

SCENE ONE

(A terrible storm. Lightning, thunder. Waves crashing. Howling winds. Dialogue being yelled above the sound of the storm.)

CAPTAIN. Fall to it, and lively, men! Or we run ourselves under!

BOATSWAIN. (To Father.) I pray you, sir, you and your family keep below!

SAILOR. Out of our way! You do assist the storm!

FATHER. My boys and I can help!

BOATSWAIN. Aye, by staying below, you can! (To others.) Look to the mainsail!

SAILOR. LAND! Land ho!

CAPTAIN. Where, man!?

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

SAILOR. Off the starboard beam!

FATHER. I see it! There!!

FRITZ. What country is it, Father?!

CAPTAIN. (To sailors.) Bring her about and turn her in to shore!! Make for shelter, lads, and quickly!! (A huge mast pole sweeps across the length of the deck.) Watch your heads, you fools! (All duck.)

MOTHER. (To Father.) John, is it true?!

FATHER. Yes. There's land not far off. Keep the children below and gather our things together.

BOATSWAIN. What island is it, Captain?

CAPTAIN. No way to tell; we could be anywhere.

SAILOR. How do we know there aren't savages there?!

CAPTAIN. We don't, but I prefer a dry death to drowning. Now, stop cackling and get the rest of those Robinsons below!

SAILOR. (To Father.) You're a minister! Minister these waves and winds to cease!

BOATSWAIN. Down with the topmast a'fore she splits!

SAILOR. Reef! REEF off the larboard! REEF OFF THE LARBOARD!!

**BOATSWAIN.** (*Simultaneously.*) REEF OFF THE LARBOARD!!

**CAPTAIN.** Set her off to sea again! Lay her off!! (*Overlapping.*) Lay her off!

**BOATSWAIN.** Bring her about! Hard to starboard, man! Hard to—

*(The ship strikes the reef and begins to break up. Sounds of wood splintering and water rushing in. Chaos. Men yelling, swearing, praying.)*

**SAILOR.** She's breakin' up! We're lost sure! Save yourselves!

**BOATSWAIN.** Lower away the boats! Lower away, I say!

**CAPTAIN.** You'll do nothin' o' the sort! (*To the sailors.*) Courage, boys! We're all above water yet! Now, get aloft and rig more sail! Aloft, I say!

**SAILOR.** Get aloft yourself! I'm not going up in this!

**CAPTAIN.** There's land not far off, men! Let's do our best to reach it together!

**SAILOR.** We're lost and no thanks to you!

**CAPTAIN.** You cowards! Take the children, then, and lay off in the shallows until she--

**BOATSWAIN.** Lay off this! (*He strikes the Captain.*) That's the last blasted order I'll take from the likes o' you! (*Strikes him again.*)

**FRITZ.** (*Trying to help the Captain.*) Captain! [REDACTED]

**FATHER.** [REDACTED], Fritz!

**SAILOR.** Leave 'im be! (*Sailor swings at Franz.*)

**FATHER.** Fritz! (*Father helps Fritz away from the sailors.*) [REDACTED]

**MOTHER.** Come, children! Ernest, take hold of your brother. (*i.e. Franz.*)

**FATHER.** (*Bringing Fritz over to Mother.*) Stay here, Fritz. (*To the sailors.*) In the name of decency, I beg you, take my wife and children!

**BOATSWAIN.** Cast off! Cast 'er off!

**FATHER.** There's more than enough room! Please!!

**MOTHER.** John. John...stay with me now. I need you by me. John. Pray with me.

*(The storm crescendos. It is a horrific storm. The family stays huddled together.)*

**FRANZ.** Shall I pray now, Papa?

**MOTHER.** Yes, Franz.

**ERNEST.** Father.

**FATHER.** Not now, Ernest.

**ERNEST.** Father, look at the water line on the reef. It's low tide!

**FATHER.** Ernest, please.

**ERNEST.** But, Father, the tide will be turning soon.

**FATHER.** *(Trying to pray.)* Elizabeth, take the children below.

**MOTHER.** Come, children.

**ERNEST.** But, Father—

**FATHER.** What is it?!

**ERNEST.** If we can hold out long enough, the tide might float us in to the island.

**FRITZ.** We're stuck fast to these rocks, Mr. Professor! We're not floating anywhere.

**FATHER.** Your brother is right, Ernest. Please go below.

~~FRITZ.~~ He's not so right, Father. *(Holding up and empty canister and some large cork floats.)* We just have to make ourselves float. *[Signature]*

**FATHER.** Heavens! Of course! Everyone, quick! Gather up anything that'll float—good thinking, Ernest! Barrels, empty wine casks, canisters, tins, anything! Fritz! Cut me some lengths of rope. *(Father cuts rope too and begins tying floatables to Mother and Franz.)* If we can last out the worst of the storm, we'll make for the shore.

**FRITZ.** Let's go now! We'll miss the tide if we wait too long.

**FATHER.** Fritz, stop! It's much too dangerous now; we'd be crushed upon the reefs.

**ERNEST.** Father, look out! *(Something falls in Father's direction. He avoids.)*

**FATHER.** Quickly now! Fritz, help Franz and your Mother! Tie them together!

**FRITZ.** Father, look! *(Sound of the lifeboats being crushed against the reef.)* The lifeboats! They're running into the reefs!

**FATHER.** Heaven help them, poor souls. *(Mother covers Franz' eyes.)*

**FRITZ.** Poor souls!? They left us to die!

**FATHER.** Fear does terrible things to men without faith. *(A short beat.)* Come, let's finish

these life vests. *(Another huge howl of wind and cracking of wood is heard.)* Stay together! Everyone try to stay together!

*(Sounds of the storm continuing and the ship breaking apart. Lights shift. The next day. Dawn. On a deserted island. The island is white hot, humid, steamy. The buzz of insects creeps in. The storm has passed. The shore is littered with pieces of the wrecked ship, supplies, of every sort: sails, lines, block and tackle, barrels, splintered wood, etc. At first we see nothing move at all. After a moment or two, we see the clump of sails on the shore begin to move. Franz comes out from under it, then Mother, and then, Father.)*

FRANZ. Where's Ernest, Papa?

FATHER. He's... We're going to look for him now that it's light, Franz.

MOTHER: Fritz. Fritz, wake up. *(From behind something else, Fritz sits up.)* Help your father to look again for Ernest. Please find him, John.

FATHER. Franz, I need your help too. *(Father gives him a knife.)* Here. Put this on your belt. I want you to wear it always. Now listen closely... I need you to look after Mother while we're gone. Can you do that?

FRANZ. Yes, Papa.

FATHER. Good.

FRITZ. *(Holding up a rifle.)* Father, look! *(Fritz has opened a chest containing arms.)* Rifles!

FATHER. Are they dry?

FRITZ. Yes.

FATHER. Fortune smiles on us again. *(Seeing Elizabeth, despondent over Ernest.)* We mustn't lose faith now, dear.

MOTHER. I haven't lost faith, John, I've lost my son.

FATHER. The four of us landed on this shore, there's no reason Ernest shouldn't have survived too.

FRITZ. Here, Father. *(Hands Father a loaded rifle.)*

FATHER. Load a pistol for your mother, Fritz.

FATHER. *(To Elizabeth.)* If Ernest is on this island I will find him. Come along, Fritz.

*(We hear an odd sound like the clanking of metal against metal, the brush/bushes start to move. Something is heading towards the family. Franz is closer to the noise than the others.)*

**MOTHER.** *(Grabbing Franz.)* Franz!

*(Fritz and father take up positions in front of Mother and Franz, their rifles pointed at the movement in the bush. Mother puts Franz behind her and points her pistol at the noise.)*

**FATHER.** We'll fire together, Fritz. Wait for my command.

*(Ernest walks out of the brush. He is still wearing his life vest made of empty canisters and/or tin or glass jugs, etc.)*

**ERNEST.** I thought this island to be uninhabited. I see I'm mistaken.

**MOTHER.** Ernest! My Ernest! *(They all rush to greet him. Dialogue overlapping.)*

**FATHER.** Are you alright, son?

**ERNEST.** Quite well, Father.

**MOTHER.** Are you hurt?

**ERNEST.** No, just a few scratches.

**FRANZ.** Where ya been?

**FATHER.** Yes, how came you to be separated from us?

**ERNEST.** I was behind you coming into the surf but then was caught in the current—a rip tide I believe—and rather than exhaust myself swimming against it, as most inexperienced swimmers are wont to do, I concluded it would be best to swim with the current, which generally runs parallel to the shore, and wait for it to dissipate. Which I did to great success. I've been walking all night. Anything for breakfast?

**FATHER.** *(Of Ernest.)* Ever the pragmatist.

**MOTHER.** Saw you anything of the crew,

**ERNEST.** Not a sign of anyone, living or dead.

**MOTHER.** Thank God you're well and with us.

**FATHER:** Children, I know not why Providence has seen <sup>to</sup> fit cast us upon this shore, but we have been, and we have been cast as a family... which is a miracle quite beyond my scope of understanding, but not beyond my faith. Let us give thanks for our deliverance.

**FRANZ.** I'm hungry, Papa.

**MOTHER.** He's right, John. We'll need all our strength for the trials ahead of us. Let's ~~see~~ ~~see~~ see what we can find.

**FATHER.** Very well. Some of the provisions must have survived. *(All scavenge through the wreckage.)*

**ERNEST.** I passed a stream of fresh water on my travels, Father.

**FATHER.** Excellent, Ernest. Can you find it again?

**ERNEST.** Most assuredly.

**FRITZ.** Here's something, Father.

**FATHER.** *(Opening a small crate.)* Heaven be praised.

**MOTHER.** What is it, John?

**FATHER.** Flints and sulfur. We shall have a fire tonight.

**ERNEST.** *(Opening a trunk. Beyond himself.)* Oh, father, look here! A treasure!!

**FRANZ.** A what!?

**ERNEST.** Treasure!

**FRITZ.** Where!?

**MOTHER.** What is it, Ernest?

**ERNEST.** *(Holding one up.)* Books! Hundreds of them!

**FATHER.** The ship's library.

**FRITZ.** We can't very well eat books, now can we, professor?

**ERNEST.** These shall certainly come in handy: encyclopedias, the sciences, drama--

**FRITZ.** Food, Ernest! We're looking for food!

**ERNEST.** Your mind needs food just as well as your stomach, brother. *(Tossing a book.)*

Here's a little Shakespeare to nibble on! *(Fritz tosses it back.)*

**FRANZ.** Papa! Papa! Look!

**FATHER.** Where did you find these, Franz?

**FRANZ.** Stepped on 'em.

**FRITZ.** What are they, Father?

**FATHER.** Clams.

**ERNEST.** Yes, an edible bivalve mollusk.

**FRITZ.** *Bivalve mollusk*, Ernest? Talk like a human being, would you.

**MOTHER.** Boys.

**FATHER.** Come on everyone. Do like Franz and me.

*(Father and Franz are feeling around in the sand/shoreline with their feet. As they feel a clam they reach down and pick it up. Ernest does not enjoy this kind of labor.)*

**FRANZ.** Here's another! And another!

**FRITZ.** They're all over.

**MOTHER.** *(Collecting the clams.)* Put them in here, boys.

**ERNEST.** Must we really?

**MOTHER.** Ernest, you must temper your scholarship with a little healthy labor. Yes, we must.

**ERNEST.** Very well—ow!

**MOTHER.** Step gently. Don't dig your heels in so. Like this--oh! Ow! *(Screams. Hops away. Franz and Fritz laugh.)* Oh, John! Help! John!

~~FRITZ. It's only a crab, Mother! An enormous crab!~~

~~ERNEST. That's not a crab.~~

**FRITZ.** It's only a crab, Mother! An enormous crab!

**ERNEST.** That's not a crab.

**FATHER.** *(Reaching down and grabbing it.)* It's a lobster.

**ERNEST.** A crustacean.

**FATHER.** Look at the size of him!

**FRANZ.** Wow!

**FATHER.** Watch his claws, Franz.

**MOTHER.** A lobster! Good heavens. How many clams have we, Ernest?

<sup>Franz.</sup>  
**ERNEST.** A dozen or so.

**DAD** ~~FRITZ.~~ That's enough for now, boys. Come along to breakfast.

**ERNEST.** What?

**FRITZ.** Breakfast?

~~FRITZ. Breakfast?~~

**FATHER.** (*Opening a clam.*) Take your knives and twist it like so along the joint in the back. Then slide your knife around and...Voila! Breakfast. Here you are, Mother."

**MOTHER.** Might we not try cooking them first? I mean, I assumed we would. It is a trifle more civilized.

**ERNEST.** I agree with Mother.

**FATHER.** Oh, they're much more nutritious like this.

**FRANZ.** Go on, Mother.

**MOTHER.** Oh...I...very well, then. I guess we should be thankful for what we have. (*Trying to eat the clam but faltering. Father slurps one down.*) Don't slurp, John.

**FRITZ.** Here, like this, Mother! (*Slurps a clam down right in Ernest's face.*)

**ERNEST.** (*Who has a weak stomach.*) Really, Fritz, you're revolting.

**MOTHER.** Boys, you will maintain your manners, please--even here. *Especially here.*

**FRITZ AND ERNEST.** Yes, Mother.

**MOTHER.** Now, I believe we've forgotten to say grace. (*They all stop.*) Father?

**FATHER.** Let us give thanks for this food.

**ERNEST.** For *this*?

**MOTHER.** That is quite enough, Ernest John.

**ERNEST.** I'm sorry, Mother.

**MOTHER.** We are truly thankful for all that we have, for, though we may seem deserted, we have each other. (*They bow their heads.*) Very well, then. (*Struggling a bit to eat.*) Now, everyone...eat. We'll need our strength in the days ahead.

**FRANZ.** I like 'em! (*Slurps another clam down.*)

**END**

*(At the end of this line Jennifer drops from a tree. She is dressed like a savage; unrecognizable as a woman or a civilized person. She wears a mask at all times. She is athletic, hardened, and strong from her years on the island—quick, agile. She deftly and silently, drops from the tree and instantly conceals herself again in the brush. Fritz and Father think they hear something, but by the time they turn around, Jenny is nowhere in sight.)*

**FRITZ.** Did you hear something, father?

**FATHER.** Shh. (*Franz slurps again.*) Franz!