

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

This Play examines the moral hazards of
command and the peril of souls

By

E. Thomalen

7600 Osler Drive, Suite 201

Towson, Maryland 21204

Fax 410-321-6340

Phone 443-768-7001

E mail: ETHomalen@gmail.com

Web: www.ethomalen.com

Synopsis: *The Night Watchman*

This is a play in five acts, which is structured around the inquiry into the sinking of Captain Pollard's second ship the *Two Brothers* that occurred in the Pacific. This allows for the development of the facts relating to the sinking of his *first* ship, the *Essex* to emerge, as well as the events leading up to it. Pollard is at the time a man young in years but old in tragedy, a hero in somewhat the same way as Oedipus of Thebes. Jonathan Shay in his book *Odysseus in America* captures the meaning of "hero" in an ancient Greek sense: "Ancient Greek heroes were men of pain who were both needed by their people and *dangerous* to them." The staging of the play should be toward a minimalist set, allowing the audience's imagination freest reign. The cast, although large, could be reduced by using one actor to play several parts.

The Night Watchman

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For permissions contact:

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Towson, Maryland 21204

443.768.7001

www.ethomalen.com

READERS COMMENTS

“This is a fascinating work, managing to take hold of one’s curiosity from the onset. A pair of women speculating on Captain Pollard’s “scarred soul” suggest darker forces and heady portent, balanced by the children’s cruel jokes which follow Pollard at the end. After that the facts surrounding the case flow effortlessly...The theatrical medium is capably exploited, enabling the action to criss-cross the seas and spans of time through a Shakespearean trust in imagination rather than scenic verisimilitude. While many of the questions raised early on are satisfied by the end, we still look...to Pollard’s larger spiritual struggle.”

Timothy Mooney *The Script Review* 1991

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“Nineteenth century seafaring tale, based on fact, of Captain Pollard who loses *two* ill-fated whaling ships. A surprisingly gripping, poetic, well-structured ... plot with appropriate period language and polished dialogue. The author skillfully moves back and forth in time with no confusion. Knowledgeable use of dramatic techniques...An empathetic yet creative director is critical here.”

Baltimore Playwrights Festival 1991

Reader

* * * * *

“This is a re-enactment of an inquiry into the sinking of 2 whaling ships commandeered by George Pollard from Nantucket, Massachusetts in the years 1819-1823. As Pollard explains the events that occurred ...the story is played out. The play is written in a historical epic style and it conveys the morals, goals, fears and courage of the people in early American 19th century.

The play sustained my interest in it tension and mystery. I have no interest or background in this period but I got caught up in what I suppose is a historical perspective. While these people are vastly different from what goes on today I could sense how their behavior has shaped who we are today...I think the play basically is very workable and it is nice to see writing that uses drama well as a means to illuminate history.”

American Theater Ventures

1991

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“Your dialogue is sharp and interesting. Pithy. You seem to have a good feel for the period. Nice distinction between hunger and starvation.

The weaving between past and present time scenes, and the occasional simultaneity of times was interesting. While another writer might have turned all the flashback material into endless monologues—you made the active choice to present them as action.”

Dwight Okita

Chicago Dramatists Workshop Network 1994

“It is with the deepest regret that I’m (finally) returning your script *The Night Watchman* to you. Your story was a particular favorite of mine and I very much wanted the Triangle Radio Theatre to produce it as our first two or three part serial production. It’s a grand story, combining elements of Moby Dick, The Caine Mutiny, and perhaps of Edgar Alan Poe all into one dark tale that I feel could have been done fine justice as a radio drama.

However, The Triangle Radio Theatre has ceased operations (due to) unfortunate event(s).”

Jay L. Shapiro

Secretary, **Triangle Theatre**, 1998

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“The ‘Night Watchman’ is the story of George Pollard Jr., Captain of the *Essex* and the *Two Brothers*, ships which both were wrecked and for which he must provide explanation. The story is compelling, and you add depth in both the characters provided and the eventual description of the horror these men went through. The dialogue is also swift and vivid...There are many strong choices throughout the crafting of this play. The first is obviously the selection of Pollard himself...a worthwhile person in his own right...The character spread also works nicely, with the presence of Pollard’s cousin ...laced into the narrative to give two levels of personal conflict on top of the professional work that he must perform as captain. The text also makes strong use of the stage, a good knowledge of the malleability of theatre – scenes eventually jumping back and forth in narrative in a way that suits performed and multi-role pieces...The language throughout is also effective, especially descriptions of the nature of hunger and starvation – and the increasingly dire situation as the men turn to allotted sacrifice and cannibalism...Overall, though, ‘The Night Watchman’ takes a compelling event and explores it in a measured but engaging manner, turning a historical catastrophe into a personal tragedy.”

WILDsound Writing Festival 2012

WILDsound Festival 2013 podcast with author:

http://www.wildsoundfestival.com/e_thomalen_interview.html

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AWARDS

Hawai'i Prize Award given by Kumu Kahua/Univeristy of Hawai'i at Manoa 2013

WILDSound Festival Spring Full Play Contest winner 2013

New Century Writers Awards Winner 1998

Finalist Shiras Institute/Panowski Playwriting Award Competition 1993

Semifinalist Eugene O'Neill Theater Center 1987

The Dream of Gerontius

By
Cardinal John Henry Newman

Soul

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone ***night-watches*** keep,
Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn –
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
Which ne'er can cease
To throb and pine, and languish, till possest
Of its Sole Peace.

Bona Fides

"I saw Captain Pollard" (1847)

Journal of Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant, and broken the monotony of a decorous age."

Heroism by Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Since writing the foregoing I--sometime about 1850-3--saw Capt. Pollard on the island of Nantucket, and exchanged some words with him. To the islanders he was a nobody--to me, the most impressive man, tho' wholly unassuming even humble--that I ever encountered."

Longhand notes by Herman Melville in his copy of Owen Chases'

Narrative used while writing *Moby Dick*

Moby Dick--References to the sinking of the *Essex* in the "Extracts" and "Chapter 45 The Affidavit"

"At this day Captain Pollard is a resident of Nantucket. I have seen Owen Chase, who was chief mate of the *Essex* at the time of the tragedy; I have read his plain and faithful narrative; I have conversed with his son; and all this within a few miles of the scene of the catastrophe."

Moby Dick Chapter 45 "The Affidavit"

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

ACT I: THE INQUIRY

ACT II: THE PREPARATIONS

ACT III: THE DIFFICULTIES

ACT IV: THE DISASTER

ACT V: THE RETURN

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

ACT I: THE INQUIRY

- Scene I: Two Old Women
- ii: The Inquiry
- iii: The whale ship Two Brothers
- iv: The Inquiry

ACT II: THE PREPARATIONS

- Scene I: Owner's office
- ii: Riddell's living room
- iii: Nantucket wharves
- iv: A Conspiracy
- v: Congregational church

ACT III: THE DIFFICULTIES

- Scene I: The whale ship Essex August 12, 1819
- ii: The Inquiry
- iii: To turn back?
- iv: The Archimedes
- v: The Pollard's living room
- vi: The Inquiry
- vii: The Essex November 16, 1820
- iii: The Essex November 17, 1820
- ix: The Essex November 18, 1820

ACT IV; THE DISASTER

- Scene I: The Essex November 19 and after
- ii: Ducie's Island
- iii: The Inquiry
- iv: The Burial at sea
- v: The Inquiry
- vi: The Third Boat
- vii: The Captain's Boat
- viii: The Inquiry
- ix: The Dream
- x: The Captain's Boat
- xi: The Inquiry
- xii: The Captain's Boat
- xiii: The Inquiry
- xiv: The Hospital

ACT V: THE RETURN

- Scene: i: The Inquiry
- ii: The Two Brothers under Captain Worth
- iii: The Inquiry
- iv: The Two Brothers under Captain Pollard

v:	The Inquiry
vi:	The Pollard's living room
vii:	The Widows Walk

Most of the action occurs in the ship-owners offices where the Inquiry is being conducted. The story that is being related, and that occurs outside of those offices, should be suggested by changes in the lighting and appropriate sound effects and by having the actors occupy a part of that office behind Pollard where he can turn and join them. Essentially, Pollard, Ransom and Worth are seated at a table which is stage right, far enough over to allow adequate space for the rest of the scenes to take place.

CHARACTERS

(in order of appearance)

First Old Woman..... Cleaning Woman
Second Old Woman..... Cleaning Woman
Jerrard Ransom..... Insurance Adjustor
George Pollard..... Captain: Essex, Two Bros.
George Worth..... Capt. Two Bros. & Co-owner
Eben Gardner..... First Mate: Two Bros.
Gideon Folger..... Essex: Owner
Mary Riddell Pollard..... Wife: Capt. Pollard
Owen Coffin..... 17 year old nephew of Capt. Pollard, son: Nancy C.
Mrs.. Nancy Coffin Aunt of Capt. Pollard
Pastor..... Congregational Church
Owen Chase..... First Mate - Essex
Matthew Joy..... 2nd Mate - Essex
Thomas Chapple..... Crew - Essex
Joseph West..... Crew - Essex
Lawson Thomas..... Crew - Essex (Black)
Charles Shorter..... Crew - Essex (Black)
Isaiah Shepherd..... Crew - Essex (Black)
William Bond..... Crew - Essex (Black)
Benjamin Lawrence..... Crew - Essex
Thomas Nicholson..... Crew - Essex
Isaac Cole..... Crew - Essex
Richard Peterson..... Crew - Essex (Black)
William Wright..... Crew - Essex
Obed Hendricks..... Crew - Essex
Brazilia Ray..... Crew - Essex
Charles Ramsdale..... Crew - Essex
Samuel Reed..... Crew - Essex (Black)
Seth Weeks..... Crew - Essex
George Coffin..... Capt. Archimedes
Woman..... In Dream
Bow Watch..... Two Brothers
Mother..... On the Wharf
Younger Son..... About 4 or 5 years old.
Older Son..... About 11 or 12 years old
Woman..... Age indeterminate
Though the cast is large, it is possible to have an actor/actress play more than one role.

THE NIGHT WATCHMAN

ACT I Scene i

Two old women are standing at the window of the offices of a ship-owning company near the wharves in Nantucket town, one is leaning on the handle of a broom, the other on the handle of a mop. It is early evening in May of the year 1845.

FIRST WOMAN

There he goes.

SECOND WOMAN

A strange man.

FIRST WOMAN

A peculiar man.

SECOND WOMAN

A man with a scar on his soul as another might have on his hand or his face.

FIRST WOMAN

He doesn't talk of it much.

SECOND WOMAN

He is cut off from his soul by the scar.

FIRST WOMAN

He never speaks of it.

SECOND WOMAN

Everybody knows!

FIRST WOMAN

Still *he* never speaks of it.

SECOND WOMAN

No one asks!

FIRST WOMAN

No one wants to hear it.

SECOND WOMAN

But to *never* speak of it.

FIRST WOMAN

He spoke during the first Inquiry and was given another ship.

SECOND WOMAN

He is an unlucky man.

FIRST WOMAN

To be still about such a thing.

SECOND WOMAN

Perhaps he speaks about it to his wife.

FIRST WOMAN

Perhaps. . . Yet I think not.

SECOND WOMAN

He could not speak about it to his family.

FIRST WOMAN

His Mother. . .

SECOND WOMAN

May she rest in peace.

FIRST WOMAN

His Mother found it too *terrible*, too disturbing.

SECOND WOMAN

It was her sister's child.

FIRST WOMAN

Of course!

SECOND WOMAN

Now he says *nothing* about it.

FIRST WOMAN

Maybe he hopes people will forget and let him rest.

SECOND WOMAN

But *he* cannot forget and rest.

FIRST WOMAN

He seems to like the hours by himself.

SECOND WOMAN

He inspects the wharves, then stands at the end
gazing out to sea.

FIRST WOMAN

Who knows what he is thinking.

SECOND WOMAN

He is not *exactly* mad . . .

FIRST WOMAN

No.

SECOND WOMAN

He likes it best in the dark - to be alone in the
dark. Nobody can see him brooding.

FIRST WOMAN

He is faithful to the Darkness as to any wife.

SECOND WOMAN

They have an understanding.

FIRST WOMAN

He knows Her power and She has tested him.

SECOND WOMAN

They are comfortable in each other's bed.

FIRST WOMAN

It is an *Unholy* thing.

SECOND WOMAN

God has made the Darkness as well as the Light.

FIRST WOMAN

Aye, that He did, but He made the Darkness for man to sleep through.

SECOND WOMAN

Yet some men He made to look upon the Night side of Creation. Once having flown open, their eyes can never again wholly accommodate the Day!

FIRST WOMAN

A monstrous thing.

SECOND WOMAN

To be told by the Mute to the Deaf.

FIRST WOMAN

Yet, from this strange man's story

Let each man draw succor,

Against the time

When he might be

Night's solitary company.

ACT I Scene ii

Captain George Pollard, Captain George Worth, Insurance Agent Mr. Jerrard Ransom in the same office of the Ship-owning company September 1823.

MR. RANSOM

Name?

GEORGE POLLARD

George Pollard.

MR. RANSOM

Occupation?

GEORGE POLLARD

Night Watchman.

MR. RANSOM

What?

GEORGE WORTH

No. It's *Captain* George Pollard, whale-ship master member of the Pacific Club, driver of the Nantucket sleigh, fueler for the lamps of the world.

MR. RANSOM

Then it's *Captain Pollard*.

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes.

MR. RANSOM

You are *too* modest Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

I did not mean to be modest.

MR. RANSOM

Your present employment is temporary, surely.

GEORGE POLLARD

I think not.

GEORGE WORTH

You should not prejudge this hearing Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

I am not prejudging it.

MR. RANSOM

It will not garner any sympathy for you, the case must be decided on the facts.

GEORGE POLLARD

What do the facts tell of it?

MR. RANSOM

We must have the facts to make our decision.

GEORGE POLLARD

Which facts do you want?

MR. RANSOM

You have been through this before Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

With the *Essex*?

MR. RANSOM

Indeed Sir. *And* you were given another ship.

GEORGE POLLARD

The *Two Brothers*.

MR. RANSOM

Yes, it is the destruction of that ship that we are inquiring about.

GEORGE POLLARD

Do you not think they are related?

MR. RANSOM

How can they be related, they were two different ships, two different owners, different crews . . .

GEORGE POLLARD

They are related by...I believe they are related.

MR. RANSOM

Sir, it is only the *Two Brothers* that we are concerned about.

GEORGE WORTH

Let him tell his story as he wishes. If you do not care to take it all down, Mr. Ransom, then just take down that which concerns the *Two Brothers*.

MR. RANSOM

Very well.

GEORGE POLLARD

Thank you Captain Worth.

GEORGE WORTH

Proceed Captain Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Mr. Ransom, I will satisfy you first and tell you what happened to the *Two Brothers*. As you know we sailed on October 8, 1821 for the Azores and from there round the Horn to the Pacific. We were in the Pacific over a year. Having fished off the coast of South America and taken on a good store of whale oil, we were bound out for the hunting grounds off Japan. We even passed near to where the *Essex* was stricken and from where we...where *I* had pushed off two years before on a fateful voyage in a small boat. Sir, *might* I have some water, if it would not be too much trouble.

MR. RANSOM

Certainly Captain (he hands a glass of water to Pollard).

GEORGE POLLARD

Thank you. Have you ever been *thirsty* Mr. Ransom?

MR. RANSOM

Of course!

GEORGE POLLARD

No, Mr. Ransom, I mean *truly* athirst?

MR. RANSOM

I am not sure I know what you mean.

GEORGE POLLARD

I mean, Mr. Ransom, have you ever been so droughty that your skin was stitched to your bones, that your tear ducts could produce no tears, and your groans had to be lightened to pass over your lips.

MR. RANSOM

Captain, I do not *understand* you.

GEORGE POLLARD

No, I can *see* that you do not.

MR. RANSOM

What has this to do with the wreck of the *Two Brothers*?

GEORGE POLLARD

Everything, Mr. Ransom....and, then again, *nothing*.

MR. RANSOM

Please, Captain Pollard, get on with it. I do have other business.

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes, I am sure you do, I *would* I had had "other business." Excuse me, Mr. Ransom and Captain Worth for taking up your time. It has not been considerate of me, and Captain Worth, I owe you such a great deal.

GEORGE WORTH

It was nothing, Captain Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Nothing! Nothing you say! You were kind enough to give me another ship.

GEORGE WORTH

I could tell from speaking with you on the way home from Valparaiso that you *deserved* another ship. I was just an old sailor looking for a chance to retire, and I had an opportunity to become an owning partner, and see my ship in good hands.

GEORGE POLLARD

You gave me your *ship* Sir. And I have *lost* it.

GEORGE WORTH

That is Mr. Ransom's problem, not mine. You did the best you could. I'm sure of it.

GEORGE POLLARD

Did I?

MR. RANSOM

That is what we are here to find out Captain Pollard, Captain Worth is a bit too hasty.

GEORGE POLLARD

Quite right, Mr. Ransom, quite right! That is what must be determined, determined exactly, *precisely*, dispassionately. Truth served! There must be no withholding, no reservation of any kind, the accounts rendered to the souls last pennyworth. That is the way I would have it!

MR. RANSOM

I am glad that you agree Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

I do indeed!

MR. RANSOM

Please then, proceed.

GEORGE POLLARD

Where was I?

MR. RANSOM

You said you had left the South American hunting grounds and were sailing toward the Pacific grounds and had passed the place where the *Essex* was lost.

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes, indeed it was so. We were west of the Sandwich Islands when the winds began to rise.

ACT I Scene iii

First Mate Eben Gardner and Captain Pollard aboard the *Two Brothers*.

EBEN GARDNER

Captain! Captain!

GEORGE POLLARD

What is it Mr. Gardner?

EBEN GARDNER

She is blowing too hard for the sail we have out.

GEORGE POLLARD

Quite right!

EBEN GARDNER

Shall I take down the fore and mizzen top gallant yards Sir?

GEORGE POLLARD

Aye, Mr. Gardner. I do not like the looks of those angry black clouds coming at us.

EBEN GARDNER

No Sir, nor me Sir.

GEORGE POLLARD

The wind has changed directions on us and veered round to the West. I am going to change course to the North East to put the Archipelago we have been following between us and the storm. What do you say to that plan Mr. Gardner?

EBEN GARDNER

I like it as well as any other!

GEORGE POLLARD

What did you say Mr. Gardner?

EBEN GARDNER

I said, that I liked it as well as any Sir. I think it is a very prudent plan Sir. Do you feel alright Sir?

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes, thank you, Mr. Gardner. And Mr. Gardner see to it the boats are secured and if the wind keeps rising close reef the fore and main topsails and take in the mizzen topsails and fore sails.

EBEN GARDNER

Aye Aye Sir.

GEORGE POLLARD

The other side of these islands is a reefy place, so tell the bow watch to keep a sharp eye out.

EBEN GARDNER

Aye Sir. I shall take care of it right away Sir.

GEORGE POLLARD

(After Mr. Gardner leaves) Can I think he used those words *deliberately* to torment me, to set off a charge of powder in my brain? I must *not* allow myself to think that.

It is a common form of speech, appropriate to the circumstances, it meant nothing...Owen! Owen? No, No... I must forget about it, put it behind me, this ship will not suffer such a fate. There it is again. Owen what did you say? *Owen!* Your hair is on fire or is it merely the reflection of mine own head. We shall escape it this time Owen. You'll see. We *will*. Why do you nod your head and turn away Owen? Come back!

ACT I Scene iv

The office of the ship- owning company.

MR. RANSOM

Are you saying, Captain Pollard, that you were confused by what your first mate Eben Gardner said to you?

GEORGE POLLARD

It was his *words* that troubled me!

MR. RANSOM

He indicated he *agreed* with you.

GEORGE POLLARD

He said that he liked it "as well as any other", Sir.

MR. RANSOM

Yes, so you said.

GEORGE POLLARD

Don't you *see*?

MR. RANSOM

No, I don't follow you Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

Those were the words of Owen Coffin.

MR. RANSOM

I thought you said that they were the words of Mr. Gardner.

GEORGE POLLARD

Owen Coffin used them first.

MR. RANSOM

(looking at the log) I don't believe that there *was* an Owen Coffin on the *Two Brothers*, Captain.

GEORGE WORTH

He was a seaman aboard the *Essex*, Mr. Ransom.

MR. RANSOM

I do not understand why you would be troubled by similar words that two men might have spoken at different times on different vessels; to me it merely attests to the commendable familiarity of our seaman with common, courteous English usage.

GEORGE POLLARD

(to Captain Worth) You *see*, he cannot understand me.

GEORGE WORTH

He cannot understand it unless he knows the history of the *Essex*.

MR. RANSOM

I do not see why that is necessary... but if it will shed light upon what happened to the *Two Brothers*, then *please*, Captain, share it with us.

GEORGE POLLARD

It all began with so little notice of the *appalling* possibilities contained in that moment. Indeed they were not even considered. I had been first mate on the whale ship *Essex* that returned to port April 9, 1819, and in May the owner, Gideon Folger, asked to speak to me.

ACT II Scene I

Gideon Folger and George Pollard in the offices of a ship owning company.

GIDEON FOLGER

Well, Mr. Pollard, how did you like being first mate aboard her?

GEORGE POLLARD

She is a good ship, Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

I dare say.

GEORGE POLLARD

Indeed Sir, a good ship and a trusty one. I should be happy to pass all of my seagoing days as mate aboard her.

GIDEON FOLGER

Would you now?

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

Well, I have come to talk to you about that, Mr. Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Sir?

GIDEON FOLGER

Did Captain Russel speak to you about his plans?

GEORGE POLLARD

He did Sir, briefly.

GIDEON FOLGER

Did he tell you that he planned to retire after this last voyage?

GEORGE POLLARD

He did mention it Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

Did he say that he would *recommend* you to be her captain?

GEORGE POLLARD

He did say so, Mr. Folger... Sir. But of course there are a lot of first mates about, and even some Captains looking for another ship, so I did not pay it any mind, Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

Very good, Mr. Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Thank you, Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

You don't push yourself forward, incline to overreach yourself, Sir. I don't fancy those kinds of men, Mr. Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

No, Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

But I don't want to waste words, we have decided to offer you the position of Captain of the *Essex* if you are willing to take it. The terms are the usual.

GEORGE POLLARD

Do I understand that you are offering me the *mastery* of a whale ship, Sir?

GIDEON FOLGER

Indeed, Sir, will you take it? Do not tell us we must look for someone with no experience aboard her, Mr. Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Well then... I accept.

GIDEON FOLGER

Excellent, Very good! It is a tribute to our ship and our company that you wish to be her master and continue in our employ.

GEORGE POLLARD

I have no complaints about either!

GIDEON FOLGER

Well said Mr...*Captain* Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Thank you, Sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

How soon, Sir, can you outfit her to go out for a voyage of three years in the Pacific to hunt for the biggest whales that you can find and make us both rich, eh Captain?

GEORGE POLLARD

It will take me about three months, I would judge.

Gideon Folger
Expedient Sir, capital! Then we may expect you to be setting sail near the middle of August. Is that correct Sir?

GEORGE POLLARD

I believe that you can count on a departure date of around that time.

GIDEON FOLGER

Good. And... Captain Pollard, you should take a wife. I like a man with a family as master of my vessel, he has reason to fill her hold quickly with barrels of oil, whilst not unduly risking the safety of the vessel or the crew.

GEORGE POLLARD

Quite right, sir.

GIDEON FOLGER

Is there anyone, Captain?

GEORGE POLLARD

There is sir, and her Father is a retired whaling Captain. But I have put off a proposal of marriage until I felt that I might adequately support a wife, or until I had prospects of doing so.

GIDEON FOLGER

Good! Then put it off no longer. And Godspeed, Captain Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Thank you, Sir.

ACT II Scene ii

In the living room of the home of Mary Riddell.

MARY RIDDELL

The women say that you are a very eligible bachelor.

GEORGE POLLARD

I don't wish to be any longer.

MARY RIDDELL

What do you mean?

GEORGE POLLARD

I want someone to share my good fortune with. Mary I have prospects and I believe I can afford, now, to take a wife and I want to know if you will marry me?

MARY RIDDELL

But do you *love* me, George?

GEORGE POLLARD

Yes, I have always loved you.

MARY RIDDELL

Then I will marry you.

GEORGE POLLARD

In this year I consider myself to be a very lucky man. Two of my most cherished dreams have been realized.

MARY RIDDELL
When do you sail... *Captain* Pollard?
GEORGE POLLARD
In the middle of August.
MARY RIDDELL
You will be careful, George?
GEORGE POLLARD
I am a *careful* man, that is why he picked me.
MARY RIDDELL
We must set the wedding date soon.
GEORGE POLLARD
In June, Mary, so that we will have some time together before I leave!
MARY RIDDELL
I would like that too.

ACT II Scene iii

The sun is low but not yet set. Captain Pollard is leaving the wharves having spent the day supervising the provisioning of his ship. A young man approaches him.

OWEN COFFIN
Cousin...
GEORGE POLLARD
(Squinting into the sun and shielding his eyes.)
Who is it?
OWEN COFFIN
It's me.
GEORGE POLLARD
Owen Coffin?
OWEN COFFIN
Yes.
GEORGE POLLARD
What is it Owen?
OWEN COFFIN
Is the *Essex* about ready?
GEORGE POLLARD
Almost.
OWEN COFFIN
Have you filled all her births yet?
GEORGE POLLARD
I have filled most of them.
OWEN COFFIN
But not all?

GEORGE POLLARD
No, not yet.
OWEN COFFIN
Cousin,...
GEORGE POLLARD
What is it?
OWEN COFFIN
Have you taken my friend, Charles Ramsdale?
GEORGE POLLARD
Yes.
OWEN COFFIN
Would you also take *me*?
GEORGE POLLARD
Take *you*?
OWEN COFFIN
Yes, I am seventeen now.
GEORGE POLLARD
What does your Mother say?
OWEN COFFIN
My Father would approve.
GEORGE POLLARD
Yes, but . . .
OWEN COFFIN
I know, I am still wearing the black armband for him.
GEORGE POLLARD
Aye... and he was lost on a whaling cruise.
OWEN COFFIN
But... we talked about it, he hoped I would follow him.
GEORGE POLLARD
What does my Aunt say, Owen?
OWEN COFFIN
It will be all right with her - if I can go with you. I know it will be all right. You're *kin*, and you have to be good to be a ship's master at your age. Besides, she won't have to worry about feeding me for three years. You went to sea younger than I, and you've seen something of the world, made something of yourself, while I have rotted at home looking out for my Mother. But the bitter truth is that my Mother doesn't need *me* to look out for her. Please, cousin, take me with you, I want to make something of myself too, before it is too late. If you won't take me, I'll sign on with somebody else, but I am determined to go.
GEORGE POLLARD
Owen, if you get your Mother's permission, but *only* then.
OWEN COFFIN
Thank you, George.
GEORGE POLLARD
One thing, Owen...

OWEN COFFIN

What's that?

GEORGE COFFIN

Until we set foot back in Nantucket, there'll be no more "cousin" or "George", only "Captain" and whatever I say you are 'lookout', 'helmsman', 'oarsman', 'cutter'. Is that clear to you?

OWEN COFFIN

Yes, Captain, it is. And thank you.... *Captain* Pollard.

GEORGE POLLARD

Aboard ship your job is to do what I say.

OWEN COFFIN

I will learn what you want and do it before you can say it.

GEORGE POLLARD

Good, then you will do well.

OWEN COFFIN

Thank you, Captain.

GEORGE POLLARD

Goodnight, Owen. You are still my cousin until my Aunt says that you can sign the papers.

OWEN COFFIN

Goodnight, cousin.

ACT II Scene iv

The wharves, a short time later, Charles Ramsdale arrives.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

What did he say?

OWEN COFFIN

He said I can go!

CHARLES RAMSDALE

Did he? And you were worried...

OWEN COFFIN

He said I could go if my Mother will give permission.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

He wouldn't have required that of you if you weren't family.

OWEN COFFIN

I don't know if my Mother will give it.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

Come on, we have to talk to her, explain things to her.

OWEN COFFIN

You know her.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

Aye.

OWEN COFFIN

I don't think she will give it, she *won't* give it, I *know* it.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

Don't give up so easily, we can talk to her.

OWEN COFFIN

It won't do any good. I have talked to her before. And so have you.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

But you didn't have the actual possibility before. That's different!

OWEN COFFIN

It won't be to her.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

You could have your cousin talk to her.

OWEN COFFIN

He will defer to the wishes of his Aunt. He will not present a strong case for me if he senses she opposes it.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

I have another idea. The Pastor might talk to her. He always likes to see the islanders working hard, earning money and making contributions to his church.

OWEN COFFIN

Do you think he could convince her?

CHARLES RAMSDALE

The widows trust him.

OWEN COFFIN

If she thinks we have arranged it to convince her she will not agree.

CHARLES RAMSDALE

I will suggest it to her, but you must oppose the idea. You suggest that she talk to the Captain.

OWEN COFFIN

I will. Your idea is worth trying, nothing else has worked.

ACT II Scene v

In the Congregational Church in Nantucket, the Pollards are waiting for Mrs. Nancy Coffin, Owen, and the Pastor.

MARY POLLARD

Your cousin is very grateful that you are willing to take him with you.

GEORGE POLLARD

It is a hard business and dangerous, but I will keep him in the same boat with me. I am well enough familiar with the hazards of the trade.

MARY POLLARD

But what if something should happen? His father died fighting savages.

GEORGE POLLARD

Aye, he tried to protect a party he had lead ashore for water. But I am not so heedless, I only stop at known ports for supplies. And if it came to it, I would not do less than *his* father to protect my men.

MARY POLLARD

I do not question your courage, George. Your Aunt has arrived. (Mrs. Nancy Coffin and Owen arrive.)

NANCY COFFIN

Hello, George, Mary.

OWEN COFFIN

I am sorry George.

NANCY COFFIN

Owen is unhappy that I have insisted on getting the Pastor's spiritual guidance on this decision.

GEORGE POLLARD

You must do what you must do.

NANCY COFFIN

I was against his going you know, no offense to you, George, you seem well regarded in the trade.

GEORGE POLLARD

I would not take Owen *without* your permission.

NANCY COFFIN

If I let him go, take care of him for me, will you? Please!

GEORGE POLLARD

You don't even have to ask that. (Nancy Coffin cries)

OWEN COFFIN

Mother!

MARY POLLARD

I understand, Nancy.

NANCY COFFIN

(angry) Not yet you don't, not yet! Pray God you *never* do!

MARY POLLARD

I'm sorry.

GEORGE POLLARD

The pastor has arrived, hello, Reverend.

PASTOR

Hello Captain, Mrs. Pollard, Mrs. Coffin, Owen.

NANCY COFFIN

Thank you for meeting us.

PASTOR

I can't stay long. There are some wealthy members of the congregation I must call on. They wish to make a contribution to the building fund for the new church.

Captain, have I shown you the plans? It will be larger, a more fitting way to thank God for the success of the trade on this Island.

NANCY COFFIN

Reverend, please, I need your help.

PASTOR

What with?

NANCY COFFIN

Owen wants to sail with George on the Essex.

PASTOR

I see Mrs. Coffin, and you are worried about letting him go?

NANCY COFFIN

Reverend, I have only just lost my husband at sea.

PASTOR

My heart goes out to you in your grief. I have visited many widows on the island. You, having endured one painful loss, wish to prevent another by holding on to your son. You would turn to Owen to fill the emptiness. You are like one of Jesus' disciples by the edge of the Sea of Galilee, with only a single loaf of bread in your hand - your son. You would hide it away if you could, to feed yourself, for you are wanting and in need. You would ask the Lord to allow you to have your own loaf. But now you are being asked, by your son, really by that order that God has placed in the Universe, to let go of him so that he can become a man. You are being asked to literally: "Cast your bread upon the waters"; to let your son go to sea; and you fear losing him. You fear that he will be lost, that that small morsel by which you hoped to feed yourself, and quiet the raging hunger within, will be no more. You want to hold fast to him, to keep from letting him go, thinking only of yourself and your neediness.

But, *he* is ready to be *let go*, still you fear he will be gone forever. The followers of Jesus, too, feared that if they shared their loaves and fishes with the five thousand that they would go hungry, their stomachs would be empty. But that is what Jesus asked them to do. Now it is your turn to share your loaf, your *son*, and you hesitate, you wish to shrink back, you wish to save it, to keep him close. Certainly that is a natural feeling at this time. So were the feelings of the disciples, to hold on to what they *had*, lest they have nothing. But the World is beautiful, rational, orderly, intelligible. There was a reason why He performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes. He performed it for our edification, so that the Ages of men and women that followed would be capable of taking the difficult step of letting something *precious* go which they were not sure they would not lose!

It is exactly in these circumstances that you must have *faith*, Mrs. Coffin. And as our Lord taught us, is it not possible that by going to sea with Captain Pollard, Owen, here, may become a *man*? May he not become a man and prosper, perhaps become a Captain himself, an *owner* even, and may he not, as a result of his good fortune, marry and have children and provide you with the happiness of grandchildren, and be an upright and contributing member of the church. So that by giving up your loaf, may it not *increase* and come back to you many fold which, had you not had the courage to do that, you might have quickly used it up in your grief and despair. and in his hopelessness and disappointment.

There is no room for doubt or superstition; for ignorance or fear. Let your mind grasp hold of this lesson, Mrs. Coffin, and when it has, I am sure that you will make the *right* decision about your son.

NANCY COFFIN

Thank you, Reverend!

OWEN COFFIN

I am no loaf of bread!

PASTOR

(laughs) No, Owen, certainly not! Captain, let me show you those plans that I spoke of. You may be interested in helping us when you come back.