

THE SWEET TRADE

A Play

by Lisa Reardon

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SETTING

Aboard the pirate ship “The Laughing Bitch,” sailing in the Caribbean in the year 1720. Also at Port Nassau in the town of New Providence, the Bahama Islands.

CHARACTERS

ANN BONNEY*	PRINCE JOHN
MARY READ*	CHARLIE DOLT
JACK RACKHAM	JAMIE
TOM DEANE	DUTCH CAPTAIN
GOVERNOR ROGERS	DUTCH FIRST MATE
MIZZENPAW	DUTCH SAILOR #1
TRASHY DICK	DUTCH SAILOR #2
FAT BILL	GUARD
RED EYE	SAILORS / TOWNSMEN (non-speaking)

* ANN and MARY pass for men until Act Two, Scene Five.

** Requires 11 actors, with doubling.

Originally commissioned by Manhattan Theatre Club in NYC.

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THE SWEET TRADE

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

THE AFTERMATH of a battle on the pirate ship *The Laughing Bitch*. The pirates are celebrating victory while the crew of the captive Dutch ship are herded into a group. Amid the drinking, laughing, shouting and looting, the Dutch CAPTAIN and FIRST MATE are brought before JACK RACKHAM, the pirate captain.

JACK

Do you swear that you are all of the ship's officers?

DUTCH CAPTAIN

The Spanish have been here before you. Half my crew killed before we could sink the devils. The rest have been murdered by you and your men.

JACK

Well and good, 'twill save time. Prepare you to face justice.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

'Tis no justice here.

JACK

Your crew shall decide that.

FIRST MATE

Who are these men to judge me?

ANN

None better than those who have suffered in your hands.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

Kill me now quickly and with dignity.

JACK

'Tis not for me to say.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

Or are you such monstrous dogs that you would deny a decent man peace in his grave?

JACK

'Tis up to your men.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

I have run an honest ship. I'll not beseech a single man to spare me.

(The Dutch sailors begin to shout.)

ANN

Howling brutes, stop your barking and yelping.

JACK

Come, come. Are we not men? We do not slaughter a man like a boar.

MIZZENPAW

By God's balls, we give a trial more fair than that of the bloody king.

JACK

Has this man been an honest captain?

DUTCH SAILOR #1

He worked us like slaves.

JACK

Speak truly.

DUTCH SAILOR #2

Led us into storms!

DUTCH SAILOR #1

He cut back our rations. We choked on saltbeef filled with maggots, and received a dozen strokes for our complaints.

(The shouts and curses increase until one Dutch sailor steps away from the rest.)

MARY

God's hooks, you'll shut your mouths! I'll not see a man die because your blood is hot after a battle.

(The DUTCH CREW and PIRATES look at MARY in equal surprise. TOM DEANE steps toward her.)

TOM

Hold thy tongue.

MARY

Think not that justice turns her face simply because we sail on lawless seas.

JACK

What be this creature?

MARY

Your black hearts shall rot in the belly of eels if you hang this man like a dog.

TOM

'Tis just a boy, sir.

JACK

You have the devil's own balls.

MARY

Balls enough to flay your filthy hide if you touch an innocent man.

TOM

Do not heed his childish temper.

JACK

(To MARY)

Give grounds then, if you would save him from the rope.

MARY

He needs not me to save him, for every man on our ship knows the same truth that God knows... that he was a firm captain but fair. He beat only those who did not their share of work. He led us into storms when there was no way around it, but by Christ's blood, he led us out again. He ate moldy crackerhash with the rest of us, and you know the truth of it, you stinking cod. 'Twas you, deserved more floggings than you got.

(SHE pulls a knife from her boot and nearly cuts the throat of the SAILOR #1 before SHE is restrained.)

ANN

Hold the boy, lest he butcher the entire crew.

MARY

"Boy"? Come closer and say it again, puppy.

TOM

(To MARY.)

In the name of Heaven, leave off.

JACK

(Addressing the Dutch crew.)

Well? Does the lad tell the truth of it?

DUTCH SAILOR #2

Aye. 'Twas a hard man, but fair.

DUTCH SAILORS

Aye.

JACK

What shall it be?

PIRATES

He lives!

JACK

Captain, your crew pleads for your life, and we are not animals despite the cries of the London court. You'll be left with a lighter ship and a portion of your crew to proceed unharmed.

(The DUTCH CAPTAIN spits at JACK's feet.)

DUTCH CAPTAIN

Am I to thank you for sparing my life?

JACK

You have the honor of knowing that your crew esteems you as an honest man. Do not take it lightly, sir.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

Release us, then.

JACK

Patience, sir, for due naval procedure.

(To the FIRST MATE.)

You there.

FIRST MATE

I'll not answer a whore's pup.

JACK

The Dutch, I think, are not well versed in civility.

FIRST MATE

'Tis easy to be civil with a full scabbard.

JACK

We bested you in fair battle, 'tis too late for challenges now.

FIRST MATE

Murderous rogues.

JACK

Tell me, do you believe your men shall spare you as well?

FIRST MATE

I expect nothing from those ungrateful hounds.

(The Dutch sailors shout again.)

DUTCH SAILORS

He's a thieving bastard! Hang the bitch's whelp! Sadistic dog! The devil's own bastard. Beating men who could not defend themselves.

JACK

Does he hang?

PIRATES

Aye!

TOM

Sir, we come from a Christian country, sir. We have not the right to condemn this man. I ask thee mercy in God's name.

JACK

Has your Christian faith been merciful to us?

TOM

Then rely on God's wrath, if thou would. Set the man free and let God judge his sins.

JACK

Clever dog. However, we haven't the patience of God, and there are no angels on hand to weigh his soul. Hanging shall have to do.

TOM

Sir, I beg thee--

ANN

Will not the boy speak for the First Mate?

JACK

You there.

TOM

(To MARY.)

He speaks to thee.

MARY

And he may kiss me here, the fawning jackass.

JACK

Do they call justly for this man's blood?

MARY

'Tis not for me to say.

JACK

'Twas for you to say when it concerned your Captain.

ANN

Does not this man merit a word from you?

MARY

No.

JACK

Men?

PIRATES

He hangs!

(Cheers all around as the FIRST MATE is hung from the mainmast. His body dangles and twists over the heads of the others for the remainder of the scene.)

JACK

Crew of the Dutch ship *Good Hope*, justice is served. Those who wish to join *The Laughing Bitch* and live like men, come forward.

MIZZENPAW

Free and equal, every one.

ANN

'Tis a life of ease you'll be enjoying.

JACK

He who would remain with his captain, no harm shall come to you.

MIZZENPAW

No king, god nor wife to plague you.

ANN

There are women and riches to plunder the world over.

(MARY and TOM join their captain. DUTCH SAILOR #1 joins the pirates.)

JACK

You there, no room for such a one as you on this ship.

(The PIRATES seize DUTCH SAILOR #1. THEY cut his throat and toss him overboard.)

ANN

Captain, we thank you for your cargo, and for your patience. You see we've stolen half your men, but we are still short by one. Where is he who spoke bravely for his captain?

MARY

Damn you for a pack of bloody, hellish jackals.

CAPTAIN

He does not choose to join you.

JACK

He shall be captive, then.

CAPTAIN

The angels weep for your soul.

JACK

Aye.

(Finishes a bottle of rum.)

We need brave men for our ship, and this one has proven himself well.

(To his men.)

Take him.

TOM

He is but a child--

MARY

Lay off your hands!

JACK

No resistance shall help you now. 'Tis the sweet trade for you for all your days remaining.

(MARY grabs a knife from one captor and succeeds in cutting him across the chest.)

MARY

Devil damn you, I've not suffered storms and an empty gut and a saber's bite at the hands of the damned Spaniards only to be taken by a hoard of black devils such as you. Filthy bastard pirates, take me if you would, and I'll tear a dozen of you limb from limb.

(ANN approaches MARY with her knife drawn.)

ANN

We shall decide if you be taken prisoner, you and I.

MARY

'Tis a trap. There be no honor amidst this pack of thieving jackals.

ANN

Jack, what say you?

JACK

(To MARY.)

There be laws, even on a pirate ship.

MARY

Ha!

JACK

Fight for your freedom if you can, and we'll give it you.

TOM

Thou must not.

(PIRATES restrain TOM.)

MIZZENPAW

Captain, 'tis not necessary.

JACK

Any man on this ship abides by our rules--

MIZZENPAW

He is but a prisoner, not one of us.

JACK

--be he here willingly or no.

MIZZENPAW

Then allow me to fight him.

ANN

He is mine.

MARY

'Tis all the same to me.

JACK

'Tis not your fight, Mizzenpaw.

MARY

I'll cut you both from neck to hem.

TOM

Thou would take a child's life for words spoken in haste?

JACK

He is man enough to speak, he is man enough to fight.

ANN

(To MARY.)

Show me your worth, little hellhound.

(THEY square off.)

MARY

I'll strip your flesh from the bone and feed it to your bloody devil-damned shipmates, you speckle-faced, rakehell dog.

ANN

Where did you learn to curse so well in your Christian country?

MARY

Godless wretch. What do you worship, the black-eyed goat?

ANN

We worship none but the sea.

(ANN draws blood. The pirates cheer.)

MARY

Your bastard's heart shall rot in the foul waters that bore you.

(MARY draws blood. The Dutch sailors cheer.)

ANN

And there I shall be content, grinning to the eels as they tear the meat from my bones.

(The fight intensifies, with the pirates cheering whomever appears to be winning. ANN disarms MARY and pins her against the foremast, holding both knives at her chest.)

ANN

You fight well.

MARY

Bleed and be damned.

ANN

Any man who swears as gloriously as you shall hail the pirate's colors within a fortnight.

MARY

I'll rip your throat as you sleep and stuff you down the hawse pipe, bitch's whelp.

ANN

We shall see.

(ANN releases MARY, who is led away.)

DUTCH CAPTAIN

Your reign over these waters is short lived. The new governor shall put an end to your bloody crew as he has all the others.

JACK

Your politicians have yet to hold much interest for me.

DUTCH CAPTAIN

He has made Port Nassau his home, and your graves shall decorate his lawn.

JACK

'Tis prettily spoken, but our graves shall adorn none but the crown of Neptune. Load her, men. We sail for New Providence with full bellies and Dutch riches to shower on the whores of Port Nassau.

MIZZENPAW

Jack, a word with you.

JACK

Aye, in a moment.

MIZZENPAW

Your eyes yet burn hot with the fight. 'Tis over.

(ANN does not answer.)

I may be conversing with the wind, for all you heed.

ANN

He is a vicious, untamed, glorious thing.

MIZZENPAW

Aye, and you be bleeding all about the deck, staring after him.

TOM

Sir, will thou allow me to join thee?

JACK

'Tis rough company you be seeking, parson.

TOM

I am strong, and not afraid to work.

JACK

'Twould be a great joke, the only pirate ship to boast a man of the cloth.

(JACK offers a bottle, TOM declines.)

TOM

I am no clergyman, sir, but a man just as thee.

JACK

'Aye, 'tis plain we are as twins. Come along then, if you will.

TOM

God bless thee, captain.

JACK

(To DUTCH CAPTAIN.)

I wish you and your remaining crew a safe voyage to the Virginia shore.

(The pirates cut down the FIRST MATE, escort the remaining DUTCH off the ship, prepare to sail, etc. JAMIE helps MIZZENPAW as HE bandages ANN's wound.)

ANN

You dress these wounds too well, Mizzenpaw. I would not have them heal so quickly.

MIZZENPAW

And see the fever set in as a consequence? No, I thank you.

ANN

They are the proof of blows dealt by his arm. Such an arm!

(JACK joins them.)

JACK

He bleeds yet?

MIZZENPAW

I am no surgeon. Do we yet sail for Port Nassau on the morrow?

JACK

With the largest prize taken yet this year.

MIZZENPAW

And what awaits us there, I'm wondering?

ANN

Food, drink and women.

MIZZENPAW

I've an idea the new governor shall not welcome us warmly.

JACK

You want me to send in a few men?

MIZZENPAW

Aye.

ANN

You are too cautious. Port Nassau is home to all pirates.

MIZZENPAW

It was when last we landed.

ANN

And so it shall remain.

MIZZENPAW

These are perilous days for the sweet trade.

ANN

For the faint hearted, perhaps.

MIZZENPAW

Playing in the courtyard of hell is what you do.

JACK

He is a demon, is he not?

ANN

Aye, an unnatural sprite, flung up from the sea in a fury of spray and mist.
Set loose upon the earth to plague God and man until Hell welcomes me home
again.

MIZZENPAW

I've no quarrel with you there, yet I would have a report of what this new governor
intends before I sail into his embrace.

JACK

Send Prince John and Red Eye. We'll have an accurate portrait of the man by
morn.

ANN

You speak more as the king's general than a pirate.

JACK

I love my work, heathen. I would continue it with my head intact.

ANN

Where is the prisoner taken?

JACK

Fat Bill sees to him.

ANN

Fat Bill is a butcher. The boy shall have gangrene by morn.

JACK

You go, Mizzenpaw. Wrap his wounds and see that he is not tortured for the amusement of the others.

MIZZENPAW

Come, Jamie.

ANN

I shall help Mizzenpaw.

JACK

You shall come below. No more brawling until these cuts have closed.

SCENE TWO

(That night. MIZZENPAW and JAMIE are above deck where MARY is guarded by TRASHY DICK. TOM argues with him and several other pirates.)

TRASHY DICK

I'm damned if I'll listen to another word from this fool.

CHARLIE DOLT

'Tis in fun, Trashy Dick.

TOM

I mean no offense.

TRASHY DICK

Dory's the sweetest girl ever to tip a pint in the taverns of Port Nassau and I'll not hear a word against her.

TOM

Thy Dory may have an amiable temper, but such sweetness has need of purity.

TRASHY DICK

I'll marry the girl if she'll tell me aye, and that be the end of it.

FAT BILL

If 'tis marriage you be seeking, better to dive among the sharks and be done.

TOM

Where shall thou find a clergyman willing to join the hands of a pirate and a girl of easy virtue in holy matrimony?

TRASHY DICK

I'll capture me one.

FAT BILL

Squealing the vows, with a bible in his hands and a cutlass at his throat.

TRASHY DICK

Aye, if I must.

(FAT BILL grabs TOM and holds a knife to his throat. The pirates perform a mock wedding ceremony.)

FAT BILL

Allow me, good fellow.

TOM

Leave off.

FAT BILL

I've a wedding for ye to perform.

TOM

Leave off, I said.

JAMIE

Hurry parson, I'm about to have a bloody baby.

CHARLIE DOLT

Your honor sir, I treasure this little baggage above all others.

FAT BILL

Come now, sir. The vows. The vows.

CHARLIE DOLT

I want to make her my blushing bride.

FAT BILL

Before he loses his courage as well as his manhood.

TOM

I'll not play thy ill-humored game.

CHARLIE DOLT

She's a bit wild your godly goodness, but I'll not have to worry about supporting her when I'm at sea.

JAMIE

I've an income, don't you know. (*Spreading his legs.*) In they come, night and day.

FAT BILL

Be there anyone aboard who objects to this unholy union?

JAMIE

Oooh! I've got pains in me belly!

FAT BILL

Being the best man, your high holiness, I must require you to pronounce them man and wife before she drops her litter upon the altar.

CHARLIE DOLT

Speak the vows, your sainted pope-ship, so my son be not born a bastard.

JAMIE

You're son? Holy Mary Mother of Christ, is it yours then?

TRASHY DICK

Misery? You think you can say anything to any man.

TOM

I speak only God's truth.

(TRASHY DICK pulls out a pistol.)

TRASHY DICK

God's truth is no good.

CHARLIE DOLT

No harm, Trashy Dick.

TRASHY DICK

No good, if it condemn a girl like Dory.

FAT BILL

No harm, he is a fool.

TRASHY DICK

Say it is a lie or I'll send you to hell.

TOM

I cannot lie. But I shall pray that she return to the light.

TRASHY DICK

Say it is a lie.

CHARLIE DOLT

You cannot murder him here.

TRASHY DICK

Tomorrow then.

FAT BILL

There, Quaker Tom. You've been challenged.

TRASHY DICK

'Tis no difference to me if I kill you now or wait one more day.

FAT BILL

Tomorrow you fight until blood is drawn.

TOM

I refuse.

CHARLIE DOLT

You cannot refuse.

TOM

I'll not lift arms against a brother whom I believe to be good in his heart.

TRASHY DICK

Then I kill you outright. 'Tis the law.

TOM

I am no pirate, and thy laws do not hold me.

FAT BILL

You sail on *The Laughing Bitch* her laws hold you.

TOM

I shall kill no man.

TRASHY DICK

Perhaps you'll kill a man for an insult like this.

(HE slaps TOM.)

Or perhaps thou shall kill a man for saying that thy sister is a whore. And thy mother as well. Shallst thou not killest a man for that?

CHARLIE DOLT

No, Quaker Tom is above us.

FAT BILL

It would take a god-sized insult to tempt him to break a commandment.

TRASHY DICK

The Blessed Virgin Mary, most sainted, pure and holy mother of our dear Christ, was a pock-ridden whore who spread herself for the devil himself and kissed the cock of the Pharaoh.

TOM

I shall meet thee tomorrow. At noon.

(TOM departs. MARY rises, bumping into TRASHY DICK.)

MARY

Move your heavy arse will you?

TRASHY DICK

'Twas you walked into me.

MARY

I said move your heavy arse, or can you not hear well? MOVE YOUR HEAVY ARSE.

TRASHY DICK

'Twas you walked into me.

MARY

"'Twas you walked into me." "'Twas you walked into me." A *monkey* knows more words than you.

TRASHY DICK

I'll cut out your tongue if you do not employ it better.

MARY

I'll cut out your eyes and give them to the devil for earbobs.

(CHARLIE DOLT laughs out loud.)

TRASHY DICK

You could not but reach my belt, little monkey. Run along to sleep and leave the men.

MARY

You are no man, but a plodding ox. And if you do not move your heavy arse, I shall kick it out of my way.

FAT BILL

Five crowns says he'll do it.

TRASHY DICK

God damn me for a fool, I'll drink bilge water 'fore I'll stand this treatment from two land rats in the span of an hour.

MARY

I'll draw pistols with you tomorrow, if you know what a pistol is.

TRASHY DICK

Aye, and I'll use it to end your chatter. At dusk.

MARY

I shall kill you at dawn, that I may eat my morning meal with your vast belly as my table.

TRASHY DICK

At dawn, then. Fat Bill, will you speak to the captain?

FAT BILL

Aye. I'll get his sanction, though he'll not like it.

MARY

Tomorrow, as the sun comes. Do not forget.

(MIZZENPAW draws MARY aside.)

MIZZENPAW

You be determined to leave this ship, though it be wrapped in a shroud. Have care what you do.

SCENE THREE

(Dawn, the next day. MARY sleeps on the deck. ANN stands beside her, looking out over the water.)

ANN

'Tis my turn to stand guard, yet he will not wake. Inconstant wind who kisses my brow each morning, who listens to the whispers of my perfidious heart, have you blown to me this gift from Neptune himself? This man, almost a boy, to amuse my scattered affections?

(ANN ducks out of sight as TOM approaches, shaking MARY to awaken her.)

MARY

Stand away, I say--

TOM

'Tis only me.

MARY

--'fore I strip the marrow from your bones.

TOM

Loose thy hold. Thou are safe now.

MARY

Safe. I think not.

TOM

What is the wild tale I hear of thee challenged to a fight?

MARY

There was a quarrel.

TOM

A quarrel?

MARY

'Twould be a sin to idly watch you slaughtered like an animal, not lifting a hand to forestall it.

TOM

'Tis as I thought. Know thou that I would not truly fight?

MARY

He means to kill you. 'Tis all I need know.

TOM

And what can a woman do against him?

MARY

A woman raised motherless with six brothers can do much, if she has courage enough.

TOM

Perhaps. Yet thou lacks a man's strength.

MARY

But I've quickness. And I have handled weapons longer than you have handled the Bible.

TOM

Give thanks that these men mistook thee as they did. Do not draw more attention than thou must.

MARY

And what shall draw their attention, but to show a woman's fear?

TOM

Fear? Thou seems not to know the word.

MARY

'Tis terror that closes about my throat until I can scarce draw breath. Be assured, I know it.

TOM

Then give up this ill-conceived game.

MARY

I would preserve your life as you preserved mine when the Spanish took us.

TOM

I would not have my life at the expense of thy soul.

MARY

Would you lie down and accept this fate that is thrust upon us?

TOM

We make our way as best we can, whatever blow is dealt us.

MARY

I shall arrive at Cape Henry at last, though God himself bar my way.

TOM

Now thou would quarrel with God?

MARY

I'll not begrudge God his will, if he not begrudge me mine.

TOM

There is solace in faith, if thou would but allow thyself--

MARY

When the Dutch crew saw that I was woman alone at sea, my husband murdered by the Spanish, 'twas you, not faith, that brought me a sailor's garb for protection. 'Twas you, not faith, kept them from the door of my cabin each night. No, I am too frightened to seek solace in faith.

TOM

Do not allow thy fear to turn thee down paths thou will regret.

MARY

Know you not what men we are among now?

TOM

Whatever their actions, there lies in every man's heart a kernel of faith and goodness that would grow if given encouragement.

MARY

A Quaker who would convert a pirate ship.

TOM

Aye. And why not?

MARY

If what you claim is true, then is there not a seed of darkness that may grow as well?

TOM

'Tis for us to choose.

MARY

Be still, we are not alone.

(ANN has overheard this entire exchange. PIRATES appear on deck.)

JACK

'Tis another dawn well-adorned for plunder.

JAMIE

Aye, sir.

JACK

What news from Prince John?

MIZZENPAW

They have not yet returned.

JACK

One hour's time, and we lift the mudhook with them or without.

FAT BILL

Captain, there is that matter to settle before we set the morning's sail.

JACK

Aye, aye. Trashy Dick.

TRASHY DICK

Captain.

JACK

You claim a quarrel with the Dutch monkey?

TRASHY DICK

He insulted me, Captain. Unprovoked.

JACK

You fight to first blood and if you be both alive at the end, the quarrel dies.

TRASHY DICK

Aye.

MARY

Aye.

JACK

What weapons shall you use?

TRASHY DICK

Pistols.

JACK

Mizzenpaw, you'll oversee.

(MARY fights to get her breath.)

TOM

Be thou ill?

MARY

Stand away, that I may gain my breath.

TOM

I beg thee, do not see this through.

JACK

Be there a man among us who would dispute this quarrel?

ANN

Aye.

JACK

What grounds?

ANN

I heard the prisoners speaking alone at dawn. The Dutchman is not as he appears.

TRASHY DICK

I shall fight him, though he be a very Frenchman.

ANN

He is not even a man.

MARY

Speak another word and your grave yawns wide.

ANN

He is but a green willow of a boy whose tongue is heavier than his hand. For all his courage, he has handled no pistols in his life. I beg leave to stand in his place.

JACK

I like it not. The challenge was given and accepted before witnesses.

ANN

'Twould be murder.

JACK

(To MARY.)

What say you? Shall you let another make amends for your careless tongue?

MARY

Justice demands that I put a ball through his worm-eaten, black-biled heart.

JACK

Then we've a pistol fight. All wagers taken?

ALL PIRATES

Aye!

ANN

'Tis not a sporting thing, Rackham.

MIZZENPAW

Hold your peace. 'Tis naught to be done.

JACK

On three, then.

MIZZENPAW

One. Two. Three.

(MARY shoots TRASHY DICK through the heart.)

FAT BILL

He murdered the poor bastard.

JACK

'Twas a fair fight.

CHARLIE DOLT

I saw the argument. 'Twas over nothing.

(The pirates grumble. MIZZENPAW collects his winnings.)

MIZZENPAW

You heard the captain, 'twas a fair fight.

MARY

I'll do the same for any who wish to try.

JACK

No doubt. But we'll not have whole-hearted slaughter on *The Laughing Bitch*.

CHARLIE DOLT

He'd tear our hearts beating out of our chests with his monkey paws.

FAT BILL

'Tis the most brood-hungry wretch ever to piss in salt water.

(The pirates cheer for MARY as TRASH DICK'S body is dragged to the edge of the ship and JACK performs the funeral service.)

JACK

“For man that is born of woman,
has but a short time to live.
He goes up like a fore topm'st stays'l,
and comes down like a flyin' jib.”

(TRASHY DICK is dumped into the sea.)

Mizzenpaw, raise sails.

MIZZENPAW

Clew up lively men, the wind has promised me fair today.

(CHARLIE DOLT and FAT BILL pull together on the ropes, chanting in time.)

CHARLIE DOLT

“Do re mi fa so la ti do!”

FAT BILL

“What makes me fart, I do not know!”

CHARLIE DOLT

‘Tis not the words.

FAT BILL

‘Tis my words.

MARY

Have you no words for me?

TOM

Thou did that which thou believed thee must.

MARY

Yet you judge me.

TOM

Nay. I ask only that it mark thy last taste of violence.

MARY

‘Tis a promise I cannot give until we depart this ship.

TOM

‘Tis no question of can or cannot, but thy choice. Thou does not credit men’s charity as well as thou ought.

MARY

But for you, I’ve yet to see an example.

TOM

The Irish one who sought to fight in thy stead, was that not an act of charity?

MARY

'Twas an act of something, though I know not what.

(ANN joins them, addressing TOM.)

ANN

You are needed to help with the mains'l.

(TOM departs.)

Will you give me your hand as a friend and shipmate?

(No answer.)

'Twas well fought... for a woman.

MARY

What is it you desire of me?

ANN

I scarcely know any more.

MARY

'Tis not rape. I know that you lie with the captain, and be a man with no taste for women.

ANN

You have watched me so closely?

MARY

You've nothing to gain from me. I've no riches to exhort, no loved ones to pay a ransom, nor influence, nor favor.

ANN

Nor trust, nor faith in friends, if truth be told.

MARY

Aye. I am no fool.

CHARLIE DOLT

(To ANN.)

Take the bowline, damn ye.

ANN

I am guarding the prisoner.

CHARLIE DOLT

I cannot trim the cursed thing by myself.

ANN

Jamie! Take the bowline.

(JAMIE and CHARLIE DOLT haul the bowline.)

CHARLIE DOLT

“Haul the bowline, for Kitty she’s me darlin’—“

JAMIE

“Haul the bowline, the bowline, haul!”

CHARLIE DOLT

“Tie fast the bowline, for Kitty she’s awaitin’—“

FAT BILL

“And what makes me fart, I do not know!”

CHARLIE DOLT

Fat Bill! That be not the words!

ANN

Tell me your name.

MARY

Dutchman.

ANN

Your true name.

(MARY secretly picks up a belaying pin and holds it behind her back as a weapon.)

MARY

Think you that I am now yours to command? Possessing my secret, you possess my will?

ANN

I ask only your name.

MARY

I'll not give it to a spider-toothed rat such as you.

ANN

Then I shall supply you one. Florentina. Or Annabelle.

MARY

Mary Read.

ANN

Mary Read.

MARY

Have I your leave to go? Or would you have me perform monkey tricks for you?

ANN

I've no wish to command you.

MARY

Dance and wear a golden cap?

ANN

You are a stranger, I think, to gratitude.

MARY

But I am no stranger to men such as you.

FAT BILL

Dutchman! Hand over the belaying pin.

(MARY does so.)

A hellish blow you gave old Trashy Dick.

MARY

And I'll crack your rotting skull against the fiferail like a squealing pig, if I've a mind.

FAT BILL

Devil take him, he sounds just like my wife.

MIZZENPAW

Heave to. The skiff approaches.

ANN

I am not the sort of man you think me.

MARY

What are you?

ANN

No mortal, to be sure. An uncanny creature, born of seaweed and salt water. Can you not glimpse the iridescent scales 'neath my rough jacket and breeches?

MARY

A madman, then.

(The sound of a skiff arriving. PRINCE JOHN and RED EYE climb aboard the ship.)

JACK

What news?

PRINCE JOHN

'Twixt the rolling of the skiff and Red Eye's feet, I've no tongue for speech.

RED EYE

Be it my fault you've no belly for sailing? Wretched land licking dog--

JACK

What news?

RED EYE

Governor Rogers has come to the Bahama Islands to end the sweet trade in these waters--

PRINCE JOHN

--and he vows it shall be done.

JACK

A claim we've heard often enough.

PRINCE JOHN

He has assembled a crew of men, calls them his Pirate Hunters--

RED EYE

--and Ben Hornigold leads them.

MIZZENPAW

Ben Hornigold!

JACK

'Tis a pirate himself!

RED EYE

'Tis a whimpering black tongued cur.

PRINCE JOHN

He signed a renunciation and received pardon.

RED EYE

He leads Rogers' men.

MIZZENPAW

Sad dog, the devil has got him now.

PRINCE JOHN

Red Eye, move away else I cut off those feet and toss them to the sharks.

RED EYE

You may kiss the hair of my--

JACK

Leave off.

FAT BILL

A crew of reformed pirates, paid by the King to hunt us like dogs?

ANN

Men who have tasted freedom, to willingly lick the boot of the law.

CHARLIE DOLT

I am ashamed.

JACK

Damnation to him that ever lived to wear a halter!

PRINCE JOHN

'Tis posted all about the town.

RED EYE

If a known pirate sails into Port Nassau--

PRINCE JOHN

--he shall be seized, tried and hanged. Rogers sentences them to death--

RED EYE

--then offers a pardon for their loyalty.

PRINCE JOHN

He has the dirty jackals hunting their own brothers to preserve their hides.

CHARLIE DOLT

Truly ashamed.

JACK

Surely 'tis but a few blackguards.

RED EYE

All those who refused to bow to Rogers' will are dead.

PRINCE JOHN

The hangings are a common fortnight entertainment from Port Nassau to St. Iago de la Vega.

ANN

'Tis a reign of terror, nothing less.

RED EYE

Port Nassau is a tamed village, Captain.

PRINCE JOHN

Women and children stroll through the streets.

RED EYE

'Twould make you weep to see it.

PRINCE JOHN

Even the whores are all in prison.

CHARLIE DOLT

No whores? I've been nearly a month at sea!

FAT BILL

I aimed to pay a visit to Trashy Dick's girl myself.

RED EYE

You can relieve yourself on the bulwark for all the sport you'll see in Port Nassau.

ANN

This man is the devil himself.

JACK

Are all men present?

MIZZENPAW

Aye.

RED EYE

Where be Trashy Dick?

(No answer.)

JACK

Are we to enter Port Nassau, or head for cooler waters?

MIZZENPAW

We've supplies enough from the Dutch prize.

JACK

How long?

MIZZENPAW

To reach the colonies, with some to spare.

FAT BILL

We can trade our captured goods in the ports of the Carolinas.

JACK

Shall we move north then?

ANN

I have no desire to go north. Perhaps further south, to Puerto Bello.

FAT BILL

The colonies, where they welcome the trade.

PRINCE JOHN

For they surely can get nothing from England.

ANN

South, where Spanish treasures lie.

RED EYE

Governor Rogers has peppered the south seas with his devil hounds.

CHARLIE DOLT

Even still, I cannot believe it.

JACK

Is it north for the present, until the storm of pirate hunting subsides?

ANN

Nay.

ALL PIRATES

Aye!

JACK

To north, then.

MIZZENPAW

(Calling to the men.)

Stand by main and jib.

ANN

Jack, there are other waters, with fat prizes waiting to be taken.

JACK

And when you are captain of *The Laughing Bitch*, then you may go where you please. Mizzenpaw, bring her 'bout.

SCENE FOUR

(Night. MARY and ANN repair ropes on the deck. MIZZENPAW sits nearby with his pistol, guarding MARY. JAMIE lies sleeping near MIZZENPAW.)

MIZZENPAW

You've lived your whole life on a pirate ship, one would think to see you now.

ANN

I warrant I can see a gold ring in his ear yet.

MARY

You take pleasure in baiting me, but be warned.

ANN

For two days you have threatened to cut my throat in my sleep, fire a ball into my gut, knock me cold with a boarding ax and toss me to the sharks. Yet here we sit under the darkening sky with the wind plucking at our sleeves. I think you shall not kill me after all.

MARY

If he had not his pistol at hand, you would soon feel--

MIZZENPAW

Do you bully all of your friends in this manner of a swaggering cock?

MARY

I have no friends.

ANN

Come, Dutchman. I am your friend.

MARY

You are a piece of dung, hanging upon the matted tail of a jackass.

ANN

And have I not shown you about the ship, taught you the rules, such as they be, of a pirate vessel?

MARY

You'll tip a pint in hell 'fore you'll receive thanks from me.

ANN

Did I not retrieve your bed roll from the rest of the prize on the Dutch ship? Have I not--

MARY

We sail for the Colonies and I shall be free of you at the first chance.

ANN

You would attempt an escape?

MARY

Attempt! I shall embrace the Virginia shore within a fortnight, and all of your hounds of hell shall not stop me.

MIZZENPAW

What awaits you there, to compare with this?

MARY

The Three Horseshoes.

MIZZENPAW

And what be three horseshoes?

MARY

A tavern that my-- my brother and I were to own.

ANN

Your brother.

MARY

Aye. Now that he is dead, it belongs to me.

MIZZENPAW

'Tis quite a piece of property for a mere Dutch sailor.

MARY

'Tis no concern of a scurrilous bitch's wag such as yourself.

MIZZENPAW

Have you no fear of a pirate's wrath?

MARY

Have you no fear of God's wrath?

(ANN and MIZZENPAW laugh.)

ANN

We may fear an empty belly and Gallows Dock, but we have no fear of damnation.

MIZZENPAW

I ask only to die at sea, 'tis all. I'd not care to swing from a rope for the amusement of the shopkeeper's wife.

ANN

What is death to us? 'Tis a merry life and a short one.

MARY

'Tis a disgrace to forsake allegiance to your crown. Mongrels with no honor.

MIZZENPAW

Was a time when piracy was not an outlaw life, but looked upon with favor. Queen Ann smiled when we plundered first the Spanish, then the French. She gave privateering captains their commissions, and large shares of each prize. Now that the barbarian George has no war to wage, his interest lies in placating the Spanish and establishing trading ports in these islands, thus privateering is declared piracy and we have our necks stretched for our pains.

MARY

You would twist the law to suit your greed.

MIZZENPAW

I was an honest sailor in the navy for the better part of my days. Sailed round the capes at all four corners of the earth, sometimes receiving my pay, sometimes losing it to a thieving scoundrel of a captain. Now freezing, now wasting of loosened bowels in the bloodboats off the coast of Africa. Sailed past plagues, slave revolts, hurricanes. Received the Punishment of Moses twice and I be alive to tell of it.

MARY

You lie. 'Tis few men who survive it once.

(MIZZENPAW reveals a back covered with whip scars.)

MIZZENPAW

39 stripes. Once in '78, I was no older than you. Refused to obey an order from a quartermaster mad as a south wind. Again in '14, I stabbed the boatswain for me own reasons. They took another 39 stripes out of me, and the hand I used to stab him. No job for a crippled sailor, so there was nothing for me but to go south and pray to the sea for deliverance. Lived most of my life an honest man, but give me hell, 'tis a merrier place.

ANN

Aye. Gaze upon our damned souls, look we not wretched, sailing upon the bulk of our sins through a lake of fire?

MARY

You shall not answer so blithely when death's icy voice whispers your name.

ANN

Perhaps not. Perhaps I shall not speak at all, but kiss it full on the mouth, as any passing whore.

MARY

That I can well believe.

ANN

'Tis all well and good, your jabbing, but it cannot spoil my good humor on a night such as this. Cease your monkey chatter and look up at the sky. Do the stars shriek and babble at one another? Does the moon trade barbs with its reflection upon the water? No, it keeps its silence, content to be watched and not heard.

MARY

'Tis but an empty sky, and a pale watered moon.

ANN

Empty sky? 'Tis not empty above us. Rather we are covered by a blanket of velvet-black violets. Can you not smell them?

MARY

There is nothing.

ANN

All the violets of the kingdom come together on nights such as this, and stretch themselves across the horizon. And the moon bores a hole through their softness, casting it's cool gaze through their petals and shedding pale teardrops of light down to the water below.

MARY

With your tongue you caress the night as you would a woman.

ANN

Were I a woman, I would suffer myself to be taken 'neath a blanket of violets, bathed in silence and the silver tears of the moon.

MARY

Were I a woman, I would not suffer myself to be taken at all. I would give love for love, but only to the man with heart and courage enough to best me in battle.

ANN

As I have?

(Pause. To MIZZENPAW.)

Fine women we would make, eh?

MIZZENPAW

Tell me, have you a wife on the shores of Holland?

MARY

I? A wife?

ANN

Or a young woman, fresh and blooming, who pines for your letters?

MARY

My heart belongs to no one.

(Pause as MIZZENPAW is falling asleep.)

ANN

A storm comes.

MARY

'Tis calm.

ANN

You've not lived long at sea, if you cannot feel it.

MARY

I feel nothing.

ANN

The wind is still and soft, the water lies black and smooth, a mirror gazing up at its starry reflection. Yet the storm is here, in the air about you. Close your eyes, can you feel it? The fullness of it in your veins?

MARY

There is a sudden stirring.

ANN

Soon lightning shall rip down from the stars and shatter the glassy calm of this dream. The air alive and sweeping in from the north, seizing the waves and tearing them up from their black sleep. You do not know if it is thunder, or your own heartbeat, roaring in your ears as the ship rolls and heaves with the force of the wind as she makes love to the sea.

MARY

You would cast a web of words around me. What magic is this?

ANN

The magic of an immortal whose power has failed him, whose heart has fallen prey to another's spell. If this poor creature were to offer himself as slave to you...

MARY

Why speak you so? Tell me if I be captive or captor.

ANN

You are both.

(THEY kiss.)

MARY

Tell me your name.

ANN

Do ethereal creatures such as I, have names?

(JACK enters, stumbling over MIZZENPAW.)

JACK

Mizzenpaw, you great maggot-ridden corpse, why lie you there?

MIZZENPAW

Seeking what scant comfort I may.

JACK

And what of guarding the prisoner?

MIZZENPAW

He is peaceful enough.

JACK

(To ANN.)

Come.

ANN

I've ropes to repair.

At this hour? Come. JACK

You are drunk. ANN

Is he what keeps you so long?
(To MARY.)
Balls of a bull, lad. Balls of a bull. JACK

Soul of a jackal, sir. MARY

Aye. JACK

You do not recognize an insult? ANN

Too sodden to mind it, my fluffy sea witch. JACK

Cease wagging your tongue like a Cardinal's beard. ANN

I know you, my love. JACK

You are so steeped in rum, you believe me to be some lost maid of your youth. ANN

The angels of prudence bow their heads and weep for me.
(To MARY.)
What think you of me? JACK

I do not think of you. MARY

JACK

I am not a fool, lest you forget who holds your life in his palm.

MARY

I hold my life, none other.

JACK

You are a boy, a runt, a squeamish puppy. Yap, yap, yap, little Dutchman.

(MARY sees MIZZENPAW'S pistol trained on her and does not respond.)

Where is your mighty tongue now? Where is that valiant spirit so likely to win a lover's heart?

ANN

Come below.

JACK

You would protect him from a quarrel?

ANN

I am tired. Come below with me.

JACK

'Tis an ugly thing, to be faithless.

(ANN and JACK go below. MIZZENPAW listens to the wind. JAMIE is awake.)

MIZZENPAW

Aye. Yes, you are a lively breeze tonight. And what shall we have on the morrow?

JAMIE

What does she tell you?

MIZZENPAW

Fair in the morn. Listen. Can you hear her whisper?

JAMIE

Not quite, sir.

MIZZENPAW

She's in a temper tonight. Says she's of a mind to blow us about a bit. Eh?

(Listens.)

But better humored by sunrise.

JAMIE

Good sailing, then?

MIZZENPAW

Aye.

JAMIE

Why does the wind not speak to me?

MIZZENPAW

She's a jealous mistress. You must love her above all others 'fore she'll tickle your ear.

MARY

There be nothing to hear. The wind no more talks than the man in the moon.

JAMIE

I've no trouble hearing the man in the moon, have I sir? 'Tis the wind I cannot yet understand.

MIZZENPAW

There, Dutchman. What say you?

MARY

'Tis a ship of fools and madmen.

MIZZENPAW

Do not scorn the wind, Dutchman. Had she a mind, she could blow straight through your heart, scattering its seeds across the seven oceans. Leaving you no choice but to roam endlessly round the world, gathering pieces of a heart blown this way and that by the wind's capricious fortune. Seeds taking root in the watery depths where you can never retrieve them. And there you shall be, sailing atop the waves from dawn to dusk, knowing only that you yearn, but for what, none can say. 'Tis a fate I've seen befall many who have laughed at the wind.

SCENE FIVE

(Moments later, ANN and JACK appear in the captain's quarters. JACK begins to undress ANN, but SHE pushes him away.)

JACK

Shall there be no sport for me again this night?

ANN

Leave off your fumbling.

JACK

You enjoy my fumbling.

ANN

Aye, but tonight your breath reeks of rum.

JACK

'Tis not the rum disgusts you.

ANN

'Tis not disgust, Jack. I've no desire for you, 'tis all.

JACK

And that is to comfort me?

ANN

Would you have me lie? Offer fatigue as my excuse, tell you I am indisposed?

JACK

I see the way of it.

ANN

I have no talent for women's games.

JACK

That bastard Dutchman has been trifling with what is mine.

ANN

Yours?

JACK

For eight months I have had no cause to doubt you.

ANN

To doubt what? My fidelity?

JACK

Aye.

ANN

I've none.

JACK

'Tis plain. *(Pause.)* He is but half my build. Had I a mind, I could snap his neck as neatly as a cat's.

ANN

'Tis not so easily done as you think.

JACK

Have you lain with him?

ANN

No.

JACK

And you shall not.

ANN

Ha!

JACK

I took you to sea when you had no other to look after you.

ANN

You took me no place I could not have gone alone.

JACK

Yours is the gratitude of a shark.

ANN

You enjoyed my company as I have enjoyed yours. There is naught owed on either side.

JACK

Have you not the soul of a woman?

ANN

Bah. And what is that?

JACK

How many others know your true sex?

ANN

None.

JACK

How many others have you lain with?

ANN

Am I now a whore with neither discrimination nor taste, because I have desire for one besides you? If so, I declare all men are whores.

JACK

You shall tire of him as you have tired of me.

ANN

'Tis true. I've tired of your smallness.

JACK

Me, and the poor devils who came before me.

ANN

Jack Rackham, the great and fearless pirate captain, playing the bully because a woman tells him nay.

JACK

Am I to meet the same fate as poor Ned?

ANN

If poor Ned had behaved as a man and let me go freely, I would not have had to dispose of him thus!

JACK

You've no love in your heart, Ann Bonney.

ANN

Love? Do not speak of love to me. 'Tis but a chain with which one soul seeks to enslave another. I'll be prisoner to no heart but my own.

JACK

You would have the Dutchman for your pleasure?

ANN

If only you knew the sort of man whose pleasure I seek. Yes, I shall have the Dutchman.

JACK

I'll not permit it.

(JACK slaps ANN.)

ANN

'Tis no choice of yours.

(SHE knocks JACK out with the nearest weapon and exits above deck where she remains alone among the sails.)

SCENE SIX

(Morning. MARY is by herself near the bowsprit, watching ANN secure a tops'l high on the foremast. JACK enters, offers MARY some of his bottle. SHE drinks.)

JACK

I do not understand it. What words did you whisper to gain the passion that was once mine?

(No answer.)

I am a handsome fellow, am I not? A patient lover. I would tolerate her woman's whims if she but had any. Why say you nothing?

MARY

I know not of what you speak.

JACK

By God's blood, you'll not take me for a fool. 'Tis plain she has revealed her sex to you, taken you as her lover.

(HE gestures to ANN above them.)

RED EYE

Speed, man.

ANN

Damn your rotting limbs, sheet home.

MARY

She. 'Tis a woman?

JACK

'Tis no woman, but a faithless cat who eats and sleeps upon the docks, mating with those strays who happen by, and sending them on their way with claw marks for their trouble.

MARY

'Tis impossible for a woman to conceal herself thus. What sort of trick do you play upon me?

JACK

I may be a fool, but I'll not have your duplicity upon my own ship.

RED EYE

I could have married me own mum to the fores'l by now.

ANN

Move those feet before I hang myself in the ratlines.

JACK

She has proclaimed her passion for you, thrown it in my face with the viciousness of which only a woman is capable. You would yet deny it?

MARY

In truth, I can say nothing.

JACK

Has she told you of her fierce love, the strength of her passion? Did she tell you of her home in the Carolinas that she fled, to escape a father's tyranny? 'Tis the tale she told me in a tavern in Port Royal, while the young sailor who had brought her from the colonies lay sleeping upstairs. She was tired of him, no doubt. And I, a pirate captain, suited her needs well enough. Her words set a veil of magic over my senses. She had him arrested for kidnapping, lest he follow her to sea. I dressed her as a man and brought her to *The Laughing Bitch*, shutting my eyes to the men who had served her aims before me.

MARY

'Tis a tale she had not shared with me.

JACK

'Twould be dishonor to kill you, though you have robbed me of what is mine. When we reach Charles Town, I shall give you your freedom if you but take it and leave her with me.

JAMIE

Captain.

JACK

Aye.

JAMIE

Dead north, sir?

JACK

Tell Mizzenpaw nor'by nor'west. I'll join him in a moment.

(JAMIE departs.)

It would have been but a fortnight's dalliance, despite her talk of loyalty. You leave little behind.

MARY

You promise safe passage for myself and for Tom Deane?

JACK
I do.

MARY
How far be Charles Town from Cape Henry in Virginia?

JACK
By sea, less than two days. By land, I cannot say. *(Pause.)* Have I your word?

MARY
Aye. You've my word.

JACK
'Tis a hard thing. A hard thing to love her as I do.

MIZZENPAW
Captain! What keeps you?
(JACK departs. The men haul the lines, chanting.)

FAT BILL
"We must put out the lamp, boys!"

CHARLIE DOLT, PRINCE JOHN, RED EYE
"From here we'll not be moving!"

FAT BILL
"This lamp it must be doused, boys!"

CHARLIE DOLT, PRINCE JOHN, RED EYE
"For we all feel like drinking!"

FAT BILL
"What is it, makes me fart, boys?"

CHARLIE DOLT
Fat Bill!
(ANN enters and joins MARY.)

ANN

Your eyes are e'en more bright in the morning sun than by moonlight.

MARY

You are much changed in this light as well.

ANN

We had been still for too long. 'Tis good to stretch out and fly across the waves once again. Look up, feel how the courses billow and catch. 'Tis the wind beating, as though 'twere the very heartbeat of the ship.

MARY

I am asking myself if perhaps you have a wife on some other shore.

ANN

Why look you so strangely?

MARY

"A young woman, fresh and blooming?"

ANN

I? A wife? *(Pause.)* No.

MARY

No lost love lingering from your past? No dark secrets?

ANN

Many secrets with which to beguile you, yet none of them so very dark.

MARY

I sometimes think you conceal yourself behind a clever array of words.

ANN

Shall I speak plainly?

MARY

Aye.

ANN

I feel most truly myself when your eyes gaze kindly upon me. 'Tis a fearsome sensation.

MARY

Fearsome? What have you to fear, being a man?

ANN

The heart's tender flesh is not that of man or woman. 'Tis torn with indiscriminate ease.

MARY

Yours is the very face of deceit.

ANN

'Tis not a handsome face, but it is one of tenderness.

MARY

The sport is finished. Do not speak again.

ANN

What false step have I taken? What words spoken?

MARY

No words! No words to the purpose! Leave me.

ANN

Whatever poison has entered your heart, I shall not leave you.

MARY

You make a mockery of truth, and yet smile so blandly.

ANN

What truth do you seek?

MARY

What more must you hear? Is it not plain that I despise you?

(MARY departs. ANN looks up to the wind in the sails.)

ANN

What jest do you play upon me? To send me idle sport only to snatch the prize at the moment of victory? Jealous of my loyalty to you, capricious and changeable though you are? Fickle wind, you shall not defeat me so easily.

PRINCE JOHN

Captain! Captain!

JACK

Aye?

PRINCE JOHN

Vessels off the port bow!

JACK

Their colors?

PRINCE JOHN

Spain. There be two.

MARY

Spanish ships?

PRINCE JOHN

Sitting low, sir. Full of cargo.

JACK

We're for the colonies.

ANN

They've seen us. Tacking around to the south, headed for the nearest port.

JACK

Let them go.

ANN

Frightened hens, full of golden eggs.

JACK

'Tis not worth the risk.

ANN

Would you turn your back on a plum such as this?

JACK

Two Spanish galleons heavily armed with cannons. 'Tis not a plum, 'tis certain death sailing under a Spanish flag.

ANN

I cannot abide a coward, Jack Rackham.

JACK

We agreed. All of us. I've not the right to change course without due consent.

ANN

Then we change our minds.

JACK

Are you mad, then? We are but six leagues from the mouth of Port Nassau.

ANN

You are a sweaty palmed school boy who cannot fondle a full breast when 'tis thrust before him.

JACK

The Pirate Hunters shall have our heads in their hands before we've loaded half the prize.

ANN

(Addressing the pirates who have gathered.)

You hear your captain. You hear the man you've elected to lead you. He takes care to keep his head attached to his shoulders, and all of you stand in a miserable quaking huddle, crying "The Colonies! The Colonies!" The Governor declares he does not care for pirates, well the pirates do not care for the Governor. Now we are to skitter north because a dandy by the name of Rogers would say us nay?

TOM

'Tis prudence to keep on course.

RED EYE

There be other prizes, in safer waters.

ANN

Damn you altogether! Damn Rogers and his men for a den of jackals, and damn you for a parcel of hen-hearted numbskulls. They persecute us, the scoundrels do, when there is only this difference. They rob the poor under the cover of law, and we plunder the rich under the protection of our own courage. Now are you pirates, or would you snake after the arses of those villains for employment?

MIZZENPAW

The devil damn me, I'm for taking the Spanish bitch.

ANN

Take her and let the Governor's foot boys do what they dare.

CHARLIE DOLT

Damn the traitorous dogs.

TOM

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! You must listen.

PRINCE JOHN

I am a gentleman indeed, yet I am no simpering pup.

RED EYE

"Gentleman," my bloody black balls.

ANN

Do we play the buccaneer when the King approves, and cringe like lap dogs when he frowns?

FAT BILL

Do we whine and scratch at the door of Parliament, begging for a crumb of mercy?

ANN

Do we run away to the Colonies because the King's puppet stamps his foot and shakes his tender white fist?

CHARLIE DOLT

No!

ALL PIRATES

No! No!

ANN

We roar across the waves and take what we will!

JACK

We face two galleons, armed with cannons.

MIZZENPAW

Armed galleons? What is that to us?

ANN

Are we not men?

FAT BILL

We shall put fear into their bowels.

RED EYE

They'll not get off a single round, but stand slack-jawed and whimpering.

PRINCE JOHN

Spanish pigs, they're no better than the bloody French!

ANN

Who's for the attack?

ALL PIRATES

Aye! Aye! Aye!

ANN

And if the governor of New Providence does not like our merry games, why, let him come and tell us of his displeasure.

TOM

Think how once you were honest men, every one.

ANN

And we shalt be fine hosts for his bows and thank you's.

TOM

'Tis not too late to turn from this bloody course.

ANN

We'll rip him from bowel to chin and let the crows feast on his maggot carcass.

TOM

Heed not this one who would urge you to your deaths.

(The PIRATES hesitate.)

ANN

I am a free prince and have as much authority to make war on the world as he who has a hundred sailing ships and a thousand men of arms in the field. And I've no use for sniveling puppies who would rather cry themselves abused than rouse themselves to action. Would you be victims to another's will, or shall you reign free over your own destiny?

PIRATES

Reign free!

MARY

Burn the Spanish pigs!

RED EYE

We'll send their Catholic souls to hell, where the bloody Pope cannot save them.

PRINCE JOHN

And if there be a Protestant among them, let him be the first to kiss the Devil's arse!

ANN

Now men, shall we show the Quaker how we ply the sweet trade? Are we not pirates?

FAT BILL

A merry life and a short one!

ALL PIRATES

A merry life and a short one!

JACK

Mizzenpaw, you hear them.

MIZZENPAW

Stand by the tops'!

JACK

'Tis south we're going, and let their god take care to save them if he can.

ANN

Drums! Pipes!

MIZZENPAW

Ready about!

ANN

We go to battle!

(A PIRATE drums the battle rhythm.)

JAMIE

Does she fly, sir?

MIZZENPAW

Run her up the foremast, Jamie.

JAMIE

Aye!

JACK

Swift to strike, and a quick retreat.

(The Jolly Roger unfurls as the ship heaves around. The PIRATES chant and prepare themselves for the attack.)

ALL PIRATES

“No quarter! No quarter!
Nor ask nor give!
No quarter! No quarter!
As long as we live!”

(MARY takes up arms with the others.)

TOM

Lay down your weapon.

MARY

And pray to God for deliverance? I'll not suffer that brand of fear again.

TOM

We can have no part of this--

MARY

Go below if you would, I shall have revenge.

PRINCE JOHN

She's pulling to. The galleons are pulling round to face us.

RED EYE

She'll strike her colors when she sees what is upon her.

MIZZENPAW

The wind is for us, men. She's hot for the battle.

PRINCE JOHN

They're standing to fight.

JACK

And hell be unleashed upon them. Fire the first warning!

(The drum beat builds until the cannon fires.)

END OF ACT ONE

(total pages in the script, 117)

*For the 2nd Act and/or to discuss production,
please contact the Author, Lisa Reardon.*

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