

33 LOST

A New Play by
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Draft D1-B

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THE ENSEMBLE

The show is built around an ensemble of 8 or 9 performers, though it could certainly be expanded as desired. Most will perform several roles and all will be involved in creating the illusions of sea and ships. A few should be singers who can handle solo moments, but the others only need to be able to sing in chorus or even in unison.

DOUBLING ARRANGEMENTS

For 8 (4w, 4m):

- #1: (female) O'Hare, Kruis, Slinning
- #2: (male) Johnson, Harris, Rimer
- #3: (female) Sam, Mrs. Nagel, Lookout
- #4: (male) Wellander, Pearson, Priest, Lundmark
- #5: (female) Peters, Mary
- #6: (male) Wicklund
- #7: (female) Vance
- #8: (male) Quinn

For 9 (4w, 5m):

- #1: (female) O'Hare, Mrs. Nagel, Slinning
- #2: (male) Johnson, Harris, Rimer
- #3: (m/f) Sam, Lookout
- #4: (male) Wellander, Pearson, Priest
- #5: (female) Peters, Mary
- #6: (male) Wicklund
- #7: (female) Vance
- #8: (male) Quinn
- #9: (male) Kruis, Lundmark

SONG LIST

All songs in the show are traditional or in the public domain as of 2026.

- I-1 Crossing the Bar
- I-4 Leave Her Johnny
- I-7 Eternal Father, Strong to Save
- I-10: Row, Me Bully Boys, Row
- I-12: Abide With Me
- II-1: Roll the Old Chariot
- II-4: The Parting Glass
- II-6: Taps
- II-10: Row, Me Bully Boys, Row (reprise)
- II-11: Crossing the Bar (reprise)

SET NEEDS

As initially imagined, the action mostly plays on a bare stage with an upstage platform. However, there are some staging elements that could be useful:

- * 1 or 2 sections of low wall or handrail, to simulate the bulkhead of the ship or rooms/offices
- * a rope and pulley capable of supporting an actor
- * some kind of rigging (ratlines) that actors can climb
- * at least 2 light 5' poles with rectangular fabric on them to simulate boat sides and waves
- * 4 light wooden chairs, preferably ladder-backed
- * a small and light wooden table

Lighting and sound will be important parts of the visual and aural design, of course, and projections and/or smoke can also add to many scenes.

TIME

The SS *Rosecrans* ran aground on January 7, 1913, just after 5:00 a.m. The action of the play re-enacts that wreck and the investigations over the following three weeks.

CHARACTERS

Jack QUINN, (m/25+), USLSS Assistant Inspector
Alexandra VANCE (f/25+), Associated Oil representative
Oscar WICKLUND (m/40+), Point Adams station-keeper
Alfred RIMER (m/40+), Fort Canby station-keeper
SAM Klondike (m/20s), USLSS Junior Inspector
Otto WELLANDER (m/40+), USLSS Headquarters Chief
Leonard PEARSON (m/20s), Point Adams surfman
Peter KRUIS (m/20s), Fort Canby surfman
MARY Wicklund (f/40+), wife of Oscar Wicklund
Mrs. NAGEL (f/20+), wife of Point Adams surfman Pat Nagel
Fred PETERS (m/25+), quartermaster of the *Rosecrans*
Johan SLINNING (m/20s), quartermaster of the *Rosecrans*
Erick LUNDMARK (m/30+), ship's carpenter, *Rosecrans*
Lucien JOHNSON (m/29), captain of the *Rosecrans*
Nora O'HARE (f/20+), (fictional) wife of *Rosecrans* sailor
Mr. HARRIS (m/any), (fictional) Associated Oil clerk
PRIEST (M/any), officiant for funeral

HISTORICAL NOTE

The wreck of the *Rosecrans* disaster engaged the efforts of many investigators. The U.S. Life-Saving Service examined the rescue and the efforts of the life-saving crews, while a parallel inquest by the U.S. Steamboat Inspection Service determined liability for the disaster. For dramatic efficiency, some characters have been combined and the two inquiries merged.

ACT ONE

I-1: **ROSECRANS AGROUND**

SETTING: The stage seems mostly bare and mostly black at first glance, with little suggestion of a specific place or time. A narrow platform near the back wall with a handrail at its downstage edge. A ratline (a climbing net) angles up on one side. A single rope runs over an unseen pulley and attaches to a crate on the floor, center.

AT RISE: The stage is dark except for a pool of down light on ENSEMBLE #4.

ENSEMBLE #4
(singing "CROSSING
THE BAR")

SUNSET AND EVENING STAR
AND ONE CLEAR CALL FOR ME
AND MAY THERE BE NO MOANING OF THE BAR
WHEN I PUT OUT TO SEA

LIGHTS rise slowly, painting the stage in blues and shadow. ENSEMBLE #2 through #7 stand at various stations, facing the audience.

FULL ENSEMBLE
(singing a cappella)
WHEN I PUT OUT TO SEA
WHEN I PUT OUT TO SEA
AND MAY THERE BE NO MOANING OF THE BAR
WHEN I PUT OUT TO SEA

Sounds of a GALE and CRASHING WAVES are heard and the Ensemble begins to be thrown about this way and that: falling, sliding on the deck, fighting to control the ship and carry out their duties. Their movements are synchronized and convey the pitch and roll of the ship through their bodies. Even the suspended crate swings back and forth.

ENSEMBLE #4

(singing)

TWILIGHT AND EVENING BELL
AND AFTER THAT THE DARK
AND MAY THERE BE NO SADNESS OR FAREWELL
WHEN I EMBARK

FULL ENSEMBLE

(singing)

WHEN I EMBARK
WHEN I EMBARK
AND MAY THERE BE NO SADNESS OR FAREWELL
WHEN I EMBARK.

Ensemble #1 points suddenly ahead.

ENSEMBLE #1

Sandbar! Dead ahead!

ENSEMBLE #4

(on the "bridge")

All engines astern full!

ENSEMBLE #5

We're gonna hit!

The ship strikes a sandbar, cueing a HORRENDOUS CRASH and a SHRIEK OF METAL. The crew lurches forward. The front LIGHTS chop out, leaving the Ensemble silhouetted in back light as a fleeting moment in time stretches into infinity. The bodies of the crew suddenly arrest in mid-motion, slowing as though frozen in that moment forever.

Another pool of LIGHT appears across the stage, and ENSEMBLE #6 as Captain Oscar WICKLUND steps into it. He is disheveled, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

WICKLUND

Yes? What is it?

ENSEMBLE #1 crosses to the light.

ENSEMBLE #1

Sorry to wake you, Keeper. SOS relayed out of Astoria Station. It's a tanker, the Rosecrans. She's run aground.

WICKLUND

Location?

ENSEMBLE #1

Astoria asked, sir. All they got back was this.

ENSEMBLE #1 hands Wicklund a length
of ticker tape.

WICKLUND

(reading)

"Stranded on Columbia Bar. Water has washed in the cabins. I
can't stay much longer. H-E-L...?"

ENSEMBLE #1

Presumably "help," but he never finished it. Cut off, no
more replies, no fix on where she struck.

WICKLUND

Very well. Rouse the men, make ready the boat.

ENSEMBLE #1

Aye, sir.

The STAGE LIGHTS restore, as does
the STORM SOUND. The ENSEMBLE snaps
back into real time and complete
their falls and slides and rolls,
some carried completely off the
ship by the wreck's force.

ENSEMBLE #4

(singing)

FOR THOUGH FROM OUT
OUR BOURNE OF TIME AND PLACE
THE FLOOD MAY BEAR ME FAR
I HOPE TO SEE MY PILOT FACE TO FACE
WHEN I HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

Gradually the FULL ENSEMBLE leaves
the "ship" and comes to stand in a
line across downstage.

FULL ENSEMBLE

(singing, repeat
twice)

WHEN I HAVE CROSSED THE BAR
WHEN I HAVE CROSSED THE BAR
I HOPE TO SEE MY PILOT FACE TO FACE
WHEN I HAVE CROSSED THE BAR

The LIGHTS fade on the ship as most
of the Ensemble exits.

I-2: ASSOCIATED OIL

*ENSEMBLE #7 as Alexandra VANCE
steps out with a briefcase to
meet ENSEMBLE #4 as Otto
WELLANDER.*

VANCE
Superintendent Wellander?

WELLANDER
Yes?

VANCE
I'm here from--

WELLANDER
(dismissively)
Mrs. Gifford is giving the interviews.

VANCE
I'm sorry?

WELLANDER
She's in charge of our clerical pool. You'll have to--

VANCE
I'm here to speak to you, sir.

WELLANDER
Just because it's my secretary that left, doesn't mean I
personally conduct the--

VANCE
I'm not a secretary.

WELLANDER
Then...what are you?

VANCE
A senior claims representative for Associated Oil.
(off his look)
I did wire you I'd be coming.

WELLANDER
I'm sure you did, and without a secretary, things get...who
are you, again?

VANCE
Alexandra Vance.

WELLANDER
Vance? Oh! You're Alex Vance?

VANCE

Yes.

WELLANDER

I was under the impression it was short for Alexander.

VANCE

I'm not responsible for your impressions.

WELLANDER

Yet you certainly like to make them, don't you, Miss Vance?

VANCE

Mrs.

Pause.

WELLANDER

How can I help you?

VANCE

I'm here about the *SS Rosecrans*. You know her?

WELLANDER

Her name showed up in a couple briefings this week. She's a tanker, yes?

VANCE

An Associated Oil steamer of twenty-nine-hundred tons.

WELLANDER

Right. Got into trouble up in Washington, as I recall.

VANCE

She was carrying nineteen thousand barrels of crude oil to Portland, Oregon. She ran aground in heavy seas trying to cross into the Columbia River. Only two men were rescued.

WELLANDER

It's a dangerous area up there. Famous for it.

VANCE

My company has asked me to liaise with the lead inspector. Has one been assigned yet?

WELLANDER

Assigned for what, exactly?

VANCE

The investigation.

WELLANDER

Of the wreck? There'll be a incident report that the Station Keeper files, but apart from that--

VANCE

Does that report determine the *cause*? Who was at fault?

WELLANDER

Not our job to point fingers: that's between you and the insurance people.

VANCE

There's no formal inquiry? We assumed that would be standard practice!

WELLANDER

And I'm not responsible for your assumptions.

VANCE

Thirty-four men died! It's your duty to investigate.

WELLANDER

With all due respect, ma'am, you have no idea what falls under my duty.

VANCE

Per Article Two of the United States Life-Saving Service General Regulations, the Superintendent is required to "cause all alleged derelictions of duty to be thoroughly and impartially investigated."

WELLANDER

Are you accusing my Lifesavers of dereliction, Miss Vance?

VANCE

If I have to.

WELLANDER

On what evidence?

VANCE

After the *Rosecrans* ran aground, survivors told newspapers the ship was largely intact and all thirty-six crewmen were alive. By the time your men arrived *ten hours later*, thirty-four were dead. Now are you going to assign an inspector, or do I have to take this up with the Treasury Department?

Pause.

WELLANDER

On second thought, I've got the perfect man for you. I'll walk you right over.

I-3: CASE REFUSED

*On another part of the stage,
ENSEMBLE #8 as Assistant
Inspector Jack QUINN sits on
the edge of a table talking
with ENSEMBLE #3 as Junior
Assistant Inspector SAM
Klondike.*

SAM

Come on, Jack...it's an open-and-shut. They even gave the
Station Keeper a commendataion.

QUINN

I'd have given him a reprimand.

SAM

What?! Are you off your noodle? His crew rescued four people
off that boat!

QUINN

Yeah, Sam, I read the report. But *where* did they save them?

SAM

Off Point Reyes!

QUINN

Four miles off Point Reyes.

SAM

And?

QUINN

And, the boundary of international waters starts at three miles.

SAM

So they literally went the extra mile to make a rescue.
You're making a mountain out of a--

QUINN

(holding up a book)

Do you know what this is?

SAM

Don't patronize me.

QUINN

Regulations of the United States Life-Saving Service, 1899.

SAM

Yeah, I've read it.

QUINN

To a Keeper and his Surfmén, this is Holy Scripture. And Article Six, Clause One-Twenty-Five clearly states, "A lifeboat and her crew shall render assistance *only within the boundaries of US territorial waters.*" What if some boat in their actual patrol zone needed aid while they were sprucing off to the open sea?

SAM

But there wasn't! They made a clean rescue!

QUINN

What if they hadn't? Captain Jones assisted a *Japanese-flagged* vessel in *international* waters. What if he botched the save, huh? We'd have an international incident on our hands.

Wellander and Vance enter.

SAM

Oh, that's...you're overreacting!
(seeing Wellander)
Skipper, tell him he's overreacting!

WELLANDER

Jack, you're overreacting. What are we talking about?

QUINN

Just explaining a little geopolitics to Junior Inspector Klondike here.

WELLANDER

You sure you got that kinda time?

QUINN

Well, case load's a little light at the moment, so...

WELLANDER

'Bout to get heavier. Meet *Mrs. Alexandra Vance*, she's a, a--

VANCE

--Senior Claims Adjuster for Associated Oil.

WELLANDER

Right. And this is Assistant Inspector Johnstone Quinn.

QUINN

Jack.

VANCE

Assistant Inspector? I was hoping--

QUINN

For *the* Inspector? As in the singular, capital-I Inspector of the Service? Yeah, he works outta D.C., appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury. For this coast, you just get me.

SAM

And me! Sam Klondike, ma'am, one of the Junior Assistant Inspectors. But! I have the most seniority, so really I'm the Senior...Junior...Assistant Inspector...

QUINN

Sam.

WELLANDER

Quinn's the best inspector the District's ever had.

VANCE

Pleased to meet you. Two days ago, Associated Oil lost one of our ships. Ran aground on its way to Portland.

WELLANDER

Trying to enter the Columbia bar.

SAM

The Graveyard of the Pacific...

QUINN

Point Adams station respond?

WELLANDER

And Cape Disappointment, too. Saved a couple of the crew, but lost two surfboats in the process.

SAM

Two? Musta been pretty hairy.

QUINN

What's this got to do with me?

WELLANDER

Mrs. Vance here wants you to run an inquiry.

QUINN

I'm flattered, but I don't really take requests.

WELLANDER

Then call it an order.

QUINN

(a statement)

You're ordering an inquiry.

SAM

On what grounds, Skipper?

WELLANDER

Dereliction of duty.

QUINN

Derelict--! From the *Columbia River* boys? Come off it, Otto!

WELLANDER

I'm serious.

QUINN

So am I! The Keepers up there know their business.

VANCE

Do they, Mister Quinn? Thirty-four of our people died because the Life-Saving Service didn't arrive until ten hours after the ship logged a distress call.

Pause.

QUINN

...Ten hours?

SAM

How many did they save?

WELLANDER

Two, last I heard.

VANCE

Out of thirty-six souls on board.

QUINN

Two stations splashed boats and they only saved two men?

WELLANDER

Might be worth a train ride to Oregon.

A long pause. Quinn looks away.

QUINN

Send Sam.

SAM

What, *me*?

VANCE

I would prefer the most experienced--

QUINN

(to Sam)

You can do it. You're ready.

Wellander looks at Sam. Sam shakes
his head "no."

WELLANDER

Sam, Mrs. Vance...give us the room, please.

VANCE

The gravity of this case requires--

WELLANDER

(firmly)

The room.

Vance and Sam exit.

WELLANDER (cont'd)

What's goin' on, Jack?

QUINN

Nothing.

WELLANDER

Then why are you balking me here?

QUINN

I can't take the case, Skip. Not this one.

WELLANDER

Because...?

QUINN

Conflict of interest.

WELLANDER

What, you own stock in Associated Oil?

QUINN

Hardly. But if Point Adams Station was involved, it's...
well, it's Wicklund.

WELLANDER

Oscar Wicklund? He still Keeper up there?

QUINN

Only way his hand comes off that tiller is he's six months
dead and you pry it off.

WELLANDER

Look, I know you and Wicklund have a history...

QUINN

That's why I gotta recuse myself.

WELLANDER

...but that was ten years ago, Jack.

QUINN

It's the *optics*, sir...people might look and say I was influenced by--

WELLANDER

I think you can be impartial.

QUINN

(suddenly)

I don't want to be impartial! You don't know what I owe that man.

(pause)

Look, Otto...you were a Keeper yourself once. You know as well as I do, a crew takes *ten hours* to get to a scene... something went wrong. Some rule wasn't followed, some protocol was breached. You send me up there...and I'll find it. I swear to God, I will *find* it.

WELLANDER

I know. You chase facts like a dog worrying at a bone. I'm counting on it.

QUINN

But you're asking me to blemish the record of a captain that's been at his post for *fifteen years*. The man's a legend. An icon. I go up there and find him liable, they'll take away his station, hell, his *pension*. You're asking me to torpedo a *friend*.

WELLANDER

I'm not asking, Mister Quinn. I'm giving you a direct order: get me the truth.

A pause. Sounds of a GALE and
CRASHING SURF begin to be heard.

I-4: **BREAKING APART**

LIGHTS change, though the STORM sounds continue. Wellander and Quinn join the ENSEMBLE and they become the crew of the Rosecrans, tossed back and forth by the pitching deck. The motion is less violent than the opening scene, for the crew is simply holding on, rather than trying to perform functions as they did before.

A light SPECIAL comes up on ENSEMBLE #5 as Quartermaster Fred PETERS.

PETERS

I think it was about five a.m. when we struck. I was on the bridge with Second Officer Palmer, who immediately gave orders to reverse the engines. Then a huge wave broke over us from the stern and Captain Johnson rushed onto the bridge.

ENSEMBLE #2 runs on as Captain
Lucien JOHNSON of the Rosecrans.

JOHNSON

My God! We're on the bar!

PETERS

The Captain did all he could for the boat and the men. We dropped an anchor astern to try to winch ourself off. He ordered the oil tanks pumped out to lighten the load. But it was no good. We were stuck fast, wind blowing a mile a minute, and every few seconds...Smash!...Smash!...a big wave would strike. We went for the lifeboats, but the sea had broken the davits, carried every one of them off...

We hear the sound of a TELEGRAPH
sending a fast message.

ENSEMBLE #1

(as if signaling)

"S.O.S...Steamer Rosecrans on bar. Send assistance...."

PETERS

Then the hatches busted open and the sea poured in...

ENSEMBLE #1

(signaling)

"Water has washed in the cabins. I can't stay much longer--"

JOHNSON

Belay that telegraph!

PETERS

For the captain had noticed the signal wires sparking, and with all the oil sloshing around, the fumes...

JOHNSON

All hands, get belowdecks!

PETERS

The Captain stayed in the wheel house and the rest of us ran below. We huddled in the dark, water up to our knees, waiting for the next blow to finish us. And the boys...they were...God, they were brave. Smiling, joking...fighting to keep each other from seeing how scared we all were. Someone even started singing.

ENSEMBLE #1

(singing "LEAVE HER JOHNNY")

OH, THE TIMES WAS HARD AND THE WAGES LOW

FULL ENSEMBLE

LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER

ENSEMBLE #1

IN ONE MORE DAY ASHORE WE'LL GO

FULL ENSEMBLE

AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.

ENSEMBLE #1

OH, I HATE TO SAIL ON THIS HOODOO TUB,

FULL ENSEMBLE

LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER.

ENSEMBLE #1

NO BOOZE ALLOWED AND ROTTEN GRUB,

FULL ENSEMBLE

AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.

(CHORUS)

LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER

OH, LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER

FOR THE VOYAGE IS DONE AND THE WINDS WON'T BLOW

AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.

ENSEMBLE #3

IT WAS PUMP OR DROWN, THE OLD MAN SAID

FULL ENSEMBLE

LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER

ENSEMBLE #3
OR ELSE, BY GOD, WE'LL ALL BE DEAD.

FULL ENSEMBLE
AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.
(CHORUS)
LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER
OH, LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER
FOR THE VOYAGE IS DONE AND THE WINDS WON'T BLOW
AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.

ENSEMBLE #3
(quieter)
NOW THE RATS HAVE GONE, AND WE, THE CREW

FULL ENSEMBLE
LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER.

ENSEMBLE #3
IN ONE MORE DAY, WHY, WE'LL GO TOO.

FULL ENSEMBLE
AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.
(CHORUS)
LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER
OH, LEAVE HER, JOHNNY, LEAVE HER
FOR THE VOYAGE IS DONE AND THE WINDS WON'T BLOW
(pause)
AND IT'S TIME FOR US TO LEAVE HER.

PETERS
We all thought help was coming.

The ambient sounds morph into the
rhythmic CLACK OF A TRAIN.

I-5: NORTHBOUND

Warm afternoon LIGHT. Quinn and Vance sit across from one another in a narrow railroad compartment, their bodies swaying in rhythm with the train. A table stacked with newspapers between them. Neither speaks. The silence stretches tight as wire.

VANCE

You haven't even glanced at the survivor statements.

QUINN

Read them already.

VANCE

All of them?

QUINN

Every word. Didn't sleep.

VANCE

And?

QUINN

And what, Mrs. Vance? Newspaper articles aren't evidence. Testimony gets distorted, altered to sell copies.

VANCE

Two stations launched lifeboats and only saved two men. Explain which part they distorted.

Silence. The train clacks along.

VANCE (cont'd)

Why didn't you want this assignment, Mister Quinn? You're an inspector, seems like your job.

QUINN

Whereas you fought awfully hard to make this inquiry happen.

VANCE

Yes. That's *my* job.

QUINN

And there's no other motivation?

VANCE

Associated Oil wants the truth, and this seems to be the only way we get it.

QUINN

Oh, the truth. How noble.

VANCE

Don't believe in truth?

QUINN

What I believe is that Associated Oil sent you to pin this whole thing on the Life-Saving Service.

VANCE

Why would we do that?

QUINN

To weasel out of paying money to the sailors' next-of-kin. The settlements those families deserve.

VANCE

What those families deserve are answers. That's what motivates me, Mister Quinn. Finding the *reason*.

QUINN

Knowing a reason is cold comfort to a widow.

VANCE

Better than no answer at all. Better than no body to bury, no justification, no...closure. An unexplained death at sea that leaves nothing but a hole.

QUINN

Sometimes the sea claims lives and it's no one's fault. I told you before: the Surfmen up here, they're some of the best the Service has. Captain Wicklund chief among them.

VANCE

And I'm not here to crucify him. I'm here to learn why thirty-four men didn't make it home. If Wicklund did everything right, then I'll stand beside you and say so. But if he was negligent--

QUINN

Then I'll write his discharge papers myself.

(pause)

But you understand what happens if I find the Service at fault here? Truly find it...not a suspicion, a finding in the facts?

VANCE

Yes: Captain Wicklund answers for it.

QUINN

He answers for it, the Service answers for it, and your thirty-four families get exactly nothing. Not a dime.

VANCE

They can sue for negligence--

QUINN

The federal government can't be sued, Mrs. Vance -- not by you...them...anybody. Not for this. Doesn't matter how I write it up. To get the widows a single dollar you'd have to convince Congress to pass a dedicated bill.

VANCE

(pause)

I still have a job to do.

QUINN

Sure. Protect the big oil company and screw the families.

They stare at each other. Silence.
The TRAIN WHISTLE shrieks. The RAIL
sounds blend with a distant OCEAN.

We hear an unseen CONDUCTOR shout,
"Astoria Station! Astoria!" VANCE
stands.

QUINN

Not here. Point Adams is the next stop. I want you to see the Life-Saving Station. See what they're working with.

VANCE

I'll meet you there soon. I have some company business here in Astoria to tend to first.

VANCE moves away from the train
setting as QUINN exits.

I-6: ASTORIA

A makeshift company desk: a small table, a ledger, a lamp. ENSEMBLE #3 sits behind it as HARRIS, an Associated Oil clerk. ENSEMBLE #1 as Nora O'HARE stands across from him, worn from travel, holding a small black-and-white photo of a young man.

O'HARE

He was hired right on the pier. Last minute. Said the captain had a fireman not report in, and needed a man quick. Stephen said he'd wire me from Portland.

HARRIS

(not unkind, but tired)

Mrs. O'Hare, I've been through the manifest three times now. He's not there.

O'HARE

I'm not asking you to find him in a book. I'm asking you to help me find *him*. Or his body at least.

HARRIS

I can't find a ghost. There's no Stephen O'Hare on the crew roster. No enlistment paper, no wage agreement, nothing filed with the company.

O'HARE

He was on that ship!

HARRIS

If he wasn't signed on proper--

O'HARE

I don't care proper! He was there! I took him to the pier myself.

HARRIS

I believe you, ma'am. I do. But the company can't answer for a man it's got no record of employing.

O'HARE

Then find the record.

HARRIS

There isn't one to find. That's what I'm telling you.

VANCE enters the edge of the scene,
papers in hand, ready to do business.
O'HARE's next line stops her.

O'HARE
I need to find my husband.

HARRIS
Mrs. O'Hare--

O'HARE
Six of them washed up already. I've stood over five caskets
that weren't his. I need to know if the sixth--

HARRIS
Look, I'm trying to be considerate here, but I can't keep
giving you access to the bodies! There's privacy issues,
and--

O'HARE
(presenting the photo)
Did he look like this? Was the sixth my Stephen?

HARRIS
Ma'am...

O'HARE sees VANCE for the first
time: a stranger, well dressed,
clearly company. Her face registers
a flicker of hope--or desperation.

O'HARE
Are you with Associated Oil?

A long beat. VANCE opens her mouth.
Nothing comes.

VANCE
(finally)
...yes.

O'HARE
Then maybe you can tell me what he can't. My husband's name
was Stephen O'Hare. He was aboard the *Rosecrans*. Nobody in
your company will say so, but I know it, because I watched
him climb the gangway with my own eyes, and no ledger's
going to tell me different.

HARRIS
(to Vance)
I'm sorry, ma'am...you are...?

VANCE

Alexandra Vance. Claims representative.

HARRIS

Then perhaps you can explain to Mrs. O'Hare that the crew rolls have nothing about her husband, and we've no authority or liability beyond what the rolls say.

O'HARE

He was on the crew!

HARRIS

She says he signed on at the last minute. But there's no paperwork.

VANCE

(quietly)

We have nothing?

O'HARE

I have nothing. Not in your book, not on your ship. Not even a body with his name on it. How can a man just vanish?

(Vance can't respond)

You don't have anything for me either, do you?

VANCE shakes her head. She can't meet O'Hare's eyes. O'HARE collects herself and exits. VANCE remains, unable to move toward Harris's desk.

HARRIS

Ma'am? Can I help you with something?

Silence.

VANCE

No. I...I have to catch a train.

VANCE turns abruptly and exits.
LIGHTS fade on the desk.

I-7: **BOATS AWAY**

The LIGHTS change to a storm at night. Ensemble #2 and #8 emerge with large pieces of gray cloth, mounted like flags on wooden poles, which they spin and twirl to call TOSSING WAVES into imagination. Ensemble #1 and #7 join them.

Wicklund emerges, now in a long peacoat and a scarf wrapped against the cold. He is joined by ENSEMBLE #4 as Surfman PEARSON, who wears foul-weather oilskins.

WICKLUND

(shouting against the wind)

And there's no better fix on her location?

PEARSON

(shouting back)

Not yet, sir! Her S.O.S. just said she was on the bar!

WICKLUND

Did you raise Captain Rimer? Does he know?

PEARSON

Telephone lines to Fort Canby are down, sir. But we got a message from the tugboat *Tatoosh* that she's making ready to assist as needed.

WICKLUND

Assist *where*? "On the bar" could be anywhere!

PEARSON

Astoria thinks she's in the breakers on Clatsop Spit.

ENSEMBLE #5 as MARY Wicklund, the Captain's wife, emerges with a shawl clutched tight around her.

WICKLUND

Very well. Call the foreman at Point Adams, see if he can get eyes on the boat. Then ask *Tatoosh* to rendezvous at the end of the jetty. We'll shelter in the lee until we get a fix.

PEARSON

We're gonna launch?

(off Wicklund's look)

I mean, I know the rulebook says we're s'posed to sail every time, but...

WICKLUND

Indeed it does. But you're in luck, Mister Pearson, 'cause there's no regulation requires us to come back. Alert the crew and let's launch the *Dreadnaught*.

PEARSON

Aye, Skipper.

Pearson exits. Mary approaches
Wicklund.

MARY

(over the storm)

You can't launch in this!

WICKLUND

(over the storm)

Mary! Get back inside!

MARY

It's all right: Betty's watching the phone while I'm here.

WICKLUND

That's not the--

MARY

I finally got through to the weather station! They say there's sixty-mile-an-hour winds and seas like they haven't seen in years!

WICKLUND

(gesturing to the water)

You think I haven't noticed?

MARY

Shingles are flying off the roof, Oscar! You have to wait until the wind dies down at least!

WICKLUND

If we wait for the wind to die, good men might die as well.

MARY

If you go out in this, you'll make *me* a widow!

WICKLUND

I have to launch, Mary! It's my job!

(beat)

See, this is why I don't allow women in my station house!

MARY

Oh, grow up! You can't treat this place like it's the tree fort you had as a kid. You can't just put up a sign that says, "No Girls Allowed."

WICKLUND

Still, you shouldn't be here! Or Mrs. Nagel!

MARY

We're trying to *help*, Oscar! And if answering the phone and keeping coffee on the stove helps you and your crew, we're gonna go right on doing it!

Mrs. NAGEL runs out.

NAGEL

Patrick says you're going to launch? You can't be serious!

WICKLUND

We have to, Mrs. Nagel!

Pearson runs back in and the "storm" ensemble moves to join him. Using the cloth flags from before, the Surfmén hold the poles horizontal and end-to-end near their waists, creating the illusion of the gunwales of the *Dreadnaught*. Pearson takes the bow and yells back over his shoulder.

PEARSON

Ready to launch, Skipper!

WICKLUND

I have to go.

NAGEL

Tell my Paddy to be careful. And tell him I love him!

WICKLUND

Tell him yourself when we get back.

Wicklund takes his place at the stern of the *Dreadnaught* surges

into the sea, Its bow raises to
almost a 45-degree angle as it
crests the first wave.

The boat moves away from "shore"
and begins to toss and turn in open
water. Mary and the Wife hang onto
each other in support. They begin
to sing.

MARY

(singing "ETERNAL FATHER,
STRONG TO SAVE")

ETERNAL FATHER, STRONG TO SAVE,
WHOSE ARM HATH BOUND THE RESTLESS WAVE,

NAGEL

WHO BID'ST THE MIGHTY OCEAN DEEP
ITS OWN APPOINTED LIMITS KEEP.

BOTH

O HEAR US WHEN WE CRY TO THEE,
FOR THOSE IN PERIL ON THE SEA.

MARY

ETERNAL FATHER, LORD OF HOSTS
WATCH O'ER THE MEN WHO GUARD OUR COASTS

BOTH

PROTECT THEM FROM THE RAGING SEAS
AND GIVE THEM LIGHT AND LIFE AND PEACE.
GRANT THEM FROM THY GREAT THRONE ABOVE THE
SHIELD AND SHELTER OF THY LOVE.

I-8: AN OLD FRIEND

LIGHTS change to day at Point Adams Station. Mrs. NAGEL exits and QUINN enters. MARY holds out her hands warmly to greet him.

MARY

Jack!

QUINN

Mary! So good to see you.

QUINN (cont'd)

You haven't changed a bit.

MARY

Oh, I have...a little grayer, a bit more plump. But still kicking. How's your Annie?

QUINN

Fine, she's fine. Say, how big is Blanche now? Last time I saw her, she was--

He holds a hand about waist level.

MARY

Ugh! She's sixteen, can you believe it? And so mad for boys I'd like to lock her in a tower! And how's your sweet little bundle of joy...how old is Meredith now?

QUINN flinches, just slightly.

QUINN

She...died at two-and-a-half. Fever. In aught-four.

MARY

Oh, Jack, I'm so sorry! No parent should outlive a child.

(pause)

We...Oscar and I...we had a son, a year or two after you left. Oscar Junior. He...passed at age five.

QUINN

I had no idea! My deepest condolen--

MARY

No, no: I'm not looking for pity. Just so you know--we understand.

QUINN

Thank you. Anne and I took Meredith's death pretty hard, but Johnstone Jr. was born that same year. He helped us find a course through it.

WICKLUND enters, his right arm in a light sling. He sees Quinn and stops, shocked, then smiles broadly.

WICKLUND

Jack Quinn! You're a sight for sore eyes!

WICKLUND claps Quinn on the shoulder.

QUINN

You too, Oscar.

(indicating the sling)

Saw in the papers you had a bit of excitement last week.

WICKLUND

This? It was nothing. Me and the boys had a dandy time.

MARY

A dandy time!

QUINN

Forty-foot swells?

WICKLUND

Ah, those I don't mind. It's the chill I don't care for much anymore. I'm gettin' old, Jack.

QUINN

You? Never.

WICKLUND

So what're you doin' on dry land? Last I heard you were skippering that revenue cutter.

QUINN

I gave up the *Tahoma* last April. Otto Wellander tapped me to be the Assistant Inspector for the Thirteenth.

WICKLUND

Down in Frisco?

(Quinn nods)

Well, I'll be damned.

(realizing)

You're the one they sent for the inquiry.

QUINN

Yes.

WICKLUND nods, clearly bracing but still calm, open.

MARY

You've had a long train ride.

QUINN
Twenty hours, give or take.

MARY
Oh, my!

VANCE enters to stand near Quinn.

QUINN
Oh! And this is Mrs. Alexandra Vance, from Associated Oil.
Station Keeper Oscar and Mary Wicklund.

VANCE
How do you do?

MARY
Mrs. Vance.

WICKLUND
Welcome to Point Adams, ma'am. Wish it could be under better
circumstances. I grieve we could not save more of your men.

VANCE
Yes...thank you.

WICKLUND
Let me show you our boathouse.

The four people move to a different
part of the stage.

VANCE
(gesturing)
That's it? Those are the boats you have? No wonder you
couldn't save my men in a storm.

WICKLUND stiffens.

QUINN
No, that's a whaleboat. Good for short rows, close rescues,
calm water.

WICKLUND
We went out in the *Dreadnaught*. But she was lost.

VANCE
And what makes that boat so different?

WICKLUND
Size, for one. Our motor lifeboats are five-and-a-half tons
and thirty-four feet stem to stern. And power, for another.
They come with a four-cylinder Holmes engine pushing twenty-
(MORE)

WICKLUND (cont'd)
five horses. Plus lots of safety features: self-bailing, self-righting, two watertight compartments...

VANCE
Still wasn't enough, though, was it?

Pause.

WICKLUND
We were out in forty-foot seas.

VANCE
That should be plenty of depth for a thirty-foot boat.

WICKLUND
(confused)
Depth?

MARY
No, no, Mrs. Vance....forty feet was the *height* of the waves.

VANCE
(trying to wrap her
mind around what
he's implying)
But...forty feet would be...

MARY
(pointing back at the
station)
See the roof of the station house back there? The peak of
second story's about...
(to Wicklund)
...what? Twenty-five?

WICKLUND
About that.

MARY
Twenty-five feet high. So add another...

Her arm angles up much higher.
Vance's jaw drops.

VANCE
No, that can't be...How is that even possible?

QUINN
The Columbia Bar is where the river meets into the ocean.
Winds pushing east drive the water along, and right when the
waves hit the mouth of the river, the bottom gets shallow,
pushing the water up, and the swells get big.

VANCE

Oh.

VANCE steps back, looking away.

WICKLUND

Whatever you need, Jack...from me, from my people...just say the word. I'd put you up here, but I've got a full crew and I'm afraid your old bunk is occupied.

QUINN

We have rooms waiting in Astoria.

MARY

Then we should let you get back there, get settled in.

Quinn nods and he and Vance begin to walk away.

WICKLUND

And Jack--

(beat)

I'm relieved it's you they sent.

WICKLUND and MARY exit. The LIGHTS change. VANCE studies Quinn as they set up a table and chairs for the inquiry. Behind them, the Ensemble gathers as the SURFMEN of Point Adams Station.

VANCE

You *know* him. That's why you didn't want to come.

QUINN

I served under Captain Wicklund here, briefly, before I made captain.

VANCE

Now I'm told this? Associated Oil is counting on this inquiry for an impartial, professional verdict, and you knew from the start you were incapable of providing it!

QUINN

I'm not a judge, Mrs. Vance. This inquiry isn't a court of law. It's just the Service trying to lay out what really happened.

VANCE

You were Wicklund's *subordinate*, and you failed to disclose that relationship!

QUINN

Yes! To an outside civilian corporation that shouldn't even be involved here!

(a breath)

I spent one season as a Surfman here a decade ago. A lot of water's gone under the bridge since then: I can weigh the facts objectively.

VANCE

Then why did you try to hide it?

(beat)

I'm going to get to the truth, Mr. Quinn, either with you or through you. As I've said before, the widows deserve answers.

They stare at each other over the table. In the silence between them, the SOUNDS of wind and waves come up.

I-9: FIRST WITNESSES

LIGHTS change to the inquiry. QUINN and VANCE sit behind the table, while ENSEMBLE #4 as Surfman Pearson stands before them.

QUINN

State your name for the record.

PEARSON

Leonard Pearson, Surfman Number Eight, sir.

QUINN

First of all, Leonard, this isn't a legal proceeding and you're not on trial here. We're simply trying to get the bottom of what happened. You're not under oath, but we expect you to tell the whole truth. Understood?

PEARSON

Yes, sir.

QUINN

Very well. Let's start from the morning of January seventh, when the distress call from the *Rosecrans* first came in.

PEARSON

Well, we got a call at the station house 'bout oh-five-thirty.

QUINN

A call on the telephone?

PEARSON

Yes, sir. Puget Sound Tugboat Company called to relay a message from the Astoria Telegraph Station. A distress call.

VANCE

Why didn't Astoria just call the station directly?

PEARSON

Seems they tried. Guess the phone wires between us and Astoria were down in the storm. They said a steamer called the *Rosecrans* was in trouble on the Bar, an' that they were sending their boat the *Tatoosh* to assist us. Would meet us at the end of the jetty. So I went an' woke up the skipper.

VANCE

Captain Wicklund was *asleep*?

PEARSON

It was five-thirty in the morning, ma'am.

VANCE

Gale-force winds, crashing seas, and the Station Keeper was...asleep?

PEARSON

I...I can't say for sure, ma'am. But it looked like he'd been roused when he answered the door.

QUINN

So you delivered your message to Captain Wicklund.

PEARSON

Yes, sir. And he ordered us to launch our boat.

QUINN

Had someone spotted the *Rosecrans*?

PEARSON

Not as far as we knew, sir.

QUINN

Had you seen any signal rockets or distress flares from the ship? Heard her whistle?

PEARSON

No, sir.

QUINN

Then where were you going?

PEARSON

Clatsop Spit.

VANCE

Why there?

PEARSON

That's where the Skipper thought the *Rosecrans* was. Boats often get into trouble 'round there.

VANCE

But you had no positive fix.

PEARSON

Not really.

QUINN

So with no confirmed location, Captain Wicklund ordered an immediate launch into a storm based on a hunch and secondhand information from the tug company.

PEARSON

We...went out to go look.

QUINN

Very well. And how did that attempt fare?

PEARSON

It was pretty rough going, sir. Worst I've seen, an' I seen some. We fought tooth and nail just to move along the jetty. That's where the *Tatoosh* came upon us.

VANCE

The tugboat?

PEARSON

Yes, ma'am. Cap'n laid us alongside and we parlayed, decided we'd shelter in the lee of the jetty while the tug continued on. Their engines are stronger, and they could make it out. The *Tatoosh* searched Clatsop Spit for near an hour and found nothing, so we came back to Adams. By then it was after dawn, about oh-eight-thirty.

VANCE

Three hours wasted. And still no idea where the *Rosecrans* was?

PEARSON

No sir. Our tower lookout hadn't seen nothin', and we hadn't heard from Captain Rimer's boys over at Fort Canby, neither. So Skip ordered us back to the *Dreadnaught*, to cross to Cape Disappointment an' see if Fort Canby had heard somethin' more.

QUINN

Did you contact the Canby station?

PEARSON

Couldn't, sir. Phone lines were down.

QUINN

Did Keeper Wicklund fire a signal rocket, either before the initial launch or the crossing to Fort Canby?

PEARSON

No sir, not that I recall.

QUINN

No? Or not that you recall?

(beat)

Think carefully, Surfman. Did Captain Wicklund order a rocket to be fired or not?

PEARSON

No, sir.

QUINN

Thank you, Mister Pearson: that'll be all, for now.

PEARSON nods and exits.

VANCE

(to Quinn)

What good would a signal rocket have done?

QUINN

It's standing orders. The very first line of Article Six, *Action at Wrecks*, requires a red rocket be fired if communication by telephone has not been had, to coordinate assistance from all crews in the area.

VANCE

Because dead phone lines have happened before.

QUINN

Every regulation in that rulebook was put there because someone died when it wasn't followed.

(calling to someone
unseen)

Send in Mister Kruis!

I-10: **MOTOR LIFEBOAT**

*Ensemble #1 enters as Surfman
Peter KRUIS.*

KRUIS
Surfman Five Peter Kruis. Fort Canby Station.

VANCE
You're one of Captain Rimer's men.

KRUIS
Yes, ma'am.

QUINN
Looks like you busted up your leg, Pete.

KRUIS
Sure did! I've pulled many an oar through many a mess of
combers, but that little trip the other day beat the rest of
'em all hollow! My leg got slammed against the engine when
Tenacious flipped.

QUINN
Hard not to roll a boat, that kind of weather.

KRUIS
Not rolled, sir: flipped. End over end, like a kid's toy.

VANCE
Damn.

Both men turn, startled.

VANCE (cont'd)
Sorry...should I not swear in mixed company?

QUINN
(to Kruis)
You're the engine specialist for your station, right, Pete?

KRUIS
Sorta unofficially.

QUINN
Captain Rimer mentioned that when you and the *Dreadnaught*
went back out, there was some engine trouble.

KRUIS
The throttle got stuck during the run we finally made it
over the bar.

QUINN

Stuck how?

KRUIS

Dunno. Stuck wide open, full speed ahead. Wouldn't answer the controls. We were about a mile from the boat, big line of surf between us an' them. But we could see a few poor devils hanging in the rigging.

VANCE

You could see survivors on the *Rosecrans*?

KRUIS

Yes, ma'am. So the skipper sent me into the engine compartment to see what I could do.

VANCE

What did Captain Wicklund's boat do while you waited to fix your engine?

KRUIS

Waited? None of us waited. Cap Rimer said, "All ahead full's what I want anyway," and he charged us right in. The Point Adams boys were behind us.

QUINN

(with a smile)

Let the record show.

KRUIS

Damn right. So we charged that line of breakers. Twice. And twice got beat back. On the third try...well, that's when a big sea picked us up and turned us end over end, and...*Bang!*

On that final exclamation, the
LIGHTS snap to a pool of light that
Quinn staggers into, lost in a
memory of his own experience. STORM
SOUNDS grow loud, with ominous
MUSIC underneath.

QUINN

And suddenly I was back there, ten years ago. Different storm, different boat, but it might well have been my testimony Kruis was giving.

ENSEMBLE members #2, #3, #4, and #5
emerge with the cloth flags, spinning
and twirling them to create a
turbulent sea all around Quinn.

QUINN (cont'd)

My face slammed into the side of the boat, breaking my nose and knocking me punchy.

Quinn bends and spin, lost under the waves.

KRUIS

The door of the engine compartment flew open and I got flung right out of the boat.

QUINN

I was caught in the swirl of a huge wave and sucked down around the rocks. I was in a daze.

The Ensemble "waves" buffet and knock Quinn about, half a brawl and half a confused dance.

KRUIS

I got sucked down among the rocks. Don't even remember how long I was under the water.

QUINN

And I was already exhausted from rowing.

KRUIS

My lungs were already near all in from breathing engine gas.

KRUIS

I was a goner.

QUINN

I was a goner.

QUINN (cont'd)

When I came up, there was no boat, no crew, no sense of where I was.

KRUIS

Then, from far off...

QUINN

...almost like a memory instead of a sound, I started to hear it:

ENSEMBLE #4 (O.S.)

(quietly singing "ROW
ME BULLY BOYS ROW")

AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS
WE'RE IN A HURRY, BOYS
WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO
AND WE'LL SING AND WE'LL DANCE
AND BID FAREWELL TO FRANCE
AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS ROW.

QUINN

Rising on the crest of a wave, I saw it in the distance. The lifeboat. With Oscar Wicklund at the helm.

ENSEMBLE #6 as WICKLUND emerges
into the maelstrom, singing.

WICKLUND

I'LL SING YOU A SONG
IT'S A SONG OF THE SEA

FULL ENSEMBLE

ROW, ME BULLY BOYS, ROW

The waves begin to coalesce into
the lifeboat as the Ensemble become
its crew. Kruis joins them as
ENSEMBLE #1.

WICKLUND

OH, I'LL SING YOU A SONG
IF YOU'LL SING IT WITH ME

FULL ENSEMBLE

AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS, ROW
(chorus)
AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS
WE'RE IN A HURRY, BOYS
WE'VE GOT A LONG WAY TO GO
AND WE'LL SING AND WE'LL DANCE
AND BID FAREWELL TO FRANCE
AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS ROW.

QUINN

(waving wildly)

Here! Over here!

The boat sees Quinn. A lookout points.

ENSEMBLE #5

(shouting)

Man in the water!

The ENSEMBLE continues humming the
shanty as QUINN continues.

QUINN

Oscar Wicklund had searched three hours for me. Found me nearly five miles from where I splashed. He wouldn't quit. Wouldn't give up. I owe that man my life.

The boat is alongside Quinn now.
WICKLUND reaches out a hand and

pulls Quinn into the boat. QUINN
embraces Wicklund in relief.

WICKLUND

Welcome aboard, Jack!

QUINN
(breathless)

Thank...you...

WICKLUND

Now grab yourself an oar and row!

FULL ENSEMBLE
AND IT'S ROW, ME BULLY BOYS
STEADY AND SURELY, BOYS
DON'T YOU DARE STOP OR SLOW
TILL AT LONG LAST WE'RE HOME
ON OUR WAY WE WILL GO
NO MORE ROW, ME BULLY BOYS ROW.

The ENSEMBLE exits, leaving Vance
and Quinn alone.

VANCE

Jack? You all right?

A long silence. QUINN finally turns.

QUINN
(coming back to himself)
I'm fine. Fine. Let's call Captain Rimer in.

I-11: RIMER

Ensemble #2 enters as Captain Alfred RIMER of the Fort Canby Station. His left hand is wrapped in a thick gauze bandage.

RIMER

Captain Alfred Rimer. Keeper, Fort Canby Lifesaving Station.

VANCE

Captain Rimer, were you in bed during the early hours of January seventh?

RIMER

Bed? Hell, no. I was up at two. Couldn't sleep, storm like that.

Vance glances at Quinn.

QUINN

And when did you learn that a vessel was in distress?

RIMER

Oh-eight-forty.

ENSEMBLE #3 as LOOKOUT enters and crosses to the lifting pulley line. The LOOKOUT ties a boatswain's chair around themselves and is hoisted up up.

LOOKOUT

(calling)

There! Ship ahoy!

RIMER

My lookout spotted a steamer on Peacock Spit. I hoofed it to the tower, took a look myself.

(to Lookout)

Who is she?

LOOKOUT

Hard to make out, sir. She's bow-on to us, no colors I can see. Steamer of some kind.

RIMER

Is she anchored or struck?

LOOKOUT

Definitely aground, sir. Not moving and taking big waves over the stern.

RIMER

Can you make out any distress signals?

LOOKOUT

Negative. No lights at all, that I can see, or lifeboats. But she's not gonna last long in that pounding!

RIMER

Very well.

LOOKOUT descends and both exit.

QUINN

Had you had any contact from Astoria Station or Point Adams prior to this?

RIMER

I heard later that Oscar knew about the situation around six, but he never called us.

VANCE

Did you see any signal rockets Captain Wicklund might have fired?

RIMER

No. Not surprised, though: Oscar's no fool. Crosswinds like we had...rocket's likely to come back at ya, burn your own station house down.

QUINN

So you spotted an unknown ship on Peacock Spit. What did you do?

RIMER

I splashed the *Tenacious*. Got underway a few minutes before oh-nine-hundred. Couldn't get 'round to the *Rosecrans*, though, try as I might. First, we just slammed right out around the cape...waves threw the damn bow up so hard the lookout landed near in my lap. Tried the cut-off behind Sand Island, tried every which way. Nothin' doin'. Finally I called it and got us back to station.

VANCE

You called off the rescue without ever reaching the *Rosecrans*?

RIMER

I called a breather for the sake of my men. Their lives are also my responsibility. We'd been going hammer and tongs for three hours and they were near exhausted.

QUINN

What time did you arrive back at your station?

RIMER

Eleven-thirty.

Beat.

VANCE

Three hours after you sighted the wreck? Six hours after the distress call?

RIMER

Yes, ma'am. I sent my men to patrol the beaches, look for survivors. That's about when Wick and the *Dreadnaught* showed up. I told him we needed to wait 'til the wind slacked a bit, but as soon as he heard where the *Rosecrans* was, he launched again.

QUINN

Captain Wicklund went back out?

RIMER

He's a stubborn cuss. Gave it two game attempts to cross the bar, but he was back by twelve-thirty. But by then I had heard from the *Fearless*.

QUINN

The tugboat commanded by Captain Parsons.

RIMER

Uh-huh. Ed said they could see men up in the rigging, trying to hang on. So Wick and I launched both boats again.

VANCE

You launched again? A moment ago, you said your men were exhausted.

RIMER

(holding her gaze)

Yes, ma'am. We were.

VANCE

And you launched anyway?

RIMER

That's what the Life-Saving Service does, Mrs. Vance.

VANCE

And on this next attempt: is that when you rescued crewmen Slinning and Lundmark?

RIMER

Us? Hardly. We got out there, tried to make a run for them, and a wave flipped us end over end. Pitched Pete Kruis right out, but we got him back. Problem was, it had killed our

(MORE)

RIMER (cont'd)
engine and cracked the keel. I could see the bow flex with every wave.

QUINN
So what did you do?

RIMER
Do? We were done for. So Oscar and the *Dreadnaught* came alongside, passed us a line, and towed us out Captain Parson's tugboat, holding about a mile outside the breakers.

QUINN
How long did that take?

RIMER
To get to the *Fearless*? Maybe half an hour.

VANCE
So the round trip was an hour for *Dreadnaught*. Leaving those sailors hanging in the rigging the whole time.

RIMER
We had done everything men could do. Sometimes, Miss Vance, a captain has to make a call.

RIMER exits. Pause.

QUINN
He's right. Sometimes it's not practical to--

VANCE
Practical? I can rescue people when it's practical. The job of the Life-Saving Service is to go out precisely when it's not!

QUINN
You don't know what it can be like out there!

VANCE
No. I think you don't realize. To be waiting for help that never comes, thinking the world has given up on you.

QUINN
Those lifesavers fought--

VANCE
Yes. They fought hard, Jack. I know. "It was tooth and nail, hammer and tongs..." Every man who walks through that door tells me how hard they fought. I get it. I'm not arguing with that. I'm not disputing that. But nobody's told me why it took ten hours to find a ship that never moved or why it ran aground in the first place.

QUINN

You can't equate losing a fight with the sea with incompetence.

VANCE

Really? No warning system. No plan. No rocket, because a rocket might come back and singe somebody's roof in a downpour. No word of communication between Fort Canby and Point Adams because a wire was down somewhere and nobody thought to send a man on a horse. And all the while, thirty-six men sit in the dark, in a ship coming apart all around them, waiting for somebody--anybody--to come help them. You say I don't know what it's like out there. What was it like for *them*?

I-12: **THE BREAKING**

LIGHTS change, going almost to complete darkness. The wind HOWLS and waves CRASH. The ship CREAKS. Two FLASHLIGHTS snap on, illuminating the face of ENSEMBLE #1 as quartermaster John SLINNING. In the dim ambient light, the rest of the ENSEMBLE sits huddled together, portraying the crew of the Rosecrans sheltering below decks in the darkness.

SLINNING

Seven-thirty a.m. Weather tables said it should be dawn about now, but we couldn't see it, not down here belowdecks. Couldn't see much of nothin', not since the engine room flooded and killed our power. We managed to find two electric hand torches, which gave us a little light. We tried to keep our spirits up.

FULL ENSEMBLE

(singing "ABIDE WITH ME")

ABIDE WITH ME, FAST FALLS THE EVENTIDE
THE DARKNESS DEEPENS, LORD WITH ME ABIDE
WHEN OTHER HELPERS FAIL AND COMFORTS FLEE
HELP OF THE HELPLESS, O ABIDE WITH ME

There is a horrendous SHRIEK of
twisting metal, followed by a
crash.

SLINNING

About that time we heard our forward mast and crane give way. Not sure if it was responsible for what happened next or was the cause of it, but the keel split just behind the mast, and the rear parts of the ship began to sag and the sea started rushin' in. We had to move out of compartments, one by one, as they began fillin' with water.

The crew stays huddled together,
but moves backwards as if to avoid
encroaching water.

FULL ENSEMBLE

(singing)

SWIFT TO ITS CLOSE EBBS OUT LIFE'S LITTLE DAY
EARTH'S JOYS GROW DIM, ITS GLORIES PASS AWAY
CHANGE AND DECAY IN ALL AROUND I SEE
O THOU WHO CHANGEST NOT, ABIDE WITH ME.

SLINNING

Eventually, the water forced us up onto the main deck. It was a ruin. The water had carried away most of everything not bolted down, and even some things that were. Our lifeboats were smashed or gone, and even the davits were bent and twisted. Most of the men made for the wheelhouse to get under cover, but I saw Quartermaster Peters pulling at something under some wreckage.

The SOUND of wind and wave grows,
causing him to shout over it.

SLINNING (cont'd)

(shouting)

Peters! Freddy! What are you doing?

PETERS

(shouting back)

It's the captain!

The sound abates a bit.

SLINNING

It was Captain Johnson. He had been hit by a falling crane and his leg was busted. Together, me and Peters were able to lift the crane a little and the Cap crawled out. And then the hoodoo struck again: a mountain of a wave came over the stern, a monster.

A huge WAVE hits with a terrible CRASH. The ENSEMBLE falls and slides and rolls a wave carries off the wheelhouse of the ship. This is performed slower than reality, but not so slow-motion as to seem comic.

SLINNING (cont'd)

It smashed the back wall of the wheelhouse to flinders and lifted the rest of it and the entire bridge right off the ship. Near thirty men were inside. By the time the wave got to us on the deck, it had lost most of its force but it still threw us around like rag dolls. It lifted the cap and sent him straight over the starboard side. I never saw him again.

The ENSEMBLE, tossed by waves, begin to leave one by one.

SLINNING (cont'd)

I first grabbed the exhaust pipe, held on to that for a while, then got around the after part of the smokestack. A sea struck me from there, and sent me over the port rail. I watched Peters pass me, carried out to sea.

PETERS calls out as he exits.

PETERS

Johnny!

SLINNING

I held onto the rail until the sea had passed, then another wave took me to the afterdeck, and I got up into the main rigging with a couple of others. It was so cold and we were soaked to the bone.

By now, three ENSEMBLE members cling desperately to rigging, illuminated by FLASHLIGHTS and surrounded by darkness.

SLINNING (cont'd)

Where was our rescue? Where were the Surfmén? Why weren't they coming?

The WIND and WAVES continue to rage. The flashlights snap off.

END OF ACT ONE

INTERMISSION