

HARPOON

Pilot

"The Mariner Hath His Will"

Written by

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TEASER

OPENING SERIES OF SHOTS -- NEW BEDFORD, MA -- 1857:

A) A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN puts on a corset made of baleen (from a whale's mouth), sprays herself with ambergris-based perfume.

B) An OLDER MAN, exquisite suit & whalebone cane, dabs a vial of 'Sperm Whale Erotic Extract' on his tongue before he greets the Beautiful Woman.

C) On their "date," the two stroll by a factory. Inside, MEN lubricate heavy machinery with gallons of whale case-oil.

D) Outside the factory, by the docks, a LEGLESS MAN carves an image of a harpoon into a small shard of scrimshaw.

CLOSE IN on the harpoon etching as we--

DISSOLVE TO:

1 EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A real harpoon, as a hand quickly seizes it. The man who grips it is EZRA STOWE (30s), half white - half Wampanoag Indian, densely muscled & profoundly focused.

Chaos is underway as CREWMEN aboard several whaleboats (30ft. long, shallow hulls) row fiercely towards an immense shadow gliding beneath the waves.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1857, THE NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN

Ezra stands at the bow, his boat ahead of the rest. They're losing the creature and he knows it.

A greenhand, JACOBI (20s, white), rowing behind Ezra, realizes it too, relaxes his efforts.

EZRA

Jacobi, open the sail now!

Jacobi leaves his seat to hoist sail. Ezra takes Jacobi's spot, rows with a fury.

With a new gust into the sail and Ezra's added strength, they gain on it. The whale breaches - 20ft. in the air, casting its colossal shadow over the men.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Ezra, give him the iron!

Ezra's ahead of the order. He leaps & hurls a harpoon directly into the whale's underbelly.

It hits with solid wet thud, a thick rope trailing behind it, pegged to the boat.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Stern all! Stern for your lives!

The whale lands, thrashing. The men paddle backwards, terrified. It dives, pulling the rope with incredible speed.

A coil of that rope is wrapped around Jacobi's ankle - it yanks him foot first into the air. Ezra grabs him and holds on with extraordinary strength till the CREW knock the rope off him.

Ezra commences a dangerous dance, switching places with the boatheader (who had shouted the orders) at the back.

That man is CAPTAIN AMBROSE SIBLEY (50s-60s), wild beard covering a cunning face. Sibley smirks at Ezra as they tip toe past one another - thrilled by the hunt.

Sibley carries a long lance. Ezra takes over steering.

A CREWMAN pours water on the whirring rope as it smokes with friction.

The whale surfaces, bleeding. It drags the boat, forcing mist on the men's faces until it finally stops, tired.

Ezra steers them in, careful of its thrashing. Finally, the whale stops fighting. Ezra brings them beside its neck area.

Like a matador, Sibley raises the lance up and plunges it deep into its shoulder - through to the lungs. Alone at the back, Ezra's next to the whale's eye.

He stares into it: frenetic and sad. It hurts him, but he holds its gaze.

The death throes commence - blood fountains out of the blow hole, rains down on the men. The Captain grins while others cheer. Ezra stays silent, stone-like.

TITLE CARD: **HARPOON**

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

2 EXT. DECK OF THE ISABELL - SUNSET - HOURS LATER

THE ISABELL is a grand three-mast, forty-man ship with a golden figurehead at the front. The *try works*, a huge brick furnace built on deck, is fully lit.

The whale carcass has been chained to the ship's side, a "cutting stage" erected around it. CREWMEN strip it apart & haul it on board. Ezra oversees everything.

EZRA

Switch out!

A group swaps places with those by the whale. Jacobi comes aboard, limping from the rope incident.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Jacobi.

Jacobi walks over. Captain Sibley comes on deck then, with his son ARTHUR (10) & wife ISABELL GRACE SIBLEY (late 30s), regal regardless of the setting. Sibley still has blood all over him.

JACOBI

(to Ezra)

What do you want then?

Like a spring-trap, Ezra backhands Jacobi, who falls to the deck.

EZRA

That was for ceasing to row before the rowing was done.

JACOBI

Not like me paddling harder would have got us there!

EZRA

Following orders is what got us there. It's why I'm standing up here, and you find yourself splayed about the deck.

Jacobi lifts himself up, furious. His temper dissipates when Sibley steps in.

SIBLEY
Refer to him as *sir*, lad. Or
first-mate if you're not in a rush.

JACOBI
Yes, Captain Sibley sir.

SIBLEY
It mightn't hurt to remember that
First-Mate Stowe saved you from
playing remora to a Baleen whale.

Jacobi nods, says nothing.

EZRA
(stern)
You are on try works now.

Jacobi limps to the furnace, hauls the cuts into a pot where
it melts to oil. Sibley walks Arthur to the cutting stage.

SIBLEY
The smaller chunks we call horse
pieces; wide slices are Bible
leaves.

ARTHUR
Does it always smell so rank?

SIBLEY
Oh it's not rank. Arthur, it's
success! This blubber will light
the lamps of the world.
(nods to the blood on him)
The mark of victory. Like war
paint, eh Ezra?

Ezra nods respectfully.

ISABELL
It *is* rank, dear. The ship was
malodorous enough before, but--

SIBLEY
--fear no longer, Mrs. Sibley. For
this is a fine haul! Our ninth
since we set sail. Arthur, how big
is that whale?

ARTHUR
It's quite big, father.

SIBLEY
No. What is bigger than quite big?

ARTHUR
Titanic?

Sibley laughs, motions to Ezra.

EZRA
Avast, men!

Everyone stops what they're doing, looks to the captain.

SIBLEY
Men, what we have here is a
titanic haul. By my reckoning,
this'll top us off at seventy-two
hundred gallons of oil.

The men cheer. Sibley soaks it in.

Ezra knows where this is going and looks around for someone,
doesn't find them.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)
Stack that atop thirty thousand
pounds of whalebone and... Well,
any among us that wields
arithmetic?

A white man, JOE MOTT (30s-40s), built like a longshoreman,
shouts from the cutting stage.

JOE
If I could I sure as shit wouldn't
be no whaler, captain!

The men guffaw. Isabell bristles at the language.

SIBLEY
What that tallies to, men, is a
voyage home!

The men wail with happiness. Isabell & Arthur smile,
relieved. Ezra's about to head off deck when Sibley stops
him.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)
Ezra, make sure they cut in quick.
Sooner they're done, sooner I get
my family back to New Bedford.

EZRA

Yessir.

Beat. Sibley looks Ezra over with paternal admiration.

SIBLEY

The whole chase over, gusts had been coming the other way. How'd you know the winds would change when you released the cloth?

EZRA

Sometimes during the hunt... the sea will speak and tell you just what it plans to do.

SIBLEY

No man can say that and mean it except you, Ezra. It's that red half - the savage inside you. Don't ever forget him.

Sibley pats him on the back. Ezra nods, releases a flicker of anger once Sibley's gone.

3

INT. CARPENTRY CHAMBER - EVENING - HOURS LATER

A confined attic-like space beneath deck, sawdust everywhere. PLEASANT WILKES (50s), African-American, a work-worn body with scars going from his neck down, saws at a partially rotten board. Ezra enters. Pleasant does not cease his work.

PLEASANT

Judging from the lumbering and jumping up on the roof, I'd say we're going back. That right?

EZRA

Back to Bedford. Quick restock in the Azores first. Will you join me this time?

PLEASANT

I never pass on a rare view of the blooming island beauty. Or, beauties.

Ezra smiles for the first time. He doesn't carry himself as an authority with Pleasant.

EZRA

I meant at home.

Pleasant saws off the rotten half of the board.

PLEASANT

Home? Don't you recognize you're standing in my private parlor right this moment?

EZRA

Pleasant--

PLEASANT

I sold it. Ceased to be a necessity. Home is where the work is. Home is here now.

EZRA

I don't fancy the change either but we must try to keep a home on land. You could stay with Wamsutta and I. It'd be safe with us, I assure you. Till we can dash back to the sail.

Pleasant carries the healthy & rotten halves of the board over to Ezra. Whale blood oozes down through the ceiling.

PLEASANT

Two sides to our life, Stowe. Sea and land. I prefer to conserve what fight's left in me for the waves, and reserve my skills for the rot can actually be remedied.

EZRA

There's fight enough for both fronts.

Ezra rubs the blood off his hands into the sawdust.

PLEASANT

I told you don't do that!

Pleasant's anger resides as Ezra reflexively assumes a hardened enforcer-face.

PLEASANT (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. Just... there's enough blood covering the rest of it already. It's enough.

Beat. Blood continues to drip down the beams.

PLEASANT

'Sides, your mother would be none too pleased with a negro on her settee.

EZRA

She'd trust you more than any ghost.

PLEASANT

Ghost?

EZRA

You remember about my father.

PLEASANT

Dogged out west, yeah?

EZRA

When I was eight. So, she named him a ghost...

PLEASANT

And since then every white man's become a ghost too?

They both smile, but can't quite laugh.

EZRA

You understand my mother's mind far better than I, Mr. Wilkes.

PLEASANT

What the eyes see again and again, eventually whittles the mind to form. And your mother and I have seen much of the same, of ghosts, I'd suppose.

Beat. Pleasant sets the wood pieces down.

PLEASANT (CONT'D)

By the almighty, is it doling time yet?

Ezra's nods, unhappy at the thought of "doling time."

4 INT. THE FORECASTLE - CONTINUOUS

A narrow triangular-shaped room beneath deck. Bunk beds line the walls. Joe, Jacobi and other WHITE CREWMEN sit atop their storage chests playing knuckle-bones (a form of Jacks).

JACOBI

Ain't got more specie to lose here.

JOE

Wager ought else then.

JACOBI

There's nothing can beat scratch,
Joe. What'd you think I'm on a
heathen-filled dingy set to
butchering sea cows for?

A burly bellowing man, HARLAND, throws the dice.

HARLAND

Jacobi, you are greenhand indeed.
Snatch is a sight better than
scratch. Why'd you think men trade
the latter for the former?

The men share a laugh, none more than Harland.

JACOBI

Point taken. I look forward--

The white men bristle as two PACIFIC ISLANDER CREWMEN enter. All's quiet as the Islanders walk through the game to settle with more of their own group in the corner - who are polishing whale teeth with great care.

JOE

Won't be in Bedford soon enough,
could play a game fucking
uninterrupted... So, what's your
wager?

JACOBI

My ration of salt horse tonight?

JOE

A wager usually refers to something
which one would desire to retain.

HARLAND

Not the jerked pork-beef
abomination that is *salt horse*!

JOE

Your brain's been dulled by the
thud of a savage hand, Jacobi.

HARLAND

If ever there was much vulnerable
matter to dull, at the pre-set.

Jacobi stands up, embarrassed and angry.

JACOBI

I'll have no shaming from you
dolts!

JOE

In jest, my son, in jest.

HARLAND

Stop squawking. Only woman-screech
allowed on this vessel is from Mrs.
Isabell Grace Sibley. I could tell
you which kind of screech, too!

JOE

Calm yourself, Harland.

Jacobi remains standing, trying to make a point.

JOE

Fuck, Jacobi. You boarded the wrong
ship. None more qualified than me
to say it. Never thought I'd stop
my advancements halfway up the
ladder on a ship with a
miscegenated bastard in second
command.

JACOBI

Board another vessel on return
then.

JOE

And slide to the bottom of the
ladder again? I've been sweating
like a galley slave for Sibley ten
years now. Three of 'em under the
whip of that red beast. The low of
it all? Stowe's been here same
stretch as me! The depravity of
that... A savage above us.

Joe's umbrage has silenced everyone; he doesn't seem to
mind. Joe sits Jacobi down, a shark's glint in his eyes.

JOE (CONT'D)

Well well, boy, I've got a fucking
wager for you.

Harland laughs as Jacobi grows worried.

5 INT. STATE ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The captain's quarters, largest room on the ship. Sofas,
dining table, Persian carpet, etc. Sibley's at his desk with
Arthur on his lap, looking at sketches of the ship.
Isabell's on a sofa, tuning her violin.

SIBLEY

And what's that, from stem to
stern?

ARTHUR

The keel.

SIBLEY

Thank Christ, you've inherited your
mother's mind.

ISABELL

Ambrose!

Ezra enters. Sibley sits Arthur on the table & stands up. We
see now he's quite drunk.

SIBLEY

Well met, Stowe!

EZRA

Captain. Mrs. Sibley. Young Sir.

Isabell's cold towards him. Arthur stares with a usual
fascination at Ezra.

SIBLEY

Arty, as a culmination to your
studies - I assign you a quest!

ARTHUR

Yes!

SIBLEY

Yes, yes. Using that compendium in
your skull, seek out and identify
the mizzenmast. Concealed at its
base, you may find treasure...

Isabell stands, about to speak against it, but Arthur rushes out in excitement.

ISABELL

I told you--

SIBLEY

Quiet. Till business is finished.
Ezra, will you have a drink?

That disgusts Isabell even more. She exits, being careful not to brush Ezra as she walks by.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)

I aim for my son to be captain one day and she won't have him about the ship alone. Now, drink with me.

EZRA

Sorry to say the men are impatient, captain sir.

Sibley pours two glasses of whiskey, then brings up two new bottles from his cupboard.

SIBLEY

If you were a slave on this ship, you'd have to take the drink. Ever think of that? Might've made for a simpler life.

A pregnant beat.

EZRA

Doling time peaks the men's spirits, for better or worse sir. Must retain my capacities in case things turn stormy.

Sibley laughs, downs a glass.

SIBLEY

A wonder of nature you are, Ezra. Just like your father, 'cept without the drink clearly.

Ezra's thrown by the comment, takes the bottles.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)

If you were a slave, I reckon you'd have earned your freedom by now.

Sibley downs the other glass. Ezra salutes, exits.

6

EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

Ezra walks onto deck. The crew have lined up, INTERNATIONAL SAILORS from all over: Europeans, North African, etc. They clap as he arrives. Pleasant joins the line. Then the WHITE CREW, led by Joe, strides out like a pride of lions and cuts in front of the rest.

EZRA

You know how it goes. Mugs out.

They all extend their cups. Ezra pours into the white men's mugs first and is about to go past when Jacobi downs his shot and steps out of line.

JACOBI

We ain't done yet.

Ezra stops, his expression stays cold. Jacobi looks to Joe for confirmation... Joe nods his head.

JACOBI (CONT'D)

(nervous)

Our glasses are not halfway full
and you've still an unopened
bottle.

EZRA

Equal portions, boy. I'll come back
'round after each man's got one.
But don't expect any more for you.

JACOBI

You have the mind of a brute,
Stowe.

Jacobi steps up, swats the bottles out of Ezra's hands.

JACOBI

You think these darkies and
scrappers get portions before we
have our fill!

Joe's expression changes, he knows Jacobi's gone too far. Ezra moves in eye to eye.

EZRA

Retrieve them.

Jacobi hesitates only for a moment, before Ezra hooks him hard in the gut. Jacobi gasps. Some of the white men move forward in solidarity, but Joe taps them back.

EZRA (CONT'D)

If you wish to earn any respect among your *hallowed* brethren, I recommend you fight me now. Or, if you believe the teeth in your muzzle to be of greater worth... back away. Sober yourself. And then you will wash deck until your permanent dismissal at the bay of the Azores.

Jacobi tries to steel himself, then jabs Ezra in the face. They fight. Jacobi is wild, clearly weaker. Ezra, a seasoned fighter, toys with him like a cat. Soon Jacobi's dazed, but Ezra continues to beat him about the deck - anger seeping in.

One of the WHITE CREWMAN grows furious, moves offside and produces a pistol. Pleasant sees this, grabs the man's shoulder - and the man nearly shoots Pleasant instead.

Ezra finally knocks Jacobi out and the moment diffuses. Jacobi lands hard, face ruined.

Ezra picks up the bottles, finishes distributing to a now somber crowd. The white crewman holsters his pistol as Joe & Harland lift Jacobi up.

JOE

If you can hear me, Jacobi...
you've earned it.

7 EXT. QUARTER DECK - SOON AFTER

Ezra, bloodied, washes himself at a bucket. Arthur appears, his wrapped gift in hand.

EZRA

Did you see what just happened?

Arthur shakes his head *no*, eyes wide. Ezra's demeanor softens.

ARTHUR

Did you teach someone a lesson?

EZRA

That was the intent.

ISABELL (O.S.)

But surely not the effect.

Isabell enters, ushers Arthur away.

EZRA
Mrs. Sibley.

ISABELL
Did you hear me?

EZRA
I did, missus.

ISABELL
Beating a young man insensate does not strengthen his morals nor the morals of any witness. What knowledge could you possibly think you've imparted to him? Some wisdom to employ in the civilized world?

Beat. Sounds of the men, drunk & rowdy, grow in the b.g.

EZRA
My concern is his function on this ship. Does civilization not also exist aboard the Isabell?

She scoffs, moves Arthur along. Something sparks in Ezra.

EZRA (CONT'D)
Sometimes more so *here* than on land, missus.

ISABELL
(with venom)
You wouldn't know the true contents of civilized society till you were finished cutting through its innards, just as you relish doing to those gentle behemoths.

Isabell storms off with Arthur. Ezra sharply scrubs the blood off his knuckles.

CUT TO:

TIME-LAPSE (over multiple days): the whale's carcass is stripped and broken apart.

Bones & baleen piled. Fat boiled & bottled. Much goes back into the water.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

8 EXT. PONTA DELGADA - AFTERNOON - DAYS LATER

The bay of Sao Miguel Island, the Azores. Deep blue water & volcanic green hinterlands in the b.g. The Isabell's docked. The harbor city teems with an array LOCALS of Portuguese, Moorish, Jewish descent & TRAVELERS from the world over. On dock, the crew gathers around Sibley.

SIBLEY

--return tomorrow afternoon, with your senses still intact!

The men laugh, eagerly head into town talking of whorehouses. Pleasant & Ezra stay behind.

PLEASANT

A whole evening, what are we to do with ourselves?

EZRA

Our duties. To garner supplies and new hands.

PLEASANT

Our duties?

EZRA

You would leave me to recruit alone?

PLEASANT

No, you'll need a typical human disposition to keep from affrighting the potential hires. I'll join, on one condition.

Sibley steps into their conversation.

SIBLEY

Condition, Pleasant?

Pleasant is quiet, obeisant in Sibley's presence.

PLEASANT

No, captain sir. I'll be sure to aid Ezra.

SIBLEY

(wants to be in on the joke)
One condition. It's the festival of our Lady of Lourdes. Make sure you
(MORE)

SIBLEY (CONT'D)
get Stowe some libations gratis in
my stead. Understood?

EZRA & PLEASANT
Yes, captain sir.

ARTHUR (O.S.)
Come, papa!

SIBLEY
Now don't stray too far boys...

Sibley exits with his family, leaving the men to face the
city.

9 EXT. PONTA DELGADA, WHORES' ROW - AFTERNOON

Ezra and Pleasant walk past a row of brothels. MASKED PEOPLE
in colorful costumes celebrate in the street. They come to a
place called "Keelhaul Kelly's." Raucous noise issues from
within.

EZRA
Sounds quite populated. Good chance
of finding recruits here.

PLEASANT
If you say so, first-mate.

They enter.

10 INT. BOTTOM'S UP - CONTINUOUS

SAILORS drink at tables while half naked PROSTITUTES flirt
with them, others are doing much more.

EZRA
(pure sarcasm)
Does it not make you home sick?

PLEASANT
Sick being the key phrase.
Certainly.

A MAN drinking a mug of beer vomits across the room.

EZRA
We can do better.

PLEASANT

Truly?

Pleasant laughs, follows a disgusted Ezra out of the place.

11 EXT. PONTA DELGADA BOARDWALK - AFTERNOON

They walk along a boardwalk in an upscale area. Well-dressed patrons stand chatting - white men to white, black to black. Pleasant spies two ELEGANT WOMEN with ornate masks & gloves strolling towards them.

EZRA

Better part of town, but not the place to find new recruits.

PLEASANT

Always about business, Ezra.

The women approach, facing them. Pleasant notes a muddy gap in the boardwalk. The RED-MASKED WOMAN looks at the gap, turns to the BLUE-MASKED one.

RED-MASKED WOMAN

Parece que tenemos un obstáculo, mi compañera.

PLEASANT

May I be of assistance?

He reaches his hands out. The women take off their masks, revealing that they're white, Spanish, upper class. Pleasant freezes - this is very dangerous territory by his standards.

RED-MASKED WOMAN

Are you sure, kind sir? I am no feather.

Pleasant collects himself. The woman puts his hands on her waist. He lifts her across.

PLEASANT

But you are a feather, one like... that of the rare cockatoo.

The woman giggles. Ezra avoids joining the scene. The Blue-Masked Woman nods her ascent and is lifted across.

RED-MASKED WOMAN

Thank you, gracious sir.

She boldly extends her hand to be kissed goodbye. Pleasant takes it, but sees two WHITE MEN nearby, staring. A moment of terror. Both our guys tense up, readying themselves.

But then, the men do not care, simply turn back to continue their conversation. Pleasant's relieved, kisses the Red-Masked Woman's hand quickly. The ladies depart. Ezra looks to a less developed part of town where several men loiter near the bay.

EZRA

If you are done with
your feathers...

PLEASANT

The feel of a feather trumps that
of whale innards. Should you
disbelieve me, I suggest trying it
yourself sometime--

But Ezra's already walked away towards the bay.

12

EXT. PONTA DELGADA BAY - CONTINUOUS

Ezra and Pleasant approach three YOUNG MEN under some bayside trees. Two of them practice knots with a heap of old rope. The third takes a piss off to the side.

EZRA

Most promising yet.

The two men look up. The third, ONI AYOTUNDE (late 20s-30s), a handsome, sly Nigerian, turns to glance - still peeing, holding what appears to be his enormous penis. We notice that the penis is made of carved wood, and that Oni is actually a woman... Though the others are not aware.

PLEASANT

(to Ezra)

If he's got half as much above
his neck as below his belt, might
make for a good sailor.

Ezra decides not to comment on that. They step up to the men. Oni finishes, joins them, keeps her distance.

PLEASANT (CONT'D)

Look you jacks, this is the
first-mate of that handsome galleon
you see docked over yonder. We're
recruiting. Any hook in that for
you?

FIRST YOUNG MAN
Hear there's good coin in whaling.

ONI
And danger.

PLEASANT
Right on both counts.

SECOND YOUNG MAN
Well, sure.

EZRA
Any experience?

FIRST YOUNG MAN
A year each. Tea-trader for me.

PLEASANT
And you?

The Second Young Man clams up. Ezra looks him over.

EZRA
Can't hire without full appraisal.

SECOND YOUNG MAN
It was a slaver. The Clotilde.

Pleasant goes stone cold, Oni too.

SECOND YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)
Listen, I love the sea. That was my
only way onto it. Quit it for a
reason though!

PLEASANT
Fly from here. Now.

EZRA
Wait. What was the reason?

SECOND YOUNG MAN
Well, ain't easy to explain. Seeing
the way they treat those peoples -
don't matter whether you're free
man or not. Makes you feel
trapped... by your own soul. Makes
slaves of everyone is what it does.

PLEASANT
You do not know what it's like to
be a slave.

Beat. The man hangs his head, starts to walk away.

EZRA

Wait. Let's see what you know. Each
of you take a length of rope.

Pleasant looks Ezra, fire still in his eyes.

EZRA (CONT'D)

We need men. I won't prejudice them
if it hinders our purpose.

Ezra stares him down, the decision clear & final.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Anchor hitch. Go. One, two, three.

Oni holds up her knot. It's perfect. Ezra huffs. The others
are only half way done.

EZRA

You two, catch up.

They finish five seconds later.

EZRA

Untie, get ready.

Ezra barks a command, and it's the same result.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Fine. All else, we'll teach
you. Follow my word and the
captain's - at all costs.

THE YOUNG MEN

Yessir.

ONI

What if one finds difference
between those words?

EZRA

What was that?

ONI

Might the word from your mouth find
itself peculiar to that of the
captain's? Who's to follow then?

Ezra flickers with doubt. Oni catches it, not without glee.

EZRA

Aboard the Isabell, the only difference between me and Captain Sibley is who does the judging and who does the punishing.

ONI

Sounds like a wholesome relationship for all involved.

EZRA

I've a feeling you'll be one to see it at play firsthand.

PLEASANT

(jumping in)

Well, the two of 'em have gotten us there & back more than a few times, and with a fair share in our pocket. That meet your standards, friend?

Oni nods.

EZRA

Meet at the ship by noon tomorrow. And if you bring this attitude to the dock, I won't be letting you aboard.

ONI

I'll ask now then: how much and for how long?

EZRA

We pay standard lay: one - three hundred & fiftieth (1/350th) of the haul's earning. And, for as long as it takes.

ONI

And another if I might. Where will we be sailing to?

EZRA

To where the whales are.

Ezra departs. Pleasant laughs.

PLEASANT

East, to New Bedford.

ONI
 (thrilled, her voice raises an
 octave too high)
 The United States of America...

PLEASANT
 Some still call it that, I suppose.

Pleasant looks at Oni, does he sense her secret? He
 exits. Oni's pensive as the two young men celebrate.

13 INT. BORDELLO - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

The brothel is packed. Two PROSTITUTES dance lethargically
 to live Fado music. Joe, his men, & a semi-healed Jacobi,
 enter.

JOE
 Best of the lot, if I recall.

They claim a table. Three WELL-DRESSED WHITE MEN, staying
 silent, move intently from the bar to seat closer by Joe -
 who motions a SERVER, a white local.

SERVER
 Sim senhor, o que posso fazer para
 você?

JOE
 One forgets English isn't spoken in
 the whole of the civilized world.

HARLAND
 Portuguese, they call it. Like
 French and Spanish had interbred.

The server's confused, but waits patiently. Some MOORISH
 MERCHANTS walk past & tip the white server as they exit.

JOE
 Seems this place is just a *false*
front of civilization. That to
 forget the past is the new currency
 of the land. To allow the dogs to
 go unchained, all the while we
 pretend their rabies has turned to
 myth? Then Jesus Christ, I pray
 grant me back to God's good
 America--

Harland motions to the server, who brings whores & drink
 over.

HARLAND
--but not yet!

Jacobi takes the hand of one of the prostitutes, leads her off.

JACOBI (O.S.)
Pass the bill on to the fella
raging to hisself at the table.

JOE
What a waste of a white skin. A boy
like that, back in the Almshouse,
would've been brought to his knees
'fore his first sundown.

They drink. Harland pulls the other prostitute onto his lap.

HARLAND
Joe I didn't know you hailed from
New York City. The Almshouse
Orphanage?

JOE
Would've been my own living
purgatory, had Mr. Lionel Haverford
not rescued me and raised me to
proper standing--

The nearby group's LEADER, bohemian mustache, Brit,
interrupts. His crony, a big man, places drinks down on the
table.

MUSTACHIOED MAN
Pardon, did I overhear you
gentleman discussing Ezra Stowe,
who works aboard the Isabell?

JOE
Only you can know what you've
overheard, sir. Don't ask me to
clarify your eavesdropping.

The man lays down several cash bills, American.

MUSTACHIOED MAN
Clarification's all I desire. Do
you both currently find yourselves
in the employ of American Whaling
Co.?

Joe's disposition changes just like the man knew it would...

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

14 EXT. THE ISABELL DOCKED AT BAY - EVENING - SIMULTANEOUS

The anchored ship's turned ghostly with no one aboard. Ezra & Pleasant walk back on deck.

PLEASANT

Would you name this evening a success?

EZRA

A start. More hands are needed.

Pleasant unfurls a hammock, hangs it between a mast & crate.

PLEASANT

Ezra, if a rain came upon you in the most desolate desert - I believe you'd not stop to open your mouth for fear of wasting time.

EZRA

If I knew I could persevere, I suppose I wouldn't want to tarry from my intended destination.

Pleasant gets in the hammock, comfortable.

PLEASANT

(jovial)

I'm talking about the women, goddammit!

SIBLEY (O.S.)

What of women?!

Sibley suddenly comes up from below. He puts an arm around Ezra, holds a whisky bottle in the other.

SIBLEY

Eh, Pleasant? What damsels? Do you bring talk of your exploits aboard just to haunt the married man in me? Unfair I say. Details then.

Ezra and Pleasant are clearly uncomfortable. Sibley notices, takes a big swig.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)

What women, eh? Tell me: earned fairly by wit on the street, or bought cheaply by the bedside?

Pleasant doesn't want to answer, looks to Ezra.

EZRA

Neither, captain. A brief dialogue was all.

SIBLEY

Ah. Dialogue. Sometimes that is all one requires to be satisfied. Pleasant, tell me - were they jezebels?

PLEASANT

Uh. Fair, sir. Fair gentlewomen.

SIBLEY

(condescending)

Fair, indeed! My imagination explodes like paint upon canvas. The vocabulary draws my mind's eye to the *lighter* pigments. Alabaster, ivory... Am I wrong?

EZRA

Sir, I might interrupt. More hands are needed, if you'll excuse me.

Sibley's eyes darken further. He takes another swig.

SIBLEY

You require permission granted for dismissal, first-mate.

Ezra stops. A long beat. Sibley holds his gaze, taunting.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)

Ezra Stowe. Sometimes you appear to me as a vision. Like a perfect clock grown from the ground of some dark wilderness. Tarnished yet tireless. Tick-tock-tick-tock...

Sibley's focus fades away. He wanders back beneath deck. Ezra turns to leave.

PLEASANT

You know I never had the chance to name my condition.

EZRA

Give it breath then.

PLEASANT

It was, for an evening, that you forget the Isabell. Forget New Bedford. Forget your duties. Just imagine yourself a free man walking in a free city.

EZRA

Imagination has its uses, Pleasant. For the future, perhaps, but not for the here and now. To do what you ask would only make a man weak.

Ezra gives Pleasant a look, returns to the city.

15 EXT. PONTA DELGADA ALLEY WAY - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

Ezra exits a tavern into an alleyway. He waves off to the men inside before noticing two SILHOUETTED MEN standing at the street's entrance. One of them is very large. They turn to Ezra, who walks the other way.

They follow. Ezra slows his pace, gives himself time to fill his fists with coins. Out of the shadows ahead, another MAN steps out. Ezra's caught between.

The third man walks forward, and that's when Ezra leaps back - striking the two behind him with lightning force. His weighted fists knock the short one out cold, the large one slams into the wall.

Ezra barrels him several times more before turning back to the final man, who's cocked a derringer & steps forward. He's the mustachioed man who talked to Joe earlier.

MUSTACHIOED MAN

Steady those cannons, gent. Might as well drop the coins too.

Ezra does not. Ignoring the gun, he marches towards the man.

MUSTACHIOED MAN (CONT'D)

This is no hijacking. I have no wish to open fire on you.

EZRA

Context implies otherwise.

MUSTACHIOED MAN

Yet, obsuration lends itself to many purposes. I wish to propose a deal, and secrecy's a prerequisite of your consideration.

The man lowers his derringer, tips his hat up.

MUSTACHIOED MAN (CONT'D)
 Name of Calvin Vesey. Would you
 mind lending Byron a hand in
 carrying Fred up to my provisional
 office?

Ezra turns to Byron, glaring, bleeding profusely at the
 mouth. He spits out a tooth.

16 EXT. CALVIN'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A tasteful, lush office. Ezra sits stiffly in an armchair.
 The unconscious Fred lies on a couch. Calvin sits behind a
 huge desk. Byron stands behind Ezra.

CALVIN
 Wine? Mint Julep? Byron is a
 capable bartender.

Ezra remains stiff. Calvin motions for Byron to move away.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 Now, don't think you have worry
 about Frederick garroting you too!

A long silence. Calvin has all the time in the world.

EZRA
 I... apologize for my offense. Had
 I done such a thing to your men
 back in New Bedford, I might be
 hanged in the street.

CALVIN
 And had you done it the
 neighborhood where we grew up,
 they'd buy you a pint for the show.

Calvin takes a stack of papers out of his desk.

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 Where I come from, I assume, is
 exactly what you're wondering this
 moment. The relevant answer is
 Transatlantic Industries. And even
 though you didn't provide
 the *conventional* sort of
 introduction - we know you to be
 Ezra Stowe: first-mate of The
 Isabell in the employ of American
 Whaling Co.

As Calvin talks he neatly lays out each sheet of paper. Seems like he never stops for a breath either.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Simply put, you are the best harpooner on the waves and we want to give you a ship of your own and a salary to match.

Beat. A well-timed smile from Calvin. Ezra absorbs this.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Here are the contracts. If you do not possess reading capabilities, I offer my very own services of enunciation.

EZRA

I cannot...

Behind Ezra, Frederick starts to stir in pain.

EZRA (CONT'D)

I have loyalty to Captain Sibley. He raised me up, gave me station where no other captain would dare. This debt is--

Fred awakes, hones in on Ezra with a rage. He draws a stiletto blade and sneaks up...

CALVIN

Stop it, Frederick!

Fred holds Calvin's gaze, puts the knife away. Ezra's shocked, decides to exit.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I understand your philosophy, Ezra. Truly. But apparent to your story is the weakness of your current employ. Such... native sentimentality that prevents you from being a captain - it simply does not exist within Transatlantic Industries.

Calvin motions for Fred to stand beside Byron, which he does. Calvin is the only one seated now.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

You see? Utter obedience. Such as you will have. We care about one

(MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 thing: volume. Volume aboard the
 ship, profit on land. Personal
 proclivities dissolve beneath the
 merit our employees. As
 Transatlantic diversifies, we aim
 to control all aspects--

EZRA
 What of the ship. A barker?

Calvin's betrays a hint of fury at being interrupted, but
 continues coolly.

CALVIN
 No, a true galleon. Three mast and
 all. Of course, we'd want you to
 name it.

EZRA
 The crew--

CALVIN
 Entirely at your discretion. And
 before you ask: you'll receive one
 eights lay of the profits. I assure
 you that's more generous than
 Sibley's contract. So,
 satisfactory?

EZRA
 Satisfactory? To release the whip
 from my hand so as to take the
 wheel. To listen to the sea when it
 speaks, and not the petty strife of
 backwards men...

CALVIN
 Your captain would understand.

Ezra knows otherwise. Beat. He takes a deep breath.

EZRA
 I accept.

CALVIN
 Yes, fantastic. Here, please sign.

Ezra signs them papers without reading them.

CALVIN
 We understand you're en route to
 New Bedford. Please sever your
 (MORE)

CALVIN (CONT'D)
 employ with Sibley immediately upon
 return. Our men on the ground will
 coordinate with you. When do you
 depart?

EZRA
 Tomorrow.

CALVIN
 Where is the ship moored?

EZRA
 East dock.

CALVIN
 And Sibley sleeps aboard?

EZRA
 Uh, no. He's taken his family to
 the Spanish hotel.

CALVIN
 Excellent. That is excellent. Ezra
 Stowe, I thank you for your time.

Calvin, oddly, does not stand to shake his hand. An awkward
 beat before Ezra shows himself out.

17 INT. EZRA'S CABIN - EARLY MORNING

The sun's not yet up. Ezra sleeps in his corner cot, made
 private by a single curtain. A loud creaking up top wakes
 him. He grabs a large carving blade and rushes out.

18 EXT. DECK OF THE ISABELL - CONTINUOUS

Ezra comes on deck to find Sibley, bottle in hand, standing
 at the helm. DOCKWORKERS exit down the gangway and ride off
 in large covered carts. Ezra sheathes his knife.

SIBLEY
 Landlubbers move like elephants
 about a ship, don't they?

EZRA
 What are they doing?

SIBLEY
 Food and tool restock. Just
 finished.

EZRA
At this hour?

SIBLEY
Couldn't find sleep. Decided to be
of use instead and get my ship in
order.

EZRA
Captain, you can always leave such
tasks--

SIBLEY
Rest, Ezra. You'll need it in the
coming voyage.

Ezra looks for some clue in Sibley, cannot find it.

19 EXT. ABOARD THE ISABELL AT SEA - AFTERNOON - THE NEXT DAY

The Isabell follows a strong wind out to sea as the Azores' archipelago disappears in the b.g. The skies darken. Ezra shouts orders from the upper deck. Oni & Pleasant set open the main sail.

ONI
To fresh eyes, Stowe seems both
first-mate *and* captain.

PLEASANT
Sibley'll be out, but not before he
gets his humors back in order from
the eve prior.

Joe restocks oars on the hunting boats near them.

JOE
You calling our captain an
inebriate, carpenter?

PLEASANT
I don't believe that word was
uttered.

Joe glares at Pleasant, who backs down. Oni steps in.

ONI
Why don't you go ask the captain
yourself, you're so curious?

JOE

Perky nigger, ain't you? No need to ask. It's plum fact Sibley's a drunk. But as an officer I must test the crew's respect now and again.

Joe throws the last of the oars in, shoulders by Oni.

JOE (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Might be no respect left with the dusky army Stowe's assembled for himself here.

Captain Sibley stumbles out onto deck, pale & dehydrated, followed by an angry Isabell. All the crew look to him.

SIBLEY

Men, listen careful now since I won't speak long. Early hours I came across a buyer for our haul. Good pricing. First-mate Stowe will deal your shares out soon. The resulting profits have been sent to American Whaling back home with letters explaining as much. We set course for the Chilean coast. May the lady's luck continue.

Sibley exits, unaided by Isabell. All the crew are shocked, including Ezra - who follows after Sibley.

ONI

This mean we're not travelling to the United States?

(off Pleasant's expression)

That's not what I signed on for.

PLEASANT

You signed on to follow whatever that man says. We'll cross the whole world over on his word.

(off Oni, sarcastic)

Don't worry brother, there are too many white men aboard this ship to allow for any bad luck!

Pleasant moseys off. Oni's concern remains intact.

20 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ezra marches down a cramped hallway that rocks back & forth as the winds pick up outside. Joe appears down the hall, holding several harpoons.

EZRA

Clear the way, Mott.

Ezra tries to walk past, but Joe doesn't budge.

JOE

Were my hands not full, I'd fucking applaud you. Whatever devilry you cast on the cap worked.

EZRA

Wasn't my words that twisted Sibley's intent.

JOE

No, course not.

EZRA

Bedford anchors me same as you. Whether you imagine it or not, it is my home and I must return promptly!

Ezra collects himself, embarrassed by his admission.

EZRA (CONT'D)

I go to reset his sights. Delay me further and you'll be hoping those skewers provide better defense than your driveling words.

Joe drops all the harpoons, shrugs.

JOE

Be at least six months more trapped in this cage of yours. Reckon I'll have time to pick these up later.

Ezra shoves past Joe, laughing, angry.

JOE (CONT'D)

Say, has your blood magic shown you a vision of the Isabell without Sibley? In case your idols fail him n' his wasting body?!

A crack of lightning. The hallway lurches, the harpoons bounce around dangerously. Sounds of a fresh downpour O.S. Ezra scoops up the harpoons as both men rush to deck to handle the weather's onset.

21 EXT. DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Heavy rain & large waves - the deck's become chaos. The men rush to secure the hunting boats. Oni & Pleasant repair the horizontal boom supporting the main sail.

Ezra sees the other side of the huge pole: about to crack off. He shouts to Harland, who's near them.

EZRA

Quick, support the fore boom!

Harland glances at Ezra, then Joe. He continues securing the hunting boats instead of helping Oni & Pleasant.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Now, Harland!

Harland ignores him. The fore boom cracks off the mast. It's about to crush Oni but she dodges as Pleasant's knocked on his back and slides down deck.

Looks like he's going into the water but Oni lassos him with a rope. The loose sail billows wildly above them.

22 INT. FORECASTLE ENTRANCE - AN HOUR LATER

The storm continues, but the men have secured the deck and rush into cover. Ezra waits by the entrance.

As soon as Harland enters, Ezra sweeps his legs out from under him. Harland lands hard.

EZRA

They could've died.

HARLAND

Them boats are worth more than a yoke of niggers!

Ezra pulls out a cat-of-nine-tails and swiftly whips Harland across the face. He shrieks.

JOE

That's right Stowe, blind your best oarsmen for speaking the truth!

A few other white crewmen pipe up in support of Joe. Ezra pauses, seems to lose all will to argue. Pleasant notices.

PLEASANT

For endangering the crew and
disobeying the first-mate, the
punishment is ten lashes!

The white men holler at Pleasant. Ezra shrugs. Fed up, he drops the whip, exits. Pleasant quickly follows.

23 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pleasant grabs Ezra, turns him face to face.

PLEASANT

Have you gone mad?

EZRA

Continue the beating yourself if
you so wish.

PLEASANT

I do so wish it, but I fucking
value my neck more. If you don't--

EZRA

We're not long for this place,
Pleasant.

PLEASANT

Now's not the time for gloom.

EZRA

No, the contrary. If we can just
get ourselves back to Bedford, I
have laid plans for us. A ship of
my own and you as first-mate.

Pleasant doesn't seem to understand.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Of *our* name. A crew of *our*
choosing. None of this bastard
wrangling.

PLEASANT

I can't leave the Isabell.

EZRA

You were the one who told me to use
my imagination. I have! Now you
must think of it--

PLEASANT

Can't be done. This is my place.

EZRA

Free men, with our own ship -
beholden to no one's judgment.

PLEASANT

That is fantasy, Ezra. Harsh and
ready judgment is a constant of the
very air we breathe. Accept it as I
have and you'll live a tall life.

EZRA

Please just imagine it. I'll do the
rest. Or, you can return to the
forecastle - see how the air feels
in there.

With that, Ezra exits. Pleasant stays stuck in place.

24 INT. STATE ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Sibley shakes under a heap of blankets as Isabell tries to
instruct Arthur in a school lesson.

SIBLEY

Isabell, promise me that you'll
allow Arthur to return to the waves
should he one day wish it.

Isabell tells Arthur to keep studying, moves close to
Sibley.

ISABELL

Don't talk like you're already
gone.

SIBLEY

Don't talk like that's not your
precise hope.

ISABELL

On death's door and you still won't
heed my requests, or my love.

SIBLEY

I accept your love, Izzy, I do. And
whatever's left in me belongs to
you. But please, answer the
question.

ISABELL
 Long as I draw breath I'll ensure
 Arthur's feet walk on solid ground.

A knock at the door.

ISABELL (CONT'D)
 Who is it?

EZRA (O.S.)
 First-mate Stowe, madam.

Isabell is not happy about that. After many moments...

EZRA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 May I enter, missus? Urgent
 matters.

Sibley motions for her to open the door & she does,
 embittered.

ISABELL
 Be brief. Mr. Sibley is truly ill
 and does not need you upsetting his
 convalescence.

EZRA
 Of course--

ISABELL
 And if you dare to utter more such
 encouragement that keeps my boy
 away from his land and family...
 All the savagery in your bones will
 not protect you from me.

Isabell escorts Arthur to the other side of the room.

SIBLEY
 Come close, Ezra. Whatever's thrown
 me isn't contagious. More than
 likely it's just divine infliction.

EZRA
 Nonsense, sir.

SIBLEY
 My heart. It's beating like a
 Highland snare drummer. I'm not one
 to endure this foolishness much
 longer.

EZRA

Captain, we must get you to the States for rest and treatment. Please, set us back home--

SIBLEY

What would you have named her?

Beat. Ezra realizes Sibley somehow knows about his secret plot.

EZRA

The Nitka. It's what I call my mother, in her language.

SIBLEY

Ah, Wamsutta Stowe. I met her once, years ago when crewing aboard the Old Barb with your pa. She was a beautiful native. Why Samuel left her, or the sea, to travel west...

EZRA

He told you why he left us?

SIBLEY

"To atone for my sins, I must travel to a new world and make good of it."

Beat. Ezra becomes emotional.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)

It would've been a fine name for a ship, Ezra. Pity you were not destined for it.

EZRA

Why?

SIBLEY

You belong here! Not under the shadow of Transatlantic. They're a soulless tar, oozing to every corner of the globe. And you chose them over me.

EZRA

They offered me freedom, sir.

SIBLEY

You had freedom! Much as you deserve, boy! 'Fore he left, Sam

(MORE)

SIBLEY (CONT'D)
 tried to sell you to me for a card
 game's worth of silver. Turned him
 down. Not cause you were a useless
 scarecrow of a lad, but because you
 had fire in your eyes and salt air
 in your lungs. If I took you then,
 chained, you wouldn't be the man
 you are now. Just his shadow
 instead.

EZRA
 When I sought you out for work,
 years following...

SIBLEY
 That was the only freedom I could
 give you. Here, by my side. Why I
 couldn't have you reach home in
 time to leave this ship. You belong
here.

EZRA
 Without you, there is no freedom on
 this ship.

SIBLEY
 Freedom is earned, Ezra. A hunter
 like you should know that. Now how
 about you give me a little freedom
 of my own n' fetch that bottle...

Ezra sighs, takes the whisky to him. Sibley drinks deep.

SIBLEY (CONT'D)
 You are absolved, my son. Quick
 now, before I lose breath. I must
 have my own absolution. You are key
 to it.

EZRA
 Anything sir.

SIBLEY
 Isabell, my love, be witness to us
 now. I name Ezra Stowe the captain
 of this ship - binding him to it,
 and to the American Whaling
 Company.

ISABELL
 (to Ezra, aghast)
 Get out! Get out now!

SIBLEY

Bring them home safe, boy.

Sibley takes another swig, closes his eyes. Ezra exits.

25 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ezra stops in the hallway, stunned. He suddenly slams his fists into the wall, punching holes through the thin wood.

Then Arthur opens the door. Ezra restrains himself.

ARTHUR

My father is unwell.

EZRA

I'm so sorry that is the case.

ARTHUR

I've read of powerful injun witch doctors in the west. They say they can raise up those that our soldiers killed. Do you have power like that?

EZRA

If I could reverse such things for your father, I would. But I can't.

Beat.

ARTHUR

At least you get to be captain now... Where will you take us?

Ezra pauses, unsure. Isabell appears behind Arthur.

ISABELL

Ambrose has passed.

Beat. Arthur starts to cry. Isabell notes the bashed-in wall, pulls her son in close.

EZRA

My condolences, Mrs. Sibley. Arthur, we're setting sail for home.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

26 EXT. DECK - NIGHT - SOON AFTER

The entire crew gathers on deck. Ezra goes above them to the helm. Joe's gaze meets Ezra and they stay locked for a long time. It seems Joe figures out what's just happened. Without a word, he gathers his soldiers. They all walk out, dead silent.

Pleasant looks to Ezra, shocked that he's allowing their exit. Oni, the greenhands, and the rest remain - clearly unnerved. Ezra struggles to speak.

EZRA

Captain Sibley is dead. He tasked me with leading the ship. We... we must believe that the Isabell will function all the same without him.

An uncomfortable lull.

PLEASANT

What are your orders, captain?

EZRA

We will change course to New Bedford.

The men smile at that, some begin to cheer.

PACIFIC ISLANDER

What of our shares? Sibley said he sold our haul. So, where's our cut?

EZRA

Mrs. Sibley is in possession of all funds. I shall discuss it with her.

PACIFIC ISLANDER

When?

EZRA

(snapping)

Would you not allow a moment's grief?!

PLEASANT

He meant no harm.

EZRA

A great man has passed! His spirit
stolen before his time.

Ezra stomps out of sight. Pleasant tries to calm the men.

27 INT. FORECASTLE ENTRANCE - SIMULTANEOUS

Joe watches the aftermath of Ezra's exit, smirking.

28 EXT. CROW'S NEST - MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

We track Oni as she climbs 100ft. up into a wooden basket. She relaxes into the crow's nest, totally alone for once. She takes off her "props" and unwraps the bindings around her breasts, breathes freely. A few moments of pure respite, before she spots something, stands up.

Off in the distance, plumes of vapor - barely visible. She looks closer, sees that the mist is travelling. No wind. It must be...

ONI

Wo bayi! Whales to the east! A mile
off starboard!

She keeps shouting, looks below to see men sprinting to their positions in clockwork formation.

29 EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

Ezra spies the whales from the helm, steers the ship towards them. As they close in, the whales split up. Several go off to one direction, while a large rogue swims towards the ship.

EZRA

Ready all boats to head port-side.
Gather your irons!

Joe blatantly disobeys - gathering his men into boats on the opposite side of the ship.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Mott, I said port-side!

JOE

(to himself)

Blind Indian, largest of the lot's
swimming right into our lap.

What turns out to be a bull Sperm whale glides right past the hull. Joe takes aim with a harpoon from the edge while his men prepare the boats to launch.

EZRA

Hold your volley or I'll shackle you!

Joe lets loose. The spear thuds into the whale. Blood streaks across the water. It thrashes, but continues on. Joe & his men lower their boats into the water as Ezra helplessly watches.

They paddle after it, soon grow smaller in the distance. Ezra furiously steers the ship to a slow crawl. The whales disappear.

30

EXT. DECK - AFTERNOON - HOURS LATER

The crew lounge about deck, they've been waiting for a while. Pleasant lies in his hammock carving scrimshaw.

Oni deals cards near him atop a barrel - playing four different hands all by herself. Ezra, still fuming, repairs the boom for the main sail nearby.

PLEASANT

Might I propose you try solitaire instead?

ONI

Solitaire is for whittling one's mind away. I much prefer Tarneeb, to sharpen it instead.

PLEASANT

Tarneeb?

ONI

Learned it stuck in the port of Beirut for three days during a storm. How the Arabs pass time.

PLEASANT

Beirut! You've a few notches on your belt, eh sailor?

ONI

It's not so far. There's much farther I plan to see yet.

Oni turns to Ezra, who's clearly finished his task but continues to find things to perfect in the rigging.

ONI (CONT'D)

Might be we could get to Lebanon,
or why not Siam, in the time we're
spending in wait for these eboe...
pale men.

EZRA

You suggest we abandon two dozen of
our crew at sea?

ONI

No, no. That'd be a captain's
decision. Though, I suppose, were I
to wear the hat, and if I *had* to
abandon two dozen crew... Well, all
I'm saying is sometimes the tragic
lot is also self-selecting.

Ezra starts to laugh. Pleasant & Oni can't believe it.

CREWMAN (O.S.)

They're back!

Joe & his men return empty-handed. They brush up against the
hull. Ezra does not lower the ropes, stranding them.

EZRA

A failed hunt, officer Mott? Or did
you and your man fancy a simple
row-about?

Ezra's men laugh at the jibe.

JOE

Don't dare seek to--

EZRA

Dare? You dared not listen to your
captain! If you had, you might've
heard that one of the spouts was
short - a calf among the pod.

Joe didn't know that, he deflates.

EZRA (CONT'D)

Even a greenhand might reckon that
a calf makes an easy target of the
mother. Yet you chose the lone
bull, strongest n' fastest of the
lot.

JOE
Continue this indignity and--

EZRA
To disobey your captain at the most crucial moment, on a whim, makes you no better than a child, Joe Mott. I revoke you of your rank.

JOE
Don't think I am blind to your glee. You think this is a victory to lord over us white men? That crude illusion is precisely what I'd expect of you! You are of the race of infants, needing to be governed - not I. Now, let down the fucking ropes!

Ezra's walked off halfway through the speech, nods to Pleasant.

EZRA
Let him study the hull barnacles a little longer. Maybe he'll learn some lesson from a fellow parasite.

Pleasant stares back with concerned eyes. Once Ezra's gone...

PLEASANT
Lower the ropes now!

31 INT. FORECASTLE ENTRANCE - LATE AFTERNOON - SOON AFTER
Joe & Harland huddle close at the door to the crew's cabin.

HARLAND
--I'd love a rumble as much as you, but that wasn't in their strategy.

JOE
Think they care? The money, the letter, all of it's been set. Whether he's delivered as captain or captive makes no mind to them.

HARLAND
You sure?

JOE

I am sure that the only thing I
have in this life is my honor.
Learned that young, amidst heathens
just like him at the Almshouse. If
I lose my dignity to Stowe now,
might as well grab an anchor and go
searching for it on the Atlantic's
sandy bed.

Beat.

HARLAND

Let's get 'em ready then.

They head inside. We see that Oni has been eavesdropping
from behind the deck stairs. She follows them in.

32 INT. FORECASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Oni treads quietly. Joe's gathered his loyal crew. He's
whispering a speech to them, but we can't quite hear it and
neither can Oni. She sneaks closer.

JOE

... you know my heart, men. This is
our only solution now.

A tap on Oni's shoulder. She turns to find Harland looming
over her. He throws her to the center of the crowd.

JOE

As if you needed further proof,
here is a spy sent by Stowe.

Beat. Joe grabs Oni by the throat, lifts her up.

JOE

Do you regret following him now,
scoundrel?

ONI

(gasping)
Not his orders!

He releases her enough to speak.

ONI (CONT'D)

I was sensing a change in
leadership around here. Just wanted
to get some place I could lay low
till the fires finished burning.

Joe scoffs, nods to Harland, who roughly searches Oni's person. Moments of terror as Oni tries to conceal her fear of being found out. Instead, Harland finds her pouch of valuables, takes it.

The pouch has a carved wooden figurine tied to it. It's of the Yoruba god Eshu, a smiling man with a long curved horn on his head. When Harland touches it, Oni lashes out at him to no avail.

JOE

Cost of passage on my ship. We'll
let you know when we hit American
soil.

Harland grabs Oni. She struggles and he cuffs her hard.

33 INT. CASE OIL STORAGE CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A claustrophobic space, empty wooden barrels stacked to the ceiling. Oni's tossed in, the door is locked. She fails to pry it open.

HARLAND (O.S.)

Time to gather arms.

The men leave. Oni surveys the room: barrels, rafters, some rats, barred door, water beneath her... the only way out is up.

She climbs the barrels, searches for weaknesses in the ceiling. There's only one spot where a full board is exposed, but she can't pull it off with just her hands.

She shimmy's a metal ring off of a barrel, uses it to pry the board off. It pops out, but the opening's a tight fit. She can't quite get through.

Unfazed, Oni searches around till she finds a hanging canister of "Lamp Oil." She dumps the liquid blubber over herself, nearly gags from the smell, but steadies & tries again to fit through...

34 INT. STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabell teaches catechism to Arthur. Then, a few feet away, Sibley's coffin budes. Then it almost hops up. Isabell rushes over to it and opens it - Sibley is still very dead. A loud knock issues from beneath him.

Arthur stares as she puts the lid back on, pushes it to the side. Isabell shrieks as Oni pops up through the floorboard - barely sliding through even with the oil.

ONI

Mean you no harm, madam. But
there's men gathering for violence
this very moment.

Isabell looks Oni over as she gets to her feet. Amidst her escape, Oni's chest wraps have loosened.

ISABELL

Men are always gathering for
violence. You would join them?

Doesn't take Oni long to realize Isabell's found her out.

ONI

I'd prevent it.

ISABELL

What's your name?

ONI

Oni Ayotunde.

ISABELL

I can only imagine what forces have
brought you to this place.

ONI

Same as you, be my guess. Now--

ISABELL

Then why not just lock the door?
Let the men follow their nature to
the very end.

ONI

Captain Stowe... isn't like other
men. He deserves a chance.

Beat.

ISABELL

Go to him then.

Oni rushes out, re-wrapping her chest as she goes.

ARTHUR

None of this sounds good to me,
mother.

Isabell nods, goes to bolt the door.

35 EXT. HELM - CONTINUOUS

Ezra steers as Pleasant calibrates the wheel. Oni rushes up.

ONI

Joe's gathering his gang, he means to mutiny.

EZRA

The whole crew must be gathered on deck, now.

PLEASANT

What if it comes to blows? Even if we win, a case could be brought against us on land. We'd be hanged!

EZRA

A better fate yet, than allowing them their greed. I will uphold my law.

Ezra sounds a bell. Pleasant is terrified.

36 EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

The loyal crew gathers by the upper deck; international & African-American sailors with more than a few white men.

Before Ezra can speak, Joe appears across the ship, harpoon in hand, with his gang.

Ezra's side outnumbers them slightly, but Joe's soldiers have come out armed with clubs, hammers, other basic weapons. Ezra meets Joe face to face in the center.

JOE

I don't contest your attributes, Stowe. You're a fine whaler. But you're no leader for these men.

EZRA

And you are?

JOE

Might be a leviathan's worth of hatred between us, but I know your true mind. You have no wish to govern these men, and why should

(MORE)

JOE (CONT'D)
 you? They have no loyalty nor
 respect for you. Embrace it.

EZRA
 Embrace what? Slavery - to you?

JOE
 Embrace freedom from a captain's
 burden. Leave me the ship and
 you'll bear it no more. Isn't that
 what your soul tells you to do?

Ezra considers it. Looks to his men, to Oni & Pleasant.

EZRA
 The brute inside me... the savage
 you hearken to again and again? He
 serves a purpose. And just as you
 say, he has no soul.

Ezra strikes out at Joe's throat, barely blocked in
 time. They fight and the two sides charge at each other,
 screaming. A vicious brawl begins.

Both skilled fighters, Ezra & Joe are at a painful
 stalemate. The mutineers, with their weapons, start gaining
 the upper hand. Men take mortal wounds on both sides.

Oni holds her own, too slippery to be grappled and a good
 fighter in her own right. Pleasant sees the blood, the
 beatings, and freezes up - starts to hyperventilate.

PLEASANT
 Not again.

Pleasant breaks down and flees to the lower deck.

37 INT. STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Isabell & Arthur pray while shuffling & creaking sounds all
 around them - but they don't hear the fighting itself.
 Someone tries to open the door, fails. Then, a knock.

HARLAND (O.S.)
 Just the first-mate, missus.

Beat. Isabell's suspicious.

HARLAND (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 There's been a re-ordering of
 things aboard your ship, missus.
 (MORE)

HARLAND (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 New captain, Mr. Mott that is,
 wants a word. He seeks your
 blessing, you see.

ISABELL
 He hardly sought my blessing when
 he disregarded my husband's dying
 orders to leave Ezra--

HARLAND (O.S.)
 Ain't like that, missus. Please
 have a word, you'll find him most
 amenable to your command. More so
 than the previous cap'n, I assure
 you.

Isabell thinks on it, then has Arthur open the door. Soon as
 he does, Harland swats Arthur and knocks him flat out. He
 sets his sights on Isabell, who's realized her folly.

HARLAND
 Always knew there was a reason I
 signed on to a hen frigate.

Harland rushes her--

38 INT. HALLWAY - SIMULTANEOUS

--as Pleasant runs down the hallway, trying to stay calm. He
 passes the state room, notices the open door. Inside, he
 sees Harland grappling Isabell into submission. Pleasant
 stares, frozen, before he charges in--

39 INT. STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- grabs a whisky bottle off the captain's desk and smashes
 it over Harland's head. Harland's rears back in rage, drops
 Isabell to the floor.

HARLAND
 That first bold move will be your
 last, you trifling--

Pleasant cuts him off with a right cross. They brawl--

40 EXT. DECK - SIMULTANEOUS

-- while Ezra and Joe continue to wear each other down, trading body shots, as men fight all around. Another mutineer attacks Ezra from behind, but Oni knocks him off. She looks around, no Pleasant to be found.

41 INT. STATE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Harland's got the upper hand when Oni appears, slashes him with a harpoon. Harland goes after Oni, but trips hard as Isabell pushes the coffin in front of him. Pleasant ties him up as Oni reclaims the pouch with her wooden Eshu figurine.

ONI

I know it is pointless to explain the importance of Eshu to you. Or that, since I stole him from my father, he would be cursed till death were I to lose it. That wouldn't be worth it.

HARLAND

Astute bastard, ain't you?

ONI

But it is worth mentioning that Eshu is like your Christian god. If he's not respected, we dole out his wrath.

Oni swiftly kicks Harland in the groin.

42 EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

The battle rages on deck. Many lie unconscious, some bleeding out. Ezra's clearly worn down, fending off multiple attackers. Joe has more circle around as he picks up his harpoon.

JOE

Time to put things right on this ship. Send you the way of your people, Stowe.

Ezra's furious, hopeless. He looks past the men to the ocean. Joe readies his strike, when Ezra sees a great plume of water just off the stern. He grabs on tight to the main mast. The men laugh, thinking he's scared. Joe sees it isn't fear of them, but he sees too late.

The ship gets rocked as the whale that Joe wounded smashes into the hull. The men tumble. Joe wounds himself with the harpoon. As the boat rebounds, Ezra knocks him out.

EZRA

Men! Follow me or fight me - this beast won't give a damn.

Ezra, Pleasant & Oni run to the stern. Ezra's loyal crew gathers. The whale speeds beneath the surface, making a circle back. Joe's harpoon sticks from its back into the air.

PLEASANT

It's fury ain't over.

ONI

The next hit will be our end.

EZRA

Pleasant, I need you to steer us south now. Oni, have the men bring a hunting boat.

Pleasant sprints to the helm. Oni runs to a boat, and the men help her lift it. Ezra gathers three harpoons.

PLEASANT

I need the jibs open and hands on quarter deck!

Ezra stares at the remaining mutineers. They look to each other, to the unconscious Joe - and promptly follow Pleasant's orders.

43 EXT. EZRA'S BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Ezra readies himself inside the boat. Men stand all around.

EZRA

Heave me out north.

ONI

Are you mad?

EZRA

They say it's the mark of a good captain.

ONI

But--

EZRA

The mark of a good officer?
Obedience.

Ezra laughs. Oni's not having it, then takes his meaning.

ONI

Officer?

EZRA

You're a good man, Oni. A fine
sailor. You have much to learn
still, but if I go the way of Noah
I have faith you'll help get these
men home.

Beat. The men pick up the boat, bring it to the ledge.

ONI

Heave ho!

Ezra flies, lands far out with a crash.

44 EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

The Isabell turns and makes serious distance from Ezra & the whale. Oni watches the whale's wake approach him.

45 EXT. EZRA'S BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Ezra grasps one harpoon in each hand, a third by his feet. He marks the whale's approach, then hurls the harpoon high on an arc like a javelin's.

The whale speeds right into its trajectory - it lands with incredible force and causes the whale to spasm, but it soon resumes its charge.

46 INT. STATE ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Isabell holds Arthur, watches David & Goliath duel from her porthole.

47 EXT. DECK - SIMULTANEOUS

All have gathered to watch. Joe wakes, crawls over to look on.

48 EXT. EZRA'S BOAT - CONTINUOUS

The whale's not twenty feet away when Ezra looses his second harpoon, it hits on target. The whale breaches in reaction, aiming to collapse right atop Ezra.

He kicks the third & final harpoon into his hand and leaps out of the boat. Ezra and the whale hover in the air together. Before he hits water, Ezra launches the harpoon right into the behemoth's underbelly.

49 EXT. DECK - SIMULTANEOUS

From afar, we see the whale, Ezra & the boat all disappear in the creature's crashing wake. The water blooms with blood as the whale floats up, dead. Ezra's gone. Isabell and Arthur join on deck. All look to the water.

ARTHUR

There!

Ezra surfaces, face-down, unmoving. Without hesitation, Oni dives off the ship and swims to him.

JOE

Didn't know they could swim.

PLEASANT

You've done enough underestimating for one day, don't you think? Take him below.

Pleasant nods to some of the crew, who bring Joe away. Meanwhile, the men throw down another boat and use it to hoist Oni & Ezra up to the deck.

50 EXT. BOAT - SIMULTANEOUS

Ezra remains unconscious as they're pulled up. Oni leans in close, worried - looks as though she'll give him mouth to mouth. Instead she lands some well-placed punches on his chest. He shakes, spits out water, and comes to.

51 EXT. DECK - CONTINUOUS

Ezra gets back on board. After much cheering...

ISABELL

Mr. Stowe, I questioned my husband's judgment many times. But

(MORE)

ISABELL (CONT'D)
 in the instance of choosing his
 successor... I believe his wisdom
 has prevailed. I'll say as much to
 my father, about your contract,
 upon our return.

EZRA
 And return we shall. Straight away.

Ezra immediately falls down dizzy. Pleasant catches him.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

SERIES OF SHOTS:

A) The ship moves fast across the waves. The try works is on full blast as men process barrel after barrel of blubber.

B) The barrel room (where Oni had been trapped). Joe, Harland, & a few other cronies are shackled together. Joe takes a gander at the exposed floorboard in the ceiling...

C) In the state room, Arthur opens the gift his father had left for him. It's a gilded compass, engraved with the ship - a tiny detail of his mother as figurehead.

D) Ezra's steering at the helm, in new captain's garb. Land appears in the distance.

52 EXT. PORT OF NEW BEDFORD - AFTERNOON

The Isabell is docked, home at last. Ezra's on land, overseeing the transfer of their goods - and prisoners. Isabell & Arthur see their belongings onto a carriage. Pleasant is about to walk onto land when a POLICE CORPORAL pulls up with a barred coach, sees Ezra handling Joe in chains. Joe senses an opportunity.

JOE
 (shouts)
 You think there's justice in this?!

POLICE CORPORAL
 Blast it - get yer hands off him!

The Corporal moves to attack Ezra when Isabell steps in.

ISABELL

Pardon me, officer, but you're quite after the wrong man here. This one led a mutiny. His second in command tried to rape me. And you stand here deciding whether the brute in chains is more innocent than the captain?!

POLICE CORPORAL

Apologies, madam.

Isabell leaves with her son. Ezra turns to see Pleasant stuck where he stands - they hold each other's gaze. Pleasant glances to see Harland and the others taken away to jail, but he's still unwilling to set foot on land. Then, Oni swaggers by and joins Ezra.

ONI

If you don't join us old man, I'll have to drink your share tonight. Course, you'll still be picking up our accounts.

Pleasant smiles, makes his way to join them on American soil. Ezra greets him warmly.

53

INT. THE ARK - NIGHT, THAT EVENING

The Ark is a giant galleon permanently anchored in the bay - transformed into the most raucous, infamous tavern in the north east. Ezra, Oni, Pleasant, & his faithful crew celebrate inside.

PLEASANT

To a grand haul sold!

THE CREW

Huzzah!

PLEASANT

To a grand captain!

THE CREW

Hurrah!

PLEASANT

And to our cut, which we'll at least pretend is grand!

The men roar with laughter. A drunk Pleasant leads them in a chorus of the sea shanty "Blow the Man Down."

PLEASANT & THE CREW
*When a Black Baller's preparing for
 sea--To my way haye, blow the man
 down--You'd split your sides
 laughing at the sights that you
 see--Give me some time to blow the
 man down...*

Oni pours Ezra another drink, nods to Pleasant.

ONI
 To look at him now, one'd think he
 owned the place.

EZRA
 Was a time Pleasant did not even
 own himself.

ONI
 A slave?

EZRA
 Escaped, and made freedom for
 himself on Sibley's ship.

ONI
 Your ship now.

EZRA
 It will be, soon as I secure
 contracts with American Whaling
 tomorrow. Mrs. Sibley's to ensure
 it.

ONI
 She's a tough one, I give her that.
 Ship like the Isabell, takes a lot
 out of a woman.

EZRA
 Oh and you would know?

ONI
 There's secrets aboard your ship,
 Captain. I'd hate for you never to
 find them out.

Oni smirks, downs her drink, and walks off in such a way as
 to capture Ezra's gaze, albeit a confused one. He can't
 linger on it long as Pleasant pulls him into the chorus.

54 INT. EZRA'S HOME - LATE NIGHT

Ezra's New Bedford home. It's dark. He stumbles in, slightly drunk - it's hard to remember the layout of this place.

EZRA

Nitka? Are you awake? Your son has returned.

He hears a noise, walks towards the living room.

EZRA (CONT'D)

I hate to wake you, but there's much news--

As he turns the corner, the Police Corporal smashes him in the head with a billy club. Ezra goes down hard.

POLICE CORPORAL

You are accused of grand theft of profits from the vessel, the Isabell, that should have arrived by way of the Azores.

The Police Corporal kicks Ezra hard in the stomach. Two OFFICERS appear and put him in chains.

POLICE CORPORAL (CONT'D)

You also stand accused of the murder of Captain Sibley by poison.

The Corporal gets in close to Ezra's bleeding face.

POLICE CORPORAL (CONT'D)

You're no captain, you bloody red bastard. And I'll make sure you never set foot on free land or sea again.

The policemen haul Ezra out of the dark, quiet house.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE