

North of Reason

Michael Devine

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Fantasies from Sir John Franklin's expedition
in search of the Northwest Passage, 1845

by Michael Devine

All inquiries regarding professional and amateur performance rights
should be directed to the playwright at mickdevine@gmail.com

North of Reason was first performed by Scheme Ov Things Theatre Ensemble at the Poor Alex Theatre, Toronto, from January 30- February 9th, 1986. The play was directed by Stephan Droege, the set and lights designed by Georg D. The cast was as follows:

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Cap't Crozier | Andrew Lewarne |
| Cap't Fitzjames | Guillermo Verdecchia |
| Lady Franklin/ Queen Vic/Emma | Ellen Ray Hennessy |
| John Boxer | Glenn Roy |
| Magnus Manson | Keven O'Shea |

For Katherine

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| "Boxer's Song" | Words and music by Michael Devine |
| "We're Away" | Words taken from a poem published on board ship in the newsletter of Cmdr. We. Parry's expedition, 1819. Sung to "Sweet Betsy From Pike." Adapted by M. Devine. |
| "Lowlands" | Words by Chris Rawlings, music traditional, adapted by Chris Rawlings. |
| "Ballad: North of Reason" | Words and music by Chris Rawlings |
| "Friendly, Fruitful Arctic" | Words from 1930's book of nonsense rhymes about explorers, music traditional sailor's shanty, adapted by Glenn Roy and Michael Devine. |
| "Boxer's Lament" | Words and music by Michael Devine |

The original sheet music for **North of Reason** is no longer available. Producers are encouraged to compose new music to match the words where needed

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1: I KNOW WHO THE HEROES ARE

In a single spotlight, Lady Franklin appears. She could be carrying a sailing wheel, a votive candle, or a swinging lamp. A handsome woman in middle age.

Lady F: Someone asked me, I don't remember who it was, it was at one of those first dinners where I met John...they asked me who I thought were England's heroes; and I said, goodness, a nation constructed of sturdy material surely needs heroes less than builders. Then, a thought, I said perhaps the inventors, the ones who pushed our industry to the forefront of the world, they're heroes of a sort; but she said—it was a she, she began the evening on John's arm, I remember—she said no, they're valuable of course but they're too *prosaic* to be heroes, and didn't I think the men who lost their lives at Waterloo were heroes? Well, she was around then, I certainly wasn't, but said, yes, they were brave enough, and every Empire needs its defenders but I find no purity in the ideal of one who works to kill another, no heroism, whatever the cause...

That created a ripple or two. There were several Admiralty officers present—including John- and a man—perhaps it was Barrow, he was old enough not to care about being rude- he said, dammit, Madam, what about Nelson? I was getting a bit flustered, they were beginning to gang up on me, I always seem to get in these situations; if I was pretty and brainless I could smile and toss my hair a bit and they'd fall like pigeons from a rifle shot but I'm not, the best I was ever called was handsome; a woman of character and substance, well, they were attacking my substance as usual when John—he'd been looking but he hadn't said a word all night beyond pass the asparagus—finally John said, very quietly, I sailed with Nelson when I was younger. He was brave, and as good a man, as any I knew; and he was an inspiration. But he was a man, with as full a complement of faults as any. We loved him—all the men did; but he was no hero to us. A man who slides you out of scrapes deserves to be appraised full value, and listened to. Heroes never are.

Perhaps he was a hero to those of us back home, said some blonde bitch, flashing her incisors like an idiot to get John's attention. Perhaps he was, returned John. We need heroes he said, but we create them—they don't exist. I got my wits back, he'd given me a chance to catch my breath, and I had something true to add that I knew he'd like and desperately I pounced after his last word so that blonde tart wouldn't giggle or something, I said, I know who the heroes are. The room stopped, I'd said it too loud, there was really

interested to see how I might dig myself out of the yawning crevasse I'd just opened up in front of the cream of the Admiralty and the renowned adventurer, Sir John Franklin; he merely smiled, as if to ask me, who? And I blurted, there's no other word for it, I blurted "the explorers"! The ones who go with a pure purpose, wanting to expand our knowledge of the world. Like, Drake, said one beard. Or Columbus offered the tart—he's not bloody English you twit said her partner which was nice but I said, yes, Drake, but our age is luckier. We have the men who are opening the last and most arduous frontier. The Polar Regions, the Northwest Passage, who isn't consumed with excitement merely to think of it?

Well. Even old Barrow liked that. And John. He knew better; he wasn't convinced; but he smiled, and said, I'm honoured you think so, Ma'am, have we been introduced?

Any of the lines in the previous speech which are quotes from other dinner guests may be spoken by other actors or as voice-overs.

2. THE SKELETONS TOAST DEATH

Blackness. The voice-over is spoken by a senior member of the admiralty: dignified, sonorous and unquestioning.

Admiralty: As 1853 draws to its end, we are forced at last to admit that the light of hope, while never extinguished, is fading for gallant Sir John and his crew. At the same time, I am confident that there is not a scintilla of truth to the scurrilous reports of Dr. Rae, whose conversations with the Eskimos of King William Island (as we now know it to be) are responsible for these rumors and falsehoods. These savages, a notoriously untruthful race, without a God, or any form of government, have convinced Dr. Rae that the crews of Erebus and Terror met their end on the southern end of that which we now know to be an island, in the hope that the curious white man might return again and again, with his good food, his guns and his building skills. We are being used, Gentlemen, and the dignity of the Hudson's Bay Company is diminished by Dr. Rae's credulousness. But then he is not a sailor, nor a gentleman. I give you Sir John Franklin!

Members: *(all as one, toasting, a rumble)* Sir John Franklin.

3. ALL THOSE THINGS WE TALKED ABOUT

Fitzjames enters into a dim light out of the blackness. He talks and moves as if afraid to make loud noise. He appears young, clear of face, and animated.

Fitzjames: Listen to me, Emma. No, come over here. Come on! Alright. Now, because you're the best sister in the world, I'm going to tell you a secret. I've joined the Navy! Ssssh! If you wake mother up, she'll never let me go! That's better. No, of course you can't. There are no women in the Navy, Emma, it isn't done. Especially little girls. No, don't cry, Emma, dammit, Emma, sssh! I apologize. You're a—very large—and handsome girl. Petite, then. Oh, aren't you hearing me, Emma? All those things we've talked about—knights and pirates and explorers—I'm going to be one! I'll write to you everyday, I promise. Cross my heart. It'd be silly to stop sharing our dreams now, wouldn't it?

4. JUST TO STAY AFLOAT

In another area a light comes up on Crozier. He too appears younger than he does later, pacing back and forth with the ferocity of a caged animal, always fighting to remain in control.

Crozier: Thank you, Mrs. Hepson. Could you just leave my dinner outside the door? Yes, fine, thank you. I'm just extremely busy at the moment. Could you see that I'm not disturbed? Don't touch those!!! I'm sorry, it's just—Mrs. Hepson. I have to work harder than anyone else just to stay afloat. And if you knock those navigational texts over, or lose my place marks, I may never get it right. Yes, some coffee would be good. It's going to be another long siege. Discipline, Mrs. Hepson. "A man rules no one who rules not himself." Now get out. *(beat)* Please.

5. NOT ENOUGH TO LET ME

In another area, a light comes up on John Boxer, a compact sturdy young man with an open face.

Boxer: Um, Jenny? You know how your Dad don't like me? Well. Not enough to let me—oh, no. 'Course I haven't! You know I'd ask you first. We had a talk that's all. Jenny, you know I do! I love you more—what, now? Um, look, I have something to tell you. I was

goin' to ask you after I told you. Alright. *(on knees)* Jenny, will you please marry me even if I go on a ship to earn money to please your pa? *(pause)* I thought that might kill my chances. You will? *(he can't believe it)* But— I'll work harder to make you happy than any man ever did.

6. NO ABODE AT PRESENT

In another area, a light reveals Magnus Manson, a small, scruffy, sinewy man who speaks with an Ulster accent. He is trying desperately to look respectable.

Manson: Manson, Magnus. *(Louder, maintains level for rest of speech)* MANSON. Magnus, yeah, that's right. No abode at present. Yeah, I been in stir—is that alright? I'm good now. It was only petty larceny. I want a fresh start. No. Mum and Dad both deceased. Nuh. Never knew any relations. If I die just dump me over the side and pay me wages to the first lonely kid you see. Yeh. Done some shipping, stevedore, that stuff. I'm quick. You'll see, I'll pick it up. I'm a good man to have on your side in a fight. Well, yeh, I know there shouldn't be fighting, I meant...look. Give me a chance. I'll make good for you, alright?

At this point the circles of light have joined to create an area including Crozier and Fitzjames, who should be raised in some way above Boxer and Manson. Lady Franklin is distant, and in dimmer light.

7. YOU DON'T STRICTLY HAVE TO BE HERE

Boxer and Manson are now separated but definitely within the same area below, as are Fitzjames and Crozier in the area above. Boxer sweeps industriously. Manson toys idly with knotting a rope. Fitzjames consults a list; Crozier peers off the 'bridge.'

Fitzjames: Two to go.

Crozier: Praise God.

Fitzjames: You don't strictly have to be here, you know.

Crozier: On the contrary. I wouldn't have missed it at any cost.

Fitzjames: Yes. Well, let's get it over with, then.

Crozier: (grabbing list) Boxer? John Boxer? Is that an English name?

Boxer turns to face the officers. He stands erect, with broom.

Fitzjames: (to Crozier) Oh, come on!

Boxer: Oh, yes, sir. It's a very common name where I come from.

Crozier: Common I have no doubt. Have you worked on a ship, Boxer?

Boxer: Yes, sir.

Crozier: Would you care to volunteer some information about the nature of your experience? Or would you rather I guessed?

Boxer takes out some crumpled papers from inside his coat, approaches the 'bridge' and hands them up to Fitzjames.

Boxer: Here you are, sir.

Crozier: No, Arctic or Antarctic experience, I suppose?

Boxer: Well, not exactly, sir. But I take to the cold very well. And I'm not work shy.

Crozier: You "take the cold well", do you? May I suggest that on a voyage of this duration, without prior experience, that the cold will in fact take you, Mr....that will be all.

Boxer turns to go. Lady Franklin, far off, waves him back. Unconscious of this, Boxer halts.

Fitzjames: Wait a bit, Captain. Read these references. "Honest character." "Selfless worker." "Pleasant demeanor even in difficult circumstances."

Boxer: Sir? I really want to go.

Crozier: It won't be me who signs your death warrant.

Fitzjames: I might remind you, Captain, that the Admiralty saw fit to place me as sub-commander to Sir John on Erebus, knowing full well that I have no arctic experience.

Crozier: I know they did. For that reason—and that only—you may stay. (to Boxer) You may go.

Boxer: Sir...

Fitzjames: You're on.

Crozier: I won't have it!

Fitzjames: It's my responsibility. Shall I read you the orders?

Boxer: *(to Fitzjames)* Thank you, sir. *(to Crozier)* I'll make good, sir. I won't let you down.

Lady Franklin reacts favorably to this in the distance. Boxer returns to his original action, swabbing a deck.

Fitzjames: Right. One to go. *(taking list)* Magnus Manson. Manson, are you still out there?

Manson turns to face them abruptly, dropping the coil.

Manson: I been waiting all day.

Crozier: "Magnus" Manson? Are you truly great, Manson?

Manson: What?

Fitzjames: I'm sorry to have discomfited you, Manson, but it's been rather a long haul for us as well. Perhaps if you show me your papers we could expedite this matter.

Crozier: Manson the Great.

Manson: I was one of the first to answer the advert. It's because I'm a con, isn't it? Or I'm a mick? And now "all the places are filled, thank you?"

Fitzjames: I think for your purposes we can say that.

Manson: I had no expectations.

Manson turns to leave.

Crozier: *I'd* like to give this man a chance.

Fitzjames: I think not. I know his kind.

- Crozier:** Oh, do you? I should be greatly surprised, Captain, if, from your exalted station, you'd have ever dealt with such a character.
- Manson:** Save your speeches.
- Crozier:** I need a wolverine on board. You'll do.
- Fitzjames:** And I say no.
- Crozier:** I'm sure a personal favor from my friend Sir John will allow me this indulgence.
- Fitzjames:** I won't have it!
- Crozier:** I will preserve us a ghost of a chance to survive with or without your help, Captain Fitzjames.
- Manson:** Are you two finished?
- Fitzjames:** You insist?
- Crozier:** Heavens no, Captain. A mere...suggestion, couched in a persuasive set of considerations.
- Fitzjames:** *(to Manson)* Get your gear.
- Manson:** You mean I'm on!? Oh Christ, you won't regret this.
- Crozier:** Get out.

Manson turns and resumes his task, undoing the knots and re-tying the rope in nautical knots. Fitzjames gathers his papers and walks off in a huff. Crozier strides briskly from the upper playing area to the centre area, Boxer and Manson working off in corners. They turn and pay attention on "Welcome."

- Crozier:** Tea and crumpets. They have no bloody idea.

The previous line can be spoken from the deck; following is from a position below, centre.

- Crozier:** Welcome to the Terror. We've a long stroll ahead of us, you and I, and we'll have a chance of getting through to the end if I have your total obedience and attention to duty at all times. No doubt we'll have more than enough of each other. Don't believe the penny papers; we'll be gone two winters, not one, and maybe longer. If you don't want a piece of the glory, you must leave now, for

there's nothing else, and your dreams might kill us all. You get your pay when you bring Her Majesty back the Passage.

You don't like me. I don't like you. If you work like dogs and do all I say I can pull you through. I'm not much for talking. But I won't let you down. And I won't let you quit.

He turns quickly and exits.

8. QUEEN VIC DROPS IN FROM THE LAND OF AMOK

Queen Vic appears, in single light, on the upper playing area.

Queen Vic: *(reading)* Dear, dear me. Oh my. How inexcusably oversightical of me. Quite inapropos. The poor dear is probably soling her drawers with anxiety. But of course there was a relief expedition, Mr. Barrow? *(pause)* A relief ship, then? *(pause)* Did we tell the whalers to "look out?"... Dear me.

She folds the piece of paper into a paper airplane.

Queen Vic: Perhaps Mr. Simpson and his Hudson Boy Company will pay for one. They always do better in icky places anyway. Oh dear, my health is failing, I can feel it...no, it's just a hemorrhoid. It's better not to read than the strain the eyeballs Royal. I'd look frightful in specs. It's all just a big heap of poo, anyway. *(looks at the airplane)* Ooh! Look! I've invented a sharp pointed object!

Queen Vic lets fly with the airplane, which describes a graceful if truncated arc and plummets to the playing area below. As it falls she disappears only to re-appear moments later, below, as Lady Franklin. Boxer appears in a separate area, on deck taking up his position on watch and composing his song.

Lady Franklin appears with a small lantern or votive, in black.

Lady F: The Christian faith is a strong one. Resilient and flexible...everlasting. That's why it triumphs over heathen creeds, and will always. It provides direction, meaning...and hope. Of course so much of that is up to us. What we do with that is up to us. What we do with what we're given. A moral responsibility to do all in our power to achieve our destiny.

She picks up the paper airplane, unfolds it, glances at the writing, and crumples it up. After a moment, She appears to be about to throw the ball of paper away when she reconsiders. She smoothes out the rumpled paper and begins to reconstruct the airplane.

Lady F: I've always believed that what creates our strength as a people is our faith...in God, in His order of things. In what we've built to house our traditions and beliefs. Unshaken faith. That way strength lies. And order. A sense of things. We must be resolute...even if we're wrong.

She throws the re-constructed airplane. It wobbles a foot or two and drops.

9. STRONG AS A HORSE

In the main lower playing area, we see Boxer, alone, on watch, bundled against the cold. He stamps back and forth across the stage, keeping warm and composing a tune he alternately hums and sings, pounding his mitts for emphasis.

Boxer: (singing) When I get home,
I will ask for your hand
I'll wave my sovereigns at
Your bloody—

He stops and reconsiders.

Your kindly old man.
(spoken) The bugger.

Fitzjames appears on the fringes of the scene. He sees Boxer and watches him silently from the shadows.

Boxer: (singing) There's no horizon here
Showing the day
Days are weeks months are years
I've been away.

Wait for me, Jenny
I'm sailing to you
I'm far away now but
I'm closer too.

(spoken) Hmmm.

Fitzjames walks out of the shadow, clapping his gloves.

- Fitzjames:** Bravo! Bravo, young Romeo! Capital!
- Boxer:** Captain Fitzjames!
- Fitzjames:** There's no need to be embarrassed. A man on late watch deserves a bit of a song—a rough-hewn tune for a rough-hewn climate, what?
- Boxer:** It needs a deal of work, Sir.
- Fitzjames:** Yes, it does. Still, I'm glad to find one fellow who enjoys his work.
- Boxer:** It's the weather, sir. It's all the men talk about. Forty below at noon—it's unnatural! And no sun, neither. Or nothing but.
- Fitzjames:** Not to mention never having dry clothes, or fresh food. I say—what would you say to an expedition?
- Boxer:** Well. We're on one, aren't we. Sir.
- Fitzjames:** Quite. A hunting expedition. A few men, with guns, and the chance for fresh meat and a look at the lay of the land.
- Boxer:** It's fierce weather for hunting, Sir. Still, I don't suppose we'd get ourselves lost. This land's so flat we'd see the ship from China.
- Fitzjames:** The men before us thought they'd see Cathay from here.
- Boxer:** With respect, Sir, I think Captain Crozier has taken care of dreams of that nature.
- Fitzjames:** But not yours, evidently.
- Boxer:** Sir?
- Fitzjames:** Come, man, no sailor serenades the icebergs without dreaming of someone to sing it to.
- Boxer:** Well. Just between us, Captain, it's a girl.
- Fitzjames:** Mmm. I guessed that much.

Boxer: Her Dad wants to see some silver in my pocket before I can itch with her. You should see her, Sir. She's not very big but she's strong as a horse!

Fitzjames: And good teeth, too, I presume.

Boxer: Oh, yes, Sir. And pretty. And smart. She can run the shop and I can handle all the stock.

Fitzjames: It seems to me that a great many women would find you irresistible, Mr...

Boxer: Boxer, Sir. And I wouldn't know about that.

Fitzjames: You will. (*looking out*) Did you know, Boxer, that when Sir John Ross first entered Lancaster Sound, he turned round and headed straight back to England? He thought the Straight was blocked by a set of mountains.

Boxer: (*snorts*) There're no mountains here, Sir.

Fitzjames: No. It was a temperature inversion. They were terribly real to him, though. Years of planning, a huge crew at stake, not to mention his personal honor...all ruined by an obstacle which didn't exist. There's a lesson in that, somewhere.

Boxer: It seems to me, Sir, we only learn from the mistakes we make ourselves. Even then only sometimes. And then sometimes the wrong lesson.

Fitzjames: Quite. Well, we'll get you out hunting for a tonic. Tell the men and see who's interested in going first.

Boxer: Alright, Sir.

Crozier appears, striding out from the shadows and up to them.

Crozier: Where's Manson?

Fitzjames: In bed, I assume. He had the evening watch.

Crozier: The hell he did. He should be on watch NOW.

Fitzjames: What? Boxer, did you switch watches with Manson?

Boxer: I let him sleep, Sir.

- Crozier:** He didn't switch at all. He never showed up. Isn't that right?
- Fitzjames:** Surly you can't have been on watch for eight hours.
- Boxer:** I guess so, Sir. It's all the same, really.
- Crozier:** I'm afraid it isn't. Fitzjames, send Manson to my quarters when you can rouse him.
- Fitzjames:** Shouldn't we get him to take the watch now?
- Crozier:** One disruption is enough. Send Manson to me. NOW. This man can keep the next watch company, if he enjoys it so much. You are on my ship, Fitzjames.
- Crozier exits, striding.*
- Fitzjames:** I'm sorry, Boxer.
- Boxer:** It's alright, Sir. I'll finish my song.

Fitzjames exits. Boxer whistles.

10. A COLD WIND IS BLOWING THROUGH THE OPEN DOOR

Lady Franklin, in single, dim light, seated, writing on a small portable writing desk, and reading from the text of her letter as she completes it.

- Lady F:** Jane Griffin, Lady Franklin, to President James Madison, of the United States of America. Sir, I write you as one human being to another, members of cousin races founded upon the same ideals. You must furnish ships to save my husband, Sir John Franklin. He is alive, you may depend on it; and the apathy with which my own Government has disgraced itself in approaching the problem of his rescue has driven me to your offices. The opening of the North is of import to both our nations. Preserving the noble goals which fired my John to seek battle with the Arctic waste is crucial to the consistent growth of our twin races as people of honor, moral spirit, and integrity. Your Navy is well furnished, I am told; there are many private merchants also with ships who may be inspired to help; you are not at war. Why not supply us with ships to seek my husband out, and in so doing win yourself a place in immortality as

benefactor of all that is pure in the human spirit? Awaiting your reply.

11. YOU'D HAVE DONE WELL IN SCHOOL

Fitzjames, Crozier are seated in the lower area, each with bottles half empty. Officers quarters. Manson stands uncertainly before them.

Crozier: HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA! Nonsense! What utter nonsense!

Manson: I didn't mean no offense, Sir.

Crozier: HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA! Don't be an idiot, Manson! *(to Fitzjames)* Your friend Booth, Mr. Fitzjames *(gestures at bottle)* is one of the worthiest companions it's been my pleasure to associate with!!

Fitzjames: Bottoms up, Mr. Crozier. *(Drinks)* Manson, you were about to explain how these ships of yours would travel under the sea...*(splutters)*

Manson: Well, Sir, they might not be ships exactly-

Crozier: HAHAAHAHAHAHAHA! Excellent! A drink, Manson! You must have a drink! Even a stupid idea deserves a drink if it's amusing!

He pours out a sloppy measure of gin into a glass and thrusts it at Manson, who accepts it.

Manson: Much obliged, Sir.

Fitzjames: Now, Manson. The secret to your...submersibles...

Manson: You see, they'd be enclosed, encased in steel...

Fitzjames: How would they breathe?

Crozier: The men, I assume my colleague means.

Fitzjames: Quite.

- Manson:** All the rooms would be linked to a machine that would draw air from above the water by means of a tube, and circulate it with a fan.
- Crozier:** Where would the power come from?
- Manson:** We could use steam power, somehow—like we have to turn the screw propeller here.
- Crozier:** He's not stupid. Your turn, Fitzjames.
- Fitzjames:** Alright. The light, Manson. How would anyone see?!
- Manson:** Well, I was thinking about that.
- Fitzjames:** He was thinking...
- Manson:** I'm not an inventor. But have you ever seen a shower of sparks from a piece of metal scraping alongside a rock? Or the flash from a cannon?
- Crozier:** Mmmm... possibly...
- Manson:** It's just an idea, Sir. But I always thought when I saw a shower of sparks—isn't that a lot like light?
- The officers consider this gravely.*
- Fitzjames:** Let me get this straight, Manson. You'd have something like a giant sheet of metal that you'd rub against a huge rock, catch the sparks and throw them around?
- Manson:** You're playing me for a fool, now, Sir.
- Crozier:** No, no...we're just trying desperately to keep pace with the accelerating scope of your genius, Manson. *(Toasts)* TO MANSON'S GENIUS!
- Fitzjames:** *(solemnly)* Manson's genius.
- Crozier:** I believe he's got something here! Think of the military applications! You'd never see the buggers 'til they'd sunk you low enough to pass on the way down!
- Fitzjames:** That's pepros- presprop- balderdash. Why, if the Russians had them, we'd have them too.

- Crozier:** True.
- Manson:** With respect, Sir, but that's why we're here, isn't it?
- Crozier:** To claim the Passage for our own. I mean, yes, the experiments with the Magnetic Pole, the surveying and all that...we did all the world getting here—it'd be a shame if we weren't the ones to finish it, wouldn't it?
- Fitzjames:** *(after a pause)*... rather a mercenary way of putting it...
- Crozier:** But patriotic nonetheless. Have a drink, Manson.
- Manson:** Thank you, Sir, I've got one.
- Crozier:** Damn it, Manson, you have a practical mind!
- Fitzjames:** CATHAY! Isn't that what we're after?
- Crozier:** Rubbish. There's been no commercial hope for years.
- Fitzjames:** Not that Cathay! The other one! Avalon! Isn't that where we're really headed?
- Manson:** Sir? That's a Peninsula somewhere, isn't it?
- Crozier:** You'd have done well in school, Manson. Made something of yourself.
- Manson:** Yes, Sir.
- Fitzjames:** We'll return in triumph! My journal will be finished. They'll publish it, of course, and we'll be immortal. There are things to seek and adventures to find!
- Crozier:** Don't listen to him, boy. He'll ruin you.
- Fitzjames:** Everyone is free to dream.
- Crozier:** Dreams are easy to realize for you and those like you. We have a longer ladder to climb, Manson and I.
- Fitzjames:** Rubbish. Without a fantasy or two, you'll never be aware there is a ladder.

Manson: Maybe I'll just get there by submarine, Sir.

Crozier: Submarine? Oh. Your machine...

Manson: Yes, Sir. The ones that go under. Goodnight.

Manson exits. Fitzjames chuckles to himself.

12. THERE'S NO ICE IN BRAZIL

In a separate area, Queen Vic at age 26. She waves a gay handkerchief and is dressed in blatantly clashing regal colors.

Queen Vic: *(waving)* Bye bye, boys! Have fun in the Amazon! What? The Arctic?! But that's not in Brazil, is it? I thought they looked overdressed. Those silly woolen hats with the flaps. You'd think they were going to Upper Canada.

My name's Vic and I rule over the biggest Empire in the world! I had a birthday yesterday! Well three weeks ago actually but every day's my birthday if I want—and these...sailors were very rude to sail away for Brazil so soon after Vic Day. It's those old coots at the Admiralty—every one of them over seventy can you believe it and they still speak out as if they haven't pissed their brains down the loo by now...anyway they said something about ice which is totally absurd, there's no ice in Brazil every eel knows that but I don't care, some...woman wrote me asking about relief expeditions and I said "it's a little early yet don't you think, I mean they're just fucking setting out, they won't sink it yet unless they're *all* Irish" which I thought was a just answer full of royal wit and wisdom but I didn't write it down and mail it I mean what would they think if the post arrived and some *working* person said "Excuse me, Ma'am, there's only a letter from the Queen" or some such and then they might say "Which Queen is that, then?" or "Oh, God, not another one, feed it to the cat" or leave it unopened for weeks and weeks gathering dust over the Royal Monogram, NO! We must protect the special quality of our relationship with our people by ignoring as many of them as possible. And by the way I'd like as *many* of them as possible, people I mean not by me are you *insane* haven't you met Albert I adore him but he couldn't fertilize a wheat field, any Eskimots or kumquats or whatever they call themselves along this Northwest Pisshole or whatever it is we must remind them how lucky they are to be a part of our Grand

Design and shoot the ones who can't shout out, "Victoria, Vagina!" (*giggles, sighs*) It's a nice world.

13. DOTTED LINES, NEAT CIRCLES

In the main lower area, Crozier comes roaring through.

Crozier: (*with bottle*) The watch! Bloody Christ! Who's got the watch?! Don't any of you know what it means?!

Fitzjames is discovered in a section of the lower area as Crozier totters off. He has a series of maps spread out before him, a pointer and a compass.

Fitzjames: Laughable. What was I thinking? One season, I told Emma, then we'll be back, modern Lancelots, covered in glory... and here we are, in the middle of a map filled with dotted lines, educated guesses, and every compass describing neat circle after neat circle... astronomical clocks, chronometers, anglo-meter, electrometers, thermometers, hydrometers; theodolite, circular protractor... azimuth compasses—bloody useless thank you very much Magnetic Pole—dipping needle, altitude scope, repeating circle, dip sector... dips and needles, dips and needles... marine barometer, mountain barometer—only good for real mountains, of course—artificial horizons! "Due southwest from Cape Walker" yes, well we did that, gentlemen, and ran smack into some land a thousand miles long they'd missed, seemingly, while the mist curls over the stars and this useless emblem of our vainglory describes its useless circles!

He flings the compass out of sight.

14. 20,000 STEPS

Manson and Boxer are seen marching off, each with a rifle singing the first verse of "We're Away", which fades out as they disappear upstage, "out on the land". The first verse of "We're Away", sung to "Sweet Betsy From Pike" goes as follows:

Manson/Boxer: (*not sung well*)
 We're away, we're away! On the bleak frozen sea,
 When glory's ahead, none so fearless as we!
 Dangers our birthright, we've scorned it before
 When friends need our help, then we'll dare it the more.

As Fitzjames' light fades into black the sounds of arctic winter are heard, wind, whistling, singing, howling, quite loud. Gradually through the sound we hear far off the broken sounds of Manson and Boxer, singing "We're Away" in a much different fashion from that with which they began. Far upstage in blue light they appear, dragging each other along slowly, each picking up the song where the other lets it go, trying to force their bodies a little farther.

They are bound to each other by a rope about a foot long, forcing them to move or stop together. As they come closer, singing in cracked, slurred voices, we see that Boxer is doing most of the final pulling, having spotted the ship. His mittens are off. At last they reach the main lower area and collapse "on deck." Crozier is the first to spot them, from the upper deck.

Crozier: Get those men below decks!

Fitzjames appears behind Crozier and sees the scene.

Fitzjames: What's going on?

Crozier: Frostbite. Snow drunk. Did you give them leave to set out like that?

Fitzjames: *(shocked)* I thought it might do the men some good.

Crozier: We'll be lucky if they're any use to us at all, now.

Fitzjames: I think we should look at this from their side, don't you think?

Crozier: There is only one side, Fitzjames. Healthy or ill, they'll consume their share of food. But if they're ill we won't get any value for our money.

Fitzjames: You bastard.

Crozier: Listen to me. If the ice cracks, we'll need every ounce of strength we can muster to break free. We may only get one chance.

Fitzjames: Have they been drinking?

Crozier: Looks like it, doesn't it? That's what the Lady Cold does if you court her too long.

Fitzjames: Well, they're back, at least.

Crozier: I'm just bloody sorry you ever let them out!

Fitzjames: We can't stay on the ship forever! We have to deal with it—the ice, the cold, the inertia...

Crozier: Look at Boxer's hands. I've seen it before. Like wax. Water beads on 'em. He'll have to cut them off, of course.

Fitzjames: The rest of him isn't made of wax.

Crozier: No. It would easier to take off the hands of a man of wax.

Below, Manson is recovering more quickly than Boxer. He sits up awkwardly and looks at him, still snow drunk.

Manson: Hey!

Crozier: What's he saying?

Manson: *(louder)* HEY!

Manson prods Boxer, who lies still. Fitzjames moves at last and reaches the lower deck. He turns Boxer over and looks at him. From a trunk he produces a sharp scalpel and a bottle of whisky. He unties the rope holding Boxer and Manson together and stuffs part of it in Boxer's mouth after forcing a slug of whisky into his mouth. He takes a generous dose himself. Manson, still moving awkwardly, moves in close to see as Fitzjames sets to work on Boxer's hands.

Crozier: *(from above)* You might as well take off the entire hand. It fits a hook more easily.

Boxer screams in sudden agony and is quiet thereafter. The sound of bone being cut can be heard.

Fitzjames: I'm- just- going to do- the fingers...

Manson: *(confused)* Alright?

Fitzjames: I'm afraid not, Manson, but we're going to try and minimize the damage.

Crozier: *(from above)* A fine sentiment, that, on a sinking ship.

Fitzjames finishes with one hand and bandages it with linen wrapping from the trunk. He begins on the next, gently pushing Manson away from Boxer, as he hovers and sways about.

- Crozier:** *(from above)* Courage there, sailor! Though I can't imagine what you were doing without your mitts. If you don't line them up and birch them, nothing gets done. Like children. You're lucky Manson had the presence of mind to tie you up and pull you in.
- Fitzjames:** How would you know that?
- Crozier:** It's quite plain. One has mitts, the other doesn't. One is recovering quickly, the other not. One's a weasel out for himself, the other a bit of a spaniel. In a pit where only one dog lives I don't fancy the spaniel.
- Fitzjames:** You're well qualified to pontificate on human nature.
- Crozier:** I am, actually. Sentiment can be fatal.
- Fitzjames:** I'll remember that, Captain. Alright, Boxer, come on. Let's get down below. We'll get you home, don't worry.
- Crozier:** Best to get them working as soon as possible. Take their minds off the ordeal.

Manson blunders into Fitzjames as he attempts to lift Boxer. All three fall.

- Manson:** Alright?
- Fitzjames:** I can't handle them both!
- Crozier:** *(turning away)* No need. I'm sure help is on the way.

He exits the upper area. Manson crawls after Fitzjames, dragging Boxer along.

- Manson:** Alright...?
- Fitzjames:** Oh, God...there now, Goodman Boxer, let's get you home. If we had a surgeon left he'd have done better. A nurse is what you need. We could all use one.

He exits with Boxer. Manson, confused, turning about, crawls after them.

15. GETTING AHEAD VIA DEFEAT

Crozier appears in the separate area far upstage, Mid-level between the upper and lower players levels, bathed in a lurid, unreal light. At the other end of the area stands Queen

Vic. Crozier wears an absurdly oversized formal sash. Queen Vic wears a huge hoop skirt.

- Queen Vic:** So, Frannie, you've come.
- Crozier:** And a rare privilege it is indeed, Your Highness.
- Queen Vic:** Don't play the toady with me. I know why you're here, even if you don't.
- Crozier:** It's a great honor anyway.
- Queen Vic:** Not every paddy gets to sniff the Queen
- Crozier:** Your magnitude...please don't call me that.
- Queen Vic:** Sorry. A mick, then. You wipe the Pope's bum. Better?
- Crozier:** Um, no. You see, my parents were Irish, but I've left all that. I consider myself English now.
- Queen Vic:** How kind of you.
- Crozier:** You won't refuse me.
- Queen Vic:** No groveling, it's tiresome. Just how did you come to Her Majesty's Feet, Frannie?
- Crozier:** Fleet.
- Queen Vic:** Yes of course.
- Crozier:** Well. I worked harder than anyone. Did the things no one else would do. Never backed off from a fight and never forgot a slight.
- Queen Vic:** How indecently single minded of you. Are you suggesting my bunch of boats is governed by some sort of...meritocracy?
- Crozier:** Democracy allows advancement through hard work.
- Queen Vic:** Democracy? That's some sort of French word, isn't it? Really, my dear spud, where would we be if our lovely land was some sort of-meritodemocracy?
- Crozier:** But it is! Look at me!

Queen Vic: No fair. You cheated. Working hard entirely precludes buttock bussing. You've missed out, Fran. Normally I'd be miffed but if you're sweet I'll loan you mine for a smack or two.

Crozier: I'm not sure I'm worthy of the honor.

Queen Vic: If you were, we'd be at it by now, but you're not so I'm asking. There's a tattoo of a large cannon pointing at a defenseless foreign land which says "V and A" on the right cheek.

Crozier: Is it the proper things to do?

Queen Vic: If you were really one of us you wouldn't ever consider asking.

Crozier: I'm game.

Queen Vic turns her back to him as Crozier kneels before her.

Crozier: *(looking at the immensity of the skirt)* Where do I start?

Queen Vic: Hmm. It seems the Irish aren't as backward as I thought.

Crozier: There seems to be a lot to get through.

Queen Vic: Think of it as an expedition, Frannie. You must start at the beginning and work your way through with only the goal in mind, ignoring all the petty distractions which sap the great, national sovereignty, human decency, wogs...

Crozier, kneeling behind Queen Vic, has settled in under her hoop skirt and appears to be making slow progress as she shifts about comfortably like a hen.

Queen Vic: Of course you must come equipped with Nelson's eye, the good one I mean, and Lord Sheffield's mettle. Your aim must be true; refrain from appropriating native flesh unless of course you want to. In addition you may at any time insert a crucifix into the...culture, and convert it to Christianity...

Crozier: *(muffled)* After this, will I belong?

Queen Vic: Well it depends on exactly where you end up, of course, but really, the best you can hope for is to...bury yourself deep enough to conceal your filthy origins...

Crozier: *(muffled)* It's very dark in here...

Queen Vic: No one said it would be easy. It was your choice.

She jumps suddenly and swats at the fabric concealing Crozier.

Queen Vic: NO MATCHES!

Crozier: *(muffled)* Sorry...it's very nice!

Queen Vic: Yes, it'll be a nice spot until it declines from over use... are you biting me? *(sighs)* That's the problem of course, once you start letting them in they just want more and more, all kinds of social services... it's such a nuisance getting them out again...*(begins to pant)*...they often have some sort of...skill...to contribute, I must admit...*(slight sexual grimace)*...as long as they don't... displace anyone...

She comes to a polite orgasm. After a brief pause to regain her surroundings, waiting for Crozier to finish doing whatever he's doing, taking out a small kerchief to dab her brow.

Queen Vic: We all waste so much of our time, don't you think?

She lifts the back of her skirt up, swivels round and exits, leaving Crozier exposed, kneeling in a prayer position. Eyes closed in concentration. After a few moments, Fitzjames appears on the periphery of the light, carrying a bottle.

Fitzjames: Kissing the Pope's bum again, Crozier? Come on, I'll stand you some support from our friend Mr. Booth.

He helps Crozier up almost tenderly. Crozier walks off tentatively with Fitzjames, still not sure where he is or has been, now that his eyes are open. He was promised something else.

16. TOO LONG AWAY FROM THE PROPER SAIL

Lady Franklin appears upstage on the mid-level.

Lady F: When he found out he was to be replaced, John shut himself up with his navigation books and his accounts of the Arctic journeys...I didn't see him for two days, I was forced to entertain this—creature sent to take his place. There'd been no letter, no warning at all, just a ship disgorging this pinchnosed aesthete, telling us we were to go home. No reason. The Queen was dissatisfied, rubbish! The Queen hasn't heard yet of Van Diemen's Land or what went on there while John was Governor...someone

had it in for him they'd always loathed me for pushing him, it was never anything he didn't want to do...God, two days of wine and lamb he said, "Haven't you got FRENCH wine? You're not hoarding it are you?" in that chilling formal way they all have...at last John came out and he looked pale. He asked one question only of our reptilian houseguest, he asked, "How was your voyage?" Before our leering lizard could gather his sails for a reply my John said, I remember this now, "I've been too long away from a proper sail..."

She exits.

17. WE AREN'T GOING ANYWHERE

Darkness. Little shards of cold blue and white light appear and are gone, revealing shadows, shapes of figures in positions of toil. The lines should not appear as a rhythmic, linear conversation but as fragments bisecting the shards of light, creating a surreal, unworldly quality. These men are already spectres.

Crozier: Right, proceed to dismantle the masts...leave the main top. She'll need to be fiddled...

Fitzjames: That way we can hoist the electrometer.

Crozier: Lower the yards amidships. They'll support the spanker. We can stretch the canvas over it...

Fitzjames: There's a lot of material lying on deck now. Boats, running rigging, sails...

Crozier: Take it ashore. It'll keep as well there with less trouble. Ropes and sails ashore! We need them frozen!

Fitzjames: The anchor?

Crozier: Ashore. We aren't going anywhere.

The following song can be sung by Lady Franklin as the stage action continues. Perhaps the men join in, Crozier leading and Fitzjames picking up by the second verse, Boxer croaking the last two lines as Manson watches.

(sung) I dreamed a dream the other night
Lowlands, lowlands away my John

My true love came all dressed in white
(chorus) My lowlands away

She came to me at my bedside
 Lowlands, lowlands away my Johnny
 All dressed in white, like some fair bride
 My lowlands away.

And bravely in her bosom fair
 Lowlands, lowlands away my John
 A red red rose my love did wear
 My lowlands away

And she lay down no word she said
 Lowlands, lowlands away my John
 And then I knew
 My love was dead
(Last line not completed)

Crozier and Fitzjames are discovered as the swirl of light and shadows dissipates, near the steps leading from the lower area to the upper.

Fitzjames: *(pacing)* We have food for two months, three if we're careful.

Crozier does not reply. He is seated on steps.

Fitzjames: The way I see it, the question is whether or not we should leave the ship. And when, of course.

Crozier: Not to mention where.

Fitzjames: Then you think we must leave!

Crozier: I said no such thing.

Fitzjames: It's this blasted Magnetic Pole, Crozier. I feel...dislocated, watching my dial spin round.

Crozier: Don't watch it, then.

Fitzjames: It's just...time's running out. I can feel that. The men can, too. If they weren't so hungry and so ill we'd have had a mutiny on our hands by now. You must tell me if I'm wrong, but I believe we have a duty to act.

Crozier: Act, then.

Fitzjames: But what? How can we get their minds off the ice? You're older, Crozier. You've been through it before.

Crozier: Read another of your books.

Fitzjames: Alright. I know we've disagreed. You didn't think I should—we must have creative leadership!

Crozier: Hear, hear.

Fitzjames: You don't give a damn. You'd rather see me dangle.

Crozier: You do it so well.

Fitzjames: At least I can get interested in saving a ship and the humanity on board!

Crozier: All you ever do is talk. When it's time to sink or swim all the words in the world won't float you through. You won't care for me anymore than you do now, but I'll be there.

Fitzjames: You're as scared as I am

Crozier begins to hum a jaunty version of a funeral air.

Fitzjames: We've got to keep their spirits up. They're not as numb as you are. They're twisting inside from the cold, their spirits are blue with chill.

Crozier hums determinedly.

Fitzjames: Yes! A play! To take their minds away. Manson could do it—he's a born organizer. Yes.

Crozier: Bravo. From rats leaving a sinking ship to fiddling while Rome burns. Creative leadership, that.

Fitzjames: **HAVE YOU GOT ANYTHING BETTER.**

Crozier: How could I? I'm numb.

He disengages from Fitzjames, turns and exits. Fitzjames watches after him and then turns out, sitting on the step.

Fitzjames: God. I never thought it would be like this.

During the ensuing voice over, Manson takes his place near the centre of the lower area.

19. A REASONABLE PROPOSAL

Dr. King: To the Admiralty. My dear Barrow. You may remember me—I was second in command on Lt. Back’s expedition up the Great Fish River as far as Chantrey Inlet in 1836. This is of course where Sir John Franklin, whom you sentenced to death with your vague and ignorant sailing orders, is waiting to be found, if he or any of his men remain to chide you.

The idea of a sea voyage through waters uncluttered with Polar ice for less than two weeks a year, where, in fact, only overland expeditions have succeeded at all beyond blind luck—such a voyage seems to me ludicrous and arrogant, surpassing rational comprehension.

Supply me with food and equipment for three months, not years, and I shall *walk* to where Franklin stands or lies. For the sake of moral propriety I advise you to confess to your stupidity and accept my proposal as the only means to your salvation. Dated this 15th of September, 1847, signed, Dr. Richard King. Copies to the Her Majesty the Queen, the Prime Minister, and all major London dailies.

20. CHILDREN CAN BE CRUEL

Lighting up on Manson, alone, brandishing a piece of wood, turning in darting, quick little circles in the lower area. The trunk lies open nearby. Fitzjames, in a separate area, speaking in an earlier conversation.

Manson: None of you’s going to get the drop on me.

Fitzjames: Come on, Manson! For the good of the crew.

Manson: No nearer! Get yourselves a nancy. I’m no whore.

Fitzjames: And make it a comedy. Find someone to play the demoiselle! The men will like that.

Boxer enters the fringe of the light. He has no fingers. He carries a coil of rope.

Boxer: What's going on?

Fitzjames: And you must use Boxer. Make him feel useful.

Manson: Nothing, nothing. Just organizing a little entertainment.

Boxer: I acted a little, once. Look. I'm learning knots all over.

Manson: *(still turning)* You'll be on to your shoelaces next.

Boxer continues to watch Manson. An awkward silence.

Manson: Look, Boxer, it's not a good thing you walked into. One good turn for another—don't get involved.

Boxer: Please. I'd like to get involved. Something to do.

Fitzjames: The men should let Boxer know he's appreciated.

Boxer: What can I do? I'm not much of a workman, now. I can sing a bit. Used to drive Jenny's Dad wild- howling outside the window like a dog in the moonlight 'til he'd let me in.

Manson: Alright. I warned you once. There's a dress in that trunk. The boys wanted me to wear it but it'll fit you just as well.

Boxer: Thanks, Manson.

Manson: *(to the boys)* Not too rough.

Boxer approaches the trunk and manages to pull out a faded red dress from it.

Boxer: I'll need some help.

Manson: Sure.

Manson lays down the wood and goes over to the trunk, where he assist Boxer in putting on the dress. He cinches it tight at the back and then ties Boxer's hands behind his back, using Boxer's coil of rope.

Boxer: What's that for?

Manson: It's a sort of melodrama. You're the tragic heroine.

Boxer: I've got it. Captured by evil villains, waiting to ravish me.

Manson: You've got it.

A pause. Manson finishes tying Boxer's hands.

Manson: Listen to me. If you're quiet, and you don't squeal, you can live to see another day.

Boxer: In the play.

Manson: It's not a bloody play. I tried to warn you off. The boys have their needs, and you're going to fill them.

Silence.

Boxer: I gave you my mitts.

He tries to move, but Manson brings him to his knees with a kick to the kidneys. Manson holds Boxer down.

Manson: I warned you! Don't say I didn't. It's you or me, sport, and in that game me always wins. You're going to be a bitch for an hour.

Fitzjames: Do something to heighten the effect, you know, lipstick, rouge, whatever we've got.

Manson quickly fishes for some make-up in the trunk and applies it roughly to Boxer's face.

Boxer: Don't. Please...

Manson: I'm sorry, mate. You shouldn't have come by, is all. I didn't plan it. Stay on your knees. And keep your mouth in range or you won't be able to sit for a week.

Fitzjames: Do a good job! Keep their spirits up!

Boxer remains on his knees. He is not struggling. Manson moves away a pace of two, staring out at the "boys" expectantly.

Manson: *(to Boxer)* Close your eyes. Think of your girl. It's easier that way.

A babble of two voices is heard, distant but getting nearer: as they come closer the words become clearer and the voices are recognized as those of the inebriated Crozier and Fitzjames. They are singing snatches between arguments about the song.

Crozier & Fitzjames: *(still relatively distant, singing)*
 Our hearts have often fainted,
 Our cheeks been filled with woe
 As travelers have painted
 The Arctic ice and snow.
 But in all the world says Franklin, Sir,
 With the friendly fruitful Arctic
 And the bracing Arctic air.

They approach. Manson, who has begun to undo his trousers, hastily reties them, cuts Boxer's bonds and kicks him over to one side. Manson stands as nonchalantly as he can as Crozier and Fitzjames enter in linked arms, swaying drunkenly and passing a bottle back and forth. Boxer, getting to his feet, tries to look as respectable as he can in his dress. Crozier and Fitzjames survey the situation silently. Crozier then turns his face very close to Fitzjames and proclaims in an elaborate stage whisper heard by all.

Crozier: Captain Fitzjames, I don't believe we should allow the men to see us in this condition.

Fitzjames: Very good. *(to the men)* Don't look men. That's an odor. *(to Crozier)* But we must sing. It's inspirational to the men.

Crozier: We can't sing. We're drunk.

Fitzjames: You insisted—do not deny it, Commander, I dismember the conversation clearly—you insisted that not only would you have to be drunk to sing, but that I would have to be drunk to listen to you.

Crozier: Humph...s' all most irregular.

Fitzjames: Of course it is. Everything's irregular at the moment. So. The men must look, and we must sing. *(to the men)* Look men! Composer Crozier and I have...commandeered a song. Actually it was a poem for the next edition of Illustrated Arctic News which you've all been kind enough to subscribe to... under order...ha ha...*(to Crozier)* But it was a terrible poem.

Crozier: Bloody awful.

Fitzjames: So naturally we made it into a song.

Crozier: It's even worse, really.

Fitzjames: Do you remember your verse?

Crozier: Of course. I have it written down.

(Hums a note, sings)

The countless miles of prairie
That rim the middle sea
The musk-ox fat and hairy
The reindeer running free;
Can all combine says Franklin, Sir,
To fill our cupboard bare
For the friendly fruitful Arctic
Holds wealth for all to share.

Fitzjames: The night is long but restful
The day is filled with flowers
Mosquitoes here are zestful
But then so in truth are ours.
And the time is near says Franklin, Sir
When thousands will repair
To the friendly fruitful Arctic
(with Crozier) And the home that waits them there.

They finish the song with a flourish, arms out in true music hall style, expectant. Silence. Boxer gazes at the floor. Manson is too tightly strung to toady. The Officers assume the worst.

Crozier: 's your fault, Fitzjames. That “friendly, fruitful Arctic” line was too much.

Fitzjames: I quite agree. It was your line. Mine was “And the home that waits them there.” A nice poetic touch to that, I thought.

Manson: How is Sir John, Sir? You mentioned him.

Fitzjames: Mmm. I regret to say, Manson, that Sir John appears to be gravely ill. *(laughs incongruously)* Though of course we're all a bit out of sorts, aren't we, crammed on one ship, stuck in the ice.

Manson: He always did the men a world of good, Sir, when he was able. Someone we could look up to.

Crozier: Do you notice anything unusual, Captain?

Fitzjames: *(regarding Boxer)* About that man there, you mean?

Crozier: Mmm.

Fitzjames: Of course. That dress is far too short.

- Crozier:** Let's see your play!
- Manson:** It's not ready yet, Sir.
- Fitzjames:** A scene, then.
- Manson:** We've only just roughed it out.
- Crozier:** How rough, I wonder. How does it end?
- Manson:** Everyone dies.
- Fitzjames:** That's rough, alright.
- Boxer:** I have a song, Sir.
- Crozier:** What?
- Boxer:** A song. From the melodrama. Near the end.
- Crozier:** Let's have it, then.

Boxer folds his hands behind his back like a schoolboy at recital, but also as he was only recently. Manson edges to the fringe of the light as Crozier and Fitzjames come in further and wait attentively for Boxer to begin.

- Boxer:** The heroine's been captured by the evil villain and brought to his lair. It's dark and cold. She sees no way out. So she sings. To keep her spirits up.

(sings) Oh, lover, don't forsake me
When all is dark
I will dream of you.

Oh, lover, o'er the great sea
My heart is strong and true.

All my troubles will fade
Like the sun
O'ercomes the shade;

When your love touches mine
Grief lies behind
For my heart is thine.

Oh, lover, can you hear me?

I fly to you
Over timeless skies.

Oh, lover, are you near me?
I'll seek for you
Through closed eyes.

He stops singing and stands quite still, gazing down.

Fitzjames: *(after a pause)* You made that up yourself, didn't you, Boxer.

Boxer: Can I go now, Sir.

Fitzjames: *(low)* Of course.

Boxer exits from the light, still wearing the dress. Crozier seems strangely silent. Manson seethes to one side. Fitzjames looks nowhere in particular.

Fitzjames: Well. We'll get to Avalon, alright, with songs like that.

21. I WON'T NEVER BE NO LORD

Boxer in a spotlight, playing with a toy boat. At the fringe of his light appears Lady Franklin, watching him. Boxer sees her, regards her impassively for a moment, and turns back to his boat. She comes nearer and stands over him.

Lady F: Johnny?...Johnny, can you see me?

Boxer: *(fixed on boat)* I dunno. My Daddy'll whack me if I say I saw you.

Lady F: But you like me, don't you, Johnny?

Boxer: I dunno. You make the ships come.

Lady F: In your dreams.

Boxer: Yeh. I like ships. *(Pause)* You can get places in a ship.

Lady F: Would you like to be captain of a great ship some day?

Boxer: No. Not captain. I want to be a sailor.

Lady F: Not a captain like Francis Drake or Lord Nelson?

- Boxer:** I won't never be no lord. *(Pause)* Sailor's keen.
- Lady F:** You'll have to work very hard.
- Boxer:** That's alright *(Pause)* I like ships.
- Lady F:** If you were sailing, then you'd have followed your dreams, Johnny.
- Boxer:** *(Pause)* I dunno. *(Pause)* I like ships.
- Lady F:** And that would mean that I exist for you.
- Boxer:** I like dreams.
- Lady F:** Yes. And you like ships.
- Boxer:** Yeh.
- Lady F:** Someday, you'll find someone who shows you what love is, and teaches you. And, if you still love ships, you may have to choose between one and the other.
- Boxer:** That's not fair.
- Lady F:** No. But if you're really very lucky, she'll be waiting for you when you come home.
- Boxer:** Even if it took a long time?
- Lady F:** Oh yes, Johnny, even if it took a long time.
- Boxer:** I like ships.

22. TWO SWELLS ON A STROLL

Far upstage in the middle area, where Manson and Boxer were during their trek, we see Manson and Crozier, again in cold blue light. Crozier lies huddled under a canvas. Manson, standing, kicks at him.

- Crozier:** You traitorous bastard! Go ahead! Murder me!
- Manson:** I thought you might be freezing. I woke you to see.

Crozier: Why don't you leave me alone?

Manson: I wish I knew.

Manson throws a chunk of meat down before Crozier's face. He chews on another piece himself while he looks around.

Crozier: I'd die before I ate that.

Manson: I could let you die, you know. I wouldn't cry.

Crozier: Why don't you then?

Manson: Because you're such a fine, jolly fellow. Now we're going to eat our little dinner, aren't we? Just one piecey-wiecey?

Crozier: Get it away from me!

Manson: Still friends with it? With this? *(Holds up sliver of flesh.)* He's not wearing his bars anymore, you know. Come on, try it. It's not too bad.

Crozier: I can't!

Manson: You're not cutting out on me yet.

He forces a piece into Crozier's mouth. Crozier resists fiercely and throws the piece away. Manson goes after it, brings it back, and eats it.

Manson: I wasn't always like this, you know.

23. A LAST WALTZ

On the main playing area we see the actress playing Lady Franklin/Queen Vic run out as if in a chase. She appears very young. She giggles as Fitzjames, singing, pursues her. He begins from the upper "deck" playing area and follows her down, slowly moving in as she tries to find a spot to hide.

Fitzjames: *(sings)* When first unto this land with Franklin I can
To set on adventure, the Passageway to claim
Now the ice has taken hold, and there's darkness all the day
And rare is the exploring, God knows how long we'll stay.

And darling sister Emma, sometimes I think I hear
The prayers you give at evening to lend courage to my fear

Like the compass spinning round I need a guiding star
 Though we played these games in childhood
 They all seem so very far.

When first unto this land with Franklin I came
 Twas such a grand adventure the Passageway to claim
 There is hope and desperation but no place left to run
 I will count each day's survival and do what must be done.

He catches up with her and pulls off her hiding veils, bringing her up into a hug. They begin to dance, a waltz, moving slowly about the fringes of the light.

Fitzjames: I never thought I'd hear you say that, Emma.

Emma/Lady F: I'd've been more disappointed if you hadn't left. You always underestimate us.

Fitzjames: That's so. I can't say I've ever truly understood any woman.

Emma/Lady F: Does any seaman? If you knew how great we are, you'd never leave us.

Fitzjames: Ah, but's that why we do leave. Just to find a tiny fragment of your wealth for our own.

Emma/Lady F: There's no Grail, you know.

Fitzjames: I know. The search is all.

Emma/Lady F: It's not fair. You get to search.

Fitzjames: And you get to be whole. Emma, I always seem to be a Jamie in your arms!

Emma/Lady F: There's no failure in the search.

Fitzjames: Only if I stopped too soon. *(laughs)* They all think I'm mad. But I'll put up my feet in Avalon, yet!

Emma/Lady F: Kiss me bye-bye. Until I meet you there.

They kiss. She exits like a breath of wind.

Fitzjames: *(after her)* For tea!

24. COIN OF THE REALM

Upstage middle level, cold blue light, Crozier, still huddled up, Manson, standing, alert.

Manson: I don't believe it.

Crozier: What is it?

Manson: Forms in the snow. Men, I think.

Crozier throws away the piece of raw flesh he's been gnawing on.

Crozier: Have they got food?

Manson: *(after a pause)* No.

Crozier hastily scrabbles after the meat he has flung away.

Manson: What do you say?

Crozier: You're the boss.

Manson: Alright. I'll go see for myself.

He strides out of the light.

Crozier: Manson! Don't leave me here! There's no meat left!

Manson returns.

Manson: I forgot we'll need something to trade.

He rips the medals off of Crozier's uniform and exits once more.

Crozier: Ask them if they've got any meat!

He sits back down, huddling disconsolately in the canvas.

Crozier: Animal meat...

25. NEW PARTNER, OLD WALTZ

Lady Franklin appears with Boxer. Each holds a tea cup. A cold blue light.

- Lady F:** Do you think a man is foolish if he starts something he knows he won't be able to finish?
- Boxer:** No, Ma'am.
- Lady F:** My husband and I believe in the benevolence of God.
- Boxer:** It's there, Ma'am. You've got to look for it to find it.
- Lady F:** He loved you all, you know.
- Boxer:** Yes, Ma'am. We died anyway.

26. PERHAPS AS WE SPEAK

As the light disappears from the main playing area and the upstage mid space, a voice over is heard: deep, sonorous.

- Admiralty:** It is with great pleasure that I stand before you charged with the pleasant duty of summing up the achievements of the Admiralty over the past year. One incident, or the lack of it, mars our celebration only: and that is, in spite of our most valiant efforts, no word of the fate of the Franklin Expedition has yet come forth. It is to be expected that criticism will inevitably come from less capable and less informed quarters, but the expected sniping of our friends in the Hudson Bay Company has been joined by the public musing of Lady Franklin. This we regret, and her ill-conceived efforts to mount independent relief expeditions can only cause her financial distress and undue emotional strain. To her, I say, let us who are men of the sea do all that men can do. Given Sir John's unyielding courage, we must expect that even after five years they may still be alive, waiting for the reassuring appearance of Her Majesty's Navy, perhaps as we speak pushing north to the rugged men of the whaling station or west to the charms of Cook's Pacific. Perhaps the secret to the Passage lies safely within their grasp. If we cannot find them, no woman can. Gentlemen, I give you "Sir John Franklin."

- Admiralty Men:** "Hear Hear!!" "Sir John Franklin" etc. etc.

To a discernible chinking of glasses over the low rumbling of the Admiralty's elders, the sound fades out.

27. WAITING AT AVALON

Fitzjames, in his long johns, holding a gun, staring out. The gun is smoking. A single spot follows him where he goes, as he descends the steps and roams the main playing area.

Fitzjames: It's strange...I thought there'd be someone waiting...don't know why...I just thought there would be. But there's nothing here. Nothing at all. *(Pause)* Well.

He looks around hopefully...all is darkness.

Fitzjames: *(Pause)* Well. It's a bit of a letdown...

Fadeout to black on Fitzjames.

28. THE INITIATE

Upstage, cold blue light. Crozier, squatting, fiercely huddling the canvas about him, beating on his thighs and arms, hopping.

Crozier: I'm alive! I can see you! Who are you?

Silence.

Crozier: Esk-i-mo? *(Pause)* What is it, yes, Hearne had it, "uski", or "ushki", Chipewyan for "raw", yes, my great bloody books, "um-wau" for "he eats" ... "Ush-ki-um-wau"? Ush-ki-um-wau?

Silence.

Crozier: No! Wait! Show what to do! I'll do it! *(Pause)* What? "Hell is dark, with snow flying, and storms." Yes. "Icebergs are like snowflakes." *(Considers)* That's not too bad. Never get tangled in your harpoon line or a whale will rip your leg off." That's very practical, but I'm not there, yet. "Small stones nearby will look like large rocks far away. Mountains will appear and vanish. Water will look like land, and land, water." *(Pause)* Oh, God, this is going to be harder than I imagined. What? "Adapt or die." I'll adapt. *(Pause)* I'll die. But it will take longer. That's important.

Manson appears at the fringe of the light. He is chewing on a piece of raw meat. Crozier's phantom appears to have vanished. He squats and stares straight ahead.

Manson: Still crapping?

Crozier: Trots.

Manson: You can't afford to get sick out here. You might die.

Crozier: Need a welsh rarebit. Yorkshire pudd.

Manson: Not on the menu today. This's all there is.

Crozier: Don't want their food.

Manson: Not much choice, as far as I can see.

Crozier: Cook it!

Manson: Yes, Sir, Captain. There it is. Suit yourself.

Manson tosses Crozier's share of the meat in front of him. Crozier ignores it. Manson takes another bite of his.

Manson: Mmmm. 's got all its vitamins when it's not bled.

Crozier remains motionless. Manson moves about, drying out strips of flesh, keeping a lookout. He is dressed in skins, while Crozier wears the remnants of his uniform under the canvas.

Crozier: *(mumbling)* Bloody foreigner.

Manson: What?

Crozier: You never hesitated a moment, did you?

Manson chews placidly on his piece of meat.

Crozier: There's no one looking for us, you know.

Manson: I never counted on it.

Crozier: Not Robinson Crusoe. You never minded.

Manson: I'll give you five seconds before I take it.

Crozier reaches out quickly and grabs the piece of meat. He tears at it with his teeth.

Crozier: Don't expect me to be grateful to your hunchback friends.

- Manson:** I won't.
- Crozier:** Seal and whale blubber for months.
- Manson:** We've had worse.
- Crozier:** You keep it down so well, though.
- Manson:** I ate the...other stuff first, too.
- Crozier:** When you came back just now, I could see—
- Manson:** What, if anything?
- Crozier:** You're beginning to walk like an Eskimo. All hunched over.
- Manson:** Beats losing your face to the wind.
- Crozier:** You're turning into an Eskimo. All hunched over.
- Manson:** Get on with it.
- Crozier:** Think of it. You marry a nice plump Eskimo squaw or whatever they call them—and they're all plump, full of blood, raw—with your brains you could be their chief.
- Manson:** They don't have chiefs.
- Crozier:** Wonderful! An opportunity. You could be first, unencumbered by Parliamentary precedent. A little tin despot ruling ice and snow and hunchbacks!
- Manson:** Look. They know how to live here. They love it, in fact. We're the bloody provincials. We're the Wogs. And I'll tell you something else—I can trust them more than I could ever trust a Captain in Her Majesty's Navy.
- Crozier:** Then you must stay, Manson! You were always a foreigner—embrace your foreignness!
- Manson:** They're not much on questions like, "Have you seen any big boats?" or "Where did they come from?" You're my compass. You'll point me home.
- Crozier:** Aren't we? (*beat*) Home.

Manson: I'll wait for your sense to return. It's the only possible thing that would make living with you day by day for all this time worthwhile. That, and the joy I'll get from telling the papers all about you when I get home.

Crozier: Don't make me laugh.

Manson: I won't. Headlines. "An Officer's Cannibalism." "Preferable To Hunting, Says Surviving Captain." "Officers Lives On After His Ship And Crew" or should that one be "Lives On His Crew?"

Crozier: You did it, too!

Manson: They'd expect me to, wouldn't they? You should've gone down with your ship, Captain. You've been wasting your time trying to stay alive. You can't go back. You're already dead.

Crozier: Dishonor the noblest of crewmates—wreck the dreams of a nation—all for a petty vendetta?

Manson: Not my nation, is it? It was a big mistake. A one hundred and twenty eight man mistake! Finish your meat?

Crozier: *(Laughs)* But of course. The wolverine. We've always managed to crush animals like you Manson. You're a mosquito to the Great English back. If you draw a little blood we'll just let you burst.

Manson: Christ. You're not even English.

Crozier: What?

Manson: You're a paddy. Every man on ship knew that.

Crozier: The difference between one's birth and one's desire is one you wouldn't understand, Manson. You are an illiterate member of a wretched class. I am not.

Manson: That's the problem with putting one's nose so close to the sewer. You can't smell your own stink. *(beat)* You'll rot here before I will.

Crozier suddenly stabs Manson with a knife from inside the canvas. Manson straightens up and falls over backward. He lies still.

Crozier: No. You won't die...until our eyes have met...like honourable men!

Crozier hoists up Manson and turns the head to look at him. With one hand he forces open Manson's eyes.

Crozier: We are honourable men!

Crozier throws Manson's form to one side. He stands over it. Looks about, confused.

Crozier: ...not...animals...

He rapidly and violently searches Manson's body. He finds an old compass and holds it up, peering at it. From the way he turns it, it becomes evident that the needle is spinning in circles. Crozier, holding the compass, turns in a slow circle, looking out in despair.

Crozier: ...north...

29. WAITING

Crozier freezes. Lady Franklin appears, a black veil over her face. She stops and stands very near the audience, peering out.

Lady F: John? (Pause) John?

Fade to black on the two images.

English martial music of the period should be used for both the introduction and post show periods of the performance.

END