

A Comedy-Thriller
by
Peter Colley

THE GHOST ISLAND LIGHT

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DRAFT

13 June 2018

(The play is still a work-in-progress.)

CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOSIAH TOLLIFSEN
ROWENA TOLLIFSEN
ERIN WARD
BRANDON AYNESWORTH III

Time: 1913.

Place: A lighthouse on a remote island.

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Example of lighthouse with attached structures.

THE GHOST ISLAND LIGHT

Premiered at:
The Lighthouse Festival Theatre
247 Main Street, Port Dover, Ontario N0A 1N0
Artistic Director, Derek Ritschel
Helen Waganaar, Administrative Director

"The Ghost Island Light" is dedicated to Derek Ritschel,
who commissioned, dramaturged and directed the play.

Premiere: August 27th 2015
Transferred to Theatre Orangeville October 2016

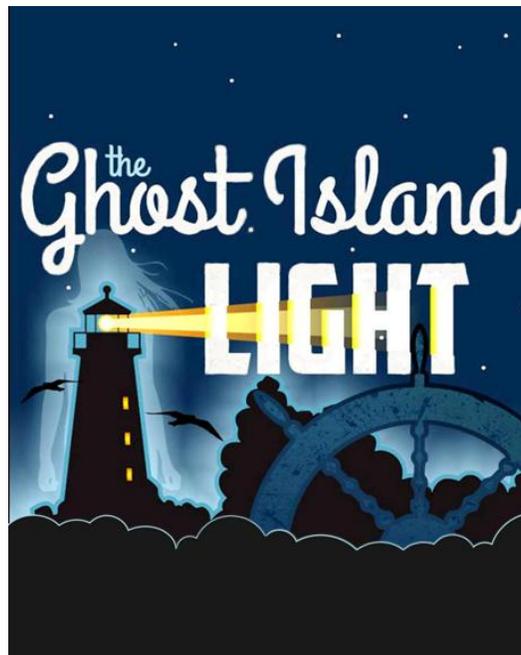
CAST

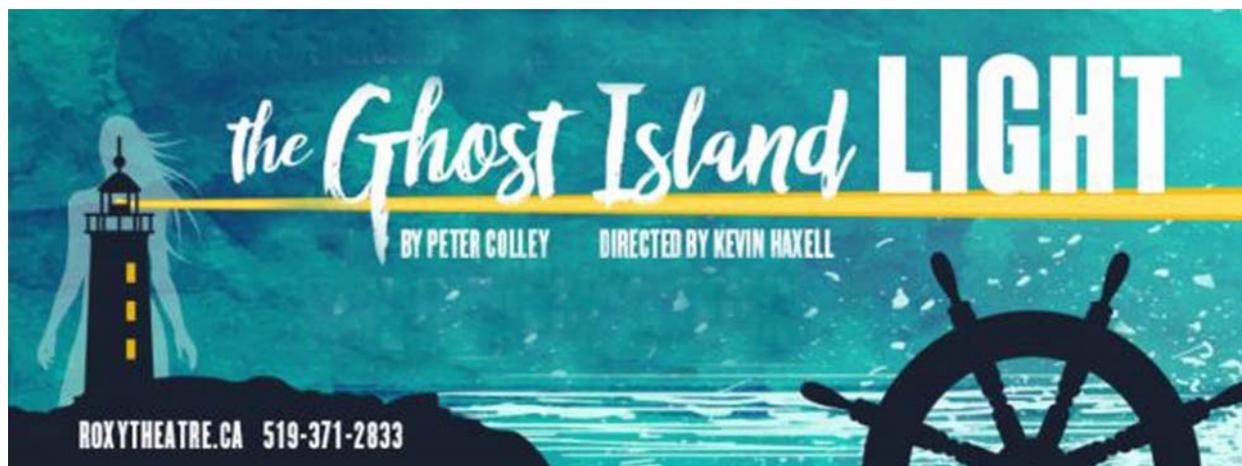
Heidi Lynch - Rowena
Perrie Olthuis - Erin
David Rosser - Josiah
Jeffrey Wetsch - Brandon

Directed by Derek Ritschel

Eric Bunnell - Set Designer
Alex Amini - Costume Designer
Wendy Greenwood - Lighting Designer
Erika Morey - Stage Manager

2018 Productions: Blackhorse Theatre, Roxy Theatre Owen
Sound, Guelph Theatre, Brighton Barn Theatre
2019: Livery Theatre Goderich





Playwright's Notes

The play was inspired by the lighthouse that was very close to where I was born. As a child I would lie in bed at night on stormy nights hearing the mournful wail of the foghorn sending out its warning to the wave-swept ships at sea, so I've always dreamed of writing a play set in a lonely lighthouse. It takes people with unusual personalities and sometimes peculiar motives to choose a life of such danger and isolation as that of a lighthouse keeper. The characters in this play have many complex and tangled reasons for being there, as you shall see.

The style of the playing can be quite variable. The play was commissioned and premiered at a summer theatre which specialized in comedy, and there are many comedic moments in the play, however, the play has at its core a true suspense thriller and the comedy generally works better when a naturalistic approach is taken to the story.



Set Design: © Eric Bunnell

SETTING:

The interior of a remote lighthouse, circa 1913. It can be round or polygonal. It is the type of lighthouse with a high tower and attached structure for sleeping quarters. SR is the main door which leads to the outside, and when the door is open a walkway and a few rough rocks can be seen. There is a window by the door. Downstage left is another door which leads to a small exterior observation deck with a railing. Attached to the railing are four mortar tubes for firing emergency rockets.

Inside the main room there is a walled-in area with a door, which, when open, shows the base of some stairs leading to the top of the lighthouse.

Around centre stage there is a large opening to a hallway leading upstage to the sleeping quarters (offstage). The hallway also leads to the attached steam foghorn building (offstage). Just SR of the hallway, hanging down from the ceiling is a heavy weight on the end of a rope - it powers the machinery that rotates the light. The other end of the rope comes down and is wrapped around a reel and crank on the wall. There is also a rope that attaches to a cleat that opens an unseen observation hatch above. There is a desk and chair or stool with charts and a logbook, and on the wall above the desk there is a barometer, a hygrometer, and a thermometer.

SL of the hallway in the main room there is a small door that has the words "STORE ROOM" stenciled on it, and far SL is a small kitchen with a stove, a pile of wood with fireplace tongs, hanging pots and pans, a metal coffee pot, a rack of knives, a kitchen table and three wooden chairs. A window is above the sink. Both windows reveal a desolate seascape outside, or they can be covered with a sheer curtain. An old rifle lies on the table. There is a sofa SR.

Among the other items are a compass for determining the headings of ships, telescope, an emergency red fire axe and a fishing rod. There is a rack of emergency flares and rockets, a set of signaling flags, a bullhorn, and a clock on the wall. There are some bullet holes in the walls.

EFFECTS:

A remote lighthouse is rarely a quiet place: there is an almost constant soundscape of seagulls, waves, foghorns, passing ships, storms, thunder, creaking timbers, the wind through the tower, birds hitting the glass and many other sounds as outlined in the script. These sound effects are easy to obtain online. All of the other special effects in the play are easy and inexpensive to do.



ACT ONE

Scene 1

AT RISE:

(It is mid-afternoon. The place is a mess. Chairs are upturned, and household items are strewn about as if there has been a struggle. JOSIAH and ROWENA TOLLIFSEN enter through the main door SR. He is a stiff-looking older man with grey hair, he wears a Lighthouse Keeper's uniform of a dark blue double-breasted jacket with two rows of brass buttons, and a peaked cap with an insignia of a lighthouse. He carries several large heavy suitcases, a ladies' hat case and is quite overloaded. Rowena is much younger, very beautiful, and wears an elegant form-fitting dress and carries a small handbag and a parasol. She is not happy. Outside there is the sound of the surf and seagulls. They look around.)

JOSIAH: Well? Well? What did I tell you? *(His eagerness is contrasted with her sullen silence. He puts the suitcases down.)* A little Spartan, perhaps, but in a charming way, don't you think? Brimming with the romance of great waters and great ships. *(He steps out onto the observation deck and looks up at the light, far above.)* Here we can listen to the roar of the waves, the cry of the seagulls, the smell of the... *(Sniffs something unpleasant)* ... what in God's name is that? *(He locates the smell in the kitchen garbage and distastefully puts a lid on it.)* Well never mind... it's a new life, a grand life. An adventure we'll be able to tell our children about one day. I can't wait to explore the island.

ROWENA: Island! What island? It's a rock!

JOSIAH: Well technically it's an island. It has a name. It's on the charts.

ROWENA: I was expecting a beach at least, some trees, a woodland I could walk through, a promenade deck for cocktails...

JOSIAH: They say a little beach appears when the wind is from the southwest for a few days...

(She breaks down.)

ROWENA: A rock. I'm stuck on a rock.

JOSIAH: Really darling...

ROWENA: Tahiti is an island. Capri is an island. This is a rock. A rock with a light stuck on it. *(Beat)* Is this punishment?

JOSIAH: Punishment? For what?

(She gives him a "look".)

JOSIAH: Dearest, I never gave any credence to those rumours. People are bound to talk whenever a mature man marries a beautiful younger woman, however distinguished and even handsome that man may be. It's just the usual small town gossip.

ROWENA: Those people are so stuffy. I love to dance, and you don't dance. What am I supposed to do? Sit there like a wallflower?

JOSIAH: I don't think you realize how flirtatious you appear at times.

ROWENA: I'm just having fun. You only make it worse with your jealous outbursts.

JOSIAH: A man has his honour.

ROWENA: So you're hiding me away from the world. Is that it?

JOSIAH: No, no, this really was forced on us by circumstances beyond my control.

ROWENA: Are we truly that ruined?

JOSIAH: I'm afraid so. The panic brought business to a standstill. This will give me time to reorganize my finances and make a grand comeback richer than ever. Besides, it's only a year.

ROWENA: A year! You said six months.

JOSIAH: No, no, dear. I said you can request a transfer after six months, but the term is always one year.

ROWENA: Oh my God.

(She slumps down on a chair, desolate.)

JOSIAH: Darling...

ROWENA: And look at this place. It's an absolute mess.

JOSIAH: Don't concern yourself, my sweet. There's a woman who comes out to clean and bring supplies, in fact... *(Checks his pocket watch.)* ... she should be here by now.

(A ship's horn SOUNDS in the distance.)

JOSIAH: *(Trying to cheer her up.)* Come and wave goodbye to the cutter.

(JOSIAH steps outside on the observation deck and waves towards the departing boat. ROWENA comes over a little sulkily. The departing boat gives a farewell BLAST on its horn.)

ROWENA: *(Ruefully watching the departing boat, she waves wanly.)* Ah, well. That's it then. *(She comes back inside.)* And what was going on with that man the Coast Guard took off? Why was he making such a fuss?

JOSIAH: The former Keeper? Oh, he was probably just happy seeing his friends again.

ROWENA: Funny way of showing it. Flailing around like that. Oh, God, I'm bored already.

JOSIAH: You'll have some company: there's an assistant keeper and the cleaning lady comes out once a month with the supplies. You can chat with her.

ROWENA: *(Perks up.)* There's an assistant keeper?

JOSIAH: Yes - haven't met him yet; he's chosen by the Lighthouse Commission, but he's probably a grizzled old salt full of stories of the sea - he'll be good company I'm sure. We'll have lovely evenings chatting, playing cards, games, reading books.

ROWENA: Books! I'm too young for books.

JOSIAH: We must make the best of our situation. Here, we can really get to know each other without the social whirligig of the port. *(He holds her, amorously.)* And who knows, by the end of our term there may be the pitter-patter of little feet...

(ROWENA looks horrified at the prospect and moves away.)

ROWENA: I can't think about that right now.

JOSIAH: Children have been born on this light, whole families...

ROWENA: Children! You couldn't raise pigs in this place.

JOSIAH: Come on, darling, you'll cheer up after a few days.

ROWENA: *(She sidles up to him.)* My dear, sweet, indulgent Josiah, you've always given me what I wanted...

JOSIAH: I try.

ROWENA: Then can we get the hell off this rock! I'll do anything, I'll even cook.

JOSIAH: We can't.

ROWENA: This is madness - you know nothing about lighthouses. You're a storekeeper not a lighthouse keeper.

JOSIAH: It's too late - the keeping of the Mason's Island Light has been officially handed over to us. You heard what the officer said: the light must stay lit. The Black Rocks shoal lies just to the north and the sailor lost on a stormy night depends on us. *(Takes out the manual and reads from the Keeper's Oath.)* "The light must shine every night a quarter of an hour before sunset unless every keeper on the light is dead."

ROWENA: I'm already dead.

JOSIAH: I'll make you a nice cup of coffee. *(He goes to the kitchen area, looks around; then sees the rifle lying on the table.)* Hm, odd place to keep a gun. Ah, there's a note. *(Reads.)* Hmm.

ROWENA: What is it?

JOSIAH: Oh, nothing.

(He puts the note in his pocket.)

ROWENA: Nothing, hmm? Josiah!

(She puts her hand out. Reluctantly he gives the note to her. She reads it.)

ROWENA: "Beware the rats! They come at night from the deep, as big as hyenas, agents of the devil woman with their teeth snapping. And beware the carrion crows that perch on the Lantern Room on moonless nights, luring song birds to their death. But most of all beware of 'her'... the beasts do her bidding, she controls everything..." *(Turns to Josiah.)* Demon rats! Carrion crows! And who in God's name is 'her'?

JOSIAH: The last keeper was here alone; the isolation must have played tricks on his mind. He was probably seeing mice and sparrows. That's why they insisted on me having an assistant.

ROWENA: *(Reads.)* "She'll try to make you turn off the light... turn off the light... turn off the light." *(She turns the note over.)* It just keeps on like that.

JOSIAH: Ignore it, darling. The man was obviously deranged.

(He picks up the rifle.)

ROWENA: Be careful with that. You know nothing about guns.

JOSIAH: Oh, when I was a young man I was quite a crack shot...

(The rifle goes off unexpectedly in his hand with a LOUD BANG and hits a metal coffee pot hanging on a hook in the kitchen and sends it tumbling to the floor.)

ROWENA: *(Picks up the fallen coffee pot, shakes it, it rattles.)* I hope you like your coffee with lead in it. *(Looking around.)* Are you aware there are bullet holes in the walls?

(JOSIAH puts the gun down nervously.)

JOSIAH: He must have been shooting at phantoms, poor fellow. Well, I'd better get to work. *(Checks Manual.)* "Test the steam foghorn". Can't be that hard. *(Reads)* "Open oil spigot, light the burners, check steam pressure". *(Looks around.)* The Foghorn Room is through the hallway, they said...

ROWENA: I'm afraid to ask, but where do we sleep? Or do we hang from the rafters like bats?

JOSIAH: There are sleeping quarters somewhere.

(He goes down the hallway and looks around. There is the distant SOUND OF AN ORGAN, slightly discordant.)

ROWENA: What is that?

JOSIAH: What?

ROWENA: That sound. It's like... *(Listens.)* ... an organ...

JOSIAH: Hmm. Must be the wind. When it blows through the tower it creates odd sounds.

They warned me of that, especially when the observation hatch is open... which is... up there.

(He goes to a rope attached to a cleat on the wall and pulls down on the rope while looking up at the hatch which is unseen, above.) The hatch helps us see if the wicks are burning brightly without having to climb the tower. *(When the hatch closes the light from above dims a little.)*

There! Closed. No more strange sounds.

(JOSIAH picks up all the heavy suitcases. ROWENA does not move to lend a hand with the luggage, though she does pick up her hat case. Thoroughly overloaded, JOSIAH staggers down the hallway.)

JOSIAH: *(Looks around.)* Ah, bedrooms!

(They turn down the corridor SR and exit. Offstage JOSIAH drops all the luggage. After a moment JOSIAH appears at the end of the hallway, breathing heavily. He sees something down the corridor SL.)

JOSIAH: *(To Rowena.)* Found the Foghorn Room!

(HE disappears down the corridor SL. The stage is empty; the SOUND of the organ comes back, getting louder and softer. Inside the lighthouse the door to the observation deck swings open on its own. Was it the wind? Then there is the SOUND like footsteps crossing the room, or perhaps it's just the lighthouse creaking in the wind. Then the door at the base of the stairs opens - was it the wind again? There are more sounds, that, to a susceptible mind could be interpreted as footsteps going up the stairs of the tower, above.

There is a KNOCK on the main door.)

ERIN: *(Outside.)* Hello! Hello!

(The main door opens and ERIN WARD enters carrying cleaning supplies. She is petite and quite pretty in a rough-and-tumble way. She wears rough work clothes of knickerbockers, jacket and a cloth cap, making her look more like a boy, and with a street-urchin attitude to go with it. BRANDON AYNESWORTH III enters after her. He is handsome and clean-cut, and speaks as someone not too long out of some ivy-covered college. He wears a crisp new lighthouse keeper's uniform and carries a sailor's duffle bag slung around his shoulder. BRANDON is an amiable, well-meaning, but clueless young man with a gift for saying the wrong thing.)

ERIN: Hello! *(Calls up the stairs.)* Hello! *(Silence.)* Huh! They must be around - we just passed the cutter.

BRANDON: *(Looking around.)* Boy, this place is a dump.

ERIN: *(Shrugs.)* It's a lighthouse not a hotel.

(ERIN starts laying out her cleaning supplies; BRANDON looks at the upturned furniture and strewn objects.)

BRANDON: Somebody had one dandy of a shindig before they left. Celebrating the end of his term, I suppose.

(ERIN sets the upturned chairs back to their proper positions.)

BRANDON: *(Looks around)* So this is it. The scene of the crime. I wonder where he died?

ERIN: Which one?

BRANDON: There was more than one?

ERIN: One was murdered - the other offed 'imself.

BRANDON: Offed himself?

ERIN: Blew his brains out. The murdered one was over there, I'm told. *(She indicates right where BRANDON is standing - he moves away from the spot.)* It was before my time. The keeper who offed 'imself was right here. I know, 'cos I cleaned it up.

BRANDON: Ugh, gruesome.

ERIN: Someone's gotta do it. I'm always cleaning other folks' mess.

(ERIN puts the box of supplies on the kitchen counter and opens the Store Room door which shows cleaning supplies, mop, broom, paint cans of red and white paint, paint brushes, splattered drop cloths etc. She gets a broom out of the Store Room and starts sweeping.)

BRANDON: You know, I was thinking all the way across - you look awfully familiar.

ERIN: Well sure, I've seen you lots of times. Down in the harbour. You've got that mahogany launch: "Miss Velocity". She's fast. Planing hull... 49-horse Lozier motor.

BRANDON: I'll take your word for that.

ERIN: And you've got that 72 foot ketch, Herreshoff design, nice lines, raked bow...

BRANDON: Really? We just call her the "Lady B".

ERIN: Though you haven't been on the ketch much of late. Ever since you met that Granville girl, you prefer the launch.

BRANDON: Well... don't you like to pry!

(She sweeps.)

ERIN: It's the port. It's my living room. People come, people go. I clean boats. Do a little fishing. I even dive for coins for the summer people.

BRANDON: Of course! That's why I know you - you're one of the wharf rats.

ERIN: Rats?

BRANDON: That's what we call the kids that hang around the docks. Scroungers and thieves, most of them.

ERIN: I work for every dime I make.

(She sweeps aggressively under his feet. He hops away.)

BRANDON: I'm sure YOU do. I mean the rest... yes, now I remember you. I thought you were a boy.

ERIN: I'm a girl all right - just not the frilly-lace type you step out with. So what does your girlfriend think about you becoming a keeper?

BRANDON: She's not my girlfriend. We broke up.

ERIN: Oh, sorry.

BRANDON: What's to be sorry about? Women are a pain.

ERIN: Really?

BRANDON: Do you have any idea what they think? Do they think? Is everything just impulse and emotion? They come up to you one day and say: "I'm not sure if you really love me".

What's that all about? I buy her things. Nice things. I compliment her. And then one day, out of the blue, it's "I'm not sure if...!" Then we get into a big argument about the meaning of love. It's enough to drive you to distraction.

ERIN: So that's why you took the keeper's post.

BRANDON: No! Of course not. *(Beat.)* But that will show her, won't it? Taking the job that nobody but a man "in extremis" would take. Assistant keeper of the most notorious lighthouse on the coast - a place of murder and ghosts, and keepers gone stark raving mad. Not sure if I love her, ha!

ERIN: Then it's good you didn't take the job just because of her.

(She starts cleaning in the kitchen area.)

BRANDON: Right. *(BRANDON twitches as if his jacket is uncomfortable.)* Boy, these things are scratchy. I should have had my own tailor make them. *(He takes his jacket and cap off.)*

ERIN: So I'm guessing you don't believe in ghosts.

BRANDON: Nah, that's a girly thing. *(He sits on the sofa, making himself comfortable, then looks at her as if to make his point.)* Right?

ERIN: What? Me? Do I believe in ghosts? *(Considers.)* Hm. I don't know if there's an afterlife, but if this life is all there is I'd be very disappointed.

BRANDON: See! You do! You girls are all the same. I rather like this life and it's quite enough for me.

ERIN: If I had your life I may feel that way too.

(There is the faint SOUND of creaking wood above; ERIN looks up towards the sound.)

BRANDON: What is it?

ERIN: That sounded like footsteps in the tower.

BRANDON: Really? I didn't hear anything.

(She goes to the bottom of the stairs, opens the door. BRANDON follows her.)

ERIN: Hello! Hello! *(She goes up a few stairs and glances up, but sees nothing.)* Huh.

(She turns back into the room and runs right into BRANDON who scares her.)

BRANDON: More ghosts, perhaps? Wooo...

ERIN: *(Glares at him.)* I hope you're this brave at midnight with a storm raging.

BRANDON: Don't worry about me. So what's your name?

ERIN: Erin.

BRANDON: I'm Brandon. Brandon Aynesworth. The third. I hate that "third" bit, but what can you do?

ERIN: I know who you are.

(She takes the smelly garbage and heads towards the main door.)

BRANDON: We should use nicknames. I much prefer that. We all had nicknames in my fraternity. Do you have a nickname?

ERIN: No.

BRANDON: I'll give you one. I'll call you... "Ratty".

ERIN: *(Stops.)* What!

BRANDON: After wharf rats, you see.

ERIN: I already have a name, and if I want a nickname, I'll choose my own.

(She empties the garbage into a receptacle just outside.)

BRANDON: Sorry, doesn't work that way. You don't get to choose - that's the rules. *(ERIN returns.)* Want to know what my nickname is?

ERIN: Shock me.

BRANDON: *(With a big grin.)* Golden Boy!

(Beat.)

ERIN: I'll call you Mr. Aynesworth.

BRANDON: I wish you wouldn't. I hate the name. Doesn't really belong to me. Please, a nickname.

(She puts the garbage can back into the kitchen.)

ERIN: How about... "Jackass"?

BRANDON: *(He thinks about it.)* I don't think I like that one.

ERIN: Sorry, you don't get to choose, remember. It doesn't work that way.

BRANDON: Be a sport.

ERIN: How about I just call you "the third".

BRANDON: No, no! Anything but that. Golden Boy's just a joke, you know. Come on, come on! Just for fun.

ERIN: *(Sighs.)* Golden Boy. No, that's not going to work. I'll think of something.

BRANDON: Thanks, Ratty. You're a pal. *(Gives her a friendly whack.)*

(She shakes her head and goes back to cleaning. JOSIAH enters and sees ERIN and BRANDON.)

JOSIAH: Ah, Miss Ward. I'm not sure I approve of you bringing your boyfriend with you.

ERIN: *(Disdainfully.)* He's not my boyfriend.

BRANDON: I'm Brandon Aynesworth - *(Slight pause.)* - the third. *(BRANDON quickly puts his jacket and cap back on.)* The assistant keeper.

JOSIAH: What! That's impossible.

BRANDON: I assure you it's quite possible. Here are my papers...

JOSIAH: But you're so... so... young... !

BRANDON: Well compared to you, I suppose I am. But I can't help that.

JOSIAH: And you're so... so... so not what I'd hoped for. Absolutely not what I'd envisioned. At all. No, no this won't do.

ERIN: I'll bring in the rest of the supplies.

(She exits)

BRANDON: But why?

JOSIAH: I need someone with experience.

BRANDON: I'll learn from you. I'm a fast learner. I have a baccalaureate in Greek Literature... and I'm fit. Varsity rowing team. Polo. I can ride a horse.

JOSIAH: You may have noticed the lack of horses and Greeks around here.

BRANDON: I'd love to learn from a seasoned old hand like yourself.

JOSIAH: *(Glances to see if Rowena is around.)* And stop calling me old - I'm only in my... fift... forties.

BRANDON: Ah. Had a hard life, did you?

JOSIAH: No, I... *(Sweating; he mops his brow.)* Listen, I'll pay you to leave. Name your price. *(Glances around to make sure Rowena is not in earshot; whispers.)* I have plenty of money.

BRANDON: Oh, I don't need money. My family is rather well off. We're the Aynesworths. The mining Aynesworths. Copper. Nickel. We have that summer cottage up on the hill above the port. Cherry Hill House.

JOSIAH: You must need some money? Some little extravagance your family would disapprove of? A flutter on the side?

BRANDON: No, no. Money never had much lure for me.

(ERIN: re-enters carrying a box of supplies.)

ERIN: That's 'cos you always had it. It has more appeal when you don't have any.

(She unloads the supplies.)

BRANDON: Despite my youth, you'll find me as good as anyone.

ERIN: *(Trying to help.)* He's very nautical. He owns two boats. *(She unloads the supplies into the kitchen.)* Tell him what kind of boats you've had experience in.

BRANDON: *(Clueless.)* Er, my mahogany launch. Fast. 49 thousand horsepower...

(ERIN shakes her head.)

JOSIAH: Thousand?

BRANDON: ... or thereabouts.

ERIN: And a ketch.

BRANDON: Yes, a famous design, nice lines... long pointy...

JOSIAH: This is a lighthouse, not a boat.

BRANDON: I can't be dismissed without due process.

ERIN: He's right. Why don't you test him? I'm sure he knows the manual perfectly.

(Brandon's eyes go wide with fear. He hasn't even read it. He quickly takes his manual out of the breast pocket of his jacket.)

JOSIAH: Good idea.

(JOSIAH snatches the manual from Brandon.)

JOSIAH: How many... *(Flicks through the pages.)* ... revolutions per minute does the light turn.

(BRANDON has no clue. He dithers for a moment, and then JOSIAH goes to hand him back the Manual.)

BRANDON: No, no! I know this... umm...

(He's obviously guessing and ERIN takes pity on him. She goes back to work and gives her broom three sweeps.)

BRANDON: Ummm...

(She does it again, more pointedly. Finally, Brandon clues in.)

BRANDON: Three!

JOSIAH: Huh. *(JOSIAH turns and looks at ERIN suspiciously, then back to BRANDON.)* What powers the turning mechanism?

(Once again BRANDON is stumped. Behind Josiah's back ERIN mimes turning a crank. JOSIAH turns and almost catches her.)

BRANDON: It's... it's... that thingy that goes round and round... *(He imitates her turning a crank.)*

ERIN: You mean a crank?

BRANDON: Right.

JOSIAH: *(Turns angrily to ERIN.)* Don't help him. *(To BRANDON.)* But what powers it?

(Behind JOSIAH's back ERIN indicates a heavy weight hanging from the ceiling.)

BRANDON: Umm... it's that thing up there...?

(ERIN can't believe how dense BRANDON is.)

JOSIAH: And what is that "thing"?

(Behind JOSIAH's back ERIN gets the fishing rod. Attached to the line is a sinker weight and a fish-shaped lure. She points to the weight.)

BRANDON: *(Looking at the lure.)* It's a... fish?
JOSIAH: What?

(ERIN indicates it's not the lure but the weight.)

BRANDON: It's a... a weight! You crank up a weight.
JOSIAH: All right. *(Got him this time.)* Show me the instrument that warns you when the atmospheric conditions are conducive to fog.

(JOSIAH keeps an eye on ERIN, but whenever he turns away from her she points to the barometer and hygrometer on the wall. BRANDON gets the hint and points at the two instruments.)

BRANDON: Er... there?
JOSIAH: Which one?

(BRANDON starts to point to the wrong one, when ERIN drops a cleaning brush loudly. BRANDON points to the other one.)

BRANDON: Um... this one.
ERIN: You see! He knows a Psychrometric Hygrometer when he sees one. He's good. I think you'll have to take him.

(ROWENA enters, looking surly, carrying a black silk scarf.)

ROWENA: Well! I had a nicer bedroom at finishing school! I found this silk scarf behind the nightstand. *(She sees Brandon and her eyes light up.)* Hello! Who's this?
BRANDON: Ah, they didn't tell me you had a daughter.
JOSIAH: This is my WIFE, Mrs. Tollifsen.
BRANDON: I'm Brandon Aynesworth.
ERIN: The third.
BRANDON: *(Reluctantly.)* The third. I'm the Assistant Keeper. *(Shows his papers to ROWENA.)* Appointed by the Lighthouse Commission.
ROWENA: I'm very happy to make your acquaintance, Brandon. *(She holds out her hand.)* I'm Rowena.
JOSIAH: I believe these are too close quarters for first names, dear.

(JOSIAH takes ROWENA's arm and gently moves her away from BRANDON.)

ROWENA: Mr. Tollifsen is of the old school of thinking regarding social intercourse. Well, Mr. Aynesworth, you seem very young for the life of a keeper. Mr. Tollifsen was expecting a grizzled old salt.
BRANDON: I may look young, but as I was telling your father...
JOSIAH: Husband!
BRANDON: Sorry, husband, I may look young but I'm a fast learner. *(Bows to ROWENA.)* I'm completely at your service.
JOSIAH: You are here to service the light. That's all you need to think about.
BRANDON: *(To ROWENA.)* Mr. Tollifsen thinks I'm too young for the job, but you'll find me very competent.
ROWENA: Of course he's not too young, darling.
ERIN: Nelson commanded his own ship when he was nineteen.
JOSIAH: *(Turns to ERIN, exasperated; then with a pained smile.)* Thank you. *(He gives up.)* Oh, very well. *(He hands the manual back to BRANDON.)* Let's go and examine the Lantern Room.

ERIN: There's a cracked step on the fourth landing. You may have noticed it when you were up there before.

JOSIAH: I haven't been up there yet. But thank you.

(ERIN reacts, she thought she heard someone on the stairs earlier.)

ERIN: You haven't been up there?

JOSIAH: No. Why?

ERIN: I thought I heard footsteps...

JOSIAH: In the tower?

ERIN: Yes.

JOSIAH: It could be smugglers or wreckers using the change of keeper to sabotage the light. We must investigate. *(He strides confidently to the base of the stairs, then hesitates.)* I... should take the gun. Prudence.

(He gets the rifle and strides back to the base of the stairs, but there is a GUST OF WIND which rattles the structure. JOSIAH loses his nerve again and closes the door to the stairs. He turns to BRANDON only to find that he has moved far away from the stairs.)

JOSIAH: Mr. Aynesworth, here's a chance for you to show your competence. *(He hands him the rifle.)*

BRANDON: Me?

(BRANDON very unwillingly takes the rifle.)

JOSIAH: You know how to use a gun, I hope?

BRANDON: Of course. Bagged a few pheasants in my time... but... *(He looks up the stairs nervously.)* ... smugglers, eh?

JOSIAH: Or wreckers. Without the light, ships can run ashore where wreckers strip them bare like a carcass.

BRANDON: My goodness. They sound rather ruthless... *(BRANDON looks up the stairs again and hesitates.)* This was not part of my job description.

(BRANDON hands the rifle back to JOSIAH.)

JOSIAH: Are you disobeying an order?

(JOSIAH hands the rifle back to BRANDON.)

BRANDON: Was it an order? It sounded more like a suggestion.

ROWENA: Oh, for God's sake, I'll go and check.

JOSIAH: No, no! I'll go. *(Takes the rifle back from BRANDON; then bravely.)* Follow me, Mr. Aynesworth.

(JOSIAH nervously goes up the tower. BRANDON reluctantly follows JOSIAH up the stairs. The tension increases as they climb, and JOSIAH looks into the void at the top of the stairs, aiming the rifle.)

BRANDON: Do you see anything?

JOSIAH: Not yet. The stairs cast a lot of shadows...

(They move a little further up, when suddenly: there is: a LOUD BLAST that scares everyone. JOSIAH and BRANDON scurry back downstairs in fright.)

JOSIAH: Good grief! What was that?

ERIN: The foghorn, sir.

JOSIAH: *(Calms himself.)* Oh, yes. Foghorn. I'd forgotten. I didn't realize it took so long to work up a head of steam.

ROWENA: *(Her ears still ringing.)* That's going to be fun on foggy nights.

(JOSIAH and BRANDON go back upstairs, still shaken. ERIN watches them, concerned.)

JOSIAH: *(Offstage.)* Can't see anyone! We'll check the Lantern Room.

(ROWENA stays at the base of the stairs, looking upward with interest as the footsteps of the men recede upwards.)

ROWENA: Brandon seems like a nice fellow. Do you know him well?

ERIN: Not much. I've seen him around.

ROWENA: The third! He must be from a rich family.

ERIN: So I hear.

ROWENA: Are you... "friends"?

ERIN: Good lord, no!

(ERIN goes back to cleaning. The organ SOUND returns.)

ROWENA: There's that sound again. It's giving me the oddest feeling.

ERIN: Ah, the wind is in the north-east.

ROWENA: What does that mean?

ERIN: There's some old broken organ pipes wedged on the rocks by the ledge.

ROWENA: Organ pipes! Was there a wreck?

ERIN: Not... exactly.

(ERIN keeps cleaning.)

ROWENA: And what does that mean?

ERIN: It's not a nice story. Some tales are best left untold.

ROWENA: Well now you have to tell me. Does this have anything to do with demon rats, or carrion crows luring song-birds to their deaths?

ERIN: *(Concerned.)* Where did you hear that?

ROWENA: The last keeper left a note.

(This unsettles ERIN.)

ERIN: So it happened again.

ROWENA: Again? So do tell. And who's this "her" who's controlling everything? Come on, what's the story?

ERIN: Are you sure you want to know? You have to stay here.

ROWENA: Oh, I don't believe in all that nonsense.

ERIN: Well... there was a keeper's wife here once. She didn't like it here.

ROWENA: Ha! Big surprise!

ERIN: Her husband shipped over a pump organ to help her pass the time. It didn't help. She went mad. In a big storm she chopped the organ to pieces and threw the pieces off the Lantern Room.

ROWENA: Good for her! What did her husband think of that?

ERIN: Not much - she chopped him up first. Then she jumped herself. The lantern went untended and the light went dark. There was a terrible wreck. When the Coast Guard arrived, they found the walls scrawled in blood with a curse against all keepers who tend this light.

Since then keepers have gone mad, or demanded to be taken off, and one killed himself. Passing sailors say they see her, standing on the observation deck, hair blowing in the wind. They call her the Black Rocks' Ghost. It's been very hard to get keepers, and the ones that come are either in desperate circumstances or don't believe in ghosts. Which one are you?

ROWENA: Both. He says we're destitute.

ERIN: Then you and the ghost have a lot in common. They say she was from a rich family who lost everything. That's how she ended up here.

(JOSIAH and BRANDON come back down the stairs. JOSIAH is puffing, out of breath. BRANDON hops down behind him, not even slightly out of breath.)

JOSIAH: *(Bent over, breathing heavily.)* Dear Lord, that's a lot of stairs. I'm all right, I'm all right. *(Holds his back and groans.)* I'll get used to it in time. Well, no-one up there. You must have heard the timbers creaking in the wind.

ERIN: *(Dubious.)* I suppose so. *(Heads towards the hallway.)* I'll clean the bedrooms.

JOSIAH: No need. They haven't been slept in.

ERIN: Really?

JOSIAH: There was only one keeper and he does not appear to have slept. Which accounts for... *(He glances at the note.)* Well, less work for you.

ERIN: I suppose I'm done then. *(She heads for the door.)* I'll see you all in a month.

BRANDON: A month!

ERIN: It looks like you're all set here.

BRANDON: *(Nervous.)* Wait! *(He goes over to her.)* Do you really have to leave so soon?

ERIN: Nothing more for me to do here.

BRANDON: But what if there's an emergency?

ERIN: *(She gets a red rocket from the rack.)* Shoot a red rocket. Or hoist the standard distress symbol... *(He looks at her blankly. She gets a flag and ball from the flag box.)* Square flag with a ball below. It's in the manual, remember? You should keep the manual with you at all times.

When bad things happen out here, they happen fast.

BRANDON: Oh, yes, yes, of course.

ROWENA: Can you bring another coffee pot? This one appears to have sprung a leak. You can put it on our account at Tollifsen's. The store is still open, isn't it Josiah?

JOSIAH: Er, yes. In receivership, but yes.

ROWENA: And bring the latest "Society Gazette".

ERIN: OK. Goodbye then.

(ERIN heads towards the door when there is a sudden LOUD BANG like something hitting the window by the main door. At the same time they also see some movement at the window. It startles everyone. ERIN opens the door and looks outside, while the others wait nervously. JOSIAH gets the rifle. ERIN returns holding something.)

ERIN: It's a bird.

JOSIAH: It must have been blinded by the light.

ERIN: At this time of day? The light isn't on.

JOSIAH: What else could it be?

ERIN: You're not a man of the sea, are you?

JOSIAH: What's that supposed to mean?

ERIN: I'll give it a proper burial. That may help.

JOSIAH: Help what?

ERIN: It's a lark. A songbird. *(Worried.)* Keep the light shining. At all costs, keep the light shining.

(She exits with the bird.)

JOSIAH: Strange girl.

(JOSIAH looks at the others and catches ROWENA looking at BRANDON with interest. JOSIAH jealously cocks the rifle. BRANDON looks nervous.

The FOGHORN sounds another ominous blast.)

Blackout. MUSIC UP, eerie, time passing.

End of Scene 1.

SCENE 2

(In the darkness we hear the SOUND of the waves - they fade and the wall clock TICKS loudly and slowly. When the lights come up it is a month later. It is still day, though the weather outside is overcast. JOSIAH, ROWENA, and BRANDON are sitting at the kitchen table, just finishing up their dinner. ROWENA is wearing a flirty ruffled blouse and looks impeccable; the men are still in their formal uniforms though JOSIAH looks disheveled, as if he's been sleeping in his clothes. The black scarf is on the table by Rowena. There is tension in the air. JOSIAH cradles the rifle in his lap as he cleans it and stares at BRANDON with a look of deep mistrust.)

ROWENA: That fish was delicious. You're turning into quite the fisherman, Mr. Aynesworth. And a good cook too.

JOSIAH: *(Jealous.)* Huh.

(The clock ticks and JOSIAH's vigilance starts to fade. He looks sleepy. BRANDON and ROWENA glance at each other. JOSIAH's head slumps forward and he starts to snore.)

BRANDON: It's my turn to get the tea, I believe. Tea, Mr. Tollifsen?

JOSIAH: *(Sleepily.)* No thanks.

ROWENA: I'll join you.

JOSIAH: *(Suddenly alert.)* What? What?

(He raises the gun.)

ROWENA: In having tea.

JOSIAH: Ah, yes. Of course.

(BRANDON puts the tea on. He looks at the clock.)

BRANDON: Ah, time to check the instruments.

(He looks at the barometer and taps it. Then he checks the hygrometer and the anemometer and writes in the Log Book.)

BRANDON: Barometer's falling a little. *(Looking out of the window.)* Visibility... seven miles, reducing since the four o'clock entry.

(He finishes writing in the log and puts the kettle on. JOSIAH keeps polishing the rifle obsessively.)

ROWENA: Surely that gun is clean by now? You polish it day and night, and you haven't even shot it yet.

JOSIAH: We must be prepared. *(Looking at BRANDON.)* The rats are out there. I've been hearing them for weeks. They even scurry up the stairs at night.

ROWENA: I never hear them. Besides, you shouldn't shoot them inside the tower. At least put it away while we're eating.

JOSIAH: Yes, dear.

(He goes to put the gun aside.)

ROWENA: You need to get some sleep. You're awake all the time. Even when it's not your watch you just pace around.

JOSIAH: I'm restless.

ROWENA: If you don't get some sleep you'll nod off during your watch.

JOSIAH: Yes, yes.

(ROWENA leads him to the sofa and he lies down, though he keeps his rifle close by. He yawns again and slowly starts to nod off. JOSIAH snores softly. There is the SOUND of distant music. ROWENA strains to hear it.)

ROWENA: Listen!

BRANDON: What?

(She goes to the SL door to the observation deck and opens it. The MUSIC gets louder; it's a romantic waltz played by a small orchestra. She steps out onto the observation deck.)

ROWENA: It's the Emerald Queen. The season must have begun. Oh, I took that boat many times. In happier days. Listen! They're playing a waltz. *(She hums sweetly along with the melody.)* They'll all be dancing. Oh, imagine! Dancing and champagne! And laughter! And beautiful dresses. Come! Come over here.

(BRANDON keeps preparing the tea.)

BRANDON: Yes, I hear it. Very nice.

ROWENA: Get me the telescope. I want to see what they're wearing.

(HE gets the telescope while she sways and hums along with the music. The MUSIC gets louder as the ship approaches. He goes to the observation deck and gives the telescope to ROWENA.)

ROWENA: *(Looking through the telescope.)* Oh, it's so beautiful! So full of life! Oh, there's the Chadwicks. Elena's wearing the most dazzling turquoise satin gown with pink ribbons. Horrible woman. She thinks she's the belle of the ball. *(Sadly.)* I was the belle of the ball once. *(SHE gets lost in a reverie for a moment, then turns to BRANDON.)* Do you dance?

BRANDON: Me? Oh, not well. My parents forced me to take lessons, of course. For society balls. I hated it.

ROWENA: That's because you had the wrong partner. *(She sways to the music.)* Come! Dance with me.

BRANDON: I'm not sure that Mr. Tollifsen would approve.

ROWENA: Oh, he won't mind. He's asleep.

(She grabs him and dances with him. He is terrified, but also strangely attracted to her.)

BRANDON: Really, I...

ROWENA: Hush. You talk too much.

(They dance. Suddenly JOSIAH snorts in his sleep, and BRANDON jumps away from her in fear and pretends to be looking for ships.)

ROWENA: Don't worry. He knows I love to dance.

BRANDON: I... I...

(She goes back to him and they dance again, cheek to cheek. The MUSIC is louder as the ship steams past. He moves away from her.)

BRANDON: I'm not sure if this is conducive to the efficient running of the light, Mrs. Tollifsen. You see, technically, I'm still on watch.

ROWENA: You'll be off watch when the Emerald Queen returns tonight around ten 'o clock. The party will be in full swing. You must come and dance with me then. He'll be up in the tower.

BRANDON: Mrs. Tollifsen...

ROWENA: Call me Rowena. Get me that scarf, Brandon. There's a chill in the air.

(He gets her the black silk scarf found earlier. The SOUND of the ship's orchestra starts to fade as the ship steams away. As she puts the scarf around her neck there is the SOUND of the organ pipes and the silk scarf blows in the wind. The moment ROWENA puts on the scarf something dark and sinister seems to come over her.)

ROWENA: *(Her voice changes tone.)* Why should they have all the fun? Why should they be able to drink champagne and dance and sing while I'm imprisoned here? If the light went out they'd founder on these rocks. They'd all die! *(BRANDON hears the change in tone and moves towards her.)* Snuff out the light and their bodies would lie broken and bleeding on the rocks. Their fancy satin gowns ripped and torn, their blood staining the water. That would show them! That would show them!

BRANDON: *(Shocked.)* Mrs. Tollifsen!

ROWENA: What?

BRANDON: How can you say such things?

(Rowena pulls the scarf off her neck as though it is hot. She feels faint and fans herself with the scarf. Then she changes back to her normal lively self and the WIND and organ SOUND fade.)

ROWENA: What things?

BRANDON: That you'd like to see them dead.

ROWENA: I didn't say that, silly thing. What imagination you have. I just want to dance.

BRANDON: *(Terrified.)* Really, I can't. I'm on watch.

(He moves guiltily away from her.)

ROWENA: *(She moves towards him.)* Tonight. When the boat comes back. You'll be off watch. Promise me!

(There is a sharp KNOCK at the door. JOSIAH wakes with a start, leaps up and grabs the rifle. BRANDON jumps guiltily away from ROWENA.)

JOSIAH: Who's there!

ERIN: *(Outside.)* It's just me. Miss Ward!

(ERIN opens the door and enters carrying a box of supplies. ERIN sees JOSIAH pointing the rifle at her. BRANDON and ROWENA come in from the deck.)

ERIN: Is everything all right?

JOSIAH: Why shouldn't it be? *(She indicates the rifle.)* Oh, this? Rats.

ROWENA: Darling, you haven't even seen any rats yet.

JOSIAH: I hear them. I hear them all the time. Something is making that noise. If not rats, then what? *(Looking pointedly at Brandon.)*

(The kettle boils with a loud SHRIEKING WHISTLE. JOSIAH spins around.)

JOSIAH: Ah! What's that!

(JOSIAH points the rifle at the kettle.)

BRANDON: Kettle's boiling, sir.

(BRANDON turns off the kettle.)

ROWENA: Put the gun away.

(He props the rifle against the wall.)

ERIN: Sorry I'm late - heavy surf running. Brought your coffee pot.

(ROWENA puts the scarf down.)

ROWENA: Did you bring the Society Gazette?

ERIN: Here it is.

ROWENA: Did you see the Emerald Queen steam by? What a wonderful ship. When night falls it will be all lit up like a Christmas tree. So lovely.

(ROWENA takes the Gazette eagerly and sits and reads. ERIN unloads the box of supplies into the kitchen.)

ERIN: How's your first month been? They say the first is always the hardest. *(Beat.)* And the last.

JOSIAH: It's been... it's taken... some getting used to. Especially the stairs.

(There's a tension in the air. ERIN notices it.)

ERIN: *(Trying to ease the tension as she works.)* I bet you've been swapping lots of stories on the long nights.

JOSIAH: Oh, yes! I've told many a tale of my adventures, haven't I darling? *(ROWENA does not look excited.)* Of course, Mrs. Tollifsen has heard many of them before.

BRANDON: *(Trying to be amiable.)* I rather liked that one when you went to London and saw four museums in one day.

JOSIAH: Ah, yes. I was fast on my feet in those days.

ERIN: I'm sure Mr. Aynesworth has some good stories too.

JOSIAH: Mr. Aynesworth is too young for stories. One has to live a little to have stories. *(Pointedly.)* There's much to be said for experience.

(Suddenly BRANDON gets an idea.)

BRANDON: I remember a story! The arrival of Ratty... ah, Miss Ward... reminded me.

ERIN: *(Surprised.)* I did?

BRANDON: Yes, you'll see. I was saving it for when you returned. And it's about a lighthouse.

ROWENA: *(Looks up from her reading.)* A story? From Mr. Aynesworth!

(She puts her magazine down. ERIN continues putting supplies away and cleaning, but listens to the story.)

BRANDON: Yes! I heard it from a friend who knew a French sailor called Toudouze who swears it's true. See, there was this lighthouse down Guyana way on a remote island. This was back in the time of the great windjammers, and they saw this big three-master heading towards them, all sails fully set. As it got closer and closer they wondered if the helmsman was

drunk, or sleeping, 'cause he was heading straight for the light and fetching awful close. They grabbed the hand-crank and gave him a toot. (*BRANDON acts this out.*) Toot! Nothing. Shot off a rocket. (*BRANDON acts this out.*) Whoosh! Boom! The big ship kept on coming at full speed. They got the telescope and looked at the ship. It looked perfect, except... (*Pauses for effect.*) ... there was not a soul on board.

JOSIAH: (*Thinking it's a camp-fire tale.*) A ghost ship!

BRANDON: You'd think. But as they looked closer, the deck and rigging seemed alive with some kind of writhing, swarming movement.

JOSIAH: The Flying Dutchman! (*To ROWENA.*) They were the spectres of dead sailors!

ERIN: (*Knowingly.*) Rats!

BRANDON: Yes! Rats. They'd eaten the crew.

JOSIAH: (*Shaken.*) That's impossible!

ERIN: No, I've heard of that. These are ships' rats, born on the sea. Big as dogs and meaner than rattlesnakes. They jump from smaller ships to larger ships, growing bigger each time, feeding off the cargo. But if you change your cargo from grain to, say, lumber, then they've only got one thing left to eat. (*JOSIAH takes a sharp breath at the thought.*) They only come ashore if there's been a wreck. Land rats are terrified of them.

JOSIAH: (*Realizes, looks around.*) There was a wreck here.

ROWENA: What happened next?

JOSIAH: That's quite enough. That is the most grotesque story!

ROWENA: I rather like it. What happened?

BRANDON: The ship hit the rocks by the lighthouse, and the rats...

JOSIAH: (*Explodes.*) I said enough!

BRANDON: Sorry. (*To ERIN.*) So you see why you reminded me of it.

ERIN: I do?

BRANDON: Ratty! See!

ERIN: Oh, right.

BRANDON: (*To the others.*) We have nicknames.

ROWENA: Ratty. How sweet.

ERIN: His nickname is "Blockhead".

BRANDON: I don't think I like that one either.

ERIN: I'll keep working on it.

(*JOSIAH is wandering around, disturbed.*)

ERIN: Is everything all right Mr. Tollifsen?

JOSIAH: That story... was... very like my dreams. You say it was true?

BRANDON: I was assured it was.

JOSIAH: From now on we must keep to stories that are pleasant. About flowers, and museums and the like. Mental composure is very important on a remote light station. Mental composure... yes... (*He seems to drift off into some inner torment.*) We need happy bright stories, not these dark monstrosities. (*He looks around nervously.*) So no more stories about rats. Because they're here. Oh, yes. I hear them. Up and down the stairs at night. Scurrying down the hallways. Waiting for the right time. But they won't get me. (*He grabs the rifle.*) Oh, no. I'm ready. (*Shouts up the tower.*) Yes, yes, I hear you, you! I'm ready for you!

(*The others look at him in shock.*)

ROWENA: You really need to get some sleep.

(*JOSIAH realizes he has gone a little crazy.*)

JOSIAH: Sleep is the worst. Dreams. Terrible dreams. (*ROWENA gingerly takes the rifle from him.*) Still, a little rest perhaps. Yes.

(ROWENA props the rifle against the wall and leads him off towards the sleeping quarters. ERIN returns to her work. JOSIAH gives BRANDON a suspicious look as he leaves. As soon as JOSIAH goes down the hallway, ROWENA comes back excitedly.)

ROWENA: *(To Brandon.)* So what happened? Did the rats eat the keepers?

BRANDON: Oh, they tried. The rats were starving, mad with hunger. They gnawed at the wood frames of the windows, and pried at the Lantern Room. Some even got in and were clubbed to death, and the keepers couldn't get outside to fire off a rocket, or hoist a flag - so they did the unthinkable... they turned out the light.

ROWENA: *(Eagerly.)* Was there a wreck?

BRANDON: No. Passing ships reported it and the Coast Guard came out, but they were beaten off by the rats. So they sent the navy. And the rats beat them off too, leaping at the sailors in their thousands like mad dogs. Next the navy came with a barge loaded with meat and all the ravenous rats jumped on it. They towed the barge out to sea, set it alight and sank it with their guns.

(BRANDON beams with satisfaction at his story.)

ROWENA: Those poor rats.

BRANDON: What?

ROWENA: Well, they were only doing what comes naturally. They were hungry.

BRANDON: *(Shocked.)* That's one way of looking at it, I suppose.

(BRANDON looks towards ERIN, as if for help.)

BRANDON: *(With a sense of failure.)* Well, that's my story.

ERIN: It was very nice, in a horrible sort of way.

ROWENA: It was wonderful. Except for the ending.

(Rowena sits and reads the gazette. A sudden gust of WIND rattles the building and a dark cloud brings down the light that comes from the windows. BRANDON rushes to the window.)

BRANDON: It's a storm. *(He taps the barometer.)* The barometer is falling fast.

(ERIN looks out of the window.)

ERIN: It's just a squall. But if the glass keeps falling I should finish up my work.

(JOSIAH dashes in from the bedroom.)

JOSIAH: What was that?

BRANDON: *(With authority.)* Just a "squall", sir. It should pass soon.

JOSIAH: Who was that in the hallway?

BRANDON: In the hallway?

ROWENA: Nobody was in the hallway, we were all here.

(JOSIAH grabs the rifle.)

JOSIAH: I saw something move. A shadow.

ROWENA: It's your lack of sleep, darling. Go back to bed.

JOSIAH: I saw something.

(JOSIAH, with the rifle, goes slowly down the hallway, looking carefully to each side. The others watch.)

ROWENA: It's nothing a good night's sleep wouldn't cure.

(JOSIAH gets to the end of the hallway, turns down a corridor and disappears. The others relax. Suddenly there is a terrible COMMOTION offstage and a flapping sound. JOSIAH cries out and comes dashing back out in a panic, breathing heavily.)

BRANDON: What is it, sir?

JOSIAH: *(Trying to catch his breath.)* It's... it's... oh my God...

ROWENA: Take some deep breaths.

JOSIAH: A big... black... crow... came right at me. Attacked me. Tried to peck my eyes out. Biggest damn crow I ever saw.

ROWENA: It must have got in through a window. It probably wasn't attacking you, darling, it felt trapped and was trying to escape.

JOSIAH: It was unnatural... its eyes... its eyes... I could see the hatred in its eyes. *(Still unnerved.)* Mr. Aynesworth, can you see if it's gone?

BRANDON: *(Nervous.)* Yes, sir.

(BRANDON looks around for a weapon - picks up a fire axe. He gives the axe a practice swing and the momentum almost knocks him over.)

ROWENA: It's just a crow, Mr. Aynesworth.

(BRANDON puts the fire axe down.)

BRANDON: A rather unpleasant one, by the sound of it.

(BRANDON picks up the broom, gives it a test whack and slowly goes down the hallway. He peeks around the corner and looks around. Then he disappears down the hallway. We hear him whacking away with the broom. Finally he reappears.)

BRANDON: *(Relieved.)* It seems to have gone, sir.

JOSIAH: Is a window open?

BRANDON: No sir. All closed.

JOSIAH: Then how did it get in?

ROWENA: Never mind about that. Someone must have left a door open. You must get some sleep, darling. Now put that gun down, come on off to bed...

JOSIAH: I tell you, it was after me.

(ERIN takes the gun from JOSIAH and puts it aside. A WIND rattles the lighthouse.)

ROWENA: *(Shivers.)* There's that cold draft again.

(ROWENA goes to the scarf and puts it around her neck, though with a moment's hesitation as though she senses something. Once round her neck ROWENA's personality changes again. JOSIAH looks towards her and she turns to him with an icy look that scares him. She leads JOSIAH ominously off to their bedroom.)

BRANDON: *(Shudders.)* Thank God she's gone. *(Rushes to ERIN.)* Ratty, you've got to help me!

ERIN: What?

BRANDON: It's Mrs. Tollifsen. She scares me.

ERIN: How could she scare you?

BRANDON: You heard what she just said about that rat story. She felt bad for the rats! Not the humans, the rats!

ERIN: Oh, she's just having fun. She's bored out here.

(ERIN goes back to working.)

BRANDON: And now the crow. Listen, something very strange is going on. One minute she's normal, the next she says the scariest things. She wants to turn off the light and wreck the Emerald Queen.

ERIN: Why would she do that?

BRANDON: Revenge. The music, the dancing... it drives her into a frenzy.

ERIN: *(Disbelieving.)* Brandon...

BRANDON: Then she doesn't remember what she says - it's like she turns into a different person. I just wonder if... ?

(He looks around.)

ERIN: But you don't believe in any of that.

BRANDON: I didn't. But now I'm not so sure. You must stay here.

ERIN: I can't.

BRANDON: When you're here I feel like you could control her. You're tough. You've been raised around rough people. I haven't. I've been pampered. I have no defenses.

ERIN: I can't stay here. It's against the rules.

BRANDON: The Emerald Queen is returning at ten tonight. What if she goes strange again and turns off the light?

ERIN: I have to leave well before dark, and there's a storm brewing, so you must get a grip on yourself. *(She goes to a cabinet and gets a bottle of whisky.)* Here, the last keeper left it. Knock it back.

(BRANDON takes a swig of whisky. He's not used to raw whisky but he gets it down.)

BRANDON: What if she gets me to turn out the light?

ERIN: Remember your oath: "The light must shine every night a quarter of an hour before sunset..."

BRANDON: *(Remembers.)* "... unless every keeper on the light is dead."

ERIN: Now, you're getting crazy. You want me to slug you? That sometimes helps.

BRANDON: No thanks.

(He takes another swig.)

ERIN: Feeling better?

BRANDON: A little.

ERIN: Have some more.

(BRANDON drinks some more.)

BRANDON: A month! You can't go for another month!

ERIN: OK, I will slug you.

BRANDON: The Emerald Queen sails this route every Saturday - I don't think I can hold out a month.

ERIN: I can't stay here. What would I tell them?

BRANDON: You want the blood of all those passengers on your hands?

ERIN: Now don't be ridiculous. Only keepers are allowed to stay overnight on the light. You know that.

BRANDON: This is an emergency.

ERIN: The Commission doesn't list "ghosts" as emergencies.

(BRANDON grabs her.)

BRANDON: Stay! I need you.

(ROWENA appears in the hallway and sees this. When BRANDON sees her, he moves guiltily away from ERIN. ROWENA is wearing the scarf.)

ERIN: I'll clean the bedrooms.

ROWENA: No need to do ours, he's sleeping like a baby.

(ERIN exits down the hallway to the Assistant Keeper's bedroom with her broom and dustpan.)

ROWENA: *(To BRANDON.)* My, my, you were getting very friendly with the help.

BRANDON: Oh, we're just pals. From the port.

ROWENA: She's low class, you know. Your family would not approve.

BRANDON: Oh, it's not like that. Heavens, no. If I fell for someone like that I'd be cast adrift without a penny. Brandon Aynesworth II is no man to put up with anything like that. He's a hard man, my father.

ROWENA: *(She approaches seductively.)* But you like her.

BRANDON: Oh, she's all right. She's just clever in ways I'm not. No good at picking nicknames, though.

ROWENA: You don't like her more than me, I hope?

BRANDON: Oh, no! You're so different. You're... *(Losing his resolve.)* You're wonderful... *(Catches himself.)* ...in that married sort of way.

ROWENA: You can imagine, dear boy. There's no crime in that.

BRANDON: Really? I think one of the Ten Commandments mentions...

ROWENA: I'm just saying that spending too much time with someone of the wrong social strata is not good for you. Whereas I'm from a good family - finishing school in Switzerland, Debutante Of The Year...

BRANDON: You've never talked about your family.

(She moves away from him, towards the observation deck.)

ROWENA: All passed on, I'm afraid.

BRANDON: Where are they from?

ROWENA: Oh, far, far away. A sad subject, so I avoid it.

BRANDON: Yes, of course.

ROWENA: *(Dreamily.)* They lost everything in the Argentine Railway Scandal. You must have heard of it.

BRANDON: Er, yes.

ROWENA: It killed them, really. That's why... *(She sighs and indicates the lighthouse.)*

Please understand, I'm very fond of dear Mr...

(There is the SOUND of a rising WIND and the organ. The scarf flows in the breeze. It's as if the lives of the old keeper's wife and Rowena's are getting intermingled.)

ROWENA: But... I do worry about him having an accident. The tower is so tall. He has to go outside on the catwalk to clean the glass, even during a storm. And you can slip on the stairs and fall fifty, sixty feet.

(ROWENA steps out on the observation deck. BRANDON follows her, horrified.)

ROWENA: He'd be smashed to pieces. I told him he should never have brought me out here. What kind of man would do that? If he fell he'd pay a terrible price, wouldn't he? Have you mended that broken step yet?

BRANDON: No, we just avoid it. Neither of us are very handy with tools.

ROWENA: So dangerous. One slip and our lives would change forever.

BRANDON: What do you mean?

ROWENA: Who would keep the light burning? Who would keep the ships away from the rocks? *(Threat-seduction.)* You, dear boy?

(She gets close to BRANDON, when ERIN appears briefly noisily sweeping out the floor of the Assistant Keeper's bedroom into the hallway. ERIN's appearance seems to break the spell. ROWENA scowls at the interruption.)

ROWENA: Oh, it's so crowded around here.

(ROWENA angrily pulls off the scarf and immediately feels faint again, fanning herself with the scarf and changing back to her normal persona. She comes in from the observation deck and closes the door. The WIND and ORGAN SOUND fades. BRANDON edges towards the Store Room.)

ROWENA: *(Breezily.)* Where are you going?

BRANDON: I...I...I'm... er... getting some tools to fix the stair.

ROWENA: *(Puzzled.)* Now?

BRANDON: Well, you mentioned...

ROWENA: Oh, you can do your chores later. We should make the most of the extra company. We should play some games. *(She looks at the games on the bookshelf.)* I hate jigsaws. Bored with cards. Something for the three of us. A new player would liven things up. *(Calls.)* Miss Ward!

(ERIN pokes her head around the hallway.)

ERIN: Yes?

ROWENA: Come and play with us. We need a third.

ERIN: If I don't finish cleaning I'll miss the light to get home.

ROWENA: Oh, come and sit. We're perfectly capable of cleaning our own bedrooms, aren't we Brandon?

BRANDON: Yes. Join us. Please.

(ERIN puts away her broom and dustpan, and goes over to them.)

ROWENA: *(To ERIN.)* Pick a game. I'm going to change. Every so often I feel a terribly cold draft. If you can find where that's coming from Brandon, I'll be eternally grateful.

(ROWENA exits down the hallway.)

BRANDON: Ratty! She did it again!

ERIN: What?

BRANDON: She went strange on me again. Just now, while you were cleaning. She was talking about killing Josiah. I think she's possessed.

ERIN: *(Dubious.)* Brandon...

BRANDON: And if she can be possessed... who's next? Me?

ERIN: You are not going to get possessed.

BRANDON: I'm not crazy. I know what I heard.

ERIN: She actually said she wanted to kill him?

BRANDON: Well, no... she said he could have an accident, but the way she said it...

ERIN: So let me get this straight - one minute she's normal and then...

BRANDON: ... she turns ice-cold, you can feel it.

ERIN: Is there anything that triggers this? Besides you?

BRANDON: Well... I hear the organ on the rocks.

ERIN: We often hear them when a nor-easter blows.

BRANDON: She always wears that scarf... *(He points to it.)* ... the one she found behind the nightstand.

ERIN: This one?

(ERIN goes to get the scarf.)

BRANDON: No, no! Don't touch it. You may be susceptible too.

ERIN: Brandon...

BRANDON: You believe in ghosts. I know you do. You're just putting on a brave face.

ERIN: I have a job to do, I can't think about all that... other stuff.

BRANDON: Why would Rowena be the only one who's susceptible? We're all at risk.

ERIN: I've heard... *(Pauses)*

BRANDON: Yes?

ERIN: ... that ghosts look for the emptiness within people. A void they can fill. A weakness.

BRANDON: Rowena doesn't have a weakness that I can see.

ERIN: Maybe she does...

BRANDON: You know something?

ERIN: No, it's just... we can't let ourselves get sidetracked. We've just got to keep the light shining.

BRANDON: If only you could see her change, you'd see it's an emergency.

ERIN: I can't just ask her to put the scarf on.

BRANDON: Hey, she wants to play a game... why don't we play the spirit game? You know - the one where you take something belonging to a dead person and try to connect with their spirit. You must have played it.

ERIN: It's no game, it's dangerous.

BRANDON: So you've played it before?

ERIN: Someone once talked me into trying to contact my... it was stupid. I shouldn't have done it. Can we stop this Brandon, you're spooking me.

BRANDON: But you believe, don't you? I want you to see it. You'll see I'm not crazy. And if the spirit appears we can try to appease it, find out what it wants...

(ROWENA enters, putting on a jacket.)

ROWENA: So what shall we play?

BRANDON: We thought a séance would be fun. *(Light-heartedly.)* You know, contact the spirits of the lighthouse.

ROWENA: Oh, perfect! I love séances, they were all the rage in Paris.

BRANDON: But we need something from the past... umm... *(Looks around.)* ... hey, didn't you find that scarf here?

ROWENA: Yes, it's right here.

(She gets it. There is a moment, as BRANDON and ERIN wait expectantly to see if the scarf changes her immediately. It doesn't. BRANDON is perplexed.)

ROWENA: *(Notices.)* Everything all right?

BRANDON: Yes, yes, all set. The scarf must have belonged to the old keeper's wife.

ROWENA: Perfect! Then she's the one we'll contact. But we need the room to be dark, don't we? Brandon, be a darling and close the storm shutters.

(BRANDON quickly exits and closes the storm shutters from outside.)

We need a single candle. Do we have any candles?

ERIN: Yes, I'll get one.

(ERIN gets the candle.)

ERIN: So you've played this before?

ROWENA: Lots of times.

ERIN: Just in Paris?

ROWENA: Paris, London, Rome...

ERIN: Did anything happen?

(ERIN hands the candle to Rowena.)

ROWENA: Lots of giggling and foolish noises.

(ROWENA puts the scarf on the kitchen table and lights the candle. The room becomes darker and darker as each of the windows get shuttered. Now there is only the light from the candle and the faintest glow of light on the stairway from the daylight far above. BRANDON re-enters.)

BRANDON: *(Nervous.)* It's dark!

ROWENA: We need darkness.

BRANDON: I mean, it's really dark.

(ROWENA arranges the scarf in a circle around the candle.)

ROWENA: First we all sit around the candle with our hands on the scarf.

(They all sit.)

ROWENA: We need a moment of quiet before we summon her from beyond the grave.

BRANDON: I think Miss Ward should ask the questions. *(ROWENA doesn't like that.)* She believes in ghosts, you see.

(ROWENA seems to accept that.)

BRANDON: Miss Ward...

(ERIN is concerned, but goes along. BRANDON is very nervous about touching the scarf.)

ERIN: All right. First we have to assure the spirit that we mean no harm. *(She takes a deep breath, and holds a moment of quiet.)* Spirit, are you there? *(Beat.)* Spirit, can you hear us? *(Beat.)* Will you reveal yourself? We mean you no harm.

(Silence.)

ERIN: Spirit, will you give us a sign that you hear us?

(Silence. Nothing happens.)

ROWENA: Well... *(Breaks the silence and scares the others.)* ... as ghosts go, I've had better.
ERIN: Spirit, will you give us a sign that you hear us?

(Suddenly there's the loud SOUND of breaking glass from the kitchen, and they all jump. BRANDON takes the candle and looks in the kitchen area. He sees something in the sink.)

BRANDON: It's a broken glass.

ROWENA: I hope the spirit isn't going to start breaking things. We don't have much china.

(They all place their hands back on the scarf. For a moment there is nothing.)

BRANDON: The scarf feels really warm. Do you feel that?

ROWENA: It's silk. It always feels warm.

ERIN: Spirit, are you there? Give us a sign.

(Silence.)

ERIN: Are you unhappy?

(Outside the WIND RISES along with the SOUND of the organ pipes rising like a moan.)

BRANDON: That's it - that's what I heard each time...

ERIN: Spirit, give us a sign that you are here.

(The WIND RISES.)

BRANDON: I feel a chill. Do you feel a sudden chill?

ROWENA: The spirit seems to have taken a particular interest in you, Brandon. *(Teasing.)*

Obviously it's a woman.

ERIN: Spirit, are you lonely?

(The WIND RISES more, and the SOUND of the organ.)

ERIN: Spirit, are you trapped between the worlds? Between the living and the dead? What is keeping you here?

(The WIND rises and falls.)

ERIN: Are you trapped by the deeds you did in life? Do you not know how to free yourself? We can help, if you tell us how.

(The tower creaks in the wind.)

BRANDON: *(Shakes.)* I'm freezing!

(Suddenly BRANDON twitches as if fighting something off. There is the SOUND of heavy breathing.)

ERIN: What is it, Brandon?

BRANDON: Don't you hear it?

(His fear is getting out of control.)

BRANDON: Oh, my God! What's happening? Someone's scratching me! Ow! Ow! Stop it! Stop it! *(Jumps up.)* Damn it, spirit, why can't you leave us alone?

ROWENA: *(Nervous now.)* I think you made the spirit angry, Brandon. Better leave Miss Ward to ask the questions.

BRANDON: It's because I'm a keeper! That's why she's attacking me!

ERIN: Come back to the table, Brandon. Don't break the circle. *(There is the SOUND of receding FOOTSTEPS in the tower.)* Wait spirit, wait!

BRANDON: Listen! Did you hear that? She's going up the tower.

ROWENA: It's just the tower creaking in the wind! Our senses are all heightened... it's not real... perhaps it's Josiah. Josiah, is that you? *(No response.)* I think we should stop now!

ERIN: It's too dangerous. We have to keep going. Put your hands back on the scarf. Quickly!

(They do.)

ERIN: Spirit, we didn't mean to anger you. Please come back. We want to help. Focus on the scarf!

(Silence. The FOOTSTEPS on the stairs get louder as it seems someone is coming down the stairs.)

BRANDON: She's coming back to the room!

(The BREATHING gets louder. BRANDON looks towards the stairs.)

ERIN: *(He turns back to the table.)* Spirit, what do you want us to do? What can we do to ease your suffering? To help you move on. Can you speak?

(There is the sound of THE WIND almost sounding like a WOMAN'S VOICE in pain.)

BRANDON: I can't make it out...

(The FOOTSTEPS or CREAKING get louder along with the WIND and the WOMAN'S VOICE. BRANDON is close to breaking. On the stairs to the tower a ghostly BLUE LIGHT appears, BRANDON turns to look.)

BRANDON: *(Whispers.)* She's there! She's there!

ERIN: Stay with the table - keep your hands on the scarf!

BRANDON: She's there. I see something! A light!

ERIN: Quiet. She'll come back if we stay still. But don't look!

BRANDON: How can I not look? She's right there!

ERIN: Brandon!

(BRANDON gets up and moves slowly towards the base of the stairs. The ORGAN/WIND increases.)

ERIN: Come back, Brandon! Don't break the circle. What you're doing is dangerous.

BRANDON: Come! Come see! She's here!

(BRANDON gets closer to the base of stairs when RIGHT BEHIND THEM through the hallway -

A FIGURE

- in dark covering bursts into the light of the candle, screaming.)

FIGURE: AAAAAAARGHHHHH!

(They leap in fear, knocking over the candle, which goes out, plunging the room into darkness. There is much scrambling around in the dark.)

MAN'S VOICE: *(In the dark.)* I saw her, I saw her!

ROWENA: Get a lantern, somebody!

ERIN: There's one in the kitchen. *(She bumps into somebody.)* Brandon, is that you?

BRANDON: No! She's here! She's among us!

(Suddenly a GUN BLAST pierces the darkness along with a cry of pain and the SOUND of a falling body.)

MAN'S VOICE: *(In the dark.)* I'm hit! I've been hit!

ROWENA: Will someone get a lantern!

ERIN: I have the lantern, I'm looking for matches. *(There is much confusion and groping around in the dark.)*

BRANDON: Where are you?

ERIN: Over here... in the kitchen.

(After more groping around in the dark, ERIN manages to light a lantern. The light of the lantern reveals JOSIAH lying on the ground, groaning, tangled in the blanket from his bed. The rifle lies on the floor nearby.)

JOSIAH: I saw her in my bedroom. Cold, white face, an axe in her hand.

(ERIN runs to his side, undoes his jacket and shirt and looks at the wound.)

ERIN: You'll be all right, it's just a flesh wound. I'll get the first aid kit.

(She rushes to get the kit. He groans.)

JOSIAH: What damned idiot shot at me?

ROWENA: We couldn't see it was you. You can't blame Mr. Aynesworth for overreacting.

BRANDON: I didn't shoot him!

ROWENA: Well, I didn't. Miss Ward?

ERIN: Of course not.

(ERIN comes back with the First Aid Kit, and puts a bandage on JOSIAH. ROWENA goes to get another lantern from the Store Room.)

JOSIAH: Ow!

ERIN: It's iodine. Stay still.

(ERIN puts on some gauze and tape.)

JOSIAH: What's going on? Why are all the shutters closed?

BRANDON: *(Shaken.)* It was a séance. We were trying to contact the spirit of the dead keeper's wife. That's why you saw her in your room.

ROWENA: It was just a game, darling.

JOSIAH: Damn foolishness! You were supposed to be on watch, Mr. Aynesworth, not playing games.

BRANDON: We only wanted to find out how to ease her suffering.

JOSIAH: *(Annoyed.)* Ease HER suffering! Oww!

(ROWENA lights her lantern and holds it up to the wall where it illuminates something.)

ROWENA: Well... there's your answer.

(Scrawled on the wall in blood in large letters is the word:)

"DIE"

(They all look at the writing in horror. CRACK of THUNDER.)

MUSIC

(BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Scene 1

AT RISE: Continuation of the previous scene.

THE DRAMATIC MUSIC that ended Act I continues as the lights come up.

(ROWENA, JOSIAH, BRANDON and ERIN are still looking at the word "DIE" scrawled on the wall, illuminated by the light of the lantern.)

ROWENA: *(Not amused.)* That was very clever.

ERIN: Clever?

ROWENA: Whoever wrote that on the wall. Brandon, are you playing tricks on us?

BRANDON: What? No. Of course not.

ROWENA: Someone played a trick. You all had access to the red paint in the Store Room. Josiah? Was this your idea to create a fright, so you could heroically rush in and rescue us? *(ROWENA picks up the rifle.)* That's a dangerous game, as you see.

JOSIAH: Good God, Rowena! I saw her in my room! I saw the creature with an axe in her hand standing at the end of my bed.

ROWENA: You had a bad dream, darling. Thank heavens you're all right. *(ROWENA props the rifle against the wall.)* Now, will someone admit to this nonsense?

(ERIN goes to the wall and runs her finger over the scrawled words and smells it.)

ERIN: It doesn't smell like paint.

ROWENA: It's fish blood I'll bet. Brandon, admit it. You're playing a prank.

(JOSIAH groans in pain.)

ERIN: Whatever happened, I think the most important thing now is to get Mr. Tollifsen to a doctor.

ROWENA: You said it was only a flesh wound.

ERIN: I'm only guessing. The whole wound could be infected by morning. Mr. Tollifsen, I do think we should leave straight away.

JOSIAH: *(Alarmed.)* You mean... leave Mr. Aynesworth in charge of the light? With Mrs. Tollifsen. By themselves?

(BRANDON is even more alarmed.)

BRANDON: I don't think that will work! Mr. Tollifsen was right, I'm far too young and inexperienced for this job. I should have stayed ashore.

ROWENA: You'll be fine, Mr. Aynesworth. You must have more faith in yourself.

ERIN: I won't be gone for long. I'll tell the Coast Guard we need a new keeper and I'll come right back.

BRANDON: But it will be dark by then. And the storm is rising.

ERIN: I can navigate back by the light. I've sailed in worse than this.

JOSIAH: You can take both me and Mrs. Tollifsen.

BRANDON: *(Terrified.)* And leave me here alone!

ROWENA: I'm not getting into that leaky little boat in a storm.

ERIN: Mrs. Tollifsen is right. We could get swamped taking you both. One passenger should be safe.

BRANDON: But what if it is a ghost? I really think the Coast Guard should come right back. And perhaps the army.

ERIN: And what would they do that you can't? Someone has to tend the light.

ROWENA: Ghosts don't exist. And even if they did, they don't kill people.

BRANDON: *(Looking at the "DIE" on the wall.)* That's not what I heard.

ERIN: The old timers in port say that ghosts only prey on those without courage.

BRANDON: Then I'm done for.

ERIN: You have courage. Trust me. I'll be back in a few hours. We'll stay up all night tending the light if we have to.

(JOSIAH groans again, the wound is hurting. ROWENA goes over to him.)

ROWENA: There, there! You poor thing. You really should go.

ERIN: The sooner I leave, the sooner I can get back.

(BRANDON takes ERIN aside.)

BRANDON: You'll be back before ten! You must be back before ten! Before the Emerald Queen returns.

ERIN: I'll be back in time. I promise. You must hold up until then. Just keep the light burning or I won't be able find my way back. *(She goes over to JOSIAH.)* Come, Mr. Tollifsen, can you walk a little?

JOSIAH: I don't want to go.

ERIN: I'm not having your death on my hands. I know too many fishermen who died of untended wounds. You're no use here.

JOSIAH: I'm fine. All I need is... *(He tries to get up, but groans again in pain.)* Perhaps you're right.

ROWENA: It's the wise thing to do, darling. The girl is perfectly right.

JOSIAH: *(Trying to be brave, he gets up. BRANDON goes to help but he pushes him away.)* I can manage. *(To BRANDON, sternly.)* Mr. Aynesworth, please record in the Official Log, that I, very reluctantly, hand the duties of the Mason's Island Light Station to you, sir. Do your duty according to the rules of the commission. Do your duty as a lightkeeper... *(Goes to leave, then turns back.)* ... and a gentleman!

(ERIN helps JOSIAH exit out of the main door. BRANDON turns and sees ROWENA.)

BRANDON: Poor Mr. Tollifsen, I hope he'll be all right.

ROWENA: He always makes a fuss over small injuries. We must make the best of it. At least we can dance to the orchestra uninterrupted. Of course we must practice first.

(She hums sweetly and waltzes towards BRANDON who edges away from her. There's a RUMBLE OF THUNDER.)

BRANDON: *(Terrified.)* I must... trim the wicks, and... *(He sees the crank on the wall.)* ... crank the weight... *(Indicates.)* ... pre-heat the foghorn boiler... *(He looks at the word "DIE" on the wall and shudders.)* ... so much to do.

(BRANDON gets his tool box from the Storage Room and goes to the base of the stairs.)

ROWENA: Such a rush. Is it really necessary?

BRANDON: The storm will bring an early sunset. It will be dark soon.

(He dashes up the stairs to the Lantern Room. The WIND and ORGAN sounds rise. ROWENA sees the scarf where it was left on the table. She seems drawn to it, then fights the urge to put it on. The scarf seems to have a magnetic power.)

She picks up the scarf and it coils itself around her neck like a snake. Then she takes the lantern and looks at the word: "DIE" with a smile.)

ROWENA: Yes. It will be very dark soon.

(The lights fade to black and the SOUND of the WIND rises to a shriek as the storm rises.)

(End of ACT II Scene I.)

ACT II Scene 2.

(It is a few hours later. An attempt has been made to clean the "blood" off the wall, although the faint image of the word "DIE" is still visible. It is now very dark outside, and the SOUND of the storm and waves can be heard crashing against the rocks. BRANDON enters from the hallway with a tool box, looks around for Rowena, then grabs the bottle of whisky and knocks down a couple of big gulps. He dashes onto the observation deck with the telescope and looks around to check for ships. He goes back inside and enters the Store Room. He gets more tools and then takes his tool box and dashes up the tower.

ROWENA enters. She has changed into a very attractive and provocative dress with a low-cut bustline, and spends a moment adjusting her corset, trying to make herself as alluring as possible. She takes out a compact and checks her makeup. She still wears the black scarf around her neck. She glances impatiently up the stairs.)

ROWENA: *(Calls up the stairs.)* You've been running around all night. What are you doing up there? The light is burning just fine.

BRANDON: *(Offstage.)* Just keeping an eye on things. The wind is getting strong, I'm adjusting the vents.

(ROWENA paces for a moment in frustration.)

ROWENA: All right, then I'll come up!

BRANDON: *(Offstage.)* No, no! I'll come down.

(ROWENA smiles, adjusts her dress and checks her makeup using her compact's mirror. We hear BRANDON's footsteps as he comes down the stairs. He enters, nervously, with his tool box.)

ROWENA: Ah, there you are, dear boy. I've been lonely down here. We have to practice our dancing.

(BRANDON sees she is still wearing the scarf. He puts his tool box down, then goes to a wall where there is a cleat which holds down a rope.)

BRANDON: I'll... I'll... open the observation hatch.

(ROWENA sensually puts her hand on top of his as he tries to unhitch the rope from the cleat.)

ROWENA: I'd rather you didn't. It does cause such a draft and I really don't want to put a jacket on.

BRANDON: It's the only way I can see if the light is still lit.

(BRANDON unhitches the rope from the cleat and pulls open the observation hatch which is above them, unseen. Light from the Lantern Room above comes in through the "hatch".)

BRANDON: That's better.

(He moves away from ROWENA.)

ROWENA: You seem nervous.

BRANDON: I saw a crow on the railing outside the Lantern Room. The biggest blackest crow I ever saw. It looked at me with these deep bottomless dark eyes. I tried to shoo it away but it just stared at me. Like it knew something. Something bad.

ROWENA: It's just a bird. Their eyes never change, they just look more intense in the bright light up there.

BRANDON: If the light goes out it will be all my fault.

ROWENA: The light won't go out. Come here. You need to turn your mind to other things.

(He is captured by her intense gaze.)

BRANDON: Don't you think you should take the scarf off?

(He reaches for the scarf, but she takes his hand to dance.)

ROWENA: I've rather taken to it.

(She hums a waltz tune and they dance. There is the distant SOUND of the organ pipes on the rocks. He appears mesmerized, lost. They are about to kiss, when... there is a sudden LOUD BANG on the window by the main door.)

BRANDON: What's that?

(He dashes over to the main door leaving ROWENA frustrated. He goes outside and returns quickly.)

BRANDON: It's another dead lark. The crows are luring them... or perhaps they are trying to warn us?

ROWENA: Oh for heaven's sake...

BRANDON: I must give it a proper burial.

(He gets a small shovel, then goes back outside, fighting with a rising wind to open the door. There is a FLASH of lightning and a CRASH of thunder. He dashes right back in, horrified, and slams the door behind him.)

BRANDON: I just saw a huge rat carry it off! This is an omen!

ROWENA: You're getting all excited over nothing. You're too sensible to believe in silly superstitions. Come here. What you need is a little distraction from all this wind and storm. It's preying on your nerves, poor boy.

(BRANDON hears something, though it is too faint for the audience to hear.)

BRANDON: What's that?

ROWENA: What now?

BRANDON: I heard something. Very faint. It's gone now.

ROWENA: Then relax.

BRANDON: There it is again. It's the sound of... it's... an orchestra! (*Horrified.*) It's the Emerald Queen! It's coming back early. (*Realizes.*) Because of the storm!

(He runs to get the telescope, opens the observation deck door and looks out.)

ROWENA: So what if it's coming back early? We can dance to the music as it passes.

BRANDON: (*From the doorway.*) It's quite a way off yet. The sound must have been carried on the wind.

ROWENA: It's good that it's coming early. We can dance alone. We won't be disturbed. Remember, you promised.

(She moves towards him when there is another LOUD BANG on the window and movement outside.)

BRANDON: Dear God, not another!

(He rushes to the door again, opens it and runs right into a -

FIGURE IN A DARK COVERING SILHOUETTED IN A FLASH OF LIGHTNING...

In a CRACK OF THUNDER, he screams and jumps back, almost falling over. After a moment he realizes that it's ERIN in her black oilskins and black sou'wester hat. She takes off her hat.)

ERIN: It's only me.

BRANDON: Oh thank God! How did you get to port and back so soon?

ERIN: I didn't. I turned back. The boat was leaking. (*Glances at ROWENA*) Some of the planking had been damaged. We barely made it back alive. Help me with Mr. Tollifsen.

(JOSIAH appears in the doorway, also in oilskins and sou'wester hat.)

JOSIAH: No, no. (*Pushes BRANDON away.*) I can walk on my own. (*He staggers in.*) I thought we were done for.

ERIN: You should lie down on your bed to rest. (*To ROWENA.*) Could you help Mr. Tollifsen?

ROWENA: Of course.

(ROWENA takes JOSIAH off to his bedroom - he's becoming very afraid of her, sensing some darkness in her.)

BRANDON: (*To ERIN.*) I'm so glad you're back. The Emerald Queen is coming back early.

ERIN: I know. I saw her lights. (*She looks up through the observation hatch.*) But you kept the wicks burning bright. How's Rowena been?

BRANDON: She seems OK. She's wearing that scarf but all she wants to do is dance. Boy, this is all so much harder than I thought.

ERIN: What is?

BRANDON: Working. I mean, I worked hard at college with books and stuff and I've never minded tough physical labour, but this... this is... life and death. I'm responsible for the lives of so many people.

ERIN: I'm here to help.

BRANDON: Thank God for that.

ERIN: But you could do it on your own.

(ERIN takes off her oilskins and hangs them up by the main door.)

BRANDON: I wish I believed that. My father doesn't. He thinks I'm a dilettante. You see, since college I've been drifting a bit. Tried this, tried that - never really settled on anything. I really want to prove to the old man I can finish something.

ERIN: You've made a good start.

BRANDON: I'll tell you, Ratty, you're one heck of a girl. Look at you: no education, no refinement...

ERIN: Hey, wait a minute...

BRANDON: No family to speak of...

ERIN: *(Indignant.)* I have a family.

BRANDON: I know, but I mean... real family... with a name...

ERIN: I have a name.

BRANDON: I mean a name like, in the social register, your own family pew at the church, that kind of name. Oh, that sounded bad, didn't it?

ERIN: Yes.

BRANDON: What I'm trying to say...

ERIN: I know what you're trying to say. I'm a nobody.

BRANDON: Exactly. No. That's not what I mean. I mean, it's remarkable how far you've come from...

ERIN: ... being so low. And so wretched.

BRANDON: Let me try that again.

ERIN: No need, it was very clear the first time.

BRANDON: I didn't mean it that way. I'm sure you have a very fine family.

ERIN: I do! I have a hard-working mother, and my father was a great sailor and fisherman.

BRANDON: Was?

ERIN: His boat went down in the big November gale of aught-seven.

BRANDON: I'm sorry. I remember that storm, it blew down some of our trees. Your father was out in that?

ERIN: For months I thought he'd come back - that suddenly he'd be standing there in the doorway... wet, but alive, just like he always did. With that big lop-sided grin on his face... and the biggest fish of the catch in his arms. *(A sad pause, then she breaks off.)* Ah, hell, you're getting me all mushy. People die at sea all the time. It taught me one thing - sometimes a storm gets too big for the best of us.

(For a moment she is quite vulnerable. He goes to her and holds her.)

BRANDON: Not this storm. *(There is a flash of lightning and a loud crash of THUNDER and he looks around nervously.)* Then again...

ERIN: Brandon, I need you to hold it all together... you're stronger than you think.

BRANDON: You keep saying that, but how do you know? You barely know me.

ERIN: Remember that cold winter some years back when the harbour iced up early? There were kids playing on the ice and a boy fell through.

BRANDON: Oh, that. I made a real fool of myself that day. I was with my father - we were checking on the Lady B.

ERIN: You were the only one who went to help.

BRANDON: Yeah, and my father was yelling at me to stop. But he was right, I fell in too. Now there were two dumb kids to rescue.

ERIN: No! The boy was frozen and starting to sink, but you kept his head above water until help arrived. You saved his life.

BRANDON: Really? All I remember is how mad my father was. See, I lost my shoe in the water. A very expensive shoe. But I saved his life, you say?

ERIN: Yes you did.

BRANDON: And you saw all this?

ERIN: All the "wharf rats" saw it. You were a hero to us.

BRANDON: *(Pleased.)* Yeah? A hero. *(His elation fades.)* Well, this may change your mind - I have a confession to make. I shot Mr. Tollifsen. I was trying to protect you, but when I heard him cry out in the dark I realized I'd made another blunder. So I dropped the gun.

ERIN: I figured it was something like that. But I don't need protection. The big question is, who wrote on the wall?

BRANDON: I don't know, there's so much about this place that doesn't make sense. I hear footsteps on the stairs, but nobody comes down from the tower. Birds are hitting the windows... something's not right. And that scarf... why would it affect Rowena and nobody else? You know something about her, don't you?

ERIN: I'm not sure. I just feel like I've seen Rowena before, long ago.

BRANDON: Where?

ERIN: There was a girl I remember when I was a kid, but she wasn't called Rowena. She was from the rough side of town, no parents they said. The townies were always at war with the "Wharf Rats". She was sent to the county Reform School up north. I never saw her again.

BRANDON: You think it could be her?

ERIN: She wasn't "beautiful" back then. She was tough, scrappy, looked like she slept outside most nights.

BRANDON: Still, it might explain... if it's true then she lied to Josiah about who she really is. The lies, the pretense, it shows the emptiness inside... the void you talked about, that ghosts can fill.

ERIN: If it was Rowena, you can't really blame her trying to hide her past.

(A gust of WIND rattles the lighthouse, BRANDON looks out of the window.)

BRANDON: It's getting thick out there - I should fire up the foghorn.

ERIN: Good idea.

*(BRANDON exits through the hallway to the attached foghorn building.
ROWENA enters from the hallway, wearing the black scarf.)*

ROWENA: Where's he going?

ERIN: He's lighting the steam boiler for the foghorn - we're going to need it. How's Mr. Tollifsen doing?

ROWENA: Who?

ERIN: Your husband.

(ROWENA looks confused.)

ROWENA: Oh, he'll be fine. I don't think he's as injured as you think.

ERIN: I'd rather be cautious.

ROWENA: What makes you think you know what's best for everyone?

ERIN: I beg your pardon?

ROWENA: I don't like your attitude. I'm his wife - I know what's best for him.

ERIN: I didn't mean...

ROWENA: And why did you look at me when you said your boat had been damaged? If you have something to say, say it!

(They eye each other warily.)

ERIN: There were axe marks on the planking. Somebody wanted my boat to sink.

ROWENA: And you think I could do such a thing? Only a rough girl like you could harbour such thoughts. It's the type of thing your kind may do, but not mine. You think because I'm here on this wretched light I'm like you? I'm not. I'm from a good family. I'm here because of a lie. I met this man, he said he was rich, that he was going to take me to Paris, to the Great Paris Exposition, to see that amazing tower built by Mr. Eiffel, to ride in a fine carriage up the

Champs-Élysées, but he lied. He wasn't rich, he brought me to this tower instead. What kind of man brings a woman to a place like this?

ERIN: The Great Paris Exposition? That was... over thirty years ago, that would have been before you were born.

ROWENA: What are you talking about? Sometimes you don't make any sense.

ERIN: *(Realizes Rowena's talking as the dead keeper's wife.)* Excuse me, I should help Brandon with the foghorn...

(ERIN exits down the hallway to find BRANDON. The light from above - coming through the observation hatch - starts to flicker and dim. ROWENA looks up and sees the flickering lights with a smile. JOSIAH staggers in from the bedroom.)

JOSIAH: I can't get comfortable lying down. I think sitting would be better.

ROWENA: You poor darling. Does it hurt a lot?

JOSIAH: No, it just aches. That was quite terrifying, being out in such a small boat in those waves. I thought it was all up with us a few times. That girl is a marvelous sailor.

ROWENA: *(Coldly.)* Yes, she's very competent.

(The WIND RISES and the organ on the distant rocks gives off a sinister SOUND of foreboding. The light above them, coming in through the observation hatch, flickers and darkens even more. She looks up.)

ROWENA: Oh, look! The light is going out.

JOSIAH: What! *(He looks up at the observation hatch.)* Good grief, the wicks are popping! This is terrible.

ROWENA: Yes, and the Emerald Queen is approaching.

JOSIAH: Call Mr. Aynesworth!

ROWENA: Call Mr. Aynesworth! Do you know that young devil tried to seduce me while you were gone.

JOSIAH: The deuce he did. The scoundrel!

ROWENA: He said that you were old and useless, and that I needed a younger man to show me how to make love properly.

JOSIAH: I knew I shouldn't have left him alone with you. Never trusted him.

ROWENA: He said that you relied on him to do everything. That whenever there was a problem you would call for him like a baby calling for its mother.

JOSIAH: You know that's not true.

ROWENA: Of course I know. But he's trying to emasculate you. If you call for him now he'll sneer at you behind your back.

(JOSIAH gets up.)

JOSIAH: I can get to the top of the light. Even wounded I can get to the top.

ROWENA: I know you can. Look! The light is almost out. Show that young blowhard that you're as good a man as he is.

(JOSIAH goes to the base of the stairs. The light is flickering badly.)

JOSIAH: It's getting very dark up there.

ROWENA: Hurry, before the light goes out. Without the light the ship will run up on the rocks and you'll be blamed. It will be your eternal shame. It will be our eternal shame. The lives of hundreds are in your hands. Go!

JOSIAH: Yes.

(As he heads up the stairs the light from above gives a few final flickers and then goes out. We hear JOSIAH's footsteps going up the stairs in the dark.)

ROWENA: Faster, faster, the light is out!

JOSIAH: *(Offstage.)* I'm trying.

(More footsteps as JOSIAH goes up the stairs.)

ROWENA: The ship is getting closer, there'll be a wreck! Faster!

JOSIAH: It's too dark, I need a lantern...

(The SOUND of the cracking of wood. JOSIAH cries out. Then there is the SOUND of a body falling and crashing onto the stairs, then another crash and finally the SOUND of a body hitting the floor level just above the main room. Some DUST falls down through the observation hatch.)

ROWENA: Josiah? Josiah?

(There is silence. ROWENA gives a cold smile, and looks up through the observation hatch. It's completely dark up there. ROWENA goes to the Store Room and gets a large oil lantern and lights it. She takes it up the stairs and disappears.)

The WIND rattles the lighthouse and the organ pipes wail as if the ghost is triumphant. After a moment, light comes in through the observation hatch.

BRANDON and ERIN return from the foghorn room.)

ERIN: She's gone.

BRANDON: I'll look outside, you check the bedroom.

(BRANDON and ERIN exit. ROWENA comes back down from the tower and looks up with satisfaction at the glow coming in from the Observation Hatch. BRANDON re-enters.)

BRANDON: Ah, Mrs. Tollifsen.

(ERIN returns. They both look at ROWENA cautiously.)

ERIN: Is everything all right?

ROWENA: Everything is fine.

ERIN: And how's Mr. Tollifsen? I knocked on the door but there was no answer.

ROWENA: Oh, he's sleeping soundly.

(BRANDON looks at ERIN - Rowena seems OK to him.)

BRANDON: I'll check on the Emerald Queen.

(He gets the telescope and steps out on the observation deck. ERIN keeps a wary eye on ROWENA.)

BRANDON: That's a strange course she's taking. It's right at us. Don't they see the light? They're all dancing in the ballroom as if nobody has a care in the world.

(BRANDON comes back in to the lighthouse and goes towards the observation hatch.)

ERIN: You're right, that's a very dangerous heading. Visibility isn't that bad.

BRANDON: *(Looking up the observation hatch.)* The light looks OK.

ERIN: We should fire off a rocket to get their attention.

BRANDON: I'll get them.

(BRANDON goes to where the rockets were stored on a rack.)

BRANDON: They're gone. That's odd. I'll check the Store Room.

(BRANDON goes into the Store Room and looks around.)

ERIN: *(To ROWENA.)* Do you know where they are?

ROWENA: *(Shrugs.)* I don't know anything about this light. It's not my job.

(BRANDON returns from the Store Room.)

BRANDON: *(Very worried.)* I can't find them. There's some spares in the Storage Hut.

(BRANDON dashes out of the main door into the storm and the SOUND of crashing waves.)

ROWENA: I'll ask Mr. Tollifsen. He may know.

ERIN: But...

(Before ERIN can reply, ROWENA disappears down the hallway. The SOUND of the organ pipes can be heard faintly amidst the wind of the storm. ERIN finds it very frightening. She hears some heavy breathing, like she heard during the séance. An eerie blue light appears in the stairway where the ghost appeared before. ERIN backs away from the light when...)

THE WEIGHT that powers the crank comes crashing down from above -

- and just misses her. She jumps away in terror. After a moment ROWENA comes rushing back.)

ROWENA: What on earth was that?

ERIN: The weight that turns the light fell.

ROWENA: How terrible. Are you all right?

ERIN: It missed me. Just.

(BRANDON comes back in with the rockets.)

BRANDON: Got 'em! I'll send up a rocket, you go and check the light. There must be some reason why they can't see it.

(ERIN looks up through the observation hatch.)

ERIN: Brandon, there's something wrong with the light. The rotation weight just fell, and the light seems to be coming from just above the hatch, not from the top.

BRANDON: *(Looks up.)* You're right.

(They both head for the stairs when suddenly there is the SOUND of a terrifying high-pitched SCREECH offstage.)

BRANDON: What in God's name is that?

ERIN: *(Realizes.)* It's the foghorn's steam boiler. The release valve must be stuck. We've got to shut it down before it blows!

(She rushes offstage through the hallway, BRANDON lays the rockets on the dining table and tries to leave but ROWENA grabs him.)

ROWENA: Don't go!

BRANDON: Why not?

ROWENA: It could be dangerous, and I don't want you to get hurt.

(The SOUND of the steam boiler hissing and whining gets louder.)

BRANDON: I have to help her.

(He tries to leave, but ROWENA grabs him even harder.)

ROWENA: I said don't go.

BRANDON: Let go of me!

(BRANDON tears himself away. There is a huge EXPLOSION outside and steam [optional] fills the hallway. BRANDON rushes down the hallway. After a moment he returns helping ERIN who is hurt. There are smoke stains on her face. He helps her to a chair.)

ERIN: The pressure release valve had been jammed.

(BRANDON turns on ROWENA.)

BRANDON: You did this. That's why you held me back.

ROWENA: I was trying to protect you.

BRANDON: And what did you do to the light? *(He looks up.)* My God, it's completely out!

(BRANDON dashes towards the stairs, but ROWENA stops him.)

ROWENA: There's no point. That's the end of the oil.

BRANDON: What?

ROWENA: There's no more oil in the tank. It sprang a leak. The light is done. Finished.

BRANDON: What are you talking about?

ROWENA: It's time for those people to feel what I felt. It's time for them to feel the sting of cold water on their painted faces. It's time for their dancing to end.

BRANDON: You must be mad. There are hundreds of people on that boat.

(BRANDON rushes to the Store Room and grabs a spare can of oil. It's empty - the side of the can has been split with an axe. He grabs another - it's been split and is empty as well. He throws them aside.)

ROWENA: Don't waste your time. They're all empty.

ERIN: Use the rockets!

(BRANDON moves towards the rockets, but ROWENA grabs the fire axe and bars his way.)

ROWENA: No rockets, please. There's no need for rockets.

(BRANDON goes for the rockets again, but ROWENA slashes the axe at him and he jumps back.)

BRANDON: Rowena, for God's sake!

ROWENA: I don't want to hurt you, darling. You are going to stay on this light with me. We're going to dance... and dance...

(She twirls in a mad dance. BRANDON goes for the rockets again, but ROWENA slashes the axe at him and he jumps back.)

BRANDON: Rowena, you must get control of yourself... there's nothing romantic between us.

ROWENA: Don't say that. You've just been under a bad influence. But that influence will end now.

(ROWENA goes towards ERIN with the axe. BRANDON jumps in front of ERIN.)

BRANDON: No! No! Stop this madness!

ROWENA: Get out of the way.

BRANDON: Put the axe down.

ROWENA: Stand aside. She's a nobody. A little wharf rat. And look at me. We're a perfect match, you and I.

BRANDON: *(Does not move.)* Rowena...

ROWENA: What's come over you? Look at her - such a scruffy little vermin. You can't prefer her to me.

BRANDON: As a matter of fact I do. She's a pal. I don't know what in God's name you are.

(ROWENA's eyes harden.)

ROWENA: So she's turned you against me. She's a conniving little worm. Well, you're no use to me then. You can die first.

(ROWENA swings the axe at BRANDON and he jumps back and she misses. From behind, ERIN grabs the scarf off ROWENA and throws it aside. This distracts ROWENA and BRANDON manages to grab hold of the ax. ROWENA struggles for a moment with BRANDON for the axe, but then she seems to go through a transformation.

She looks around, bewildered, as if waking from a dream.)

ROWENA: What's happening? *(Looks around.)* Where am I? Where's Josiah?

(She sees the axe in her hand with horror. BRANDON takes the axe from her.)

ROWENA: What have I done?

(ROWENA slumps down in a corner like an exhausted animal. The SOUND of the Emerald Queen's orchestra can be heard.)

ERIN: The rockets!

(BRANDON puts the axe aside, far from ROWENA, then gets two rockets. He prepares the rocket for firing when behind them...

... ROWENA sees the scarf lying near her. She seems drawn to it by some supernatural power. She crawls over to it, and, still struggling with the urge as if

fighting a snake, she puts the scarf around her neck. Then she hardens, picks up the rifle and aims it at ERIN and BRANDON.)

ROWENA: Stop! Now we shall all wait until the ship hits the rocks.

ERIN: The scarf... !

BRANDON: Rowena, If we don't fire the rocket all those people will die.

ROWENA: That's the whole point, dear Brandon.

BRANDON: Why? What have they done?

ROWENA: Oh, you think those beautiful society people are all noble citizens? Underneath their finery, they are pigs. They forced me here and now they will pay.

BRANDON: They forced you here?

ROWENA: I was the most popular girl at every ball until we lost everything, then I was shunned, reviled... nobody loves a poor girl, it seems. In desperation I married that fool who brought me here. And there they are, all those "beautiful" people, packed into one ship... it's a fitting punishment.

BRANDON: This is not you speaking, Rowena. There's some dark spirit that's taken hold of you. What you are talking about happened decades ago to someone else. *(ROWENA appears confused.)* Fight it! You can fight it.

(The SOUND of the orchestra wafts in again. BRANDON moves closer.)

BRANDON: Rowena, there's no need for this. Give me the rifle and we won't tell. The ship will be saved... no-one need know.

(BRANDON moves closer and reaches for the rifle. Suddenly ROWENA hardens, shoots, and knocks him backwards. He slumps down on a chair, dead.)

ROWENA: I'm sorry Brandon.

(ERIN runs to him and opens his jacket - his shirt is red with blood. ROWENA aims the rifle at ERIN and cocks the rifle again - it looks like it's all over for her.)

ROWENA: You, I have less regret over.

(ROWENA aims the gun at ERIN. ERIN tries to hide, but ROWENA follows her. Finally she cowers next to BRANDON. ROWENA approaches but just before she can pull the trigger...

... BRANDON's hand darts out and grabs the rifle barrel - then he pulls the rifle away from ROWENA.

Slowly he stands up and ROWENA backs away from him as if she's seen a ghost.)

ROWENA: *(Shocked.)* That's impossible!

(BRANDON hands the rifle to ERIN. ROWENA goes for the axe again when BRANDON grabs her, rips off the scarf and throws it aside. BRANDON drags ROWENA over to the Store Room.)

BRANDON: I'm not taking any chances this time.

(He pushes her in and locks the door. ERIN goes to him.)

ERIN: What happened? I thought you were dead! You're not a ghost, are you?

BRANDON: Not if ghosts feel pain. Ow! I thought I was dead for a minute, I fainted, I think.

(BRANDON takes a deeply gouged blood-stained copy of the manual out from his inside pocket.)

BRANDON: The manual must have deflected the bullet. You told me to keep it with me at all times - best advice I ever had. *(Feels his chest and pulls out a bloody bullet.)* The bullet didn't go far in - I think I'll live.

ERIN: Let me put a dressing on that.

(The SOUND of the Emerald Queen's engines and the orchestra can be heard again - the thumping of a massive steam engine churning through the night. It's right on top of them.)

BRANDON: No time! The rockets!

(BRANDON grabs the rockets and runs outside to the observation deck. ERIN gets a lantern and the bullhorn, and joins him. He puts a rocket in the mortar tube, and lights the fuse.

There is the SOUND of a rocket whooshing into the air and a bright red glare can be seen, then there is a bang as the rocket bursts into a flare at high altitude. The SOUND of a ship's horn blows an emergency warning. The orchestra stops abruptly.)

ERIN: Fire another one!

(Another rocket whooshes into the air with its bright red glare. She gives the bullhorn to BRANDON and she waves the lantern madly.

The ship's HORN blows again. The THUDDING SOUND of the big engine gets louder and louder.)

BRANDON: *(Shouts to the ship through the bullhorn.)* Turn! Turn!

(The SOUND of the ship's engine reaches a loud crescendo as ERIN waves urgently. The light from the Emerald Queen's cabin lights reflect off the walls of the lighthouse. The ship's HORN blares again, so loud it's as if it's right outside, then the SOUND of the engine and the cabin lights start to fade.)

BRANDON: It missed the rocks! Dear lord, that was close.

ERIN: I'll get the first aid kit.

(They go back into the lighthouse. ERIN gets the first aid kit.)

ERIN: Well you saved some more lives.

(She puts a dressing on his wound.)

BRANDON: Yeah, I did, didn't I?

ERIN: See, I told you. Saving that boy who fell through the ice was no fluke. You're still a hero.

BRANDON: You know, once you told me about that, I realized that maybe I wasn't such a chump. I kept thinking... that boy's alive because of me.

ERIN: Alive and well and all grown up.

BRANDON: You know him?

ERIN: Oh, sure... still lives in the port.

BRANDON: I'd like to meet him one day.

ERIN: You already have.

BRANDON: Who? When?

ERIN: I never did like wearing dresses. *(Finishes dressing his wound.)* There, that should help. I'd better see if there are any more ships around.

(She goes back out on the observation deck with the telescope and scans the horizon for ships.)

BRANDON: *(Slowly figures it out.)* Wait a minute! That was you? *(He goes out to the observation deck.)* You were the one I saved? *(She smiles.)* So that's why... *(He takes all this in amazement.)* Listen, I have an idea, Ratty. Why don't we do this together? You could be the Assistant Keeper. Wouldn't that be the grandest thing? You and me. Pals. Ratty and... "Hero"... keepers of the light.

ERIN: "Hero!" No, no. You don't get to choose your nickname. But I'll give you back your Golden Boy, given the circumstances.

(ERIN continues scanning the horizon for ships with the telescope.)

BRANDON: *(Delighted.)* Yes! It'll be just like college. We'll make great keepers, you and I.

ERIN: We would, but I don't think the Commission would approve.

BRANDON: Why not?

ERIN: Look at us.

BRANDON: What's wrong with us? *(ERIN indicates the two of them.)* Oh, right. A young girl and a fella. Alone on a light. Not married. Ah, well.

ERIN: Kinda scotches the whole idea, doesn't it.

BRANDON: *(Glumly.)* Yes. Still it would have been...

ERIN: *(She sees something.)* There's a ship's lights about ten miles nor'-nor'-west.

BRANDON: We'd better check what she did to the light.

(BRANDON dashes towards the stairs, ERIN follows.)

ERIN: Be careful of that broken step.

(Just as BRANDON reaches the base of the stairs, the door to the stairs flies open and ...)

JOSIAH LURCHES OUT

... blood staining his face. He scares them both. He reaches for BRANDON.)

JOSIAH: The light! The light!

(BRANDON helps put JOSIAH down on the sofa.)

BRANDON: The light is in good hands, sir. We have rockets. We can fix the light.

JOSIAH: No wrecks!

BRANDON: There'll be no wrecks, sir. You can rely on us.

(JOSIAH passes out.)

ERIN: Is he dead?

BRANDON: *(Checks for pulse and breathing.)* No, he's still breathing.

ERIN: *(Picks up a piece of broken wood on the stairs.)* This wood is from the broken stair. He must have fallen.

BRANDON: What was he doing up there? He was injured. He would never have gone up on his own.

(ROWENA bangs angrily on the Store Room door.)

ROWENA: *(Offstage.)* Let me out! Why did you lock me in here?

ERIN: I guess we know.

BRANDON: Listen, Ratty, I'm not going back on shore. I'm staying here to finish out my term, maybe do another.

ERIN: Good for you. That'll show your father.

BRANDON: I'm not doing it to show my father.

ERIN: Then it'll show Miss Granville.

BRANDON: Who?

ERIN: The girl you came out to the light to impress.

BRANDON: Oh, I've forgotten all about her. No, I'm doing it for myself. And you.

ERIN: For me? You don't need to impress me.

BRANDON: Yes, I do.

(She looks at him, perplexed.)

ERIN: Why?

BRANDON: When you find someone who believes in you, you kind of... want to be around them.

ERIN: Yeah? *(Realizes.)* Your family won't go for you being friends with a wharf rat.

BRANDON: To hell with them.

(She's beginning to sense that he's serious.)

ERIN: *(Warily.)* I can only come out once a month. That's the rules.

BRANDON: Once a month, or any time the emergency supply flag is flying - I read the manual.

ERIN: Once a month. No emergency flags.

BRANDON: And then? *(Silence.)* Ratty?

ERIN: Erin, my name is Erin.

BRANDON: And then? Erin?

ERIN: *(Uncomfortable.)* Can we patch the tank and get the light burning? There's ships out there.

(BRANDON starts to leave when ERIN stops him.)

ERIN: You're OK, Golden Boy. Sorry... Brandon.

BRANDON: Pals?

ERIN: Yeah. *(ERIN gives him a friendly whack.)* Pals!

(There's a moment where they look as if they are about to kiss when ROWENA bangs on the store room door.)

ROWENA: *(Offstage.)* Let me out!

(The WIND HOWLS like the angry scream of the ghost.)

BRANDON: *(Realizes.)* The scarf!

(BRANDON gets the fireplace tongs from the kitchen and gingerly picks up the scarf. They go out to the observation deck. ERIN quickly grabs the scarf and throws it into the sea. This calms the storm and wind.

MUSIC UP as they go to work. BRANDON gets his toolbox and heads towards the stairs to repair the light. He starts to go up the stairs, stops and offers his hand to ERIN. She takes it and they go up the stairs together to fix the light. When they are gone...

... there is THE SINISTER SOUND of the organ pipes on the rocks.

THE SCARF floats down from the observation hatch, as if caught by the wind and blown in through the Lantern Room, down through the Observation Hatch and lands in the centre of the room.

Lights fade, leaving only an eerie blue light centre stage on the scarf.

BLACKOUT

MUSIC UP.

THE END

TECHNICAL NOTES:

THE RIFLE

The rifle used in the play does not have to be a real rifle. The rifle used in the premiere was a simple prop gun made of wood. It was quite effective just using a sound effect and an actor faking a recoil to make it look real. Complete non-firing replicas with moveable bolts can be bought between \$38 and \$225 depending on the complexity (search for Parade Rifles, dummy training rifles, or Denix Replicas like the M1 Garand.) For example a 42" Replica 1903 Springfield M-30 Parade Rifle is \$38 on the web or an ROTC Parade Rifle is \$50.

Replica Winchester style lever-action rifles are abundant and will suffice - a nice one costs \$138. If you build your own rifles, the bolt knob can be bought on Ebay for as little as \$15, wooden rifle stocks are also on Ebay for as low as \$15. The barrel can be wooden dowel, painted black. As a repeater, a bolt action rifle should have a small magazine fixed under it, whereas all Winchesters are repeating rifles.

THE WORD "DIE" ON THE WALL

The word "DIE" appears written on the wall: the easiest way to achieve this is to have a replaceable section of wall; the original production used a horizontal slide with three thin panels - the first was the bare wall, the second with "DIE" revealed during the blackout, the third with a faded "DIE" done between Act II Scene 1 and Scene 2 (this last one is optional). If it is above the hallway then there should be something nearby for any of the characters to stand on, like a chair or ladder, so any of them could logically have reached that high.

THE ROCKETS

Smoke coming from the rocket mortar tube is a cool effect, but is optional - the rocket can be fired using only light and sound effects. Otherwise a magician's confetti mortar cannon can be used with CO2 cylinders, or even a balloon in a tube with some powder above, the balloon being punctured by Brandon as if lighting the fuse. If there is a bank of four mortar tubes (made of cardboard), the rocket can be placed in the upstage tube while the powder or sparkles comes out from the preset downstage tube. Home made confetti cannon can easily be made and instructions are on Youtube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd3DYPF4m5g>

Remote controlled Version:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YZZmJuYtmyc>

Commercial magician's confetti cannons using CO2 cartridges can be purchased for \$68 (Pocket Cannon) and up to \$200 for a mortar.

<http://www.aerotechnic.com>.

<http://www.theatrefx.com>

THE SCARF

The scarf can be weighted slightly so it carries off over the heads of the audience. Throwing it into the audience usually gets a great reaction. Though the original production had a scarf made for every night, almost everyone gave it back, presumably not wanting to go home with a haunted scarf.

It is a second prop scarf that falls onto the stage at the end. It can be thrown over the flat.