



Titanic Cocktail

Black Comedy

by

Christian Lanciai.

The characters :

Mr Smith
Mr Jones
an engineer
Mrs Flop
Mr Brown
a bartender
Benjamin Guggenheim
a mate
another passenger
Mrs Davis
Mr Davis

All are anonymous except the well known millionaire Guggenmheim.
They are all around 40 except the engineer, who is slightly younger,
and the young couple Mr and Mrs Davis, who are not far above 30.
Only Guggenheim is an older man, around 60.

Copyright © Christian Lanciai 1991

The Atlantic, the night of April 15th, 1912.
The stage is the luxurious first class bar on board the S/S Titanic.

Smith I tell you that this ship will go down. It has no sails.
Jones And I tell you that you are drunk.
Smith Have another drink.
Jones You don't know what you are saying. Haven't you had enough yet?
Smith I tell you that this old barge is worthless. It's as worthless as the greatest of air balloons. Pow! And it will sink directly like a stone.
engineer Allow me to inform you, that this boat is the safest ship in the world.
Smith Yes, the whole world says so. You shouldn't brag about it. Just hit it in the waterline, and it will go down like any other punctured balloon.
Jones This is no balloon.
Smith You don't get what I mean. Don't you think I know this is no balloon? An air balloon would at least float! This tin box will never float and never keep tight, if anything would happen.
engineer (to Jones) He is obviously wacky.
Jones He's got balloons on the brain.
Smith No, I tell you! No balloon could be more risky than this one!
engineer (to Smith) This is no balloon, Sir.
Smith What is it then? A tram?
Engineer It's the S/S Titanic, the safest ship in the world!

Smith (imitates) The safest ship in the world! I am fed up with that bullshit. It's not safer than a runaway train that has lost its way and will only float on the waves for a short moment to then go down and vanish like a stone without a trace.

Engineer (at a loss) He is hopeless.

Jones (to Smith) How would you have fitted the ship, Sir, if you wanted to make it foolproof?

Smith Given it sails, of course! Great Eastern is still alive and floating intact because she had sails! If the engines break down in here we will lie here like a dead wreck in the middle of the Atlantic without being able to move a fin!

Engineer It pleases you to be unreasonable, Sir.

Smith I am bloody serious.

Mrs Flop The gentleman here is not entirely wrong. What would be left of human nature and of all nature if everything in this world was given over completely to the discretion of monstrous machines?

Jones Are you also of the conviction, madam, that this craft will capsize?

Flop No, I never thought so, but all advanced technology has always given me misgivings. You can't just take for granted that all technique is infallible.

Smith That's precisely what I mean. A raft is safer than this roaring ironing board, which only keeps floating by the surface tension of the Atlantic.

Brown I hear, Sir, that you have studied chemistry.

Smith Not at all, but I know something about the sea.

Jones (to Brown) He thinks we will go down.

Brown Prophets of misfortune are not welcome here. This is after all a maiden voyage.

Smith I am no prophet of misfortune! I am a realist!

Jones He is just drunk.

Brown I see. (*turns around in order to leave*)

Flop Still they say that drunkards speak the truth.

Brown (turns back) Will you also insist on bad prophecies?

Flop Not at all. I just wish to point out that everything this gentleman says is not all nonsense.

Brown What then is not perfect nonsense of what he says?

Flop That the ocean actually is greater than even the S/S Titanic.

Jones She is right. No one can contradict Mr Smith on that point.

Brown But that is nonsense, madam. Of course the Atlantic is greater than a ship crossing her!

Smith That's what I mean!

Flop So even drunkards can sometimes be right.

Brown But this besotted nitwit claims we run the risk of sinking! What kind of right and reason is that? Do you make such statements during a maiden voyage?

Smith A maiden you can tell anything except the truth.

Brown What?

Jones (to Brown) Don't mind him. He is drunk.

Brown That does not give him any right to bring irresponsible prophecies!

Smith I don't bring irresponsible prophecies. I tell the truth.

Flop You must be allowed to stand up for the truth.

Brown You are all besotted. (*dons his hat and leaves*)

Flop (to Smith) Tell me now, Sir, what do you really mean?

Smith I need another drink.

bartender (serves him) At your service, Sir, as long as you please to drink.

Jones Don't you get seasick by drinking so much?

Smith I am used to worse naval battles than this one.

Flop You are? How romantic! Tell us about it!

Jones He means naval battles, madam.

Flop Yes, what else what he mean by naval battles than naval battles?

Jones They call it a naval battle, madam, when drinking gentlemen drink themselves under the table.

Flop Do they? I didn't know.

Smith What I mean, madam, is that we are all in the same boat.

Flop And what kind of boat would you then be suggesting, Sir?

engineer S/S Titanic, of course! What else?

Smith Your psychic intelligence is indeed impressive, Sir.

Engineer I leave nothing to chance.

Smith Thereby you also risk excluding the possible existence of the human factor.

engineer The human factor is a myth.

Smith Myths tend to outlive world history.

Engineer What do you mean by that?

Smith I mean that it's a myth that the S/S Titanic is unsinkable, and that myth will outlive S/S Titanic.

Jones Here he goes again.

Engineer You flatter me, Sir.

Smith That was not intended.

Engineer Then why did you say it?

Smith To insult you.

Engineer Well, you have failed, Sir. Have another drink.

Smith (to himself) What the hell did I now do wrong?

Jones Allow me to sort out the dilemma. You said that the myth of the unsinkability of the S/S Titanic would outlive the S/S Titanic. Our engineer here took it as a confirmation of her unsinkability.

Smith He got it all wrong.

Jones And what did you mean?

Smith That the S/S Titanic will go down! And there are no guarantees that she will not go down already today! (*drinks*)

engineer (self-satisfied) Ha-ha-ha! Childish nonsense of a hopeless drunk!

Flop One thing struck me today as I took a walk on deck, Sir. Why is this gigantic ship with so many passengers equipped with so few lifeboats?

Smith Because our engineer in his technical perfection has rationally sorted them out as redundant on board the most unsinkable vessel in the world.

Jones What is your problem with technique, Mr Smith?

Smith It is inhuman and unnatural. It's a monster, and the way man suffers from many faults of character, the wonders of technique can only increase her abuse of her supremacy of nature.

Jones Would you then prefer to be a caveman?

Smith No, but as inhuman as man has grown today by the boost of technique, I prefer the animals.

Jones Why?

Smith They are more beautiful and more alive.

Engineer A decadent post romantic.

Flop I must say, that I feel a certain sympathy for the inebriated Mr Smith.

Engineer Old ladies are attracted by men of weakness.

Flop (immediately hits him with her handbag) Shame, Sir!

Jones (waking up) What's happening?

Smith Our engineer insulted our lady.

Jones How rude of you!

Engineer I did not insult her! She just slugged me with her handbag!

Smith And you in your technical infallibility had of course done nothing to deserve it?

Flop He insulted me!

bartender Please, no fighting here at the bar, dear customers. If you want to fight, you will be obliged to go outside.

Guggenheim (passes by) What is going on here? Can I be of any assistance?

Smith We have here an impertinent engineer who insults old ladies by demonstrating his technical supremacy.

Guggenheim (inspects the engineer) He appears militarily more inferior.

Engineer I didn't mean to insult you, madam.

Flop Then why did you?

Guggenheim My friend, you stand accused. What have you to say for your defence?

Engineer I did not defend myself. I defended my ship.

Guggenheim Are you the constructor of this ship?

Engineer Partly, yes.

Guggenheim And what objection could this good lady have against that?

Flop He didn't insult me as much as he insulted Mr Smith.

Guggenheim And who is Mr Smith?

Smith (presenting himself) Have a drink, Sir!

Guggenheim I would love to. But how can you insult a man already under the influence?

Flop He called him a decadent romantic.

Guggenheim But that is unpardonable, my friend!

engineer (stupidly) Why?

Guggenheim That's improper and immoral!

Engineer How?

Jones Another mad eccentric.

Guggenheim When you call someone a decadent romantic, you don't intend it as an insult! You intend it as a compliment!

Engineer And why is it immoral?

Guggenheim It's unfair and mean against romanticism! It's blasphemy!

Engineer Pardon me, Sir, but are you in your right mind?

Smith You risk new handbags in your face, Sir. Don't you know who he is?

Engineer No?

Smith The multi millionaire Guggenheim.

Engineer (bowing) I humbly apologise.

Guggenheim Are you apologising to me or to my millions?

Smith Both, of course, to be on the safe side.

Guggenheim You should rather apologise to the lady here.

engineer (upset) Because she handbagged me?

Smith Look, you moron, she is a lady and the only one here. Show some respect.

Guggenheim You have to forbear with ladies whatever they do.

Engineer (making a hard effort, mobilising some humility) I apologise, madam.

Flop It's rather to the gentleman here you should apologise. (*meaning Smith.*)

engineer (purple red) That blackguard! Never!

Smith (throwing the contents of his glass in the engineer's face) Cool off, my friend. (*Guggenheim smiles.*)

Jones That will hardly make anything better, Mr Smith.

Smith At least it's worth trying.

Engineer (furious) I demand redress! I challenge you to a duel!

bartender Outside, gentlemen.

Guggenheim My dear engineer, you can't force someone drunk to a duel.

Engineer And why not?

Guggenheim Because he is drunk.

Engineer What difference does it make?

Guggenheim A gentleman can't aim at another gentleman who can't aim.

Engineer He would have to sober up then, wouldn't he? He can't be regarded as a sacred cow, just because he is drinking.

Guggenheim My friend, a sober person would never challenge a drunk person to a duel. You are not quite sober.

Engineer (calming down at once) You are right. Give me a drink.

Flop How wise you are, Mr Guggenheim.

Guggenheim Not at all. Only human.

Jones Is that how you turned out a millionaire?

Guggenheim Not quite. I used the lack of wisdom and humanity in others.

Smith Capitalism has spoken.

Guggenheim Yes, common sense capitalism. That's what made this ship.

Smith That's the boat we are all sitting in.

Guggenheim Yes, but you'll have to admit that it's elegant.

Smith But is it quite seaworthy? In the long run?

Guggenheim Why would it not be?

Smith I don't know. I just happen to doubt everything.

Guggenheim And our engineer here could not have his life's work questioned? Is that what started the quarrel?

Engineer Anyone who doubts that my ship is floating as long as it is floating is an idiot.

Guggenheim That was a clear answer if anything. What do you say to that, doubting Thomas?

Smith I say that the engineer's self-complacency is unbearable and needs some opposition.

Guggenheim But do you deny that the S/S Titanic is floating as long as she keeps floating?

Smith Just to watch the look on the engineer's face, it would be a pleasure for me if she suddenly would sink.

Guggenheim Are you aware that you in that case would be going down with her?

Smith I have nothing to lose.

Guggenheim Not even your drink?

Smith (looks deep into his glass, thoughtfully) I would get the whole Atlantic instead.

Jones The défaitism and unpleasant thoughts of our drinking brother have disturbed us from the beginning, Mr Guggenheim.

Guggenheim And apparently upset the engineer beyond his mind.

Flop A fact is that we have far too few lifeboats on board.

Guggenheim How many would be rescued if the Titanic went down, our expert engineer? Please try to answer with some scientific exactness!

engineer At least all first class passengers.

Guggenheim Why so few?

engineer We should actually have had even less lifeboats and even more passengers. Just because the Titanic wasn't equipped with more lifeboats, we didn't allow more passengers.

Guggenheim Still two thirds of all passengers would be left without a lifeboat if we went down?

Engineer You forget one point, Sir.

Guggenheim What?

Engineer The Titanic is unsinkable.

(a fierce crashing sound is heard at a distance)

Flop What was that?

Guggenheim It sounded like a collision.

Jones Did we hit another ship?

ingenjören In that case she was probably overrun. Ha-ha-ha! (drinks)

Smith That's no laughing matter, mate. Being driven over on the Atlantic isn't as easy as to get driven over on a street in London.

Guggenheim He is right. In London you can have the body identified, if you don't make it.

Jones Here on the Atlantic you will sink like a stone and never get up again.

Smith How well you express it, Mr Jones.

Jones I was inspired by the depth of the glass.

Smith No ocean is deeper than an unfinished drink. (drinks up)

Flop But what was it that we struck?

Jones We have stopped.

bartender It could have been an iceberg.

Flop Iceberg?

bartender Yes. We are on that part of the Atlantic where we are most likely to meet with icebergs.

Guggenheim But isn't it rather irresponsible to go at full speed on a sea where there might be icebergs?

bartender The captain knows what he is doing.

Jones I sincerely hope so.

Smith What does our engineer think about the idea of icebergs?

Engineer Nonsense. Impossible at this time of the year.

Guggenheim I hear that our engineer also is an expert on meteorological conditions.

Engineer If there would have been a risk of icebergs, we would not have travelled at full speed. I think it's more likely that we hit some poor sailing-boat.

Guggenheim It should have been a larger vessel in that case. Perhaps a beautiful brig, with all large sails set?

Smith I will never forgive you, Sir, if we ran down a beautiful fregate.

Engineer Don't get sentimental. In due time we will get to know what happened. If we hit someone, we would surely have stopped to rescue survivors.

(a mate comes around.)

Guggenheim What has happened, mate?

mate We hit an iceberg. Nothing serious.

Jones Why have we stopped?

styrman Just to examine eventual damages. Nothing to worry about.

(passes on. The others grow thoughtful for a moment.)

Smith (after a while of silence, suddenly cries) We are sinking! I can already feel that we are sinking!

Jones Calm down, Mr Smith. There is no reason for panic yet.

Smith I tell you that we are sinking!

Engineer (to Guggenheim) He has gone too deep into the glass.

Guggenheim He seems perhaps somewhat over-sensitive.

Flop Intuition is not be explained away. How serious is it, Mr Smith?

Smith I tell you, that we are sinking!

Guggenheim (by himself) If only that was not just wishful thinking!

Flop What did you say, baron Guggenheim?

Guggenheim Nothing, madam. Forget it.

Flop Have you nothing to live for?

Guggenheim Who has who already owns everything and whose only attraction and human value is in his money?

Flop You are a very unhappy man, Mr Guggenheim.

Guggenheim (shrugs it off) I am just a symptom of a very unhappy age and a very unhappy world.

Engineer Why do you think the world is unhappy?

Smith Because it is sinking and going down the bog of its own welfare. That's how we are sinking as well. We are just a symptom of the general condition of the world.

Engineer You dare persist in maintaining your absurd deranged hallucinatory fancies about us going down?

Smith I know it.

Engineer And how do you know, if I may ask? Where is your evidence?

Smith I can't prove it mathematically with pen and paper, if that's what you mean.

Engineer You have no sense of reality, mr drunkard. I have irrefutable evidence that we cannot sink, which perhaps could satisfy some of you who are not yet gone down too deep.

Smith Your evidence will make an impression on the world forever, Sir, when we all lie at rest at the bottom of the Atlantic in one big titanic coffin.

Engineer Shut up, you opposite of a universal genius! *(to the others)* Suppose now that this collision with an iceberg actually caused some damage to the hulk. Suppose it has caused some leak. Suppose this leak actually is large and that the water is rushing in faster than we can pump it out. *(proud)* Well, ladies and gentlemen, the worst that could happen in that case is that one of the bulkheads of the Titanic then would be filled. An empty space in the lower parts of the ship is filled with water, and thereby the ballast will become somewhat heavier. That is all. There are six waterproof bulkheads along the sides of the bottom of the ship. No matter which bulkhead is filled with water, it will make no difference to the carrying capacity of the ship. The Titanic is foolproof. Nothing can sink her, not even an iceberg.

Jones Well, Mr Smith, how do you respond to that?

Smith I repeat that we are sinking. *(drinks)*

Engineer (vexed) Moron! Drunkard! Idiot!

Jones Slow down, Sir. Mr Smith is entitled to his right of expressing his opinion and to keep it. There also those who still believe the earth is flat.

Engineer He is still nothing but a fool, a drunkard and a moron!

Smith (calm) Our engineer speaks against better knowledge.

Engineer Get lost, man!

Smith My friends, beware of this scientific genius. It is getting violent.

Engineer "It" is slowly but inevitably losing patience with an incurable stolidity that only keeps provoking to make a nuisance and trouble!

Smith The situation is quite unpleasant already as it is, lord engineer, thanks to the absolutely titanic manifestation of security by your infallible science of your "Titanic", to have any need of being made even more unpleasant by your increasing aggression.

Flop In which way is our situation unpleasant, Mr Smith?

Smith I already told you. We are sinking. *(drinks)*

Engineer Here he goes again!

Guggenheim Take it easy, my friend. He means no harm. He is only drunk. He is shooting but without aiming.

Engineer But every shot is a hit!

Smith How can you explain that, lord engineer, with your mathematical infallibility?

Flop (aside) They just keep on drinking and don't know what they are talking about. *(gets away)*

Engineer (tries to calm down) I admit that I perhaps work myself up for nothing.

Jones You allow yourself to be provoked for nothing.

(the mate returns)

Guggenheim What news, mate?

Mate (addresses all of them) We ask all passengers to take it very easy. We have hit an iceberg, and we have not yet been able to estimate or remedy all the damages. Just for security we therefore kindly ask all passengers to put on their lifebelts and go up on deck.

Guggenheim (discreetly, to the mate) How great are the damages, mate?

mate (quietly back) Captain said it could be serious. That's all I can say.

Jones What is it you cannot say, Sir?

another passenger How bad is it?

mate There is no cause for panic. We only have to make some manoeuvre exercise for security reasons.

Smith Do we already have to abandon ship?

Guggenheim Shut up, miserable croaker.

mate (embarrassed) As I said, there is no cause for panic. *(leaves)*

engineer I wonder what has happened. I will go and speak with the captain.

Smith Do so. And then come back and tell us, that we will all be drowned like rats, since there are no lifeboats.

Guggenheim Keep quiet, my poor friend.

Smith Why poor?

Guggenheim Because you seem to know more than anyone else knows.

Smith Cheers! *(drinks)*

(a besotted couple come by, she dressed in a long necklet)

Mrs Davis I heard that someone here knows what no one else knows.

Jones I am innocent.

Mr Davis Take the opportunity of having your curiosity satisfied, darling.

Mrs Davis Is it true that we are sinking?

Smith (solemnly) As true as amen in church.

Jones Don't listen to him. He is drunk

Mrs Davis Isn't that exciting, darling? We are foundering with everyone on board!

Mr Davis It really would be exciting if it were true.

Mrs Davis But isn't it rather deep here? How far down would we go?

Guggenheim It's only about 4000 meters deep here, madam.

Mrs Davis That's nothing! It's not even up the Matterhorn in the opposite direction! Do you remember Matterhorn, darling? Wasn't it a perfectly dazzling experience?

Guggenheim The difference between the Matterhorn and the Atlantic, madam, is that in the Alps you climb up towards the light, but in the Atlantic all lights will fade and end after only a few hundred meters. Then all you have is a black compact night three thousand meters further down, which you travel extremely slowly.

Mrs Davis Isn't it exciting, darling?

Mr Davis Extremely.

Jones The truth is that we just sent up an engineer to reconnoitre and find out what's really happened.

Mrs Davis So something has actually happened?

Jones Yes, we appear to have struck an iceberg. But even if there is a hole in the ship we cannot sink.

Mrs Davis How disappointing! Just when I started to embrace the possibility of slowly sinking down a vast and infinite, soft and dark grave.

Mr Davis When will that engineer be back?

Smith He will not be back.

Mr Davis How come?

Smith He will get into the first lifeboat that is being launched.

Jones Would he then just let us down, his drinking companions?

Smith Without further notice. He is after all a scientist.

Mr Davis Come, darling. We need a drink.

Mrs Davis Yes, you certainly always need some more ice in the stomach. *(they place themselves at the bar.)*

Guggenheim I say, here is after all our friend the engineer! *(the engineer returns.)*

Jones A drink, Sir?

Engineer *(pale and serious)* No, I don't think so.

Smith Are you seasick?

engineer I almost think so.

Guggenheim What did you find out?

Engineer I think I'll need that drink after all. *(gets a drink)*

Jones What did you learn?

Engineer Nothing certain. They are examining the situation.

Mrs Davis Doesn't it seem perfectly thrilling, darling?

Mr Davis Something really seems to be going on.

Jones Tell us what you know, mate.

engineer All security measures that can be applied will be applied. The command will not take any chances. Therefore all passengers have been ordered on deck.

Mr Davis In the middle of the night? In this cold? Isn't that slightly inhuman?

Mrs Davis We will stay here, darling.

Engineer Other ships have also been contacted and cabled of the emergency.

Guggenheim Is it because we can't get the engines started again?

Engineer Probably.

Mr Davis Some circus! What the deuce has happened down there in the hulk then? Are the workers on strike? That seems to be so modern nowadays.

Mrs Davis Most certainly, darling. Don't you worry about it.

Engineer I think we had all better get up on deck. *(dons his hat and leaves.)*

Smith We are sinking and going down headlong into the Atlantic.

Jones Don't talk so foolish nonsense, you befuddled prattler.

Smith That engineer knew more than he was telling. Now we'll never see him again.

Mrs Davis I just hope he will not go away and hang himself.

Smith On the contrary. He will save his arse and leave all the children and mothers of the second class to be drowned on board like rats.

Jones *(angry)* Sir, you are going too far with your delirium!

Smith Am I, Mr Jones? If I am wrong, you will have to prove it.

Guggenheim Perhaps you would go up and try to find out something about our possible dilemma, Mr Jones?

Jones Bosh! All the world knows that this ship is safer than any life on land.

Mrs Davis *(confused)* Is there anything wrong with me? Have I been drinking too much again? Look here, Arthur. Is this glass really standing straight?

Mr Davis *(studies a glass on the bar)* I can't be certain about it, my dear. I am not sober.

Smith It has only started.

Jones What?

Smith The declination.

Jones What declination?

Smith When a ship starts going down it's obvious that it has to start declining! When the declination goes so far that you no longer are able to stand on the floor, it will go down. No engineer is necessary to find that out.

Guggenheim By my soul, I really think the entire lounge has started declining a little.

Mr Davis Darling, I need another drink.

Mrs Davis You are so sensible, darling.

Jones Your imagination is getting the better of you. You are all so under the influence that you could imagine anything.

Smith My dear Sir, even you will stagger and fall when the ship goes down.

Jones Nonsense! If I fall it will not be because of any sinking ship but because I am drunk. Bartender, another, please.

Mr Davis How many lifeboats did you say there were?

Mrs Davis Don't worry about that, darling, There will not be enough anyway.

Jones Sir, you also seem to take for granted that the Titanic will sink. What nonsense is that? The way your fantasies cheat you into jumping to conclusions you could believe, that you are not just under the influence of alcohol and Mr Smith but that you even had some questionable hereditary disposition.

Guggenheim All of us?

Jones Yes, all of you!

bartender Except you, of course, Mr Jones. *(serves the drink)*

Jones Yes, of course.

Guggenheim For you still believe in science and its comfort and safety.

Jones There is no reason to doubt scientific facts.

Smith Still you doubt the scientific fact that we are sinking.

Jones Blockhead! You can never twist science to suit your twisted purposes.

Mrs Davis *(indicates a glass)* Can you still doubt that the ship is declining?

Jones Everyone knows that man's sense of balance is affected when he drinks alcohol. *(drinks)*

Guggenheim Mr Jones, with respect, but you seem slightly out of balance.

Jones *(drinks)* Is that so strange? *(drains his glass)*

Smith Gradually he will more and more come over to our side. Soon even *you* will be drunk, Jones.

Jones *(drinks)* Who can get anything else in your company?

Guggenheim I had better get into my frock coat if we are going down.

Mr Davis Will that be necessary if you are rescued?

Guggenheim Sir, I don't intend to be rescued.

Jones He intends to stay on here with me to prove that the ship never will sink.

Guggenheim Between ourselves, Sir, I don't give a damn whether we are going down or not. But the occasion is momentous, and I intend to dress as befits great occasions. *(leaves)*

Jones An odd original.

Smith No, a gentleman.

Mrs Davis Why the heck would you forget to bring your dinner jacket, darling, when we now even are about to go down?

Mr Davis My darling, I couldn't well have foreseen such an event.

Mrs Davis No, you are right as usual, darling. We will have to just enjoy the occasion and have our drinks anyway.

Mr Davis I am afraid that's all we can do, darling.
(*the mate comes passing by.*)

mate Why are you still here loitering at the bar? The first lifeboats have already been launched.

Jones What are you saying, Sir?

mate That the first lifeboats already have been launched.

Jones Is it true than?

mate Yes, it is true that the first lifeboats already have been launched.

Jones You mean to suggest, that we are sinking?

mate I wouldn't say that. As long as there is life there is hope. But see for yourselves how your glasses on the table are leaning. We will not take the risk of staying on board if the declination will get worse. A definite slant is soon a fact. (*to Mrs Davis*) Madam, I recommend you to go up on deck. Women and children will at least be sure to have seats in all the lifeboats.

Mrs Davis And what about my husband?

mate Women and children go first.

Mrs Davis But we have no children.

mate But you are a woman.

Mrs Davis As if I didn't know.

styrman Madam, I have warned you. What you will do with the rest of your life is your own affair. (*leaves*)

Mrs Davis My husband has gone before me all my life. Would I suddenly get ahead of him?

Mr Davis Darling, you are excused.

Mrs Davis To leave you? Never! Darling, it's much better here at the bar than out there on the cold deck. We can't do anything about icebergs anyway.

Mr Davis Darling, you are absolutely right.

Jones (to the bartender) How long do you intend to remain at the bar?

bartender As long as I can still make money on selling drinks.

Jones And then?

bartender Then we'll see.

Smith We appreciate your presence, Sir.

bartender Thanks. My duty makes me much obliged.

Jones That's the spirit. Let me now invite you all for a drink. I think that is what we all need under the circumstances. So, please be my guests.

Mr Davis Well advised, Mr?

Jones Jones.

Davis David is my name. And this is my wife.

Jones Delighted, Mrs Davis.

Mrs Davis Delighted to be invited, Mr Jones.

Jones Imagine that we all would happen to meet here!

Smith Yes, at exclusive bars you always run into the most inveterate sinners when you are faced with doomsday.

Jones What do you mean by that, Mr Smith?

Smith Only what I say. I always mean only what I say. And by that I mean that I am also most grateful for your invitation for a drink.
Jones That's the spirit.
Smith You are learning, Mr Jones.
Mrs Davis What do you think, darling? Shall we wage on the future after all and try to find a place in one of those absurd lifeboats?
Mr Davis Whatever you say, darling.
Mrs Davis But you must follow me in that case.
Mr Davis I could always promise to do my best.
Mrs Davis (*takes his hand*) I will never get into a lifeboat unless you take the seat beside me.
Mr Davis I will have to try then.
Mrs Davis Come on! (*they hurry away.*)
Smith Two more who let us down besides the engineer.
Jones Is it then obligatory to stick to a ship going down, Mr Smith?
Smith No, but it is a must to grant a bartender his livelihood.
Jones You are right in certain aspects, Mr Smith.
bartender There is still time for you to have more drinks, gentlemen.
Jones When is closing time?
bartender When the lights go out, if not sooner.
Smith That's what I call a real bartender.
Guggenheim (*enters in frock coat*) Cigars, gentlemen?
Jones Thank you.
Smith At least you keep up appearances, Sir.
Guggenheim What happened to the couple?
Smith They went out to see if there was any vacancy in any lifeboat.
Guggenheim There is room only for women.
Smith In that case they will be back.
Guggenheim Don't be too sure. I saw the engineer sneak into one. He was alone among forty women.
Jones Had he dressed up as a woman?
Guggenheim Almost. He cried.
Jones For what? For all those people who have to die?
Guggenheim No. For the fact of his ship is going down.
Smith Was it really a surprise to him after all my arguments?
Jones Does it have to?
Guggenheim (*indicating a leaning glass*) You can see for yourself.
Jones (*solemnly*) Gentlemen, the slant seems to be a fact.
Smith Halleluja! Welcome to embrace the only right conviction, Mr Jones.
Jones Thanks. But it was a long and arduous way to reach it.
Smith But now when you have arrived, things will happen faster.
Jones When a goal is reached, time has always run out.
Guggenheim I wonder at what wise philosophers you all have turned into.
Jones The vicinity of death turns you wise.
Guggenheim Are you then dead already, Mr Jones?
Jones As well as.

Smith He only still has his drinks to live for.

Jones That's not too bad.

Bartender Gentlemen, unfortunately I have to close the bar in five minutes.

Smith Why such a hurry?

bartender I have to observe that the inclination is accelerating.

Smith Don't you worry about that. We will gladly take care of your bottles when you are gone.

bartendern You are welcome to save as many as you can. (*gets away in a haste.*)

Jones He obviously panicked.

Guggenheim Perhaps he was in a hurry for the toilet.

Smith Or he suddenly remembered that he had missed his rendez-vous with his mistress in the moonlight.

Jones It must be something like that.

Smith Let's not miss the opportunity. (*jumps across the bar*) What will you have, gentlemen? It's all on the house!

Jones A double scotch!

Guggenheim A double double!

Jones Talk about the good public relations and liberality of the shipping company!

Guggenheim They will gladly let their ships founder if just their passengers are happy enough at the bar.

Jones That's what I call generosity!

Guggenheim Unfortunately it's not really good business, but I buy it.
(*Mrs Flop returns.*)

Smith Are you still here, Mrs Flop?

Flop Why wouldn't I??

Jones But you are a woman!

Flop (*insulted*) Was that intended as an insult?

Jones Not at all, madam.

Smith Watch out for the rolling pin in her handbag.

Guggenheim Pardon us, madam, but all women except you have by now saved their lives by settling for a lifeboat.

Flop And why would I settle for a lifeboat?
(*the three gentlemen look at each other, speechless.*)

Jones Pardon, madam, but aren't you aware that our ship is sinking?

Flop (*still feeling insulted*) And why would it sink? (*the three gentlemen remain speechless looking at each other*) Have we been torpedoed maybe? Has there been any outbreak of war?

Guggenheim (*accepts the difficult mission of releasing Mrs Flop from her misconceptions*) Not at all, madam. But we have collided with an iceberg that has torn up the entire hulk, and we are going down within an hour.

Flop And how could ice tear up a foolproof ship like the Titanic? Isn't ice something you use for your drinks?

Jones Pardon us, madam, but where have you been all the time?

Flop I was detained in a small back room where men are not allowed.

Guggenheim (*resigns, turns away and concentrates on his drink*) She missed the entire show.

Jones Pardon us, madam, but can't you see that everything is declining?
Flop And why would it be declining?
Smith (after some moments of silence) Give her a drink. That's what she needs.
Jones May we, madam?
Flop Since you insist. (is served a drink and is quite happy with the situation.)
Jones (to *Smith*) That's what I call stoical composure.
Smith Or Spartan foolhardiness?
Guggenheim Both with a considerable portion of felicitous innocence.
Jones Have you ever been married, madam?
Flop Are you interested?
Smith I don't think it's the right moment, Mr Jones, now to seduce old virgins.
Jones I was just asking. She took the initiative.
Guggenheim Don't hide away, Jones. You started.
Jones I assure you. My question had no hidden agenda.
Guggenheim Who would believe it?
Flop Cheers, gentlemen! (drinks)
(Mr Davis returns.)
Jones What now? Was there no room for you in the lifeboat?
Davis (out of breath) Everything is chaos out there. There are no lifeboats on board. Do you hear? There are no lifeboats on board!
Guggenheim (calmly) Make a complaint to the shipping company-
Smith Send a bottle mail.
Jones It will be sure to arrive before the next decade.
Flop Gentlemen, what is really going on here? Are you really suggesting that we might be sinking?
Jones No, we are just hallucinating just like you, when you have to admit to yourself that everything actually keeps on declining.
Flop But the Titanic couldn't sink. She was unsinkable. That was the whole idea about her.
Smith That was yesterday.
Guggenheim (to *Davis*) Are there really so few lifeboats?
Davis My wife got in with extreme difficulty. Most first class women and children are rescued but very few of us men. And there are so many more second and third class passengers. They say they locked down the third class just for security.
Guggenheim What kind of people are there?
Davis Mostly Irish emigrants. Among them not even women and children will be likely to get any help or chance of escape.
Smith We will go down with them but with our honour in flying colours.
Davis Yes, that's about the best way of looking at it.
Jones A drink, Sir?
Davis I would love to.
Jones We have to be quick. Soon the bottles will no longer keep on their shelves.
Davis You seem to take it easy.
Guggenheim So do all sensible people. In the card room they are still sitting comfortably at their game of bridge. The orchestra keeps playing ragtime. And they

say the ship constructor is in the library contemplating and admiring a picture of his life's masterpiece while he hasn't even put on his lifebelt.

Smith He takes it easy.

Guggenheim That's the best thing you can do. The ship will go down anyway.

Jones It will sink down into eternity taking all our buried secrets down with it.

Flop What secrets do you have, Sir?

Jones They will go down into eternity.

Flop Am I one of them?

Jones You might be. (*gives her a hug*)

Flop (giggles) O no, Sir, it ain't proper!

Jones It's now or never! (*kisses her*)

Flop (giggles) Dear me, what a dabbling dauber! But please, don't ooze so strongly of whisky! (*She withdraws, he follows. They disappear.*)

Guggenheim That's what I call practical philosophy.

Davis Love, whisky and a splendid environment on board the proudest ship in the world. What more do you need?

Smith Life.

Davis We have it. Now is the moment we have it. The rest of the world doesn't know what it is missing.

Guggenheim He is right, by golly. (*the declination increases.*)

Smith Gentlemen, something is happening. I suspect there might be a blackout any moment.

Davis Do you mean to say that the lights would go out?

Smith Out, out, brief candle. Like in Macbeth.

Guggenheim He is probably right.

Davis And what do you suggest that we should do about it?

Smith What about a moment of silence of respect for all the thousands who will go down with the proudest and safest ship in the world?

Guggenheim Would we waste an entire minute?

Smith It could be our last chance of showing our respect for life.

Guggenheim You are drunk, Smith.

Smith I have many comments on that. Yes, I am drunk, and it's intentional. It can't very well be denied that I am drunk. If anything is for certain, it is that I am drunk. But who is drunk speaks the truth.

Davis He is actually right, Sir. We should go down in an honourable way.

Guggenheim It would be silly to anticipate the beatifying moment.

Smith Rather than lose it.

Guggenheim We'll lose it anyway.

Davis Gentlemen, we have to make up our minds! We can't adjourn this important issue! This decision cannot be postponed!

Guggenheim Shut up your besotted nonsense!

Smith You are the one pushing the argument, Mr Millionaire.

Davis Will you fight about it?

Guggenheim (resigns) Don't remind me of all my ridiculous vanity. Between ourselves, I'll gladly be rid of it.

Davis Let's not quarrel now on the threshold of eternity.

Guggenheim But isn't it human to hesitate about it?

Smith You are quite right, Sir. Let's hesitate as long as possible.

Davis (giggles)

Smith What are you grinning at?

Davis I just came to think of something.

Smith What?

Davis "Three Men in a Boat" by Jerome K. Jerome. That idiotic book, you know.

Smith Yes, what about it?

Davis Three men in a boat - that's us. (giggles)

Smith He is right. We are exactly as clumsy and helpless.

(They all three giggle, while the declination increases. Suddenly all lights go out.)

Guggenheim (with a loud voice) Cheers, gentlemen!

Smith Cheers!

Davis Cheers!

(There is a deafening noise of all the bottles in the bar crushing down and in connection with that all possible noise that could arise in a great passenger ship when it breaks up to go down.)

Cheers.