am at the mercy of Mills and Martin. I am their slave, just like Hu was. I can't work for them any more, and when I don't work they hit me and kick me, like they did to Hu.

Minarii What do you know about Hu, *Nihau*?

Nijau Hu was Martin's slave. He complained to Tararu. Tararu suggested he should push Martin out of the Rope when they collected eggs there with Smith, like Fasto used to do.

Minarii More about Fasto later. What did Hu do?

Nihau He really tried to push Martin down the precipice but failed. Then Martin kicked and almost beat him to death, and if Smith hadn't come back up and intervened, Martin would have killed Hu.

Tetathiti Smith is one of the good ones.

Minarii Instead Hu died later. Tell me now, *Te Moa*, what you know about Hutia.

Te Moa Williams loved her. Tararu didn't want to let her go. When Fasto saw that Williams deceived her with Hutia she went to the precipice and was found dead below. Her egg-basket was empty. She hadn't collected any eggs. No one wanted to let Williams take Tararu's wife from him, but Hutia continued to have two men. Finally Tararu wanted to kill Williams, but Hutia was too clever and kept guard over Williams with a loaded gun.

Minarii Is it true that Hutia's parents were known for witchcraft?

Te Moa At least her mother. She knew poisons that no one else knew. One day Tararu and Hu were found dead together. They had eaten a poisonous fish, they said. But the fish they had eaten was not poisonous. Someone had poisoned Tararu's food while he was fishing. Hu had come by, and they had eaten together.

Minarii And who except Hutia could have poisoned Tararu's food?

Tetahiti All know that Hutia preferred Williams to Tararu. Williams and Hutia have lived happily together ever since.

Minarii I have myself the following to tell. I had built a new fine house for me and my wife. When it was ready Quintal set it on fire. He meant that I had built it on his land, but the island belongs to all of us. Why then did Quintal wait until it was finished before setting fire to it?

Tetahiti Quintal is one of the evil ones, like Mills, Martin and Williams.

Minarii Now it's your turn, Tetahiti. Tell us what you heard from Christian.

Tetahiti Unfortunately Christian has confirmed that the whites have decided to split the island between them in nine parts.

Minarii Do you see what that means? Both Tetahiti and I are born chiefs and have never been landowners. On Tahiti it's only those without honour who don't own any land. We have cultivated and worked on this island in two years just to suddenly be reduced to slaves like Nihau and Te Moa. We can never accept that.

Te Moa Minarii, what shall we do?

Minarii I have carefully thought about it. There is only one thing to do.

Nihau Command us, Minarii, and we obey. You are a warrior chief.

Minarii We must kill all whites.

Tetahiti (after some pause) All whites, Minarii? Even Brown, your best friend?

Minarii I have carefully thought about it. If we only kill the bad ones, how could we then live together with their wives and the four good ones? If we kill Mills, Martin, Williams, McCoy and Quintal, how could then Christian and the others any more look upon us as friends? We must kill all and also the good ones.

Tetahiti Can you kill Brown, your best friend, Minarii?

Minarii You shall kill Brown. Instead I will kill Christian, your best friend.

Tetahiti There is nothing bad in Christian, Young, Brown or Smith. We have no reason to kill them. I still look up to Christian as a god. I don't think he will agree on cutting up the land in only nine parts.

Minarii You are right, Tetahiti. Brown, my best friend, is the most innocent of all on the island, and neither he nor Young were parts in taking their ship from captain Bligh. And Smith is a good friend to all of us. But the majority of the whites have decided that they shall own the whole island. They have decided that their race is superior to the darker one, and therefore they want to deny us all human dignity. They have a right to be divine, and we have the right to adore them, for they can sometimes be divine. But they have no right to claim divinity themselves. They have no right to claim superiority of their race and consider all others as inferior beings. Even they are only human like us however divine they could be. We have sacrificed everything for them, we left our lives on Tahiti for their sake, and we helped them and worked for them here for two years. We can never return to our earlier better lives. They have cheated us to come here to result in my nephew Tararu's and his servant Hu's death, to make you two, Nihau and Te Moa, their slaves, to burn down my home when it finally was finished and to finally decide that we all four should be slaves without property or any rights. White gods must not behave like that. We must punish them.

Tetahiti (after some pause) Minarii is right. The whites have turned themselves into swine. We can't live with them any longer. We must liberate our lives from them. I will kill Brown, Minarii.

Minarii Good. But we must act very quietly and discreetly. No one must suspect anything. We are four against nine, and all nine must die before next dawn. We have one gun each, and no one must miss.

Nihau Command us, *Minarii*, and we shall obey. You are our leader now.

Minarii I think we should succeed with the operation.

Scene 4. The women at *Maimiti*'s house.

Maimiti (in bed with her newly born daughter) O *Taurua*, why doesn't *Christian* arrive? You could think he is used to having a daughter every day, as he keeps away so diffidently.

Taurua O *Maimiti*, he will surely come any moment. He was only supposed to fell some trees in the *Auté* valley.

Maimiti All the industriousness in the world is nothing to a father's duties to his family. His moral support is better needed here than in the *Auté* valley. Will no one go there and fetch him?

Taurua *Moetua* and *Nanai* are there looking for him.

Maimiti That's good. Then they must also find him. *(cuddles with her newborn child)*

Balhadi (to Taurua) How much does she know?

Taurua Nothing.

Balhadi So she doesn't even know what is going on?

Taurua She suspects nothing.

Balhadi Hasn't she even heard the shots?

Taurua Of course she heard them. But she believes, like we all believed at first, that *Minarii* is shooting pigs. I also believed it until *Jenny* told me they had shot her husband.

Balhadi *Tetahiti* shot him through the head. *Minarii* tried to save his life and asked him to feign dead. He feigned dead but moved. *Tetahiti*, *Nihau* and *Te Moa* came by. *Tetahiti* saw him move and shot him through the head. He is dead.

Taurua And the others?

Balhadi *Hutia* was tied up hands and feet while they executed her husband. *Te Moa* and *Nihau* have been seen with the heads of *Mills* and *Martin* hanging in their belts. No one knows anything about *Quintal* and *McCoy*.

Taurua And your husband?

Balhadi *Alex Smith* has been shot but will survive. If only we could find *Christian*!

Taurua *Moetua* and *Nanai* will surely find him.

Maimiti *Taurua*! Are you there?

Taurua I am here, *Maimiti*.

Maimiti What are you two talking about?

Taurua Nothing. We just believe that *Moetua* and *Nanai* soon will return with your husband.

Maimiti Yes, it would be funny otherwise. Just imagine! And he was always such a good father!

Balhadi (carefully) Taurua! I see Moetua and Nanai coming!

Taurua Are they alone?

Balhadi No, they are carrying something. They are carrying a litter.

Taurua Is it Christian? Have they found Christian?

Balhadi Yes, I think so.

Taurua He mustn't be dead.

Balhadi Yes. He mustn't be dead. Not yet.

Maimiti What are you whispering about?

Taurua Nothing, Maimiti. But we believe Moetua and Nanai are coming.

Maimiti At last! But where is Christian?

Taurua We don't know. But we might know soon.

Maimiti Tell him when he comes to go straight in to me.

Taurua Yes, Maimiti.

Balhadi They are coming with a stretcher. They are carrying a stretcher together. There is a man on the stretcher.

Taurua Then they found Christian, and Christian has been shot, like all the others.

Balhadi (carefully) Welcome, Moetua and Nanai.

Moetua (entering with Nanai. They carry a stretcher with Christian unconscious on it.)
We found Christian. He is badly wounded but might make it.

Balhadi Where did the bullet strike?

Nanai In the side but not in the heart. He is still alive but has lost very much blood.

Taurua Is he mortally wounded?

Nanai We don't know yet. But whatever you think, we know nothing about it. Our men have acted entirely on their own initiative without informing us.

Moetua It was Minarii who shot Christian, and Tetahiti shot Brown. Mills and Martin have been murdered, but Quintal and McCoy are still alive.

Nanai Quintal and Minarii met at the Rope. They fought, and Quintal succeeded in breaking Minarii's arm. Then he threw him out down the precipice.

Balhadi And the other three?

Moetua Prudence, Hutia and Jenny butchered them. They found them sleeping in a glade waiting for Minarii.

Nanai They found the courage of revenge and slaughtered them with cutlasses.

Moetua None of our husbands is still alive.

Nanai All the coloured are dead.

Taurua (looking at Balhadi) Then at least we have peace on the island.

Moetua But how is it with the others? Who are still alive and who are dead?

Taurua Mills, Martin, Williams and Brown are dead. Smith is wounded but still alive.

Nanai And your husband?

Taurua He seems to be the only one not to have been touched.

Christian (wakes up half way) Young! Are you still alive? This was the very thing we tried to avoid!

Moetua He is delirious. His fever is high.

Taurua He must make it.

Balhadi But how can we tell Maimiti?

Maimiti Taurua! Balhadi! Did Moetua and Nanai find my husband?

Christian (half unconscious) Maimiti!

Taurua They found him, Maimiti. And he is alive.

Maimiti And why wouldn't he have been alive? Has anything happened?

Moetua (appears to Maimiti) Maimiti, our men, Minarii and Tetahiti, have together with Te Moa and Nihau decided to kill all white men. They killed Mills, Martin, Williams and Brown. Smith and your husband were shot, but they are still alive.

Maimiti (shocked) And why would they kill our husbands?

Nanai Mills, Martin, McCoy, Quintal and Williams wanted to cut up the island in only nine parts between all whites.

Maimiti And Quintal and McCoy are still alive while Brown and my husband are murdered?

Moetua Only Brown has been murdered, Maimiti. Your husband might still make it.

Maimiti And you knew nothing about it?

Nanai Absolutely nothing. And our men, Tetahiti and Minarii and also Te Moa and Nihau are all murdered. The widows of the white dead have slaughtered them.

Maimiti I understand their fury. And how is it with my husband?

Christian (faintly) Maimiti!

Maimiti (rushing up) I am coming, my love, I am coming!

Christian Maimiti, you must believe. I never wanted this.

Maimiti (covering him with kisses) I believe you, my love, I believe you!

Christian It's the punishment for our mutiny. We revolted against Bligh, and now our natives revolt against us.

Maimiti It's not your fault, my love! It's not your fault!

Christian Then whose fault is it? It's my punishment for my mutiny. It's the revenge of my destiny.

Maimiti It's not your fault, my love! You mustn't die! You have a newborn daughter to live for! You must not leave us!

Christian (serious) Maimiti, we had the opportunity here to create a true paradise for us. The racists did everything to destroy our possibilities. Now the racists are dead. We can still create our human paradise. I beg of you: never let the children know anything about all the evil that took place...

Maimiti Live, my beloved husband, for the paradise you sought to create! You can still succeed!

Christian The worst is over now. I must atone for my crime that you may live. Live well, and forget all that went wrong. I shall keep watch over you...

Maimiti Christian! You mustn't die!

Christian I must die, that you and captain Bligh may live. Live well, my beloved darling, and take care of our blessed children. But I will never desert you...

Maimiti Your daughter, Christian! Don't leave your newborn daughter!

(Christian goes off.)

Balhade He is gone. We have lost him.

Taurua We can still create our future, Maimiti.

Maimiti (dissolved in tears) Without my husband? Never! Never! *(cries out desperately)*

Taurua It's up to us now, Balhadi, and our men.

Balhadi Yes, Taurua. Smith must make it and survive.

Scene 5. The house of McCoy.

Quintal Terrific you are, who could keep this distiller secret so long.

McCoy And now we have the whole island to ourselves. We can grow ti-plants and burn and store to damnation.

Quintal Was that why you wanted Tetahiti's plantations? Because you wanted to plant ti-plants instead?

McCoy Yes, that was the only reason. Why else? The best ti-plants on the island grew by his fields. It was his fields or my liquor.

Quintal You are a devil, Will McCoy.

McCoy And now we are lords of the island. More and more of the girls become dependent on my liquor, and Ned Young and Alex Smith are entirely under us. We can do exactly as we please.

Quintal I hear them coming.

Smith (outside) Ahoy, McCoy and Quintal! Are you there?

McCoy Come in, Smith! Is Ned Young with you?

Smith You can count on that!

McCoy Come in for a round! *(enter Young and Smith)*

Smith The ladies have forbidden us to come here, but we come anyway.

Young Liquor is all we have after Christian left us.

McCoy And there is plenty of liquor indeed! It's more than enough for all, and we go on distilling more and more. But why won't Maimiti, Moetua and Nanai drink with us?

Young Taurua and Balhadi don't feel like it either.

Quintal But all the rest of us do. Why would anyone insist on being sober?

Smith Jenny, Susannah, Hutia and Prudence have reasons enough to drink, since their men were murdered. They have no other comfort as widows.

Quintal But also Maimiti, Moetua and Nanai had their husbands murdered, but they never touched a drop.

Young They keep cherishing their husbands' memories and think of the children. They still believe in some kind of decency.

Quintal And our wives won't drink with yours. Why?

Smith Taurua and Balhadi follow Maimiti, Moetua and Nanai.

McCoy You should also force Taurua and Balhadi to drink. If only they would start, Maimiti, Moetua and Nanai would fall for the temptation as well and become as blessed alcoholics as all the rest of us. They must be forced to learn to forget. Or else they will never forget.

Smith Can you forget the dangling heads of Mills and Martin in Nihau's and Te Moa's belts, McCoy?

McCoy That's why I drink. It's my only chance to ever forget it.

Quintal Our wives are only native women. It's just to chastise them and use them as you wish. If they won't drink, then force them to drink. If they make resistance, then bind them and beat them and gag them, like I and McCoy are doing with Sarah and Mary. Then they will drink freely like fish.

Smith Christian would never have approved of your drinking workshop, McCoy.

McCoy Who the devil cares for Christian any more? He is gone, and we have the right to do as we please.

Young Including raping even other women than your wives?

Quintal Jenny, Nanai, Moetua and the others are widows. A coition will only do them good. If we condescend to rape them, they should just be grateful.

Smith I don't think all the women think so.

McCoy Don't think of that now. Drink and be merry instead. Forget Christian and Bligh and Bounty. They are all gone for good, but we are living here now!

Young You are right, McCoy. We are prisoners for life of our own destiny here on the island. The only thing we can do to soften our misery is to drink and forget.

Smith Yes, that's the only thing that can make us feel good.

McCoy So drink, brothers! Drink and be happy! What does it matter if everybody dies as long as someone survives and still can be happy!

Young Cheers, Quintal and McCoy, to forgetfulness! Scrap the ghosts! Let the bodies lie unburied and forgotten! Forget all the graves! Let the pigs piss on them! We have forgotten where they were! We have forgotten where they fell! We have forgotten where we dug them down! We have forgotten where we pissed afterwards to flush away our tears! (*bursts into tears*)

Quintal Now Ned is getting sentimental again.

McCoy Give him more booze to make him forget.

Smith But don't drink him unconscious again. His health is not very strong.

Quintal He has a wife, hasn't he? He was not even shot by the cannibals. He can take anything. He even overslept the mutiny.

McCoy Let him get drunk. That's his only remaining beatitude. That's all we still have ahead of us and left to live for! Cheers to the eternal bliss of many future drinking bouts and blackouts!

Quintal Be our prophet, McCoy, and show us the only right way to perdition! Cheers!

(They drink and reel and become increasingly more befuddled and ungovernable.)

Scene 6. Maimiti's house.

Balhadi Hutia, you who know those animals, what do you think? Could they have killed Jenny and Nanai?

Hutia No, they are worse than that. They are worse than animals. They would be human if they out of compassion took the lives of those they are abusing.

Taurua Sarah, you who are Quintal's wife, what do you think?

Sarah Quintal would only be able to kill by mistake. He is stronger than the others and so rough that he by mistake could squeeze the life out of anyone. It's a wonder that I am still alive after so many terrible years with him.

Prudence They have probably bound and gagged Nanai and Jenny to be able to abuse and rape them as much as they want without them being able to defend themselves.

Maimiti And you speak like that so insensitively and casually.

Prudence Maimiti, me and Susannah and certain other widows here went to the bottom of our grief in the drunken society of Quintal and McCoy. McCoy's liquor was the only comfort anyone could give us. We lived like animals with them, but at least it tempered our sorrow for the moment.

Hutia Quiet! I hear something.

Maimiti Look who it is.

Moetua (by the door) It's Jenny and Nanai. Nanai is badly hurt.

Maimiti Let them in!

(Jenny and Nanai are let in in a terrible state, Nanai almost half dead.)

Hutia Thank God that you are alive, at least!

Jenny It's not thanks to God. It's in spite of God. Take care of Nanai. Quintal has been raping her for two days.

Prudence Good God! What bladders! What has he done to her?

Jenny Only the usual thing. He kept her hands and feet tied and gagged and then ploughed with her incessantly. Then he left her without liberating her when he was tired. When he and McCoy finally fell asleep we could at last escape from there. It might have been in the last moment. One more hour, and Nanai would have been dead.

Maimiti How did they manage to get you?

Jenny They waited for us when we went down to the beach. They assaulted us, bound us and gagged us. Then they brought us by force to McCoy's house. There they got drunk like mad animals. Then they abused us as much as they could. Sometimes they didn't know who they were lying with at the moment.

Maimiti And Smith?

Jenny Smith came by and drank but didn't want to share the orgies.

Moetua Maimiti, – Tetahiti and Minarii left their work uncompleted. Quintal and McCoy are still alive.

Balhadi We must destroy their distiller.

Taurua They are a mortal danger to us and to the children as long as they keep on making their liquor.

Maimiti We must force them to leave the island.

Moetua They would never agree. We must kill them.

Balhadi Let Nanai be their judge. She was always scared to death of Quintal. Now she has been made his victim. She has her husband Tetahiti to avenge. Let her decide.

Moetua It's fair. Let Nanai decide.

Maimiti (carefully, motherly and tenderly to the severely manhandled Nanai) Nanai, you have been the most victimised of all of us to the madness of Quintal and McCoy. You will now decide for us their fate.

Jenny It's fair, Nanai. We will do whatever you say.

Moetua If you command us to kill them we will do so without flinching.

Nanai (after some reflection) Only Quintal. You must kill Quintal for the sake of our children and future. And you must destroy McCoy's house with the distiller. Smoke them out from their house of debauchery and destroy it. Then perhaps we might have some peace, and life could have another start.

Moetua It's fair. Quintal must be killed.

Maimiti We besiege the house tomorrow, keep it under fire until they leave it and then burn it down. We have all the weapons. The wretches can't defend themselves. If anyone else gets killed than Quintal it's their own fault.

Moetua Well spoken, Maimiti. *(takes care of Nanai)* It's over now, Nanai. You are home now.

(They take care of Nanai and Jenny.)

Scene 7. The inside of a house in ruins.

Smith (entering carefully) McCoy? Are you there? *(coming in, searching)* Are you there?

McCoy (concealed) Don't let him in!

Smith Who?

McCoy (grabbing hold of Smith) Whatever you do, don't let him in! He has come to kill me!

Smith But who?

McCoy Who? Minarii, of course! He is standing there behind the door! He is just waiting for me!

Smith Minarii is dead, Will.

McCoy How the devil can you then explain that he is standing behind that door? He has come to get me!

Smith (observing the emptied bottles on the floor everywhere) Will, you must have emptied eight bottles only today. You have delirium.

McCoy Alex, it wasn't the ladies who shot at us yesterday and burnt our house. It was Minarii and his damned negroes.

Smith It's over now, Will. Quintal is gone.

McCoy Do you think they got him?

Smith I saw him get hit in the side. He immediately escaped into hiding in the bushes. I followed his blood traces to the bird mountain and the precipice. He must have gone over and killed himself.

McCoy It was Minarii who shot him!

Smith Minarii is dead, Will.

McCoy No, he is standing there behind the door, waiting! Do you think I have the DTs, what? Don't I recognize you? Can't I see that you are Alex? And don't you think that I then also can recognize Minarii? I tell you that he is alive! I see him! *(Minarii is seen by the door. Smith doesn't see him.)*

Smith You squeeze me to death, Will! What the hell would Minarii want to kill you for? It was Quintal who burned his house and threw him out the Rope!

McCoy I tell you that he is alive! And he has come to get me! He knows that it was all my fault!

Smith What was your fault?

McCoy I had an argument with Tetahiti. He wanted to till the earth in the best place for growing ti-roots. I needed the ti-roots for my distillation! He tried to root them out without knowing that they were of use to me. To save the ti-root, Quintal and I decided that all land should be ours. Mills and Martin were easy to persuade, and so was Williams.

Smith So it was only because you wanted to distil your liquor in peace that you decided to take all land from the natives...

McCoy That's what I am telling you! It was all my fault! *(crying out)* I know that Minarii is in here!

Smith Take it easy, McCoy.

McCoy Te Moa and Nihau came by with Mills' and Martin's heads dangling by their belts. They were all bloody. They butchered us like cannibals, Alex! How could I then depart from my liquor?

Smith So that's why you could disappear for weeks without anyone knowing where you were! You were distilling by yourself and drinking alone! Not until all the natives were dead did you drag also Quintal, Young and me into your self-destruction! Young is dying in consumption, Will.

McCoy He as well? I have killed him too!

Smith We must destroy the distiller, Will. It's our only chance of survival. Or else you are finished.

McCoy Never! It's my elixir of life! I would die without my booze! *(screaming)* There he is! There he is! *(Minarii becomes visible again.)*

Smith You are just delirious. Will. Take it easy! Drink water!

McCoy *(off his mind, rushing up)* I tell you that it's Minarii who has come to kill me! He is standing there and calling me to the Rope! And Quintal is there as well! *(Quintal appears.)* And Fasto! *(Fasto appears.)* And Tetahiti, Nihau, Te Moa, Tararu and Hu! *(Also these appear behind the others.)* They have all come for their revenge! Help me, Alex! Protect me! Hide me! Tell them I am not at home!

Smith (to himself) It's delirium tremens.

McCoy (screaming) Leave me alone! Leave in peace! I just wanted to be alone and have fun by myself and forget all the sad memories! Don't stare at me like that!

Christian (entering as the last) Will McCoy, you alone ruined the life of all of us.

McCoy Nooooooooo! (*runs amuck, rushes out, disappears, bawls, and a macabre death cry is heard.*)

Smith Will! Will! Come back! (*rushes out into the darkness after him. All the other visitors retire, disappear and are lost in the darkness as unnoticeably and quietly as they first appeared.*)

Act VI scene 1. Portsmouth, the Court Martial.

Admiral Hood Gentlemen, this is now no ordinary court martial but a trial extraordinary the purpose of which is not to punish the guilty – in the case of the guilt of some not being proved we hope on the contrary to still be able to acquit them – but instead to find out the truth. We have a tremendous crime to deal with, the worst in British naval history, which has rather proved to be something of a mystery, since no one has been able to provide a reasonable explanation to why it was committed. Adding to the difficulty of the mystery is the fact that neither its leading actor nor victim nor chief responsible can be present to give testimony. What we have, though, is a written detailed account by lieutenant Bligh, who neither has been able to understand the reason for its occurrence, while the chief perpetrator, master's mate Fletcher Christian, perhaps the only one who could have explained the matter, is beyond reach of the law and no one knows where. Several other desired witnesses and accused have been equally impossible to locate.

I want to make it clear that several of you who could be present without taking any part in the mutiny have nothing to fear. On the contrary, your testimony will now be of special importance to our understanding of the case. I know, that several of you were treated brutally and beyond all criticism during your transport home on the Pandora, and we can never enough regret the loss of those of you who did not survive this and who were innocent. This cannot be justified or rectified, but we will spare no effort in trying to reconstruct the whole truth.

Mr Fryer, you were master on board and lieutenant Bligh's number one. Can you give an explanation to why the mutiny took place?

Fryer Mylord, all of us who sailed under lieutenant Bligh's command can thoroughly testify that there were problems of cooperation with whoever he had to deal with.

Hood Do you mean that it was lieutenant Bligh's own fault?

Fryer Certainly not. It was rather the consequence of some natural development, like a thunderstorm or volcano eruption, that no one could do anything about.

Hood Did you see it coming?

Fryer No.

Hood If all had problems in working with lieutenant Bligh, then there must have been tensions, who all must have been aware of? Were you as an experienced sailor blind to the approaching storm?

Fryer Sir, I did what I could to calm down the upsets.

Hood What did you do?

Fryer I took sides with the crew against lieutenant Bligh and warned him that a report of his abuse would be brought to the admiralty in London on arrival home.

Hood Did such warnings have any desired effect?

Fryer None at all.

Hood What was the manner of lieutenant Bligh's abuse?

Fryer Forged accounts. Accusations against the crew without evidence. Lack of self control by furious tactless outbursts of anger. Insults against individual members of the crew in view of the whole crew. Ridiculous punishments and exaggerated drastic methods of punishment for trivial offences.

Hood Still it appears from our investigation that lieutenant Bligh applied milder disciplinary methods than most other commanders. Still the methods of harsher commanders have not resulted in any mutiny. You have not been able to explain the mutiny, Mr Fryer.

Fryer I know, Sir. It was a thing between lieutenant Bligh and Mr Christian.

Hood What, if I may ask?

Fryer In the beginning of our journey with the *Bounty* we officers shared our dinners with lieutenant Bligh in the cabin by his invitation. When his clumsy provocations became routine we took our distance from him, and one after the other refused to continue keeping him company at dinner. Finally it was only Mr Christian who remained loyal.

Hood But even he finally left him.

Fryer Yes. Lieutenant Bligh humiliated him in front of the whole crew worse than anyone else by publicly accusing him of stealing without evidence.

Hood Would Mr Christian have made mutiny for an accusation of theft?

Fryer Mr Christian was a gentleman, Sir. Lieutenant Bligh was not.

Hood That's not a satisfactory explanation of the mutiny.

Fryer I know, Sir.

Hood What more do you know? Are there any more details you know of that we should know?

Fryer You have all important details in my written testimony.

Hood One detail has puzzled us. After your arrival at Timor after your incredible sea voyage in an open boat under horrible tribulations, you and the carpenter Mr Purcell were accused of almost revolt by lieutenant Bligh. Was it a matter of a second mutiny provoked by him?

Fryer Mr Purcell may answer for himself. He and lieutenant Bligh were always quarrelling, but although the commander treated Mr Purcell inhumanly the

carpenter remained loyal. Lieutenant Bligh could in blind uncontrolled anger accuse anyone of anything.

Hood Would you say that he was mentally unaccountable?

Fryer No, but completely without self control, stubbornly clumsy unto stupidity and as humanly incompetent and coarse as a butcher.

Hood But still an expert seaman, according to your assessment.

Fryer The best after captain Cook.

Hood Here's the paradox: a masterly seaman and worthy successor of captain Cook, whose disciple he was, but who could have no normal relationships with ordinary people, an admirable expert who can't cooperate. Is that a correct view of captain Bligh, Mr Fryer?

Fryer There is something to it.

Hood Thank you, Mr Fryer. One last question. Do you think that Mr Christian's revolt against lieutenant Bligh in any way was justified?

Fryer Absolutely not, Sir.

Hood Has Mr Graham any questions before the witness steps down?

Graham Mr Fryer, for what reason did you cease to attend at lieutenant Bligh's dinners?

Fryer He manipulated with us against the crew and wanted to use us as his instruments for his brutal and clumsy methods against the crew. Ask mate Morrison, who was forced to flog them with the cat-o'-nine-tails although he couldn't endure the sight of blood.

Graham What did you think of Mr Christian?

Fryer Everybody liked him, since he was the opposite of lieutenant Bligh.

Graham He was a gentleman while the commander was a bully.

Fryer These positions were constantly stressed during the whole voyage.

Christian Still it was finally Mr Christian who went too far against the commander.

Fryer Yes, unfortunately.

Graham If Mr Christian was such a sympathetic gentleman, some rather extreme provocations must have been applied in order to bring forth a rebellion against such an expert seaman and the whole navy?

Fryer Yes.

Graham Were there not enough extreme provocations to urge this to occur?

Fryer If they occurred it was on a personal level between him and the commander and of such a nature that no outsider could have any insight to them.

Graham So they could have occurred?

Fryer Yes.

Graham Thank you, Mr Fryer. You can go.

Fryer Thank you. (*leaves the stand*)

Scene 2.

A dark corner in a shabby restaurant.

Edward Things are going well, Mr Graham, but no one must ever know that I am assisting you with the defence.

Graham Do you really think you could exonerate your brother?

Edward Never completely. Jurisdiction is a rotten and dirty field, Mr Graham. You can never be completely recompensed for your wrongs. At best you can achieve some retaliation. That is all. That monster Bligh has so completely dishonoured my brother in writing and in public that he shall never be able to get away with it. The more witnesses from the Bounty to be called forth, the better, for they all have exactly the same story to tell about Bligh's absurd inhumanity and my brother's tragic heroism. Only those abject creatures who crawled and fawned for Bligh and allowed him to bribe them have testified to his advantage and thereby revealed themselves as miserable beggars.

Graham The court martial has become aware of this tendency and intends therefore to call as few more witnesses as possible.

Edward In that case we have at least come one step forward by the understanding of the court martial that Bligh's case is hopeless.

Graham It doesn't help those mutineers who still will be sentenced to death.

Edward They will become martyrs in the eyes of posterity. The future will acquit today's martyrs to Mr Bligh, who will get away but never get rid of his brand by the court of eternity as an example of human incapacity and gross inhumanity.

Graham You talk of eternal justice. I must stick to the law.

Edward By the shortcomings of mundane law we are compelled to constantly appeal to eternal justice, which always persists and wins in the end, which is our only comfort.

Graham Can that save and comfort your brother's soul?

Edward No, Mr Graham not even that could ever satisfy my brother. I feel that for certain wherever he is.

Graham Do you think he lives?

Edward I am sure he lives.

Scene 3. The Court Martial.

Hood Mr Purcell, how was your relationship with lieutenant Bligh?

Purcell You know. The worst possible.

Hood Still you claim you were always loyal to him.

Purcell Not to him. The navy.

Hood Still lieutenant Bligh accused you of treason and mutiny.

Purcell He was hysterical.

Hood In what way?

Purcell He was certain that everyone was against him and persecuted him. He interpreted anything to mutiny conspiracies until he was taken aback in his bed that day in April 1789 outside Tofoa. He always expected a mutiny except then.

Hood Lieutenant Bligh claims that since the mutiny was carried through so fast and efficiently it must have been planned for months.

Purcell Not at all. It was a moment's inspiration.

Hood How do you know?

Purcell Fletcher Christian planned to escape and leave the ship on a raft. He never planned any mutiny.

Hood But even a raft takes some time to build.

Purcell Yes. We worked on it very carefully to make it carry Fletcher Christian as long and far as possible although we never thought he would get ashore alive anywhere.

Hood Who were 'we'?

Purcell John Norton mostly and I.

Hood John Norton was the man who was killed on Tofoa, the only one among you who followed your commander who didn't reach Timor.

Purcell Yes.

Hood And it wasn't a bluff? Mr Christian didn't give you the order to build a raft to hide his plans for a mutiny?

Purcell No. He was in despair and desperate and just wanted to get away from the ship.

Hood Didn't lieutenant Bligh wonder why you built a raft?

Purcell On Fletcher's express orders it was kept absolutely secret from the commander. Lieutenant Bligh didn't suspect anything of the sort. He was blind and stupid.

Hood Was the raft completed?

Purcell Yes, it was completed the day before the mutiny and as seaworthy as could be.

Hood But instead of escaping, the master's mate Christian mutinied.

Purcell Yes, to the great surprise of everyone, and to the great disappointment of many. I could have done anything to make life worse for that villain Bligh except mutiny. That was the line.

Hood Were many on board of the same attitude as you?

Purcell Most of them.

Hood Any exceptions?

Purcell The butler Samuel, that rat, whom everyone detested. He was Bligh's personal spy and probably the only exception.

Hood How long did mate Christian's loyalty last?

Purcell Obviously all the way up to the mutiny. Bligh hurt him deeply and brought him to despair, no one's loyalty was put on harder trial than his, and still he remained loyal until the end and would rather have abandoned the ship on a raft than broken it.

Hood Still he broke it in the end and worse than anyone else.

Purcell Yes.

Hood Thank you, Mr Purcell. Any questions, Mr Graham?

Graham Could we assume, Mr Purcell, that most men on board who did not partake in the mutiny were about in the same situation as Mr Christian: they couldn't bear lieutenant Bligh and were brought by him to despair but endured him anyway?

Purcell Yes, Sir, absolutely. The mutineers were just a small bunch of the worst hoodlums of the crew. All were simple sailors except the master-at-arms Churchill and the officer Ned Young.

Graham (to the court) The master-at-arms Charles Churchill died on Tahiti, and the officer Edward Young is lost with Fletcher Christian somewhere. *(to Purcell)* Why did Edward Young take part in the mutiny?

Purcell He didn't.

Graham Did he want to come with you and his commander?

Purcell No. He was asleep when we were set adrift from the ship. Fletcher wondered where he was, and when someone said he was still asleep, Fletcher said: "Let him sleep. It's better that way."

Graham But even Young was flogged by his commander.

Purcell Yes, for a petty detail, like all the others. Young never forgave him and hated him but endured him.

Graham Did the midshipman Heywood hate him?

Purcell No. He had no reason to. He was never punished.

Graham But he saw others being punished and stayed with the mutineers on board the *Bounty*. Bligh calls him one of the mutineers.

Purcell He was forced to stay on against his will. There were several like him. Morrison, Heywood, Stewart...

Graham (to the court) The midshipman Stewart perished with the *Pandora* at her shipwreck.

Heywood (rising) He was chained like a galley slave in the prison of *Pandora* on deck although he was innocent!

Hood (severely) You may speak when you are called, Mr Heywood.

Heywood Excuse me, Sir, but the truth must come out!

Hood We are all agreed on that, but in order of the law, Mr Heywood.

Heywood Yes, Sir. *(is seated)*

Graham How was it with the boy Tom Ellison?

Purcell For him the mutiny was just a play. He never hurt a fly.

Hood Still he took active part in the mutiny.

Purcell Only as a clown. He was only a cabin boy. We all loved him. He was good at pranks. That was all.

Hood Still he was armed.

Purcell Only with a cutlass that was too large for him.

Hood More questions, Mr Graham?

Graham No, Sir.

Hood May we then ask midshipman Heywood to step forth, please.
(*Heywood steps forth, young and sensitive but already marked.*)

Midshipman Heywood, let me remind you that our chief aim here is to chart the truth. I hope you can help us find out how it really happened and why.

Heywood I am at your service, Sir.

Hood Do you think the mutiny took place because Fletcher Christian and other mutineers quite humanly longed to get back to their sweethearts on Tahiti? We know that you yourself had a sweetheart on Tahiti whom you were separated from by force by captain Edwards on the Pandora. Therefore maybe you can help us with some clarity on this issue.

Heywood Although I had wife and child on Tahiti, whom I was taken away from by force, as you quite rightly propound, Sir, I had no part in the mutiny.

Hood That was not the question. Your eventual part in the mutiny is here of secondary importance to the question of why the mutiny happened in the first place, although lieutenant Bligh was the most liberal, careless and undisciplined of all our captains.

Heywood Sir, Fletcher Christian had a sweetheart, as you termed it, on Tahiti but no children, and when he separated from her before the mutiny it was definite and for good. He took for granted that he would never see her again. It was the same thing with my friend George Stewart and his girl Jenny. We took leave of our girls on Tahiti forever. No one expected to ever see them again.

Hood But the contrast between life on Tahiti and on board was rather extreme, we have learned to understand.

Heywood It was total, Sir.

Hood Can you elaborate on this.

Heywood We had all freedom on land and none on board. The happier we were on Tahiti, the more difficult captain Bligh made life for us on board. When we left Tahiti it was changing paradise against hell. We knew it would be difficult but could never imagine it would become *that* difficult. Of course many of us then started to long back to Tahiti, and even those who didn't have any sweetheart there, like Churchill and actually almost everyone.

Hood How was it with Christian?

Heywood No, not he. For him Tahiti was a finished story until the mutiny.

Hood Are you able to confirm this?

Heywood Yes. The night before the mutiny he intended to get away on a raft, as you already heard. The raft was ready waiting for him. I met him on deck that night, and we talked. He had no plans on any mutiny. His only concern was his family and parents home in Cumberland. He asked me to pay them a visit when I came home. He had promised his father to ask a fellow sailor to inform his parents if anything happened to him.

Hood Did anyone hear this conversation between you and Christian?

Heywood Except for Robert Tinkler, who has been reported missing, only captain Bligh, who came and disturbed us, but I don't think he overheard our conversation. We talked so low.

Hood So since captain Bligh didn't hear your talk no one alive did.

Heywood Yes, Sir.

Hood Were you among them who liked mate Christian and loathed the captain?

Heywood No, Sir.

Hood Can you explain why?

Heywood I liked Fletcher Christian very much, as all of us younger officers did, but I didn't hate lieutenant Bligh.

Hood No, you had no reason to, since you never were subjected to his methods. Is that correct?

Heywood Yes, Sir.

Hood Did you loathe his methods?

Heywood I detached myself from them, Sir, and was in a happier position at a safe distance than James Morrison, who was forced against his will to apply them.

Hood The court has some understanding for midshipman Morrison's dilemma and your obvious innocence, midshipman Heywood. Any questions, Mr Graham?

Graham Have you anything to say for the defence of Fletcher Christian?

Heywood No, Sir. The mutiny brought on my first and total disappointment with him.

Graham For Tom Ellison?

Heywood Nothing except for what has already been said.

Graham For any of the other mutineers?

Heywood Yes, for several of my absent friends. William Brown was just a gardener who took no active part in the mutiny. Ned Young woke up surprised and found himself abandoned by Bligh and the others in the launch. He was innocent. Alexander Smith was the best fellow in the world and took no active part in the mutiny but sympathized with Christian. I think he chose to stay on board because he realized Christian would have problems with the wilder mutineers. Also Smith had a sweetheart on Tahiti.

Graham Any defence for captain Bligh?

Heywood No, Sir. With Mr Fryer I must share the view that the loss of Bounty was completely lieutenant Bligh's own fault.

Graham What was his fault?

Heywood He made no technical faults, but he didn't realize his own human limitations and refused to listen to others. In his self-sufficiency, self-love and complacency he was impossible to argue with. He insulted and trampled everyone down and didn't care. Captain Cook was legendary for his good cooperation with his crews and his care for his men. Captain Bligh didn't cooperate with anyone but only commanded by brute force ignoring all human factors.

Graham Thank you, midshipman Heywood.

Hood The Martial Court is adjourned. The judges will be informed in due time.

Scene 4.

Edward It looks dark, a journey into darkness towards night that ever grows more dense in hopelessness and darkness. What chance do the poor innocent victims stand against the implacable and well trimmed military machinery, where from the beginning all opposition is severely sentenced as criminal insubordination, wherefore all criticism is doomed from the beginning with no consideration of how reasonable it could be? During a number of years now vast fortunes have been wasted only to hunt the mutineers of the Bounty all over the South Seas, which have been combed in senseless waste of seamanship and ships that foundered in the process, and all you get for a result is a few petty small fish caught in their almighty net, innocent victims that were only manhandled the whole way so that several died in the process, while no trace was found of the accountable, the real pirates, of which the villain number one was my own brother Fletcher Christian, dishonoured for life without hope of any exoneration ever, since his dishonour dragged down with it all his family and even me in disrepute and horror. And against such an overwhelming flood I stand here alone powerless without means and yet fighting still, and that's all I can do no matter how hopelessly lost the matter is. My only comfort and help is the doubtful easing cheer and encouragement of lurid wine. (*drinks. There is a knock.*)

Who wants me in the desolation of the loneliness of this late midnight hour? Come in!

(The door is opened. A discouraging figure appears.)

Who are you, and what do you want?

Christian (after some pause) At least you don't turn me away.

Edward (to himself) I have heard that voice before. – I am a lawyer. As such I may not turn anyone away no matter how lousy he is.

Christian I understand that you don't recognize me.

Edward (to himself) Where have I heard that voice before? But it should be stronger and more cheerful. This makes me worried in earnest. No, it just couldn't be possible. – Brother, is that thou?

Christian Yes, it's me, coming to disturb you like a ghost at night.

Edward And you dare show yourself in England?

Christian Only to you. You see yourself how unrecognizable I am.

Edward You are indeed. But why have you come? To raise all unblest spirits in the navy and England?

Christian No, only to bear witness of them to you. I have seen many comrades die, Edward, because of an unfathomable tragedy that only one man started by common brutal senselessness.

Edward All England holds you responsible for that senselessness.

Christian They got it wrong. I was only the victim.

Edward William Bligh is the greatest naval hero of the nation since James Cook.

Christian I hold him exclusively responsible for the whole tragedy.

Edward You can't testify. You will only be hanged immediately.

Christian Don't you think I know? But I have a lawyer.

Edward I can't do anything, Fletcher, even as a lawyer. I can't take part in the case as brother of the first of the accused, which makes me all too challengeable. I can't even show myself in any connection with the case. All I can do is to find out the truth.

Christian That's good enough.

Edward And make it public.

Christian That's even better.

Edward Are you actually real, Fletcher? You aren't any ghost that has come to haunt me in the fogs of the fumes of my wine?

Christian Don't touch me, Edward, in case I would prove unreal.

Edward You pull my legs.

Christian No, but I smell and am full of bugs. You can see for yourself how dirty I am. I sneaked on board the first ship that came to Pitcairn and called myself by one of my dead fellows' name, whose corpse was said to be me. You see, a number of us died violently on Pitcairn by ourselves. I'll tell the story of that minor civil war another time, but by the murder of the gardener Brown, whose name I took, everything was lost on Pitcairn that I had lived for, and I couldn't remain with my failure but had to get back to the world to get even with the cause of all our ruins, so I went officially dead after having survived myself once too much and let none of the remaining Pitcairners know. You have a right to know this as a lawyer, but I must rely on your absolute obligation of silence. Thus I was back on deck and became a mate of great help to the voyage, by which I could manage to get back to England, but in Bristol I was recognized by Peter Heywood.

Edward Damn! How did it happen? What happened?

Christian He caught sight of me, recognized me and called my name. I immediately turned and fled.

Edward That must not happen again!

Christian That's why I kept with the outcasts and tramps in the sewers and their quarters and shared beds with rats and lice, drunkards and bandits and became like one of them, just to be able to reach you.

Edward We must get you in order, Fletcher, washed and shaved with clean clothes, but you must never show yourself outdoors except in disguise.

Christian I agree.

Edward But how do you intend to get at lieutenant William Bligh, the most celebrated sea hero in England today?

Christian I don't know yet. But I heard that the trial against my friends from Tahiti is on.

Edward Only a few survived the home deportation. Some of them were clearly guilty, others were clearly innocent, but most of them were border cases, and the risk is that they will be hanged with the others. The trial is only about saving the face of the navy and make examples.

Christian Is there no one to defend the innocents?

Edward Only one succeeded in hiring a lawyer.

Christian Who?

Edward Peter Heywood.

Christian He was never punished by Bligh and had no motive to take part in the mutiny and therefore didn't. His case should be obvious.

Edward The case of all of them should be obvious except two, Millward and Muspratt, who provedly took part and had motives.

Christian Severely punished both of them for reasonable protests.

Edward But how about little Tom Ellison, the boy, who only was a junior when it happened? But he took part without motive and will be hanged.

Christian Can't Heywood's lawyer do something?

Edward Not for Ellison, and not for Muspratt and Millward. But by figuring there at all he can as a lawyer speak for all the others.

Christian Can he reach the truth about Bligh?

Edward The truth is, Fletcher, that I am in daily secret contact with him. All that appears in the trial he conveys to me, so that I can publish it.

Christian As usual you are the man behind the curtain.

Edward But behind the man behind the curtain is the impulse and the motivation, which is you. Whatever terrible danger you have put yourself in by returning to England, brother, I am sincerely grateful and happy to see you. Welcome home, brother. (*wants to embrace him*)

Christian (*backing*) I am unclean, brother.

Edward What the hell does that matter, when your soul is the noblest thing in the world? (*embraces him and hugs him. Christian starts crying.*) There, brother. The worst is over now. Next on our program is to get you clean.

Scene 5. With the King.

George The man is impossible.

Banks I know, your majesty, but he has his credits.

George Don't talk rubbish, Sir Joseph. The man is a boor and a monster of conceit. He has become a burden to the navy.

Banks Still he is our greatest sailor, and not even captain Cook would have managed his voyage in an open launch across open sea bringing nineteen men alive to Timor.

George He can't cooperate. He can only command. He could make the entire navy revolt against him. He is a bully without sense.

Banks Give him a chance, Sir.

George Don't we have rebellions and mutinies enough?

Banks He made the bread fruit expedition to Tahiti successfully the second time, Sire.

George Yes, and now we are faced with the fact that the negroes of the West Indies can't eat those bloody plants. Two expensive Tahiti expeditions wasted for nothing!

Banks The second time it was no fault of William Bligh's.

George No, but if we had known it the first time, much time and money would have been saved, and we wouldn't have had that mutiny scandal, which came along like more water for the rebellion mills of the Americans!

Banks We can't just scrap him, *Sire*.

George Why not? He has only himself to blame for his preposterousness. He doesn't even learn from his own failures!

Banks He learned not to provoke a mutiny the second time.

George He shall never have another commission in the navy from me! That's final!

Banks Then give him something else.

George Like what? What on earth could fit such a blasted knave?

Banks Our governor in Australia needs to be replaced.

George There's an impossible mission for you. Only penal colonies for scum and felons. Only trouble and rebellion all the time. You've got something there. Lieutenant Bligh would there find something to do.

Banks He is waiting outside for your grace, *Sire*.

George Bring him in! He shall get what he deserves!

(The doors are opened to lieutenant William Bligh.)

Welcome, our greatest sea hero of the British empire!

Bligh (humbly bowing) Your majesty, I hardly deserve being flattered by your highest majesty.

George And why not, when you deserve all the honours you can get, after all that you have come through, you old bootleg!

Banks His majesty is very satisfied with your services to the navy, William, and especially with your success with the second bread fruit expedition.

Bligh It was really no fault of mine that the damned slave workers in the West Indies refused what I managed to bring them with so much trouble and hard labour!

George Perhaps you would be the right man to teach the negroes to eat what they don't want to, lieutenant.

Bligh I would then rather remain in the navy and continue sailing in snows and storms and rough seas.

Banks His majesty has a new commission for you, William.

Bligh (brightens up) At last! A new command? More than just bread fruits and mutineers this time?

George Much more than just bread fruits and mutineers. Consider yourself promoted, lieutenant.

Bligh To commander?

George No, to governor.

Bligh I don't understand.

Banks You have been promoted to be the new governor of Australia, William.

Bligh (uncertain) But... that's ashore.

George Yes, but still at sea and as far away from the hard ground of England as possible. There you will be rid of all scandals and bad publicity pursuing you here in

England by the Bounty trial and the well written pamphlets by Edward Christian to exonerate his brother the innocent pirate. Your wife will not have to be ashamed of you in Australia, lieutenant William Bligh.

Bligh (carefully) Do I have to accept it?

George Nelson will take over the navy, lieutenant. He won't be needing you.

Banks You'll have to stay ashore in any case, William, here among all the rumours or in the new world of Australia.

Bligh (carefully) What happened to the former governor in the penal colony?

George Overstrained. Burnt out. He was finished. He didn't make it.

Banks His majesty thinks you are the right man for the job, William.

Bligh (finds himself in the new situation but with difficulty) Well, I will have to thank you, then.

George You will get the details later. Await further orders.

Bligh (consents and bows) Yes, your majesty. *(leaves)*

George (after he has left) He will never make it.

Banks If he doesn't no one will.

George No one made it in America either.

Banks I hope then that we will not lose Australia as well.

George If anyone will be responsible for our losing Australia as well, Sir Joseph, then lieutenant William Bligh is the right man for it.

Banks Yes, your majesty, but I don't think Sir William Pitt will be happy with the appointment.

George William Pitt is a fool. He is always unhappy with whatever I do. I suppose he is actually a republican, that traitor. Tell him that I threw William Bligh to the wolves, and he will be happy.

Banks Yes, your majesty.

Scene 6.

Edward Meet my brother, Fletcher Christian.

MacArthur The damned sea hero.

Christian Why do you say so?

MacArthur Because you are. A sea hero. And condemned.

Christian Why sea hero?

MacArthur You threw a bad captain over board but was honest enough to give him a chance to survive. Therefore you can not be called a pirate.

Christian You seem to admire me.

MacArthur Everybody does. You are romantic.

Christian Who is he, Edward? Why do you let him see me?

Edward Fletcher, John MacArthur is our key person in Australia, where William Bligh is now the new governor but where John here holds the real power. And you will go with him to Australia.

Christian I know that Bligh was rewarded with a governorship after succeeding in having three mutineers hanged of which one was innocent. Many others of his crew died for nothing because of his clumsiness. What do you want me to do in Australia? Crawl to Bligh again?

Edward You can't stay in England, Fletcher. It's too dangerous. John MacArthur is the wealthiest man in Australia, and he will never allow Bligh to come through with his tyrant's methods there.

Christian You mean...

Edward Exactly. Revenge. You will get a new chance. I am the attorney for John MacArthur here in England. I will keep England informed of every step that Bligh will take in Australia to make himself impossible as usual.

MacArthur I happened to meet captain Bligh. He is a conceited fool who is afraid of every human being. He will never manage a governor's position in Sydney, where I hold all the strings of power in my hand.

Christian How?

Edward He owns all the gambling halls and brothels and most of the bars.

Christian An underground king, then. No king could be more dangerous or powerful.

MacArthur It would be a pleasure to sail with you to Australia, Fletcher Christian.

Christian I almost think I will accept your invitation.

Edward That gives me pleasure. Then we are all three agreed?

MacArthur So it seems.

Edward Then all we have to do is to form our strategy.

Christian Keep me out of all intrigues. I think that's best, until I may stand face to face with him when he is ruined. That's all I ask.

Edward You will get what you want. It's a small compensation for his ruining all our family.

MacArthur It will be my great pleasure to make the best of it. I will enjoy it. A puffed up pope of fools in a spider's web without knowing about it or the spider. He will wriggle indeed.

Edward We worked long for this, Fletcher, ever since the last governor started to fade out. We saw the fantastic possibility for Bligh to unconsciously and enthusiastically get himself into real trouble.

Christian You helped him become governor?

Edward It was so easy, since he was without doubt the surest candidate. It turned out a splendid opportunity for Sir Joseph Banks to get rid of him and for the king to get him ousted from the navy without bother.

Christian You really set up a trap for poor old captain Bligh.

Scene 7.

George What's this, Sir Joseph? The man is a complete failure! He is worse than any ordinary American delinquent! His clumsiness defies all description! The man is absurd and a shame to the whole nation!

Banks I really hadn't expected this, your majesty.

George Didn't you know the man? Didn't you back him for more than twenty years?

Banks He deserved all the nation's respect as a sailor.

George But you yourself suggested him as diplomat and politician!

Banks He had the best possible recommendations. You said yourself, your majesty, that only an impossible man like him could manage the situation of the greatest penal colony of Australia.

George I never thought he would make it, and I was right! He has nothing but blundered and failed from beginning to end! He literally collects mutinies and insurrections! What the devil should he send Short home in chains for? What was his crime?

Banks Insubordination, Sire.

George A petty trifle! A quarrel about rank! And for that the idiot Bligh confiscates all his property and sends him home in degradation and chains and kills his wife and children!

Banks They died of hardship, Sire.

George Yes, which that blundering villain Bligh caused them! He caused the deaths of an entire family without reason!

Banks Yes, Sire.

George No wonder his harassed wife refused to follow him to Australia. And now all the troubles and insurrections in Sydney. Is there anyone there at all whom Bligh hasn't offended and turned into an enemy for life?

Banks No, Sire, except judge Atkins, who was laughed out of the trial against MacArthur and who got home after some gauntlet-running all but lynched on the way.

George What do you mean? All but lynched?

Banks He got drunk on the way home and fell so badly into some ditch that he was beaten blue all over. After that he has refused to show himself outside his house.

George It's the death blow to the governorship of Bligh in Australia.

Banks Yes, Sire, it is. Even all his servants have abandoned him.

George So he is completely alone in his governor's residence?

Banks Completely alone.

George We must get him home before he gets any new ideas and his madness turns out even worse results.

Banks We have already received a petition from all the leading citizens of Sydney demanding his resignation and return to England.

George Well then, what are we waiting for? Send him home and take him out of service immediately!

Banks It will take a few years since Australia is far away, Sire.
George I don't care! Just issue the order and then keep him as far away from London as possible! Put him to feed hens and let him cackle with them as much as he wants! I never want to see him or hear anything about him any more!
Banks Yes, Sire. (*retires deeply embarrassed.*)

Scene 8.

Bligh (in front of a colossal mirror in his fantastic governor's palace, completely alone but dressed up in all his governor's splendour)

Look at me! Am I not splendid? Why can't the world see, that all I ever did was right all the way? I was given authority to command, order was my duty, and then all the people I have to deal with prove to be villains and blunderers, murderers and pirates, hooligans and anarchists. That MacArthur lived on the greatest chain of brothels in the world and smuggled rum all over Australia, but I got him prosecuted! Unfortunately the weak judge proved utterly corrupt, so the trial went to the dogs. I am lucky not to have been lynched. What I can't understand is, why no one ever wanted to obey me, although my authority to command always was indisputable? Authority is obeyed by everyone else, even the mad king who fuddled away America still has power and is obeyed, but no one ever obeyed me, although my affirming of my natural authority always was absolutely obvious! Damned fools! The whole of humanity appears to only consist of damned fools.

(*Enter Christian. Bligh sees him in the mirror.*)

Do I see a ghost?

Christian No, captain Bligh.

Bligh Are you not a phantom?

Christian No, captain Bligh.

Bligh So what the devil are you doing here?

Christian I wanted to see you one last time in the right moment when you yourself have to face the same ruin and dishonour that you caused so many others. Your career is finished, captain Bligh. You are lost.

Bligh And you, damned pirate? What do you gain by that?

Christian Nothing except perhaps the satisfaction of giving you a bad conscience. All the mutineers are dead except one, captain Bligh. You sent them all to death by your sheer vanity and pettiness, greed and ambition. You suffered the greatest defeat possible for a man to meet with. You have failed as a human being. At least that's something that none of all the sailors did who you sent to death or ruin or dishonour, let alone their families.

Bligh Avaunt, you cursed ghost! You are dead!

Christian Am I? I died several times but always survived myself. You are still alive to your own misfortune, and it's worse to be alive but dead than dead but alive.

Bligh Who let you in here? Did you walk through the walls?

Christian Your palace is empty and desolate. They have all abandoned you. There is no one here to stop me. You are as alone as a sultan locked in with all his sterile riches. I just wanted to see you one last time, poor old sloppy detestable lump of meat, you mountain of dough, laziness and vanity. If it hadn't been for your fatness I would at least have tried to feel pity for you. I sort you out of my life like a used up old rag. I am finally through with you, but your example will regrettably survive and always stand out as the worst possible among men of any accountability. Good-bye, captain Bligh. *(leaves)*

Bligh A dream. A hallucination. An unpleasant reminder of the past. Nothing to bother about. Fletcher Christian is dead. He must be dead, and I just saw the evidence. It's as simple as that. I am still governor, and no one should ever try to put that to me that I didn't always do what was right!

(straightens himself up to the mirror and admires himself thoroughly.)



Epilogue.

On Pitcairn.

Maimiti (around 40, indescribably ennobled by her sufferings) We haven't had any English ship visiting us ever before. Why are we so honoured now?

Taurua There seems to be an older naval officer on board who insists on coming ashore.

Maimiti What does Alex say?

Balhadi He says nothing but thinks we have nothing to fear.

Taurua The man is already ashore and on his way up to us.

Maimiti We shall receive him as it befits an Englishman.

Balhadi I see him coming.

Peter Heywood (very aged, all white) We saw smoke from the island. When we anchored outside, we were visited by natives who spoke English. That made me curious.

Balhadi Your ship is the third that ever anchored here.

Heywood The second was *Topaz* from America under the command of Mayhew Folger.

Taurua Then you know who we are.

Heywood (turns to Maimiti) Maimiti, don't you recognize me?

Maimiti (hesitating) Yes, I recognize you, but you are very aged. You were with us on Tahiti. *(hesitates)* I don't remember your name, but you were married to Tehani. Where is Tehani now?

Heywood (can't control his emotion, hides his eyes in his eyes)

Maimiti I am sorry. Is she dead also?

Heywood overcoming his emotions) So none of you has been on Tahiti since that time?

Maimiti No one. As soon as we came here Christian burned the *Bounty* at the request of everyone. Since then we have lived here completely isolated.

Balhadi One or other tried to leave the island, but no one ever succeeded, except those who went down the Rope.

Taurua How is life on Tahiti today?

Heywood (with some effort) All you knew are gone. Two years after *Bounty* there was an English ship bringing misery to the island. All Christian's friends were taken from there by force. All their wives died of sorrow within a year after the forced separation. They weren't even allowed to say goodbye to their husbands. Their children grew up without fathers. Even my wife Tehani died. Her daughter looks exactly today like my Tehani when I first met her, but she doesn't know I am her father.

Maimiti Were there other tragedies on Tahiti?

Heywood They followed one upon the other. The English brought infections to the island, and the French brought war. Today there is only a tenth of its population left, and most of them are ancients and widows in mourning. Only the shadows, the ghosts and the memories are alive on Tahiti today.

Maimiti So at least we were not alone with our misfortunes.

Heywood And Smith? Is he still alive?

Balhadi (sees Smith coming) Here he is. *(Heywood rises as Smith enters. The women remain seated.)*

Smith (doesn't believe his eyes) Peter Heywood! After all these years! *(shakes cordially hands with him)*

Heywood Alexander Smith, I presume.

Smith Alias John Adams. But you have aged, my friend.

Heywood Europe has had twenty years of war.

Smith You were stupid to return to Europe.

Heywood Europe was stupid to take me back by force. We had no choice.

Smith Captain Mayhew Folger told me that there were three or four who were hanged. Obviously you were not one of them.

Heywood They hanged Ellison, Burkitt and Millward. That was the only result that England got out of the entire Bounty expedition.

Smith But have a seat. We have so much to talk about. (*takes a seat*)

Heywood If the ladies permit. (*is seated*)

Smith They managed everything so far. Of the twelve that came here with us ten are still here.

Heywood Who didn't make it?

Smith Williams' wife Fasto went down the precipice of the bird mountain when Williams deceived her. Quintal's wife Sarah was chased down the same precipice by him.

Maimiti Excuse us, but you must have much to discuss. (*The ladies retire.*)

Smith I am sorry, Maimiti.

Taurua We who experienced it all don't need to hear it told.

Balhadi Take your time. We will be back. (*The ladies leave.*)

Smith You can't imagine what they have gone through. When it was like worst, and I with Ned Young and Quintal and McCoy were drinking like swine every day after Christian's departure, the ladies had to build a fort with palisades in the other end of the island to be left in peace with the children. If we came there inebriated and out of control and demanded our wives or any of the widows they fired at us, and they did right.

Heywood What happened to Edward Young?

Smith He had a strange kind of asthma after the loss of Christian. He then languished and faded away in tuberculosis.

Heywood And Quintal?

Smith He went mad. He was probably on his way to go mad already before McCoy started distilling his liquor, but his madness doubled after that. He disappeared after having been wounded when the ladies chased us out of McCoy's house and set fire to it. But he survived. Then he attacked anyone who dared to approach him. He had been transformed into a wild animal. I was finally obliged to execute by necessity.

Heywood And McCoy?

Smith He went delirious. He also went mad and went down the Rope. But tell me about Bligh. What happened to him afterwards?

Heywood (sighs) He remained perfectly trusted by the admiralty at home. He was commissioned to remake the entire bread fruit expedition with a new ship. He went to Tahiti and succeeded this time in bringing back enough bread fruit plants to the West Indies. But there appeared a problem which no one had foreseen.

Smith Well?

Heywood It appeared that the coloured slaves on the plantations there in the West Indies couldn't eat bread fruit. There were mortal allergies and such things.

Smith So the whole absurd enterprise was stillborn from the beginning.

Heywood Yes. Completely.

Smith And the others who were brought home to England by force? Morrison?
Tinkler?

Heywood They were some of the few who survived. Stewart, Sumner, Skinner and Hillbrandt perished in the shipwreck of Pandora. Two of them were completely innocent, like Tom Ellison, who was hanged. Churchill and Thompson died on Tahiti. Norton, Nelson, Elphinstone, Lamb and Hall died during the home journey with captain Bligh. With your eight comrades here who don't exist any more, that makes sixteen people or a third of Bounty's crew who were sacrificed in the enterprise.

Smith An expensive enterprise that failed.

Heywood And then was repeated and proved a fiasco.

Smith And what about Bligh after that? Was he rewarded?

Heywood Yes, it is very strange. He was actually rewarded in the end. He became governor for all the penal colonies in Australia. There he abused his power by the same brutal methods he used on the Bounty. He made himself so impossible as a sadistic bully, that his closest man put him in irons and brought him to England to bring him to trial, just as Fletcher Christian's original intentions had been. But Christian's mutiny aborted, and he was never allowed to bring Bligh to trial. It happened fifteen years too late.

Smith And was he sentenced?

Heywood The dishonour was enough. He was never given the confidence of the admiralty any more. But Christian's brother is still fighting to exonerate Fletcher and the mutineers.

Smith It's too late now. They are all dead.

Heywood Are they? It feels as if they were all still here. They say that deceased sailors become dolphins and albatrosses. There are many around this island.

Smith The most godforsaken civilized island on earth. I am very pleased that you came, Heywood, although all you can find here is grieving widows and children.

Heywood As long as there are children, Alex, there is hope.

Smith Strange. Those were also the last words to us by Christian.

Heywood He maybe inspired me.

Smith The circle is completed. We will probably all meet again some day.

Heywood On a new Bounty on her way to the South Seas.

Smith Loaded with expectant illusions of beauty and innocence.

Heywood Bounty sailed straight into eternity, Alex.

Smith Yes, somehow it feels as if we still were on our way to Tahiti without ever really managing to reach our destination.

Heywood We are still on our way there after all these years.

Smith Maybe it's best that way.

Heywood How?

Smith Perhaps we had better never reach our destination.

Heywood Yes, I think you are right.

(Twilight on Pitcairn Island.)



The End.

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