



Cape Horn

after Jack London's novel

by Christian Lanciai (2010)

The characters:

John Pathurst

Pike, first mate

Captain Anthony West

Margaret, his daughter

Mellaire, second mate

Charley Davis

Trunk-Murphy

Bert Rhine

Raimo, carpenter

and the rest of the rather gruesome crew

The action is on board the "Elsinore" in 1913

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Cape Horn

Act I scene 1.

Pathurst But you don't understand! I've got to have that cabin!

Mate I am sorry, but it is not possible.

Pathurst But why is it impossible? All other captains sell their cabins!

Mate But captain West needs his cabin himself.

Pathurst But there are several! Why can't we just switch cabins?

Mate Because there aren't any more.

Pathurst But there are at least three cabins! If the captain doesn't want to change with me, there is a third one!

Mate That one is occupied.

Pathurst Are there more passengers than than I?

Mate Here he comes himself with the third mate.

Pathurst Good lord! He brings a woman! It's against all rules! I told you expressly that I would refuse to travel with you if the captain brought his wife with him!

Mate We haven't violated your condition. It's not his wife. It's his daughter.

Pathurst Had I known I would never have...

Captain West (*enters with his beautiful daughter*) Any problems? Mate? Mr Pathurst?

Mate Mr Pathurst wants your cabin.

Captain I have told you it's not possible.

Pathurst And I told you from the beginning that I must insist on no woman following on such a dangerous voyage!

Captain My daughter is not following, Mr Pathurst. She is only here to say goodbye.

Pathurst What about the cabin then! In that case there are three cabins after all!

Captain The third one is just for emergency, for instance for someone in dire need or someone shipwrecked. It is much worse than the one you have now. You will certainly be able to make yourself at home and feel comfortable after a few days. If not, we could then further discuss a possible cabin exchange. Is everything ready, mate?

Mate We just have to make sure your daughter's piano is properly secured first.

Pathurst A piano? A piano on board a ship?

Mate It's just a cargo like any other. It just has to be the more firmly secured in the store and protected against any possible risks of water.

West Exactly. It must arrive as safely as you, Mr Pathurst.

Margaret I think I'll come along after all, father.

West It's a dangerous journey. It would be safest for you to travel by land.

Margaret Am I then not a captain's daughter? And don't bother about securing and protecting the piano. Put it in the lounge instead, so that I can play on it during the voyage. – Don't worry, Mr Pathurst. I play no jigs.

Pathurst I am just astonished at the mere existence of a piano on board a sailing ship going round the Cape Horn.

West Are you in doubt concerning my seamanship, Mr Pathurst?

Pathurst But isn't it slightly – daring? What happens when the weather gets stormy and the piano starts rolling around?

West We'll see when it happens, Mr Pathurst. You can never do anything about a situation until it occurs. You could provide against possibilities in any thinkable way, but all seamanship is only about doing what's necessary for the moment.

Margaret You are in safe hands under the command of my father, Mr Pathurst. See you down in the lounge. I have to supervise the safe conduct of the piano.

Pathurst At what time in the lounge?

Margaret When I call for you when tea is ready. (*leaves*)

West Don't worry, Mr Pathurst. Don't you think I tried to dissuade her? She is as impossible to persuade as I.

Pathurst I will have to trust you then.

West I don't think you have a choice, if you still want to follow us on the journey. If our cabin remains dissatisfactory we could make a switch out at sea. Until then I ask of you to at least give the one you have a try.

Pathurst Thanks, captain. I will go to watch the loading. (*leaves*)

West (*after he has left* Landlubber! Such a one should never have been released. He will be a security risk to the entire shipping. And he is cross with me just because I know better. Well, he has chosen to come along all by himself. If he does not like it, it will be *his own* problem. (*leaves*)

Scene 2. The lounge. (*The piano is in position.*)

Margaret (*sitting at the tea table*) What is a lounge without a piano? What is life without a piano? Is it life that makes music, or is it music that makes life? Of course it's music that makes life. A life without music is no life. (*enter Pathurst.*)

Some tea, Mr Pathurst? (*He takes a seat. She pours.*) Are you still worried about the piano?

Pathurst It seems safe enough and well secured, but how safe will it be when it comes to Cape Horn? Well, we'll see when we get that far. No, there is something else that worries me.

Margaret What?

Pathurst The crew. What kind of a crew is this really? They all seem rather scary, to say the least.

Margaret All crews are like that, Mr Pathurst. Have you never been to sea before?

Pathurst No, this is my first extensive voyage at sea.

Margaret Why do you undertake it at all?

Pathurst Good question. I found life at home intolerably boring. I needed some change, the greater, the better. So I chose the greatest possible.

Margaret You chose with some distinction. You threw yourself out into an abyss. You know of course that many seas are deeper than any mountains on earth?

Pathurst Some of them haven't even been reached the bottom of yet.

Margaret Exactly. And we are sailing across them. Better not look down.

Pathurst You don't see anything in the darkness anyway.

Margaret Maybe it's safest that way. (*pours some more tea*) What's your concern about the crew?

Pathurst It looks so nasty. Some of them look like absolute savages, and that man who went over board after having gone mad – he had evidently tried to kill himself.

Margaret People get mad sometimes. It could happen to anyone.

Pathurst And your father was remarkably passive. He just stood with his hands in his pockets looking on.

Margaret He could do nothing more than to save the poor man's life. Was that wrong?

Pathurst No, not at all.

Margaret He always knows what he is doing, Mr Pathurst. He only does the least possible and what's absolutely necessary. That's why he never makes a mistake.

Pathurst Who does not commit mistakes?

Margaret He. At least it never happened so far. On one occasion we rammed a steamboat. It was the fault of the steamboat, which tried to get ahead of us through the Golden Gate in San Francisco. Our bow went straight through the plate and almost split the entire ship. Father put his hands into his pockets and went up front to supervise the rescue work. We had already started taking down the sails, but now he gave the order to set them all again.

Pathurst (confused) Why?

Margaret As long as the bow was stuck in the ship there was less water let in, and the steamboat went down more slowly. Or else it would have sunk like a stone. Steamships always go down like stones. Now all those on board could be saved, and as soon as the operation was completed, he gave the order to take down the sails again. The bow was set free, and the steamboat went down like a stone. He had never taken out his hands from his pockets.

Pathurst A remarkable captain.

Margaret He knows his business.

Pathurst Is he not concerned about his crew at all? They all seem utterly unreliable to say the least.

Margaret To him the crew doesn't exist. He only needs his mates to manage his ship, which is his only task. The mates also know their business, which is to set the men at work. You can still walk back ashore, if you don't dare to follow. The towboat can bring you back.

Pathurst No thank you, there is too much on board that interests me, my reading, for example, and you. I still haven't heard you playing.

Margaret (slightly laughing) I am afraid the piano could be rather out of tune. Tuning was not part of the delivery.

Pathurst The music sets the mood, and the ear adjusts it, to some degree.

Margaret We'll see how much I could strain your limits. But did you have anything on land to run away from except your boredom?

Pathurst No, actually not.

Margaret So you are really a bachelor.

Pathurst Absolutely.

Margaret What then drove you to attempt a journey round the Cape Horn for your first voyage at sea? It appears somewhat desperate, to say the least.

Pathurst I will gladly tell you. I fell for this beautiful ship, perhaps the last great sailing ship for cargo and passengers that ever will be built in America. The brutal steamships seem to take over all shipping traffic with their ugliness, noise and impurity. Everything is dirty on board of them. I saw this beautiful "Elsinore" as perhaps my last chance to make a real journey with a real sailing ship. Of course the sailing shipping will continue, but hardly with passengers and least of all round the Cape Horn, since they are now constructing a canal through the Panama isthmus. You only need to observe the crew to understand the total declination in the sailing shipping traffic. The heroic age of the clipper ships with the contests for Australia are long since passed forever, and instead the motor ships are polluting the seas in increasing fervour while constantly more sailing ships are committed to wharfs or kept going with constantly cheaper and worse crews.

Margaret So you think this your first voyage will be your last?

Pathurst Yes, with a sailing ship. May I now hear you play something, please.

(Margaret gets up to the piano and plays a simple Chopin waltz.

After a while Pathurst interrupts the music.)

Are you not at all afraid of the crew, Miss West?

Margaret Why should I be?

Pathurst Because it is so obviously scary. There are all kinds of nasty elements apart from downright monsters. I have seen them at work when we set sails. Mr Pike almost had to lash them to work. They are slow and did everything wrong, as if they were all inveterate anarchists.

Margaret They will learn soon at sea.

Pathurst But there are some revolting types, stinking whisky, fighting all the time with no end to their visiousness and work most reluctantly. How could they manage a storm out on the ocean? Could they even take down sails?

Margaret All crews can take down sails. Or else they would not be a crew. Don't worry, Mr Pathurst. They are after all human.

Pathurst And the second mate with his deep gash in his head. How did he get it?

Margaret You have seen it? He doesn't want to show it to anyone, and few have seen it. A mad cook once hacked him with a meat-axe for not being allowed to go ashore in Baltimore, although they were in Bangkok.

Pathurst Was he operated?

Margaret The cook?

Pathurst No, the mate.

Margaret Yes, but barely.

Pathurst How so?

Margaret They were already at sea, so he had to wait with the operation until Hongkong. In the meanwhile the ship's doctor filled the gap with syrup and plastered it. It had to suffice, and it did. The wound healed, and in Hongkong Mellaire didn't want to hear about any operation. He has managed all right since then, and he is good second mate.

Pathurst So it's the brain directly under the naked skin?

Margaret Yes.

Pathurst Then he is a living miracle. But I would never consider such a man dependable.

Margaret Neither would I. But he has never committed a mistake.

Pathurst He looks as if he constantly waited for the chance.

Margaret To commit a mistake?

Pathurst No, to let out the devil within.

Margaret I assure you, Mr Pathurst, that all crews are the same. They all consist of men without women, extreme originals, madmen and idiots, morbid eccentrics and extreme maniacs with some mark of Cain to conceal, like the second mate. No one is quite whole as a human being, and if he is he will not go to sea or is far too weak and naïve.

Pathurst But even Mr Pike says this crew is worse than all others.

Margaret Then so it is according to Mr Pike's experience. I wouldn't worry, Mr Pathurst. That's the last thing my father does, and I have sailed with him all my life.

Pathurst And never a shipwreck?

Margaret Oh yes. His fifth ship foundered with him and me on board. It was a tsunami that caught us and thrust us up on land in San Francisco in the large earthquake. It was nobody's fault. I was a girl then. The anchor chains broke, and the ship was thrown so hard against a rock, that the rock collapsed over it. Such a wreck no one can repair, although it was in the harbour. That's why everyone could be saved, though, who hadn't been smashed to death.

Pathurst What a shock!

Margaret Not at all. Just something you have to survive.

Pathurst Like everything else, no matter how boring it is.

Margaret You will not be likely to be bored here on board with the scariest crew in the world.

Pathurst Do you suggest there could be a mutiny?

Margaret That's the last thing my father is afraid of.

Pathurst Play some more for me, Miss West. Pardon me for having interrupted you.

Margaret It doesn't matter, Mr Pathurst. You are welcome to interrupt me again. I need some practice. No pianist is ever accomplished and I least of all.

(When Margaret has started playing again a simple prelude by Chopin, the "sea prelude", Pike enters with his funnel gramophone.)

Margaret (breaks off at once when she notices him) Welcome, Mr Pike.

Pathurst But mate, what's that contraption you are carrying?

Pike Since you are getting on with music anyway, I thought this could interest you. It's a gramophone of the latest model. I have records also, Caruso, Melba, and others.

Margaret I didn't know you were interested in music, Mr Pike.

Pike Others get drunk ashore. I look up music. I am old enough to have had time to mature. My knuckles are hard, but my heart is soft. Would you like to hear?

Margaret I would love to!

Pike (winds up the gramophone, puts on a record, wipes it carefully with a comb of camel hair and cautiously sets the needle: an aria by Verdi with Caruso.)

I love opera. I have always loved opera.

Pathurst How old are you, Mr Pike?

Pike 69 years, but tough like an elephant. I have never fallen on deck, Mr Pathurst. I know the sea. Both Miss West and the captain get seasick at times but me never. And no one ever made trouble with me. You need hard knuckles to keep this crew in order, but I've got them.

(looks at Margaret) The captain need not worry.

Margaret He never did.

Pathurst Maybe I am too sensitive and inexperienced, but every time I hear your fights and fisticuffs from the prow and find new damaged knuckles on your hands I wonder how this is going to end.

Pike The captain doesn't care. Neither should you. I will arrange a new sleeping-place for you, so you don't have to hear what's going on. This crew is impossible, the craziest and most unmanageable I've ever had to deal with, but it can do some work and must be forced to it, and it's my job to make them work. Whatever you do, don't try to interfere. The less you see and hear of what's going on, the better.

Pathurst Are you used to this, Miss West?

Margaret I was used to it from the beginning. It's life at sea, Mr Pathurst. You've only got to get used to it.

Pathurst I wish I could, but it's getting more difficult the worse it grows. And now it's too late to turn back.

Pike (casually) Yes, it is.

Margaret Well, what do you think about my playing, Mr Pathurst?

Pathurst You have a good and almost masculine touch. It's self-assured and completely convincing. I have no objections.

Margaret But?

Pathurst Something may be missing, like that special extra thing, you know. You play perfectly, but still the most important is missing, a lack which almost all

professional pianists are suffering from. You are good at Chopin but lack his lyricism. Perhaps Schumann would suit you better?

Margaret I actually prefer Schumann, but everybody loves Chopin, he is inexhaustible, while few are knowledgeable about Schumann, since he falls in the shadow of Chopin.

Pathurst Why do you prefer Schumann?

Margaret Because he is more liberated, masculine and generous.

Pathurst And the others? Liszt? Debussy?

Margaret I never play them. To me they are no longer music, especially not Liszt, except in exceptions like *Liebesträum*, *Un Sospiro* and *Funerailles*, which though in large parts is a travesty on Chopin's 6th polonaise. His Hungarian rhapsodies are also of course quite valid, but concerning Debussy there are few pieces that hold water, mainly only *Clair de Lune*, 'The girl with the linen hair' and 'La Cathédrale Engloutie'. I find it difficult to learn Debussy by heart, while there never is any problem about the classics, maybe because they always are structured, while Debussy seldom is.

Pathurst Beethoven? Schubert?

Margaret No problem. They are unsurpassed.

Pike And the modern composers? Rachmaninoff? Paderewski? Sibelius?

Margaret Sibelius is somewhat too nice to be acceptable. His music is too lovely and endearing. Rachmaninoff allows technique to supersede the purely musical, which is the wrong that most modern composers commit. Paderewski has composed less but better – as much gold as Chopin.

Pike I leave you to your piano. I have to get back to work and mind the crew. Don't play the gramophone if there is a storm. Then the needle will glide and scratch the records. (*leaves*)

Margaret There he goes to cudgel the crew again. That's the only thing he knows.

Pathurst Except his job.

Margaret He minds his job by cudgelling the crew.

Pathurst Is your father completely ignorant of what is going on on board?

Margaret What do you mean?

Pathurst Do you think that he as commanding officer could turn a blind eye to the fact that members of the crew beat each other to death and that mate Pike every day have new wounds on his knuckles after fights that only grow worse every day?

Margaret He has no choice but to trust his mates to do what they must do. If someone fails he can be replaced. No one is irreplaceable except my father. By the way, how did you get on board yourself? Normally we don't accept passengers.

Pathurst I am shipped as third mate, and my servant as a cabin boy. You do always take some passenger, don't you?

Margaret Only by exception. The only function of 'Elsinore' is to transport coal, much coal, we have five thousand tons in the cargo, and our only obligation is to make sure the cargo reaches Seattle. We actually have no obligation to any passenger, he signs on at his own risk, even if naturally it is in the interest of all of us

that he also gets through alive. You bribed your way on board. Had you done so also if you had learned about the crew before the departure?

Pathurst Certainly not. I am willing to risk anything for some change but not my life.

Margaret Do you think your life is at risk here?

Pathurst Mate Pike is only able to keep his crew at work by violence. My servant has told me that there is a conspiracy going on in the fo'c'sle, maybe to do away with Pike, maybe to mutiny.

Margaret Never against my father. Everyone respects him.

Pathurst And what if Pike one day is murdered? Who would replace him?

Margaret It would automatically be second mate Bellaire. And that would make you second mate.

Pathurst And if I told you that the second mate is in league with the worst rogues in the fo'c'sle, the three former convicts, what would you say to that?

Margaret Nothing. That's exactly why my father doesn't want anything to do with the crew. It only causes worries that least of all should be of any concern to you.

Pathurst Everything that goes on on board a ship, especially on such a splendid barque as this one, a brittle shell of steel of just a few inches with 5000 tons of coal on board, should be of concern to everyone on board, since everything the captain does concerns everyone. And the captain should be well aware of everything that goes on on board in order to be able to anticipate dangers.

Margaret He is. I am just worried about his health.

Pathurst I have seen him turning white and pass out for a few seconds while you watched him with alarm.

Margaret Exactly. I am afraid his heart will give in. That's why he is so intentionally resigned and as little active as possible. He has to take it easy.

Pathurst I understand. So there is a risk he will go off?

Margaret It has been imminent all his life. It's the same for all of us. There is no life without death.

Pathurst But he has a heart failure?

Margaret I don't want to discuss it, and that's the last thing *you* should do.

Pathurst I would speculate in the consequences of a crisis.

Margaret No one would do that on board, at least not among the command.

Pike (returns) Now those submen have been given a round again! They seem to insist on sailing us to hell as soon as they are given free reins.

Pathurst There are no submen or overmen, Mr Pike. There are only human beings.

Pike Would you suggest that a negro is as good as an American or Englishman? Don't you see there are different races, that some are yellow and some are black and that's only the whites that can make the others work? There is not one single pure-bred idiot in the crew. It's only we in the aft who are white and blue-eyed who can manage them. All the rest is damned, and you have to admit the differences are more than obvious. Our crew consists of limpings freaks with crooked backs and

faults to more than one limb except that they are all either madmen or idiots. That difference between them they can't see themselves. But there is a long distance from their level to ours, as long as from ours to captain West's, who is principally the only indispensable one on board for his superior invaluable knowledge. Only knowledge raises man above the state of animals. Is there any knowledge in the crew? Can they play the piano like us or even understand or hear music? Do they know anything about Edison or Emerson? They can't even manage a ship. The negroes of Africa have lived by waters just as long as we whites, but did they ever enter the idea of navigation? No, when we came to Africa with compass and charts they were still paddling around in their lumber stocks. Does that make them as good as human beings as we?

Margaret (trying to make a joke of it) The Neanderthal man got his name from the German village in which he was found. The Cro Magnon man was found in France. He considered himself superior to the Neanderthal man and called him flatskull. Is that why we have had wars between France and Germany ever since then?

Pathurst You have to admit, Mr Pike, that it would be worth accepting any people as nothing less than human people just to avoid unnecessary wars and troubles.

Margaret That was my point.

Pike There will be wars anyway. You might as well be a realist from the beginning.

Pathurst We don't have a war on board yet.

Pike Are you so naïve, Mr Pathurst? I never sailed any ship where there weren't conflicts that sooner or later led to war with some casualty or other. Since the murder of captain Somers I always fought bitterly on the side of the command. That's the only way for the ship to reach its destination.

Pathurst Who was captain Somers?

Pike He was an old man, more than seventy. They said he had a stroke – I wasn't present then, but heard about it later. The second mate beat him to death in the middle of the night. It was eleven years ago in San Francisco. But the worst was not the murder of a man broken by stroke, but that the murderer was pardoned after seven years. He should have been hanged at once. He blamed some mental illness since he had had his skull cloven long before by a mad cook at sea. He was a scumbag, but he belonged to an old powerful family of Virginia called Waltham who stood him by anyway and used all their influence. His name was Sidney Waltham. (*Pathurst grows pale.*) What is it, Mr Pathurst? Have you seen him? No one knows where he is today.

Margaret (makes a sign to Pathurst to keep quiet with a finger on her mouth. Pathurst controls himself.)

Pathurst Nothing. I thought maybe, but I don't know.

Pike (alert) What did he look like?

Pathurst I can hardly remember.

(It starts blowing.)

Pike There is a storm coming up. I have to get out. There's probably some madman by the helm who has jumped over board again. (*vanishes*)

Pathurst (*when he is gone*) Do you think he could be the one?

Margaret It could hardly be anyone else. There are hardly two cases of mad cooks hacking the head of a mate with an axe. The probability is obvious.

Pathurst What shall we do?

Margaret What can we do? Nothing, until the storm comes.

Pathurst Sit down by the piano again, please. We need to calm down after this.

Margaret It will be difficult to stay put on the chair in the increasing sea.

Pathurst Try your best. Let the music transcend all the disharmonies of the universe.

Margaret It will be difficult just to endure the loaded disharmony on board, which appears like a gunpowder magazine with already a lighted fuse.

Pathurst Then perhaps the music might save us.

Margaret Or nothing will. Let's see if I can outdo the storm.
(starts on Chopin's revolution study, but the competition from the increasing storm outside is hard.)

Act II scene 1. In the fo'c'sle.

Pike You rotten scumbags, if you don't at once get down to work you will get stuck here in the grave of the ocean all of you, unless you don't want me to throw you all over board, if you don't get going with your work!

Davis Mate, we are not impossible. We are as much human as you, perhaps even more. You never even read a book, while here in the fo'c'sle there is more cultivation than in your entire ship's cabin.

Pike Shall we bet? Shall we fight about it? (*menacingly untucking his sleeves*)

Mellaire Mate Pike, take it easy and give us a chance. Let me handle the men. Using violence will only make it worse, but I stand closer to them and can actually persuade them to manage the vessel in any weather. You go up and take orders from the captain, and we'll manage the rest and the rig. Stay on deck and scowl the wind, which might take you more seriously than we do.

Pike Then move your bloody legs! Nothing gets done if we don't at once have all hands on deck!

Mellaire We're coming, mate. Give us a chance to climb the rig, and you'll see that not one of us will fall down until all sails are in order.

Pike You had better, Mellaire. I give you ten minutes. Be on deck then, and I will give you the captain's latest orders. (*leaves*)

Mellaire (*to the men*) He is an old violent sourpuss who is impossible to reason with, but he is right. You actually must work. We must all work together if we are to get this smack round the Cape Horn.

Davis He is all washed up. He is after all almost seventy and only lives by his toothless roars, as if that could scare us.

Murphy He also has hard knuckles and still knows how to fight. He is not counted out until someone knocks him to death or sends him over board.

Davis Forget it. No one sends him over board. No wave could displace him from deck. His old sealegs are like earthed rocks on board of a ship. We could only get rid of him by using force to murder him.

Murphy And then? What next? Do we then take the ship?

Davis Not as long as the captain lives.

Murphy He is even older.

Davis But he is the captain, and no one knows the ship better than he. He could manage it alone. We could hardly do that.

Mellaire Forget all your bullshit and get going! We have a storm to face. Let's take one storm at a time. Any attempt on mate Pike's life you'll have to discuss in calmer weather. As long as it's storming around the Cape and we haven't got round it, everything else must wait.

Davis You are the only one who can make us work, mate. Number one just keeps brawling and paralysing us by his empty threats.

Mellaire That's what I mean. You need more than just brute force to bring a ship to harbour around the Cape Horn. Get up on deck now, boys! (*They all get going.*)

Scene 2. In the cabin.

West What do you think about the crew, mate Pike?

Pike It's the worst I ever sailed with. How could the shipowners get us such a worthless crew? You have to lash them to work if they are to work at all. They are all of them just rotten crooks, and I can't find one among them whom you could trust.

West Still the second seems to be able to get them to work.

Pike That doesn't make them any better, and between ourselves I think the second is a little too close with them.

West That's his job. It's perhaps the only way for him to make them work as they should.

Pike I don't trust him.

West You don't have to. Just make sure he works and that the crew works for him, and you don't have to do anything further, least of all to have anything with him and them to do.

Pike Thanks for that, but if you don't beat the hell out of them they will never start working.

West I don't accept your methods, mate Pike. They are all your own. My only interest is that you and the second obey my orders and make the crew cooperate, for the interest of us all. After all, we are all interested in surviving, aren't we?

Pike That's about the only thing that keeps those rotten eggs going.

West Be content with that, and don't be afraid of them.

Pike That's the last thing I am.

West Why then do you beat them? (*smiles and winks and sucks his pipe*) It's all right, Mr Pike. Just mind your work, and all the others will mind theirs as well. (*winks him off. Pike leaves.*) This will probably be my last voyage. Cape Horn has never defeated me so far, but it doesn't age, while I unfortunately must confess that I no longer am as young as I ought to be to be able to endure her perpetual fury, which at length is getting tiresome.

(*enter Margaret.*)

My daughter. That's all you wanted,

Margaret How are you, father?

West As usual. How are you yourself?

Margaret You sound rather disinterested as usual.

West I couldn't be less interested.

Margaret The entire crew is fighting for their lives against the storms.

West How fares the piano?

Margaret It will manage.

West You should never have brought it along.

Margaret It's weight is nothing to the five thousand tons of coal.

West I am thinking of its sensitivity. Nothing is more sensitive than music, especially against such barbarity that now is thriving on board.

Margaret I hope you are not worried about the crew?

West That's the last thing I am worried about. Everyone else is worrying to death about it.

Margaret So you fear no mutiny?

West Never in my life as long as I am captain. A crew instinctively knows better than to revolt when they have a captain who is capable of handling the ship, and when they have that they feel it. They will only mutiny if the captain doesn't behave, like for example the poor miserable captain Bligh, who went hysterical. Then the crew *has* to resort to mutiny.

Margaret There is one more thing, though, that you don't know about.

West And that is?

Margaret Second mate is using a false name. His real name is Sidney Waltham. He was the one who hacked captain Somers to death eleven years ago.

West (*takes for the first time his pipe out of his mouth*) Does the first mate know?

Margaret Not yet.

West (*puts back his pipe*) He had better not.

Margaret No one knows about it except the four of us.

West (*takes out his pipe again*) Who is the fourth?

Margaret Our dandy passenger.

West (*puts back his pipe*) That knave. Does he worry?

Margaret None of us will squeal, naturally.

West Will number one be able to recognize him?

Margaret Only if he removes his cap and reveals his scar.

West Yes, I have seen that gash. If number one knows what it means we are done for, if he discovers it. Then we run the risk of losing both our mates.

Margaret It will be the state secret of the ship.

West We must live to keep it. What else is he like, that paying stowaway?

Margaret He is not as stupid as he looks. He is a hopeless snob and landlubber, but he could learn a great deal on this journey, if we make it.

West We always make it. My only concern from the beginning was if *he* would make it.

Margaret He made it so far. He likes and understands music. That might save him.

West That gives us a certain hope. Go on treating him with music, and you might make him propagate the family.

Margaret He is not like that.

West Just you wait. All men are like that at heart. Neither I was like that before I married. Still I got married.

Margaret You should have had a son instead of me.

West I never complained.

Margaret Neither did I.

West Get back up now and take care of our guest. He must not get worried.

Margaret He is afraid of the crew.

West He has no reason to be as long as I am on board.

Margaret You are old, father. We are worried about your health.

West I know. I am at the end of the line. I just told to myself, that this is probably my last journey. Not that my strength is lacking, but my heart is not quite with me all the time. That's why I do as little as possible and only what's absolutely necessary. I cannot for instance engage in intrigues of the crew. The sailors and mates will have to manage by themselves. I only give orders, nothing else.

Margaret You are right in doing so. No one can question your seamanship.

West That's why I am still a captain although more than seventy-five.

Margaret And mate Pike is sixty-nine. None of you must fail.

West We know that well enough. Go ahead and flirt with your guest now, so that he feels good and forgets about the crew.

Margaret Yes, father. Just take it easy yourself.

West Indeed. (*She leaves.*) That was not good. If my mate learns who his second mate is, anything could happen. But I trust the second mate is wise enough to always keep his cap on. (*sucks his pipe*)

Scene 3. The lounge

Pathurst (sitting comfortably smoking) What does she mean? Is she trying to court me? I was quite clear already when I got myself on board, that I would accept anything but no woman on board. Still that infernal captain brings his own daughter along, an insolent beauty, who even plays the piano most seductively. Can you happen to a more insidious life danger and death trap?

Margaret (enters) There you are. Don't tell me you are waiting for me to play for you again?

Pathurst However could you believe such a thing? The sea is increasing. What does your father the captain say about the weather?

Margaret You don't have to tell me you are a landlubber. You have to have heard as much of Cape Horn, that it is always lashed by violent storms and that you always head against the wind?

Pathurst That should depend on from which direction you come.

Margaret There is always headwind against the direction from which we come. It never blows west around the Horn, only east, and it's the hardest winds in the world.

Pathurst And still your father intends to sail round the Horn?

Margaret It's his art and craft, for which he is paid. It's his profession. He never foundered in a storm, only by unpredictable accidents. He never sailed a ship to destruction, least of all round the Horn, which he in contrast to almost everyone always managed well.

Pathurst I believe you, but how is he? He seems somewhat like running out.

Margaret He appears to be clear about this being his last journey at least round the Horn. For the rest, he is all right.

Pathurst If a captain is aware of sailing out on his last journey, nothing is well with him. How old is he really?

Margaret Over seventy-five.

Pathurst Shouldn't he have had his pension long ago?

Margaret Try saying that to him. He will throw you overboard.

Pathurst The mate then? He cannot be much younger. Shouldn't they both go ashore and stay there together?

Margaret The mate would be even quicker in throwing you overboard. You had better stay silent with the sailors about their professions.

Pathurst How do you think the piano will manage the storms?

Margaret Well, as long someone plays on it and keeps it working. Water is not likely to be able to enter it. What usually affects pianos is that someone spills whiskey or liquor or wine or beer in it. Then no one can play it any more. Music instruments can take water but not alcohol.

Pathurst Honestly speaking, how is your father really? Could he really manage this journey?

Margaret As long as he lives there is no danger. The mate looks after him, and he couldn't have a better mate. The only security risk is our friend the second mate with

the gash in his head and the murder of a captain in his past, whom we never can be sure of, and a most capricious and unpredictable crew.

Pathurst But it's to the interest of all of us that we get through, especially for the crew and second mate, since they must be well aware of how old and frail their command is.

Margaret Yes, I think that's what will save us.

Pathurst And everyone in the crew is not a dumbbell.

Margaret Crew members are usually underestimated. They are superstitious and violent, but they possess impressing natural forces and have an enormously high developed natural instinct. Like my father every one of them can sense a change of weather and climate crisis days in advance. They have a sixth sense, which it is very stupid to ignore. If something goes wrong, if some injustice is carried through, if a crime is committed they react with a vengeance. There was never in naval history any mutiny that wasn't reasonable.

Pathurst But here on board a mutiny would never be reasonable.

Margaret No.

Pathurst I believe you. (*enter Pike, ill abused, beaten black and blue and with a blue eye.*) Here is our friend like by order.

Pike There! They got it down their throats! Now they are working again!

Margaret Have you beaten the crew to death once again now, Mr Pike?

Pike Only some of them who asked for it. No one looks for trouble with Mr Pike! What about some Caruso?

Margaret You are welcome. The gramophone is all yours.

Pathurst Don't you think the sea may make the needle slip?

Pike Let's risk it. Let's try Madame Melba, to play it safe. (*puts on a screaming scratchy record with Madame Melba*)

Pathurst The one with the peaches?

Pike Yes, she is actually the one with the peaches.

Margaret How long do you think we will have to beat around the Horn before we get past it?

Pike You never know. It could take weeks, and it could take months. If you get well past it you could be back again behind it without having noticed it. All winds and currents are against us. You'll just have to stick it out until it works. Shame on you if you give up. All will finally get past it who don't founder.

Margaret Right you are, Mr Pike.

Pike As long as your father runs the ship there is no danger.

Pathurst He says it will be his last voyage.

Pike Did he say that? That surprises me. Seamen never say a thing like that even if it is. It bodes no good. Why would he give up, of all people?

Margaret I haven't said that he is giving up. He only thinks he will have reason to get a pension after this voyage.

Pike How old is he? Seventy-seven?

Margaret About.

Pike He still has a long way to go. Trust me. I am sixty-nine but have muscles and sinews and powers left like a nineteen-year old. I am older than anyone in the crew, but they are all like moths to me. No one can stick up against me or the captain.

Pathurst Still you've had wounded knuckles and several bruises besides a formidable black eye.

Pike They are only flesh wounds. I never get interior damages, but I give them to anyone who asks for it.

Pathurst Thanks, I promise to never be in your way.

Pike But your father's melancholy is a serious sign, Miss West. I hope he doesn't think the days of the sailing ships are over?

Margaret It could have something to do with that. He never wants to tread the planks of a steamship. All his expert seamanship is only for sailing ships, and they are a vanishing tribe. This is probably the last cargo of coal going under sails from Baltimore to Seattle. If he doesn't get any more job on a sailing vessel after this, he will probably prefer staying ashore, even if that would be the worst of all and death to him.

Pike We refuse to give up, he and I. Sailing ships will always be needed. The motor ships are the parasites of the oceans, testifying to the fact that humanity is totally derailed. If humankind converts to that pollution she is doomed. It will not take many hundred years. She has already departed from the safe guardianship of nature to general denaturalisation and dehumanisation, which is a straight suicidal course. You mark my words. Humanity isn't worth as much as a lapping any more if she takes one step away from nature.

Pathurst There is a writer who tries to call man's universal decadence to attention, that she is only growing more unhealthy and unsound all the time, but that there will still always be individuals who will be able to save her, like God saved Noah.

Pike Nietzsche?

Pathurst No, Spengler.

Pike Never heard of him.

Pathurst He is still young.

Pike We'll see. Who lives will see. We will at least survive this journey, Miss, you can be sure. *(returns out in the blast)*

Pathurst Honestly speaking I am not so sure of that.

Margaret We'll see, Mr Pathurst. We can't do much else than take one day at a time.

Pathurst Yes, and that will be enough indeed, with a mate beating the crew to death every day and taking for granted that it will not mutiny. What happens when he discovers the scar on the second's skull?

Margaret Don't talk about it. That if anything we must prevent at all costs.

Pathurst It will pass for the time being and some time, but on the day when he sees it anything could happen, if the game isn't finished then.

Margaret It isn't finished until we reach the end of the journey.

Pathurst You are an optimist.

Margaret No, a realist, as far as possible. If one day it's no longer possible, we'll have to resort to surrealism, which actually could become a reality on a ship like this.

Pathurst I'll have to trust you and your realism. You know more about life at sea than I.

Margaret What about some water music? (*sits by the piano and starts on the raindrop prelude. When the storm section starts, the storm outside also accelerates.*)

Act III scene 1.

Mellaire You must understand that it's a matter of life and death, boys. We can't give up now, not as long as the captain is in command!

Murphy He just keeps sitting in apathy smoking in his lounge and saying nothing. He doesn't even show up any more.

Davis While his wench keeps fawning on that cad from Baltimore, who never should have placed his foot on board a ship.

Bert Rhine Especially not on a ship like this, with only scumbags and unblessed devils on board.

several Ha-ha-ha!

Davis But that captain's wench I would sure like to have by myself for some time.

Mellaire Forget it, Davis. Don't you see, that as long as you keep messing about your job the mate will just keep beating you around even worse than so far! Haven't you noticed that he has dynamite in his fists and that he like the captain is not likely to ever give in?

Davis The captain is old, and the mate is almost just as old. If the captain falls off, the mate will not be able to hang on, and then the ship is ours.

Mellaire Don't even think of mutiny, boys. The captain is the toughest man on board, and he doesn't budge until we get past the Cape Horn, and then the danger is over.

Murphy If only that damned carpenter wasn't on board all the time throwing vicious glances around, as if he constantly cursed us, we would have got past the Horn long ago.

Mellaire But as it is we are not, and only we ourselves can get our ship around it.

Davis No, mate, we need a change of wind. As long as the wind is on to us we will never get round the Cape.

Murphy And it's that cursed carpenter who makes sure the wind doesn't turn. He only wished us bad weather from the start.

Mellaire You can't see yourselves how childishly superstitious you are. The carpenter is just an honest and hard working Finn.

Murphy But he is quiet and says nothing and keeps away from us, as if he didn't want anything to do with us. Every devil of a seaman knows, that Finns have the power to manipulate with the weather, and if the weather is hard against us, as it has

been now for a month, it could only be because we have a nasty and invidious Finn on board.

Bert Rhine Throw him to the sharks.

Davis There are no sharks here on these latitudes.

Bert Rhine To the mermaids then, which will make both him and them happy.

Pike (appearing) What is going on here? Are you intriguing again, you nitwits? Why aren't you up in the rig? We'll never get round the Horn if you are to keep on skulking all the time!

Mellaire I just told them the same thing. We are on our way up now.

Pike That's good, Mellaire! Get the boys going and make them work! Or else they wouldn't even do as shark fodder, and then the only thing for me to do would be to beat them to death!

Mellaire Well, boys, what about breaking the Horn?

Davis If only we get favourable wind...

Pike You need more than favourable wind to break the Horn, and every sailor knows that since infancy! And if you just put your shoulder to the wheel you can knock out the horn without even wind in your sails! The captain was just about to do it from the beginning, when the weather and the currents pleased to play games with us and force us backward. It wasn't our fault. We fought like men, and we are going on like that until we have rounded the horn! Aren't we, mates?

most (can't resist him) Yes, Sir!

Pike That's the spirit! Up to the sky with all of you! If you just show you have some gunpowder in you perhaps the wind will get impressed and turn around! Maybe that's all that's missing! No one is giving up here on this vessel, and least of all a true sailor!

(The boys get into some action, and all go out on deck, the mates at last.)

There is no foul intrigue going on down here, I hope, mate?

Mellaire What do you mean?

Pike The captain doesn't like that you are on such a good footing with the crew. They are here to work, not to have their fancies blown up by mate who stoops down to their level.

Mellaire It does no harm to be on the level with the men, Sir, especially not when you have to make them work against all odds.

Pike I hope indeed, Mellaire, there is nothing else going on between you. *(leads the way up, Mellaire going first.)* Bloody journey! Who knows when you will ever be able to sleep at all again? *(leaves after the others and Mellaire.)*

Scene 2.

West It's the ultimate showdown at the end of the world, like it was already in Maghellan's days, when he waged everything on one card and had no other choice but to win. We are wearing out the storms, that are wasting their energy on us in vain, while we just keep struggling on and refuse to give up. There is no higher degree of heroism than a Cape Hornian who just keeps carrying on fighting against the wind and the hardest storms in the world and against all the assembled power resources of the world's greatest ocean, which furiously keeps raging against us and wreaking their stormy billows over us day out and day in, while the sailors just go on climbing the yards, freezing to death and falling down. But there are always new ones. No one is more inexhaustible when it comes to human and spiritual resources than a hardy sailor. Here is our mate again with his ordinary dejecting reports. What's new, mate? How many have now gone over board?

Pike (has entered) Only one, but like all the others he was irreplaceable.

West That's again one too much, mate. How did it happen?

Pike He slipped and lost his grip. Perhaps he was tired. The sailors are not allowed to sleep any more, as you know. Their berths are full of water, and they can't get rid of the water in the fo'c'sle. They get flooded in their sleep, if they challenge fate by daring to fall asleep.

West And the three new ones? How are they managing?

Pike They are a phenomenon. We don't know from where they are. We were about to ram another ship that suddenly turned up in front of us from nowhere, another ship that probably has been pitching here for weeks, and the only reasonable explanation would be that they fell over board from the other ship and managed to get on board here.

West And no one understands their language?

Pike They are probably locals from here. They are tall and ash blond, like people often are from this land, and they purr like cats. That's no human language, at least not one with words and grammar.

West And you are the right man to determine linguistic conditions, who only knows English and hardly event hat.

Pike No one else understands them either.

West But they can work, and that's the point. They are welcome on board. We have lost a number of hands, so they couldn't have come here more conveniently. Make sure they are well taken care of and provided for, so they will miss nothing.

Pike Certainly, Sir.

West What does the crew say? We have been pitching here now for almost six weeks.

Pike That's not unusual, Sir. The crew is patient.

West Because they have to since you keep cudgelling them all the time if they don't work their heels off. Those who fell down from the masts or froze to death had more or less been forced out on the yards by you and by force, I gather.

Pike We all must work, Sir. We can't have a single slacker on board.

West Except the passenger.

Pike Who paid for it.

West But I don't quite like that the second is so intimate with the crew.

Pike He is an able sailor, Sir, and almost as indispensable as I. My confidence in him is complete.

West A mate who makes friends with the crew is always speculating in mutiny.

Pike Not he.

West How do you know?

Pike You may rest assured, Sir. Like me he is aware of the necessity of making the crew work since it is so reluctant and deficient. I force the bastards to work with the whip and by force, but he knows to apply friendly persuasion. We are both successful.

West And how is the general mood in the crew in face of our months of adversities?

Pike They are afraid of the carpenter, Sir.

West The carpenter?

Pike He is a Finn, Sir.

West So what? What makes a Finn different from a Norwegian or a Dane or a Scotsman?

Pike It is well known since of old among all kinds of sailors that Finns know to manipulate the weather. If storms and adversities consistently harass a ship for weeks and there is a Finn on board, he is the one who maintains the headwind and the storms.

West This is Cape Horn, mate Pike. The weather conditions around the Cape Horn are not the fault of any special person and least of all of any Finn.

Pike Still it's the Finn they are afraid of, not the storms.

West Is there any risk that anything may happen?

Pike If I were you, Sir, I would keep further off the coast.

West We are far enough from the coast.

Pike We can't see it. If the view is bad it could be closer than we think, and it's speckled with insidious bays which it would be way too easy to pass into by mistake without a chance of getting out again.

West Trust me, mate. I know these waters as if they were the duck pond of my own private garden.

Pike Naturally we all trust you, Sir. But I would still keep more off the coast, especially since we can't see it.

West We will probably make the Horn any moment now, and our only chance is to keep as close to the coast as possible. If we fall out the least at sea our chances will be drastically reduced, and we might have to continue struggling on for weeks. Who wants something like that? Not I.

Pike Not anyone.

West So, Pike, just trust me, and wait for further orders.

Pike Yes, Sir.

West You may leave. (*Pike leaves.*) What does he think of me? Does he imagine that I could make a mistake and misjudge the distance to the coast? Doesn't he think that I know every insidious bay in our course with all the collected wrecks everywhere? If there is anything we never do, it's entering any of the murderous traps found all around here. Which only exist for bunglers and landlubbers who can't hold on to a helm. If there is anything I know, it's manoeuvring a full-rigged vessel in full storm, even around the Tierra del Fuego and the Cape Horn. (*resumes calmly his seat with his feet up on the table and sucking his pipe, as he has been doing all through the scene.*)

Scene 3. The fo'c'sle.

Murphy This won't do any more. Someone has to do something about it.

Bert Rhine What can we do about the weather?

Murphy It's not just the weather. The captain is sailing us to hell. Every time we are forced back he presses closer to the land.

Davis We haven't foundered yet.

Murphy Will you wait until we do?

Davis As long as the captain doesn't sail us aground, I consider the risk minimal that he will. He knows his trade. Or else he would not be captain.

Bert Rhine Are you preaching mutiny now again, Trunk-Murphy? It will not work. You don't mutiny until there is no other desperate measure to resort to. Making mutiny would be committing collective suicide, especially here by the Cape Horn.

Murphy I didn't preach mutiny. There are other dangers aboard.

Davis Like what?

Murphy Miserable outcasts that manipulate the weather by black arts.

Bert Rhine Don't be so miserably superstitious, Trunk-Murphy.

Murphy And stop calling me Trunk-Murphy! There is no bloody trunk in my face, is there? It's just an ordinary nose, like everybody else's!

Davis To be offended for having your leg pulled is the best way to keep the joke going.

Murphy This is no joke! It isn't funny! It's just downright humiliation!

Bert Rhine Don't mind, Trunk-Murphy. You know too well you'll never be known as anything else.

Murphy You bloody cursed black puddings! You don't see the curse hanging over you! Can't you see how that insidious carpenter all the time casts his evil eye with dark furtive glances and hateful looks over all of us? He will not cease until we all have been lost and swept clean from the deck by the damned heavy seas of Cape Horn, which he alone is conjuring against us!

Raimo (the carpenter) Of course, you worthless dumbbells, of course I alone am mobilizing the entire Pacific Ocean against you! Who else would it be? I am the only

Finn on board, and everybody knows what magicians all Finns are and have to be! They just keep working hard and keeping silent like death, so you could suspect them for all the worst kind of evil! You don't care how hard they work, but just because they are silent you have to get at them and harass them and torture them and abuse them and give them more work, so they all go on remaining silent! You damned rotten eggs, I never sailed with such a lousy and worthless crew like you! You don't even want to work and make good for your salary! Here you sit on the finest sailing vessel in the world and have the honour of sailing round the Horn for maybe the last time, and all you can do is to sit and consider mutiny and how to get rid of your carpenter, who has been working hardest of all on board ever since we left Baltimore and who is the only one never to complain! Of course he alone must be guilty of all your defeats and adversities and all the storms of the world, of course he alone could be responsible for all the ships that sailed to their destruction round the Cape Horn! I challenge you, miserable patsies! You can't even sail! I am the only one working on board, and all you want is to throw me over board just because of that!

Davis (o the others) Don't provoke him any more. He is dangerous.

Raimo As if you ever did anything else during the entire journey! You have let everything out on the carpenter, who just kept quiet and went on working in murderous silence. Yes, I wish my murderous silence could have been murderous enough to murder at least all the worst of you. We have the best captain in the world and some of the most qualified mates on board one of the proudest and fastest, finest and most unique of ships, and all you want is to ruin the life for everyone on board! You are all but miserable humbugs of failed sissies!

Bert Rhine That's enough, carpenter. Don't abuse them any more

Raimo You are the ones who are abusing me, damn it! So just throw me over board, and get done with it! You will not sail any better anyway, and you will go on pitching here around the Cape Horn until you turn into the likes of the Flying Dutchman and his immortal crew of ghosts, who also just keep on pitching without ever getting round the Cape!

Murphy That's enough, blockhead!

Raimo Blockhead yourself, you incurable rotten cabbage head!

Murphy No, that's enough!

Raimo Do you want to fight? You are welcome! I will take you all on one by one! Let's have it settled! Let me throw you all over board, for not one of you deserves anything better!

(puts up his heavy fists)

Bert Rhine That's enough, Raimo! Calm down, boys! We haven't rounded the Horn yet!

Raimo No, we haven't indeed, and we'll never get round it as long as you just keep on lazing and sabotaging the work of others instead of doing some work yourselves!

Mellaire (has entered) What's going on here?

Murphy The carpenter is abusing the crew.

Raimo I scold them for not working. They don't have the guts to work. They are incompetent. Throw them over board, I say, for they are all but spoiled rotten eggs, they don't deserve any better, but all they want is to throw me over board! They would be good for that indeed! And then they will go on throwing each other over board.

Mellaire No more argument! Get up on deck all of you! That's where you should be and not here! Or else we'll never get round the Horn!

Raimo We'll not get around it anyway.

Murphy (attacks him) Shut up, Raimo!

Raimo (knocks him down straight with his right) Asking for trouble, you monstrous freak? *(turns against the entire crew)* Come on, if you be men, you slimy muckrakers! *(Full fight at once. Everyone fights everyone. Raimo knocks out one after the other, but finally he is overcome by a crowd of cowards.)*

Murphy (yells) Get him out of here! Throw him over board! We don't need him! He has just been messing with us all journey!

Mellaire Stop it!

Bert Rhine It doesn't work, Mr Mellaire. The carpenter has gone too far. He has promised to make coffins for us all during the whole journey, but we don't want them. It's him or us.

(A majority of the crew gets Raimo up on deck under constant fighting and forces him towards the rail.)

Raimo You are worse than cockroaches, you superstitious misfits! You will perish, everyone of you!

Murphy (screams) Get him over board!

The men Yo-ho! *(succeed in throwing Raimo over board)*

Mellaire (shocked) This is going too far. Now we'll never get round the Horn. *(retires)*

Murphy (after him) Tell the captain that we threw the Finn over board! Now the coast is clear for sailing round the Horn! He was the only one in the way!

Mellaire (terrified) You animal monsters! You are worse than savage beasts! *(retires out)*

Davis Now we'll see what happens. Either the Finn will be proven right in his damnation of us, or else we have prevailed and will at last make the Horn. I suspect the latter.

Murphy Well done, boys! At last we got rid of the carpenter!

Bert Rhine I am afraid this will only be the beginning of our problems.

Murphy Are you superstitious, Bert Rhine?

Bert Rhine I would rather not be, but he Finn's body is a difficult load on the log to have to drag behind for the rest of the journey.

Murphy But we got rid of him!

Bert Rhine Do you think so? I think the contrary. Now we'll never get rid of him.

Murphy (to the others) He is superstitious.

Davis Is that so strange? You have committed murder! That's the worst thing you can do on board of a ship!

Murphy Me! You were all part of it! You all share the responsibility!

Davis Do you think we want to? Never. This responsibility will be entirely yours and no one else's. (*leaves*)

Bert Rhine Come on, boys. Mate Mellaire is right. We will never get round the Horn unless we work.

(*They all return to work.*)

Act IV scene 1. The cabin.

West What did I do wrong? How could I go so wrong in the navigation? Or can the weather and nature really be so unconsciously cruel, that they expose a poor weather-beaten captain, who never in his seventy-seven years of seamanship committed any mistake, to such a cruel practical joke, that they almost force him into shipwreck with the loveliest and safest ship he ever sailed, which would have been his last as the worthiest possible conclusion to a long life of infallible seamanship? Could I really have committed a mistake? If number one had not discovered it in time and immediately applied drastic measures to move us out of the bay we would have foundered here with men and all against the most frosty and murderous, blackest and sharpest rocks, which we couldn't even see in the darkness of the storm. They were lurking like insidious cheats just waiting to crush and rub us to death against the sharp-toothed razor edges of the coastal rocks. Here he is now. Welcome, Pike. You have executed some heroic deeds tonight.

Pike We were lucky.

West Don't blame our luck. If you hadn't noticed that I had gone wrong we would have foundered. That you noticed it straight was the supreme evidence of your high qualifications as a seaman. I will never be able to forgive myself that I could commit such a mistake.

Pike We don't know if it was a mistake, Sir. We were perhaps driven into that trap by the currents, that could do anything here to make any ship sail completely astray out of course. These are the most perilous waters in the world.

West You don't have to tell me. The more unpardonable it was that I could do wrong.

Pike Don't blame yourself, Sir. It is over now. We have worse problems to cope with.

West Well?

Pike The crew has thrown the carpenter over board.

West The Finn?

Pike Yes.

West Why?

Pike Superstition. They blamed him for the bad weather and that we couldn't get past the cape in six weeks.

West Then the crew is more out of control and incompetent than any of us could have guessed.

Pike I am afraid so, Sir.

West We can't tolerate such a thing, not murder. We can't stop seamen from going over board if they lose their footing in the rig, but murder is not allowed.

Pike No, Sir.

West Who was responsible?

Pike All the worst ones.

West Not third mate, I hope.

Pike He tried to avert it but failed. He will come down soon to give a report.

West Then we can deal with the case in due order as soon as we have rounded the Horn.

Mellaire (appearing, coming directly in from the storm)

Pike Here he is, Sir.

West Good, Mellaire. What do you have to report?

Pike Remove your cap when you speak with the captain.

Mellaire (ignores him) A miracle, Sir. After the carpenter went overboard the wind has suddenly shifted, as if the sacrifice of Jonah had had some effect.

West Nonsense. Don't pull my leg. Who threw the carpenter overboard?

Mellaire The worst conspirators, Sir, those who worked the least and worst, and most kept under deck with all kinds of excuses like claimed handicaps and illness and other follery, Davis, Murphy and Bert Rhine above all.

West Is it true that the wind has shifted?

Mellaire Yes, Sir. Suddenly the men work with enthusiasm, and if we are lucky we could now get around the Horn.

Pike Off with your cap in front of the captain, Mellaire, I said.

Mellaire (to the captain) With your permission, Sir, I'll keep it on.

West Is your head cold? Or have you got a damage?

Pike Off with your cap, I said! *(snatches off his cap. Mellaire at once clasps his head as if to cover his scar, but nothing can conceal its terribility, and Pike almost totters backwards)*

West What is it? What has he done?

Pike (like in an approaching volcano eruption) It was you!

Mellaire (turns completely around and runs off in a panic, disappearing completely)

West (can't understand anything) What is this, Pike? What scar was that in his head?

Pike (infuriated but controlled) It was he! He was the one who murdered captain Somers on the 'Jason Harrison' in cold blood! It is Sidney Waltham himself! And we have had him on board all the time!

West Pull yourself together, man. You are hysterical.

Pike No, I have sworn to kill him if I ever would catch sight of him! He murdered his own captain in his sleep and was only sentenced to seven years!

West Pike, I will not tolerate any open conflicts on board.

Pike That scum! This time he will not get away! (*rushes out into the storm after Mellaire*)

West Stop him! Stop him! (*rises to rush out after him but has a sudden attack and must check himself. At that moment Margaret comes rushing in.*)

Margaret Father! What kind of loud and upset voices is this!

West (*clenches his heart*) Our mate is going to murder the second. This won't do. I can't stand this. It will be too much. First the wrecking danger and then this. (*has a new attack and doubles up*)

Margaret Father! (*hurries to his assistance and helps him down in the larger armchair*)

West (*after having somewhat recovered*) This will certainly be my last voyage. But it's not fair that I should be interrupted in the middle of it...

Margaret Take it easy, father. Calm down. Just rest. (*enter Pathurst.*)

Now you really came like by order. Father has had an attack of some kind, perhaps a stroke. Get me some water at once. (*Pathurst immediately complies.*)

Pathurst I heard loud upset voices from here. What has happened?

Margaret Everything has happened. The crew has mutinied and thrown the carpenter overboard, the wind has shifted so that we now can get past the Horn, the first mate wants to kill the second mate, and father has had a heart attack. That's what has happened.

Pathurst What can we do about it?

West (*with effort*) If Pike insists on killing Mellaire, the whole crew will stand for Mellaire against Pike. In that case it's mutiny. Then you are alone, if I will be gone as well. Damn it! If at least we had got round the Horn!

Margaret Take it easy, father.

West How the devil could I take it easy under the circumstances? Perhaps it would have been better if I had sailed us to wreckage. Then we would all have died infallibly at the same time. Now it will be a prolonged struggle of life and death between the few capable ones and the entire mob...

Pathurst Has Pike discovered Mellaire's identity?

Margaret It seems like it. That's all we wanted.

West It's all my fault.

Margaret Not at all, father. It's no one's fault. It's destiny. We had bad luck from the beginning.

West (*smiles on Margaret and takes her hand*) How is the piano?

Margaret It has managed so far.

West Go on playing it.

Margaret Of course, as long as it holds.

West Is it still in tune?

Margaret You can't expect that during a delivery round the Cape Horn.

West I would like to hear you play it one more time before it is too late. That lovely waltz by Brahms...

Margaret The one in A flat major?

West Yes, I suppose so. May I hear it one last time?

Margaret Take care of him, John. (*rises and goes out. John takes charge of the captain. Soon you hear the music from the lounge.*)

West Yes, that's the one, very simple but sincerely lovable. If only all music was like that. The simplest melodies will last the longest. Let me just remain sitting here and enjoy... (*drowns off*)

Pathurst (*notices it at once and calls:*) Margaret!

Margaret (*interrupts, enters and understands at once*)

Pathurst I am afraid the ship is now sailing without a captain.

Margaret Then it all depends on the crew.

Pike (*returns, observes the situation*) The captain?

Pathurst Dead.

Pike Heart stroke?

Margaret Immediately after your quarrel.

Pike It was no quarrel. It was the unmasking of Sidney Waltham. He and the crew are now entrenched in the fo'c'sle. The ship is at the mercy of the wind and the waves sailing on its own with a boy at the helm, but we are actually round the Horn.

Pathurst At least something.

Margaret What happens now?

Pike I have to settle with Waltham. Then we can try getting back our crew.

Margaret Isn't it to the interest of all of us that we just get back north first of all?

Pike We are on our way. But Waltham will never give himself up. He knows that he is dead and that I intend to kill him, and as long as he lives we have the entire crew against us.

Margaret Couldn't you try to cooperate, for the sake of the survival of all of us?

Pike He will not give in, and neither will I. That's just how it is. I am sorry, Miss. War for life and death. That's all that counts. The ship may sail to hell in the meanwhile. All mutineers know that the only thing expecting them ashore is the gallows, and that applies to Waltham, our indispensable mate Mellaire, most of all.

Scene 2. The fo'c'sle.

Davis What the devil shall we do, mate? The captain is dead, the vessel is drifting and disabled, and you have made the first mate your deadly enemy. What was the good of that?

Mellaire It wasn't me. It was him.

Bert Rhine You have to make it up with him. It's our only chance.

Davis Or else we'll be sitting here adrift until we end up like some other Flying Dutchman, who never gets a mile out of his position forever.

Murphy They are right, mate. You have to speak with the first mate.

Mellaire Do you think that's possible? He is irreconcilable. All the journey he has been mercilessly beating us up. He has the hardest fists in the world, and his heart is even harder. He will never spare us. We are safe here until further, but we cannot go

out, while they are sitting down in the cabin in deadly fear of us, but they have all the weapons and the bridge. But they can't manage the ship without us.

Bert Rhine That's why you have to talk with him.

Pike (outside) Ohoy! Anybody there?

Davis (answers) Ohoy! We are all here! The second wants to speak with you!

Pike (outside) What does he want?

Davis Come to terms with you, so that we can go on with the journey.

Pike He must give himself up. He is a murderer. He has nothing else to expect than justice.

Mellaire Damn it, Pike, it was eleven years ago! I was given seven years for the trouble. And it didn't happen as you think.

Pike You have murdered a captain and should never have been admitted to a ship ever again! You should at least have got a life sentence! At sea you would have been hanged, which would have been the only fair punishment!

Mellaire We have a new captain who is dead now, Pike, and no one has murdered him. The crew is innocent, but you want to sacrifice an entire crew including passengers and a captain's daughter just for a fixed idea and an unreasonable thirst for revenge! You are out of your mind!

Pike Are you then in possession of your wits, you murderer, with your skull almost cleft in half? How do you think you could ever be regarded as a normal human being? You are an incalculable psychopath who could murder again at any moment and even any harmless soul while he sleeps! Don't believe a word of what he says, the rest of you down there! As a madman and murderer he is a mortal danger to anyone alive and nothing less!

Mellaire We'll never get out of here if you reason like that.

Pike Yes, we'll get out of here as soon as you have given yourself up.

Mellaire I have already been sentenced and punished for the death of captain Somers many years ago. You can't reopen that case.

Pike You have started a mutiny on board. That demands court martial. All I can promise you is safe conduct ashore for further interrogation and trial. If you give yourself up all the others will be acquitted, for it was only you who caused a rebellion.

Mellaire Even if I give myself up you will never let me reach land alive. I know you.

Pike I take responsibility for the ship and the security of all. That also includes a mad murderer.

Mellaire I don't trust you. You are mad of desire of revenge and blinded by your fixed idea. We have seen you fighting all the journey, and we have all felt your hard knuckles, especially those who went overboard, whether it was voluntarily or they were thrown over board.

Pike You have murdered the carpenter. That's my most serious charge against you.

Mellaire It was not I. Then you have to accuse the entire crew, which they will never accept. We will rather remain entrenched in safety back here.

Pike So you want war.

Mellaire No one here will give up freely. We know how justice works ashore. Only injustice is working there.

Pike You have no chance, Mellaire. If you don't give up without fighting you will all go down one after the other. We could begin with starving you. We have all the supplies here with us.

Mellaire Don't try it, Pike. Okey, starve us if you can. But you know, seamen have tougher resources of survival than any man in land.

Pike You sacrifice an entire crew for your obstinacy.

Mellaire No, it's you who sacrifice it.

Pike Have you any better suggestion?

Mellaire Let's make a settlement.

Pike How?

Mellaire I know you. You will never give me a chance. If you get me in your hands and closed in I will be beaten to death before the next dawn. Our only alternative is then to make a settlement.

Pike You mean that we should fight unto the bitter end?

Mellaire May the best man win and sail the 'Elsinore' home to Seattle.

Pike You are serious.

Mellaire I can see no other way out.

Pike War then for life and death?

Mellaire Come and get me if you can. We shall crawl in to you at night and smoke you out and poison you out and give you a hell until you have lost and we are alone left on board.

Pike You will never succeed, and even if you would succeed you'll stand no chance afterwards. Pirates are no longer valid. They are outdated.

Mellaire We'll see about that.

Pike Let us know if you need water. We have enough, and when you have given up it will be enough for you as well.

Mellaire Get lost, you infernal sadist, Pike! Is slavery and tyranny all you ever were good for in life?

Pike No, I can sail and manage ships also, and you know it, and so did the captain, when I rescued the 'Elsinore' out of the bay at Cape Horn in which we almost foundered. But to manage a ship you need discipline, and you didn't have an ounce of that during the whole voyage. You only lazed and made mutiny. You are good for nothing. You are a bunch of mouldy sacks of meal and clubfooted ragamuffins all of you!

Mellaire Now you sound exactly like the Finn. What did he get for that?

The others He went to hell!

Mellaire Exactly.

Pike I retire, Waltham. I promise to at least discuss your points with the others.

Mellaire What others? The woman and that cad? The only ones you've got over there besides are the cook and some servant.

Pike That's enough. The 'cad' is now first mate, since you have quit.

Mellaire Go to hell, Pike! I will never give in!

Pike And you want me to believe that? Ha! I will have you crawling on all fours in front of me, and the longer it takes, the greater will be your pains. I am just showing you your great expectations. The sooner you confront it, the better will be your chances, and the contrary.

Mellaire I have nothing more to say.

Pike Yes, you have – to the judge in Valparaiso. (*leaves*)

Bert Rhine It didn't sound too good, all that.

Mellaire No, it didn't.

Murphy What will you do?

Mellaire The war is on. Now we'll just have to stick it out and wait for them. They are much fewer, and one of them is a landlubber, the cook is Chinese, and on top of that they are bothered by a woman. We must win.

Davis And then?

Mellaire Do we have any choice? Get them over board, and ours will be the freedom.

Bert Rhine It's not going to be easy.

Mellaire All we have to do is to let time work for us.

Scene 3. The cabin. Situation unchanged.

Captain West is still sitting in his favourite armchair in peace as if he slept.

You can understand that Margaret and Pathurst have been unwilling to move him.

Enter Pike.

Pathurst How is it going?

Pike It is not going at all.

Margaret What is not going?

Pike They are transforming the fo'c'sle into an unimpregnable fortress. We can never reach them there or get them out of there. Mellaire refuses to give in, and the whole crew is with him. They dare nothing else, those cowards. (*sees the captain in the armchair*) And the old man is still there doing nothing.

Pathurst He is dead, Pike.

Pike And you want me to believe that? We are not sailing with corpses in the cargo. Do you think he will abandon us after what has happened? No, I feel how he carefully keeps watch of every nook and crannie of the ship more carefully than ever. He is with us still, indeed!

Margaret What will you do?

Pike I wish we could do something, but what can we do? We can't even sleep! If we fall asleep those rotten eggs will come sneaking on us and cut our throats, that's

for sure! They will from now on constantly grow more desperate, as if they hadn't been desperate enough already throughout the voyage! They will lurk on us like vultures! The least mistake committed by any part will be the last of him, and he will have lost the game. I haven't been sleeping for all the journey, every night I have to get up to fight that monstrous crew who are the worst workers of all seamen on the seven seas, every night I have to knock my knuckles to bleeding sores to get them up the masts and keep us upright, and then this happens! The captain is dead, and second mate is the worst murderer at large of the oceans!

Margaret Have you tried speaking with them? It's our only chance to get anywhere. We have to make a deal with them. It's to the best interest of us all. If no one sails we will keep spinning around here round and around until we all are dead.

Pike Don't you think I know? Don't you think I have been going through the situation a thousand times? We are stuck in a deadlock! They will never give in, and we can never let them take over! It's hopeless! Not even a miracle could save us! (*observes the captain*) Whatever you do, don't move the captain one inch. He is perhaps the only one who can save us.

Pathurst (regards him suspiciously) Have you had too much whiskey?

Pike Not one drop. You know that, constipated landlubber, that I am a teetotaler and the only teetotaler on board!

Pathurst The captain is dead, Pike, and you appear to have some doubts about it. Shouldn't we get rid of the body first of all, to have some better space?

Pike Don't touch him! What were his last instructions? Margaret? You must have heard his last words. What did he want? What was his final order?

Margaret (reflecting) "Let me just sit here and enjoy."

Pike I knew it! Even if everyone dies and the ship goes up in smoke, we must not move him an inch!

Pathurst Pike, you are ill. You are over-wrought. You haven't had enough sleep and perhaps no sleep for weeks...

Pike Months! But don't you think I can manage? I did save the ship when the captain misjudged the currents, so that we went back into that cursed bay of shipwrecks, where all who had been pulled therein earlier had been smashed against the rocks! Only I could have done it, for I was awake! The captain was sitting there in his armchair smoking his pipe doing nothing, for he didn't expect the elements to be so mean and cruel to trick him. He didn't understand that the Cape was about to cheat him to destroy him! He didn't understand that he was about to die! But I tell you, that he isn't dead, for now he tries to understand everything afterwards in order to maybe do something about it!

Pathurst (makes a sign to Margaret by screwing a finger to his front about Pike)

Margaret No, Pike is the best seaman in the world. He knows what he is doing, and he is more aware of the situation than any of us. He is right. Only he could save us out of the bay of death. How is the situation now, Pike? Where are we drifting? To me it seems we are slowly moving backwards all the time.

Pike (lower, almost solemnly) That's the worst of all. We are drifting back down towards the Horn. We will not get any further. We are forced to remain here. The currents bring us back to the bay of death. We are the hostages of the powers of the weather. We thought we got round the Horn, but the Horn has tricked and cheated us once more. We passed Staten Island once and got through the sound and out on the other side, but then we didn't get any further but were driven by the storms and the currents back west of the Horn. Now they start all over again by slowly but inevitably forcing us back down to the storms and the Horn and the unavoidable bay of shipwrecks, which is swarming with the eternally unblest ghosts of dead sailors haunting and dragging other ships down to them forever...

Pathurst Shut up, Pike! You are unwell!

Pike What do you want us to do? Take the crew by surprise and force them to work? They are all lost. They will never work any more. They have had enough. It was the captain who kept them going, but now when he is gone they have lost their souls and don't care about anything. They will all perish with us or without us, and we can't stop them.

Margaret What is your plan?

Pike We starve them out. They have no food. We have all the food. When starvation gets too much for them they will try to take us by storm, and then we'll shoot them down, every one of them, Mellaire first of all.

Margaret Wouldn't it be better after all to leave Mellaire in peace, let his crime be prescribed, he has even served his time, and persuade him to get the crew back to work? Isn't that our only chance?

Pike He is and remains a captain killer. Now we have yet another dead captain on board, and even if Mellaire is not guilty, he is responsible by his mere presence on board. Why do you think he uses another name? Because no ship in the world would have let him on board if they knew who he was! He has a hole in his head! The axe clove half his skull! He is incalculable and might murder again at any moment! There is nothing more invidious than a half cured patient, and Waltham could never become normal again. His crushed skull was filled up with syrup! We had no access to any healthcare on board, so he had to wait until we reached the harbour of Hongkong, until then the hole in his head had to be repaired provisionally, and the cook used syrup. It worked. When the bandage was removed the skin had grown and covered the gash, and even if his brain lay bare directly under it, Waltham refused to go ashore and have the damage reopened. He let it be as it was. And here he is now with a dead captain on board and a gang of gangsters to command of mainly madmen and criminals, which position he enjoys. I will not let him get away. He knows his only chance is to get us all killed here in the cabin, which includes your cook and your servant, Mr Pathurst and the few weak sailors who didn't get stuck in the fo'c'sle. He will lurk and wait for his chance as long as he lives, and our only chance is to get him first.

Mellaire (outside) Pike! Let's make our settlement!

Pike He dares to come here, that devil! (*loud*) What do you want, you devil? There is nothing here for you but death!

Mellaire You can't manage the ship without a crew! She is drifting disabled back round the Horn! You have to work with us!

Pike Give up, and you might have a chance to survive!

Mellaire No, Pike, you are the one who must compromise. You are not a worse sailor than that you don't realize that we can't but founder if we don't cooperate.

Margaret He is right.

Pathurst Let's for God's sake have an end to this farce, Pike! Open the door to him, and let him negotiate! We have to survive, for goodness' sake!

Pike He is a captain killer! It will not work. He will only try to deceive us in order to take the lives of everyone here. The crew is sure to lurk behind him. We can't take any risks. (*loud*) Give yourself up, Waltham! It's your only chance and my last offer!

Mellaire All our lives are on your responsibility if you don't cooperate!

Pike I know how cunning you are. You can fool everyone but not me. Give yourself up, and everything is settled. Or else we'll starve you out, until we'll have to drag you out on deck half dead. All the supplies are here. You have no chance to survive without them.

Mellaire I will talk with the crew. If they agree I will come back. (*He leaves.*)

Pike He will never be back.

Pathurst How do you know?

Pike I know him. He couldn't fool us. So he goes to the crew and figures out another strategy. Don't expect any mercy from such pirate freaks! They know it's a war on to the last dying man, and they will not give in until they are all dead or have killed us all. It's either or. You can't compromise with a captain killer.

Margaret Pike, go to bed. You need some sleep. We will keep watch.

Pike Can I rely on that?

Margaret There are two of us, and we also have the cook and the deck hand. You have to get some sleep. You are worn out and overstrained and under hard psychic stress on top of that.

Pike The captain died. I have lost one captain too many and seen one captain too many go foundering. This captain I will never leave.

Margaret We will not touch him. He will remain sitting there until this crisis is over.

Pike It will never blow over, for he is dead. (*rises and retires*)

Pathurst What do you think of him?

Margaret He is breaking up. He will break any moment. He has been too much awake for too long, and there is not much go left in him. He has to have a rest. Or else he could be the end to all of us.

Pathurst And Mellaire?

Margaret However cunning he is, he is right. We cannot navigate without him and the crew. We have to reach an agreement. Or else we will all be lost.

Pathurst Do you think he was serious or really just wanted to play tricks with us?

Margaret He is testing his way. He doesn't know himself what he wants. Alas, father, what kind of mates did you have to catch up with, one worse than the other, and mortal enemies at that!

Pathurst It was not his fault. It just turned out that way.

Margaret But that he would happen to it on his last voyage! It's not fair!

Pathurst Nothing in life is fair, Margaret. Justice is an ideal you can live for, but if you are a realist you have to realize from the beginning, that it can never be made by us humans, only perhaps by destiny.

Margaret Then we'll have to hope for destiny at least, but it seems to be more against us than anything else.

Pathurst Go and sit by the piano. If everything else is lost, we could at least stick to the music.

Margaret Poor piano. Water has entered it.

Pathurst It will dry up.

Margaret You know nothing about pianos. If there is anything that can't take a beating, it's the music.

Pathurst Play anyway. We need that comfort.

Margaret If the piano will allow me. (*rises, and they move over to the lounge.*)

Act V scene 1. The fo'c'sle.

Mellaire Bad news, boys. The mate has gone mad.

Davis Mad? In what way?

Mellaire He thinks he still owes his captain his loyalty, as if he wasn't dead. He leaves captain West sitting in his armchair and refuses to allow him to be touched by anyone, as if he still was in command of the ship. You mark my words, he is at the end of his tether.

Bert Rhine Did you speak with him? He must understand that he can't manage the ship without us.

Mellaire It's hopeless, boys. He refuses to compromise. He suffers from the fixed idea that he must see me hang from the yard for what I did eleven years ago and served a sentence of seven years for, as if that punishment never had occurred, and still I was legally judged by law. He is out of his mind. As long as he refuses us even a helm to cling to we are done for, and all we can do is to sit here until we die and let the ship go to hell back south of the Cape Horn.

Murphy Can't we attack the cabin and finish all those parasites at once? We don't need them to run the ship. Only they need us, and if they don't realize that, they are worthless. We outnumber them by far. If we just could get rid of them, we could then manage on our own.

Mellaire Yes, just go ahead and gun them down, if you can. They have all the guns, and they sit on all supplies. They have everything we need, and we can't get at them without their defending themselves and shooting us down one by one. We are in a deadlock, boys, and the mate's folly impedes us from getting out of it. We will have to accept being run back down to the Horn and perhaps even to the south pole but will then at least have an honourable death without anyone hanging us or getting to know what happened on board.

Davis We can't just sit here waiting for death.

Mellaire Do you have any better idea?

Davis Try again. Make another effort. Negotiate. They are exactly as unwilling to perish as we are.

Mellaire He has made an ultimatum. I have to surrender myself to justice, which means death. I refuse. We are all mutineers, and as such we have nothing more than the gallows to expect or at best life sentences. I refuse to accept that. I am a free man, and I was a good sailor. I would rather drown at sea than languish to death in prison.

Bert Rhine You have to talk with him, Mellaire. Give him a last chance. Give him an ultimatum as well. Cooperation or death. That's how simple it is. They have to be reasonable or go down with all of us.

Mellaire I'll never give in.

Davis None of us will.

Murphy We are with you. Give them a last chance, or we drive the ship on the rocks.

Mellaire Very well. I'll go.

Bert Rhine Good luck. (*Mellaire exits again.*)

Murphy Does he stand any chance?

Davis Hardly. At best. Mellaire and Pike will settle their issue alone by themselves, and then we'll have to manage the rest.

Murphy You mean, if they both get lost?

Davis Exactly.

Bert Rhine We'll see. Is there still any rum?

Davis Not much for a booze.

Bert Rhine Some sip has to be the last one anyway. Let it pass around.

(They pass a bottle of rum around with only a small remnant left in the bottom.)

Scene 2. The cabin.

Pathurst What the hell did I have to do on this vessel?

Margaret There is only one thing for us to do, and that is to make the best of it.

Pathurst Can anything get better than the worst in this situation?

Pike One thing troubles me.

Pathurst Well?

Pike How the hell do the elves do it when they reproduce?

Pathurst The elves?

Margaret We are at sea now, mate Pike.

Pike I am well aware of that, but I wondered about that all my life. How do they do it? They are not like us humans, and it is difficult let alone impossible to imagine intercourse between the elves. It just can't be done that way. In that case anyway they cannot be elves.

Margaret Is that your greatest concern?

Pike Yes, it is actually. Everything else becomes unimportant compared to that mystery.

Margaret Can you help him, John?

Pathurst How do the mermaids do it? Do they also have such problems?

Pike There must be some explanation.

Margaret So you take for granted that there are elves and mermaids?

Pike Well, you just have to, don't you? Or else we wouldn't know of their existence.

Margaret Can you refute that logic, John?

Pathurst I have a suggestion. Suppose they are not earthal beings but simply ethereal spirits of the air. Seamen have through all ages had the idea that dolphins and albatrosses are the spirits of dead seamen. Suppose that also the mermaids and elves are spirits of former human beings. Could that ease the problem?

Pike You mean, that lost people and seamen after death simply would be assumed in heaven or the sea as elves or mermaids?

Pathurst Something like that.

Pike That would actually be the only reasonable explanation. I can't figure any other.

Margaret Does it satisfy you, Mr Pike?

Pike I think so, at least for the moment.

Pathurst I am afraid the storm is increasing again.

Pike Let it come. We have solved the problem. We become elves after death.

Pathurst Except Margaret, who becomes a mermaid. And I might be a manatee.

Pike Don't joke about it, Pathurst. It's serious.

Pathurst Yes, it's dead serious.

Mellaire (outside) Pike!

Margaret Here he is again!

Pike (calling) What is it? Do you have more brazen suggestions?

Mellaire We only have one choice, Pike. I refuse to give in, and you refuse to compromise. Meanwhile the ship is heading for perdition in our personal deadlock, in which a crew and some more will perish for nothing and unfairly. They have no part in our quarrel. Come out, and let's fight it out man to man.

Pike You mean a fight to the death?

Mellaire We should give the innocents that chance. If one of us goes down the deadlock can be resolved.

Pike I am almost starting to respect you, Waltham.

Mellaire I am a sailor like you, and you never had any reason to question my seamanship.

Pike I am on. (*rising*) His deal is fair. Let the captain remain at rest. I'll be back. (*goes out into the storm. Margaret and Pathurst look at each other.*)

Margaret What do you think?

Pathurst They will beat each other to death. Both are at the end of their journey. In this storm they will hardly even be able to hold on to the deck. I don't know if the tackling still can be used. Most of it is blown to shreds since it was left unreefed. We are back in the vicinity of the Horn and could without qualified sailing easily be smashed to pieces again the first rocky coast.

Margaret We are still alive, though.

Pathurst Yes, we are, but I don't think neither Mellaire nor Pike will ever come down under deck. Mellaire knew what he was offering, and it was noble of him to sacrifice himself. He offered Pike to sacrifice himself in the same way, and Pike fell for the chance of an honourable end. He is finished anyway. He is soft in the brain and only thinks of maintaining a dead captain and of elves and mermaids. Mellaire knew how distracted he was. Or else he would have waited him out and taken over when Pike was gone.

Margaret How they must enjoy hacking each other to death up there.

Pathurst Pike hasn't done anything else during the entire journey. Now he can concentrate on one single person, but Mellaire knows how to defend himself.

Margaret Who is stronger?

Pathurst Pike has stronger knuckles and is steadier, but Mellaire is faster and still has his brains.

Margaret What results could that give?

Pathurst No one can surrender. So they beat each other to death. Either they are both swept over board when their forces are spent and they can't stand upright any longer.

Margaret A Cape Horn combat in full storm to death.

Pathurst No one even wants to be a spectator in this storm. What about some entertainment music in the meantime? The piano is almost the only thing of value we still have left of the entire journey.

Margaret It has managed better than anyone of us. Perhaps it could help us get on.

Pathurst Let it sing prayers of appeal to the powers of the weather.

Margaret Yes, I will let it sing until we die.

Pathurst Let's first wait for the death of the others.

Margaret I will play for father. He is still the only captain of the proudest sailing ship of Cape Horn.

Pathurst Do so. Let him lead us to security in safe custody to the other side.

Margaret Have you really given up?

Pathurst All except the music.

Margaret You are right. Music is the only thing that never can give up.

Pathurst Play Chopin and Schumann, so that the universe will hear that we are alive.

Margaret We are sailing to hell, but what does it matter, as long as we do it with music?

Pathurst Exactly!

(Pathurst makes himself comfortable in the armchair closest to the captain's, while Margaret goes to the lounge to play. Soon the loveliest Chopin nocturnes are heard from the lounge, while the storm continues to rage...)

Göteborg 21.5.2010,
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