**PERIL ON THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI**

ACT ONE
Scene One

AT RISE: MODESTY adjusts CAPTAIN'S uniform.

**CAPTAIN:** Well, how do I look?

**MODESTY:** You look like the best riverboat captain on the Mississippi River, Father.

**CAPTAIN:** Thank you, my dear.

**MODESTY:** And how do I look?

**CAPTAIN:** You look beautiful. The very image of your... *(Sad.)* ...dearly departed mother. I only wish that she were here to see what a lovely young lady you have become. She would be so proud of you.

**MODESTY:** I am sure that she is looking down on us, and that she is proud of the both of us.

**CAPTAIN:** Even though I pulled you out of boarding school to have enough money to try this business venture?

**MODESTY:** I know that Mother would have supported you, as I do.

**CAPTAIN:** Still, I invested our last penny in this riverboat. This will be the maiden voyage of the Mighty Mississipp'. What if something goes wrong?

**MODESTY:** Do not fret so, Father. I am confident that Mother is looking out for us and that everything will be just fine.

**CAPTAIN:** Your words lighten my spirits, child. You know, your mother and I spent a lot of effort to increase our social standing so that you could marry well, and it is time to be finding you a husband. Several of our passengers will be people of high social standing. Now that you are back, it is important that we introduce you into the proper social circles.

**MODESTY:** I understand, Father. I will do my best to present myself as a proper lady at all times.

**CAPTAIN:** I have no doubt that you will. Oh, dear! Look at the time! I wanted to check on the kitchen staff and then address some of the men before our passengers began boarding.

**MODESTY:** A proper lady may still check on the kitchen staff. I will handle that whilst you address the men. *(EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

**JUSTIN:** *(ENTERS UP LEFT with JONATHAN SMITH.)* Crewmen Stalwart and Smith reporting as ordered, Captain. *(BOTH salute.)*

**CAPTAIN:** *(Returns the salute.)* Ah, yes, right on time. Listen up. This will be a high-class operation. I want everything to run smoothly and efficiently. Tell the men that there is to be no swearing, spitting, or drinking. Is that understood?



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**JUSTIN/JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** The passengers are to be treated as honored guests. And the first-class passengers should be catered to at every opportunity. Is that understood?

**JUSTIN/JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** We have made our passengers a promise! Five days to reach St. Louis guaranteed or your money back. We are going to keep that promise! Is that understood?

**JUSTIN/JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** Good! The two of you are going to escort the first-class passengers to their cabins and carry their luggage. Mr. Stalwart, go pass the word along to the rest of the crew and then report back here for bellhop duty.

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**CAPTAIN:** Mr. Smith, to your station. It looks like passenger boarding has commenced.

**JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(Takes his station UP CENTER. VANDALL VONLECH ENTERS DOWN LEFT, carrying a suitcase, which he sets down.)*

**CAPTAIN:** Welcome aboard! As I live and breathe, if it is not Vandall VonLech! How are you, my old friend?

**VANDALL:** *(Surprised.)* Quite well, mein freund! *(CAPTAIN and VANDALL shake hands. Aside.)* This is quite unexpected. I was hired by a rival riverboat owner to prevent this boat from reaching St. Louis within five days. I had not expected to find my old friend as the captain. He was one of my better "upstanding citizen" references. Alas, this job will be most upsetting... for him. *(Villainous laughter. To CAPTAIN.)* Moving up in the world, I see—captain of a riverboat now! Wunderbar!

**CAPTAIN:** I am moving up farther than that. I am also the owner. It took everything I had, but my lifelong dream has been realized.

**VANDALL:** *(Aside.)* Such a short dream... more like a nap, ja? *(Villainous laughter. To CAPTAIN.)* I am so happy for you. *(MODESTY ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* Und what have we here?

**CAPTAIN:** Allow me to introduce my daughter, Modesty. She is just back from boarding school. Modesty, this is my old friend Vandall VonLech.

**MODESTY:** It is a pleasure to make your acquaintance, sir.

**VANDALL:** Nein, nein. The pleasure is all mine, I assure you. *(Aside.)* What a delectable little morsel she is. This is better than I could have hoped for. Once I have ruined her father's business, they



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will be destitute. Then, I shall swoop in und save her from a life of poverty. *(Villainous laughter. To MODESTY, as he steps close.)* I hope that during our journey, we will have the chance to get better acquainted. Some of the stories I could tell you about your father, you would not believe.

**MODESTY:** *(Uncomfortable at his closeness and practically blushing.)* Oh, really?

**CAPTAIN:** Do not forget, Vandall, that I might be able to regale her with a few embarrassing stories about you, also.

**VANDALL:** Ach, do not remind me.

**CAPTAIN:** *(Snaps his fingers and JONATHAN steps forward and takes VANDALL'S suitcase.)* We must catch up later.

**VANDALL:** Indubitably. *(JONATHAN leads him OFF, DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MODESTY:** Father, are all of your old friends so... so...

**CAPTAIN:** Gregarious? Prosperous? Fun to be around?

**MODESTY:** Those were not the words I would use to describe him.

**CAPTAIN:** Oh, I know he can seem a little rough around the edges. I think it is his German accent. Now that I think about it, he might prove to be an excellent suitor.

**MODESTY:** *(Aghast.)* Please, Father, tell me that you are not serious.

**CAPTAIN:** And what is wrong with him?

**MODESTY:** I do not wish to speak ill of your friends, Father, but I was hoping for someone who is... different.

**CAPTAIN:** "Someone who is... different," in what way?

**MODESTY:** Someone who is... younger. Someone who is... noble... and honest... and loyal and brave and strong and handsome. Someone who is... *(Turns and faces RIGHT just as JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. He stops when he sees her. There is a frozen moment between the two as they stare into each other's eyes. In slow motion, they move into "in love" poses. Once they have completed the pose, there is a single beat and then... Aside.)* Who is this handsome stranger? And why am I suddenly all aflutter? My heart is racing... I feel dizzy... perhaps I am getting sea sick? But no, the boat is steady, and we have not even left the dock.

**JUSTIN:** *(Aside.)* Who is this vision of loveliness standing before me? She is truly an angel. *(Alarmed.)* Does this mean that I have perished? *(Pinches himself.)* Ouch! *(Pulls out a mirror and breathes on it.)* No, I have not passed, there is yet breath within my body. *(Breathes deeply a few times and then looks at her again, and she takes his breath away.)* Except for when I gaze upon her. *(Takes up his station.)*

**CAPTAIN:** "Someone who is..." what?



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**MODESTY:** What?

**CAPTAIN:** The last thing you said was "Someone who is..." Are you feeling all right, my dear?

**MODESTY:** I will be fine, Father. In fact, I think I will be... *(Looks at JUSTIN then back to AUDIENCE.)* ...wonderful.

**CAPTAIN:** *(Oblivious to the googly eyes.)* Of course you will be. And have no fear. If not on this trip, then on the next or the one after that. Eventually, we will find you a suitable suitor.

**JUSTIN:** *(Aside.)* I can scarcely believe my ears. Such a beautiful woman and she is not already spoken for? How fortunate can one man be?

**CAPTAIN:** A man of high social standing and impeccable character.

**JUSTIN:** *(Aside.)* All right, there will be some problems to surmount. While I do have an impeccable character, I do not have a high social standing. But I shall not let this deter me. I will win over the Captain with my hard work, dedication to duty, honesty, and loyalty. In other words, I will be myself.

**CAPTAIN:** But we may talk more of this later. Another passenger has boarded. *(BLYTHE LEE CHEETUM ENTERS DOWN LEFT, carrying a bag. He is in a ridiculously simple disguise that can be removed and replaced quickly.)*

**BLYTHE:** *(Aside.)* The wheels are set in motion. The man I hired to do the dirty work is already on board. And if all goes as planned, I will be here to witness Steerwell's downfall in person! Now to see if my clever disguise works. That poor fool will never realize that it is I, his nemesis, Blythe Lee Cheetum, rather than some random passenger.

**CAPTAIN:** Welcome aboard! I am Captain Steerwell, and this is my daughter Modesty Steerwell.

**BLYTHE:** Pleased to meet you.

**CAPTAIN:** And you are...?

**BLYTHE:** Oh, I am not anybody.

**CAPTAIN:** Nonsense. Everybody is somebody.

**BLYTHE:** *(Aside.)* Dagnabbit! Although my disguise is working perfectly, in all the work of putting it together, I forgot to make up a fake name. I must think quickly. *(To CAPTAIN.)* I see where the confusion lies. You thought I said that I am not anybody. What I said was I am Not-ha-nee Bod-hee. My first name is Not-ha-nee, and my last name is Bod-hee. My grandfather was a Sioux Indian.

**CAPTAIN:** Ah, I see. How fascinating. *(Snaps his fingers and JUSTIN steps forward and takes BLYTHE'S bag.)* I hope you enjoy your trip.



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**BLYTHE:** *(Trying to appear Native American, holds up his right hand, palm out.)* How.

**CAPTAIN:** Well, we have several shuffleboard courts.

**MODESTY:** And there is a band that plays in the evenings.

**BLYTHE:** I meant... I am part Indian...

**CAPTAIN:** *(It dawns on them.)* Yes... of course.

**MODESTY:** Oh, naturally. *(Withdrawing from the awkwardness, BLYTHE and JUSTIN EXIT DOWN RIGHT. MODESTY watches JUSTIN leave.)* Father, on the subject of suitors...

**CAPTAIN:** *(Thinks she is referring to BLYTHE.)* Do not worry, child, he did not seem to fit your description. We can talk later. *(Gleeful.)* More passengers are boarding. *JONATHAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and takes up his station. REGINALD POSHMORE, followed by his wife, PRUCILLA, ENTERS DOWN LEFT. REGINALD is carrying a briefcase. PRUCILLA is carrying a fan and wearing a necklace that features a huge blue gem. Her fan covers the necklace.)* Welcome aboard! I am Captain Steerwell, and this is my daughter, Modesty Steerwell.

**REGINALD:** *(Begins to speak, but is cut off by PRUCILLA. This happens throughout the play.)* I—

**PRUCILLA:** We are the Poshmores. I am Prucilla, and this is Reginald. According to your advertisements, you offer the finest first-class amenities of any riverboat on the Mississippi. Is this true?

**CAPTAIN:** That is correct.

**REGINALD:** What—

**PRUCILLA:** And what of your claim that you also offer the finest meals?

**CAPTAIN:** Madame, our chef graduated from the recently opened Cordon Bleu school in Paris, France. You will find our meals equal to any of the finest restaurants.

**REGINALD:** I—

**PRUCILLA:** I will be the judge of that. *(Moves her fan aside and reveals the necklace.)*

**MODESTY:** Oh, my!

**CAPTAIN:** Is that—

**REGINALD:** That—

**PRUCILLA:** This is the one and only "Heart of the River" originally commissioned by Louis XV. Not to be confused with the smaller and less valuable "Heart of the Ocean" commissioned by Louis XVI. That one is but a pale imitation.

**MALEFICENT:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, carrying a small suitcase. Stops short. Aside.)* Gadzooks! I did not realize that the Poshmores would still be talking to the Captain. If they notice me following them,



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they may realize that I plan to steal the "Heart of the River." I must act casually.

**CAPTAIN:** If there is anything you need, just let us know and it shall be set aright. *(Snaps his fingers and JONATHAN steps forward and moves to take REGINALD'S briefcase.)*

**REGINALD:** I—

**PRUCILLA:** He insists on carrying his own briefcase wherever he goes. You, my good man, may get the other bags. *(Gestures OFFSTAGE DOWN LEFT. JONATHAN EXITS briefly DOWN LEFT and returns with a handcart that is stacked nigh on to heaven with trunks, suitcases, hat boxes, and vanity cases. He leads them DOWN RIGHT.)* I just wish I had not let you talk me into traveling "light." *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT. REGINALD hangs back just long enough to look at the bewildered expressions of CAPTAIN and MODESTY, then nods his head "yes" to indicate that this is in fact traveling light for PRUCILLA. He then EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**CAPTAIN:** *(Notices MALEFICENT.)* Welcome aboard! I am Captain Steerwell, and this is my daughter, Modesty Steerwell. *(JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and takes his station. During the following, JUSTIN and MODESTY exchange glances and bashful smiles.)*

**MALEFICENT:** Why, thank you, Captain. I am Maleficent Syreen. Perhaps you have heard of me?

**CAPTAIN:** No, I am afraid that I have not.

**MALEFICENT:** *(Aside.)* Excellent! I was afraid that word of my exploits might have preceded me. *(To him.)* That is just as well. I prefer my privacy whenever possible.

**CAPTAIN:** You may rest assured that our passengers' comfort and privacy are of the utmost concern. (clap)

**MALEFICENT:** I am glad to hear it. Now, if you will excuse me...

**CAPTAIN:** Of course. *(Snaps fingers and JUSTIN steps forward and takes MALEFICENT'S suitcase. MODESTY and JUSTIN exchange glances again.)*

**MALEFICENT:** *(Notices. Aside.)* I wonder if the Captain knows that his daughter is in love with the help. If time permits, I may have to toy with those two to tone my temptress talents. *(Villainous laughter. EXITS with JUSTIN DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MODESTY:** Father, I was wondering if we could talk about possible suitors now.

**CAPTAIN:** We may talk briefly. We must be getting underway soon.

**MODESTY:** What if, for the sake of argument, I found a suitor and he was everything I could have hoped for... except for one teeny tiny little thing?



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**CAPTAIN:** I suppose it would depend on what that one teeny tiny little thing is.

**MODESTY:** Let us suppose that the one teeny tiny little thing... was... that he was not of high social standing.

**CAPTAIN:** What exactly do you mean?

**MODESTY:** Suppose that he was a hardworking man with a good job.

**CAPTAIN:** Well, I suppose that if he met all of your qualifications, I might consider him. But he would have to prove himself to me to get my blessing. And it would depend on what kind of job. *(JONATHAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and takes his station.)*

**MODESTY:** Suppose that his job was... one of your crew. *(JONATHAN'S eyes grow wide, and he looks around as if to say "what the heck have I walked into the middle of?")*

**CAPTAIN:** One of my crew? But you have not met any of... *(Slowly turns his head toward JONATHAN, who shakes his head "no" as if to say, "I do not know what you are talking about, I just got here.")*

**MODESTY:** *(Notices her father's stare.)* Not him, the other one.

**CAPTAIN:** Justin Stalwart?

**MODESTY:** Justin Stalwart! What a manly name.

**CAPTAIN:** He is one of the finest crew members I have ever known. Still...

**MODESTY:** Just promise me that you will keep an open mind, Father.

**CAPTAIN:** If you will keep an open mind about other suitors, such as Mr. VonLech, then I will keep an open mind about Mr. Stalwart.

**MODESTY:** Oh, thank you, thank you, Father. I am sure he will meet all of your expectations and more.

**CAPTAIN:** We shall see. Now, go and tell the band to play. We must shove off to make St. Louis in five days.

**MODESTY:** Aye aye, Captain. *(Salutes him, and EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

**CAPTAIN:** Mr. Smith, make ready to sail.

**JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(EXITS UP LEFT. JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and takes up his station.)*

**CAPTAIN:** Mr. Stalwart, make ready to sail.

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(Moves UP LEFT to leave.)*

**CAPTAIN:** And Mr. Stalwart. *(Approaches JUSTIN, who stops.)* I am watching you. *(Does the Robert De Niro "eyes on you" gesture.)*

**JUSTIN:** *(Confused.)* Aye aye, Captain. *(EXITS UP LEFT. CAPTAIN EXITS UP RIGHT. LIGHTS DOWN.)*

End of Scene One



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ACT ONE
Scene Two

LIGHTS UP. Early that evening. JONATHAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT with a mop. He stops center, looks around suspiciously, then EXITS DOWN LEFT. PRUCILLA and REGINALD ENTER DOWN LEFT.

**PRUCILLA:** Well, I suppose that the trip so far has not been entirely intolerable.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** And I have to admit that the meals today were quite excellent.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** Stand up straight, Reginald, you are slouching again.

**REGINALD:** *(Stands up straight.)* Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** You do not want to become a hunchback, do you?

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear. *(PRUCILLA shoots him a withering glance.)* I mean, no, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** *(Softens.)* I cannot wait until we reach St. Louis. I am sure that the Carnegies will throw us the most amazing welcome party.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** Of course, I will have to go shopping for a new dress. I simply have nothing to wear.

**REGINALD:** *(Pulls out a cigar.)* Yes, dear. *(Pats his pockets to find a match.)*

**PRUCILLA:** Another one? You know that I cannot stand the smell of cigars.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** I shall wait for you in our state room. Hurry up with that dreadful thing and come along as soon as you are done with it.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear. *(PRUCILLA EXITS DOWN RIGHT. REGINALD stops patting his pockets.)*

**MALEFICENT:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT. Aside.)* I have been shadowing these two all day. I was beginning to think that the old shrew would never leave him alone. A man who cannot stand up to his wife should be easy to bend to my will. After all, the quickest way to a woman's jewelry is through her husband's heart! *(Villainous laughter. Slinks towards him. To REGINALD.)* Excuse me, handsome. I could not help but notice that you do not seem to have a match. *(Pulls out a match.)* Maybe I could... light your fire.

**REGINALD:** No, please, you will ruin it!

**MALEFICENT:** But I thought you wanted to smoke a cigar.



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**REGINALD:** Gracious, no. I cannot stand the things.

**MALEFICENT:** Then why, pray tell, do you have one?

**REGINALD:** My wife cannot stand them either. This is the only peace and quiet that I get. I have been using this same cigar for the last three years.

**MALEFICENT:** *(Aside.)* It would seem that he is craftier than I thought. No matter. He is still no match for Maleficent Syreen. *(Villainous laughter. To him.)* Well, if I were your wife, I would not let you out of my sight. A strong, handsome, virile man such as you must attract the attention of every available woman around.

**REGINALD:** *(Obviously affected by her charms.)* One would think so.

**MALEFICENT:** I would treat you the way you deserve to be treated. I would dote upon your every word... support you in your every action... fulfill your every heart's desire.

**REGINALD:** *(Barely able to squeak it out.)* You would?

**MALEFICENT:** Of course, my dear sweet boy. I would bow to your every whim... and treat you like a king.

**REGINALD:** It's good to be da king.

**MALEFICENT:** I bet you would be a wonderful and generous king, would you not?

**REGINALD:** *(Hopes it's the right answer.)* Yes?

**MALEFICENT:** And as your loyal subject, I would be most grateful. If you gave me a certain special token of your generosity, I would give you the royal treatment.

**PRUCILLA:** *(From OFF.)* Reeeeeginaaaaaaald!

**MALEFICENT:** *(Aside.)* Curses! Just when I was ready to reel him in. This is why I despise working on boats—you can never get far enough away from the old ball and chain.

**PRUCILLA:** *(From OFF.)* Reeeeeginaaaaaaald!

**REGINALD:** *(Still somewhat in a daze.)* What was that, dear?

**PRUCILLA:** *(Screams from OFF.)* Reginald!

**REGINALD:** *(Snaps out of it.)* Yes, dear?

**PRUCILLA:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)* Reginald, what is taking you so long? And who is this woman?

**REGINALD:** *(Obviously used to thinking quickly.)* I was taking so long, because I did not have a match. This woman is a passenger that was passing by. I asked her if she had a match, but alas, she did not.

**PRUCILLA:** Well, you have no time to smoke that wretched thing now. We agreed to play Whist with the Remingtons. Come along, I do not wish to be tardy.



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**REGINALD:** Yes, dear. *(Moves DOWN RIGHT with PRUCILLA. PRUCILLA EXITS. Looks back. MALEFICENT smiles and waves goodbye. He sighs and EXITS.)*

**MALEFICENT:** Well, at least I was able to lay the groundwork. *(Moves DOWN LEFT.)* I still have four days to work my charms on him. In the meantime, his every waking thought will turn toward me. After all, there is no force more formidable for fervent fascination as forbidden fruit. *(Villainous laughter.)* Soon he will be begging me to accept the Heart of the River as a token of his esteem. *(Villainous laughter.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS UP LEFT and crosses as if to leave DOWN RIGHT. Stops just short. MALEFICENT and VANDALL simultaneously realize that someone else is there, turn to look, and recognize each other. Aside.)* Gadzooks! What is she doing here? I must not let her know of my plans.

**MALEFICENT:** *(Aside.)* Gadzooks! What is he doing here? I must not let him know of my plans.

**VANDALL:** Meine liebchen! I did not know that you were on this boat.

**MALEFICENT:** Darling! What an unexpected pleasure! *(They do the fake cheek kissing thing.)*

**VANDALL:** *(Conspiratorially.)* Und what name are you using? ← accent!!

**MALEFICENT:** *(Conspiratorially.)* Maleficent Syreen. And you?

**VANDALL:** *(Conspiratorially.)* Vandall VonLech. *(They break apart.)*

**MALEFICENT:** Vandall, it is so lovely to see you again. What have you been up to?

**VANDALL:** *(Aside.)* I have been sabotaging the pressure gauge on the boiler. The way it reads now, even at full steam, it will take us six to seven days to reach St. Louis. *(Villainous laughter.)* Und the master stroke is that the change in speed is too subtle to notice until it is too late. *(Villainous laughter. To her.)* I have not been up to much. That is why I am traveling to St. Louis, to find new opportunities. Und what have you been up to?

**MALEFICENT:** Not much. I swindled a farmer out of his life savings. It was not much, but it was enough to get a ticket to St. Louis and start fresh. I have used up my welcome down south.

**VANDALL:** I know what you mean.

**MALEFICENT:** I am surprised, though. Normally you plan two steps ahead at all times. Is it that you do not trust me?

**VANDALL:** Do not be ridiculous. Of course I trust you. *(Aside.)* I do not trust her. *(To her.)* You were always quite the planner yourself. Perhaps it is you that does not trust me?



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**MALEFICENT:** Silly man. Of course I trust you. *(Aside.)* I do not trust him. *(Awkward moment where neither knows what to say next.)*

**VANDALL:** We simply must have dinner sometime und catch up.

**MALEFICENT:** Yes, we simply must. *(In unison, BOTH turn from each other and begin to leave, she DOWN LEFT and VANDALL DOWN RIGHT. Just before they leave, they BOTH stop, breathe a heavy sigh, and slowly turn to look back. When they see each other, they BOTH startle and then pretend there was some other reason they turned around. After a beat or two of this, they BOTH rush OFF.)*

**JUSTIN:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)* Ever since my shift ended, I have been walking these decks in the hopes of seeing my one true love... Modesty Steerwell. Alas, it has all been for naught. Even if we had chanced to meet, how would I get her to notice me? She probably does not even know that I exist. I should probably think of some way to get her to notice me before we meet. I shall think on it. *(Moves to the barrel and sits in a pose reminiscent of Rodin's "The Thinker." There are a few beats while he thinks.)* Perhaps I could use my coat to cover a mud puddle for her. No, if there is a mud puddle on the deck of the boat then we have bigger problems than dirty shoes. *(Resumes pose.)* I could present her with some flowers or candy. No, there are no shops on the boat. *(Resumes pose.)* I could try to impress her by winning some sport or contest. No, the closest thing we have to a sport on the boat is shuffleboard. I do not think that would be very impressive. *(Pauses, looks around. Senses something is amiss.)* Wait one moment. Something is amiss. We are going slower than what we ought. I had best check the engine room to make sure that nothing has gone awry. *(EXITS UP LEFT. JONATHAN ENTERS DOWN LEFT with his mop. He stops center, looks around suspiciously, and then EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MODESTY:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* Finally I have a moment to relax after running to and fro all day. I told Father that I was going out on deck to get some fresh air, but I was also hoping to see my one true love... Justin Stalwart. Alas, it has all been for naught. Even if we had chanced to meet, how would I get him to notice me? He probably does not even know that I exist.

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and sees MODESTY. Aside.)* Well, this seems to be my lucky day, nicht wahr? The job is done. I can relax on this luxurious riverboat. Und what appears before me? Surely this is fate. I shall use my inimitable charms to insinuate myself into her good graces. Und then, when she is destitute, she will more easily fall into my clutches. *(Villainous laughter. To her.)* Miss Steerwell?

**MODESTY:** Mr. VonLech, good evening.



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**VANDALL:** Please, meine liebchen, after all, I am an old family friend. Please, call me Vandall.

**MODESTY:** Very well, Vandall.

**VANDALL:** That is better. Und since I am an old family friend, may I call you Modesty?

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* This strikes me as overly familiar since we have just met, but I did promise Father that I would keep an open mind. *(To him.)* I suppose that would be all right.

**VANDALL:** Danke schoen, Modesty. Und what brings you out on deck at this hour, all alone?

**MODESTY:** I was getting some fresh air. Actually, I was just about to head back to my room.

**VANDALL:** Then allow me to escort you.

**MODESTY:** That will not be necessary. I would not wish to inconvenience you.

**VANDALL:** Nonsense! It is never an inconvenience to keep a young... innocent... beautiful... lady safe. *(Aside.)* Her presence is intoxicating, but I must control myself. There will be plenty of time later. *(Villainous laughter.)*

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* This man's demeanor seems most unsettling, but he is one of Father's friends. Should I trust him? Should I beware his apparent advances? He is a foreigner, is it possible that I am misunderstanding his intentions? Should I trust in the kindness of strangers? Oh, woe is me, what should I do? *(To him.)* While I thank you for your kind offer, I do not feel it appropriate for us to remain unchaperoned any longer. I am sure that we will see each other again tomorrow. For now, goodnight.

**VANDALL:** Halten sie! I apologize if I seemed untoward. I was worried about your safety. Sailors can be a dangerous breed. They are a depraved lot with many... unsavory... desires.

**MODESTY:** You may rest assured that none of the men that crew this boat are anything like you have described. My father would not hire such men. Goodnight, Vandall.

**VANDALL:** Guten abend, Modesty. *(Bows, and his head ends up close to her hand. Aside.)* I can contain myself no longer. I must kiss... her hand. *(Takes her hand and slowly brings it closer to his pursed lips. MODESTY is shocked and her horror grows the closer to his lips her hand moves. Just before his lips touch her hand... JUSTIN ENTERS UP LEFT and begins to cross DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MODESTY:** Unhand me! *(Tries to pull her hand away, but can't.)*

**JUSTIN:** Hold! *(VANDALL stops as JUSTIN approaches him and strikes a pose.)* I believe the young lady asked you to unhand her. I suggest you do so forthwith.



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**VANDALL:** *(Lets go of her hand. MODESTY runs around behind JUSTIN.)* Und who might you be, you young whippersnapper, to be giving me orders?

**JUSTIN:** I am Justin Stalwart. And I am the man who will give you a sound thrashing if I ever see you bothering this young lady again.

**VANDALL:** We shall see about that, you insolent cur. The captain happens to be an old friend of mine, und I will see that you lose your job over this. *(EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

**MODESTY:** My hero! You were so brave! You saved me from that wretched man.

**JUSTIN:** I merely did what any real man would do. It is just fortuitous that I came along when I did. This is the second unfortunate event that I have prevented this evening.

**MODESTY:** What was the first unfortunate event?

**JUSTIN:** I noticed that we had slowed down. I checked the boiler and the pressure gauge was malfunctioning. It would have added days to our journey. I replaced the faulty gauge, and we are once more under full steam.

**MODESTY:** That is wonderful news. Even if that horrible man does try to get you fired, Father could not possibly fire you after he hears how you saved both me and the boat.

**JUSTIN:** I was merely doing my duty, first as a member of this crew and second as a gentleman.

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* And he is humble, too! Will his wonders never cease?

**JUSTIN:** I shall escort you to your cabin and then we must part. It would not be appropriate for us to remain unchaperoned any longer than that. *(They EXIT DOWN LEFT. LIGHTS DOWN.)*

End of Scene Two

ACT ONE
Scene Three

*LIGHTS UP.* The next day. JUSTIN sits on the barrel, repairing a rope. *PRUCILLA* and REGINALD ENTER DOWN RIGHT.

**PRUCILLA:** *(Points OFF LEFT.)* Look, Reginald, they are loading more wood for the boilers.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**PRUCILLA:** It is so invigorating to watch men work from a distance.

**REGINALD:** Yes, dear.

**MALEFICENT:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and notices JUSTIN. Aside.)* I cannot work with an audience. But how to get rid of him? Wait! He was the one mooning over the captain's daughter. Well, this should be simple enough. *(To JUSTIN.)* Excuse me, sailor.



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**JUSTIN:** Ma'am.

**MALEFICENT:** I noticed the captain's daughter needed a hand with something back by the paddlewheel. Are there any of you chaps available to help her?

**JUSTIN:** I would be available for such a duty. Thank you and good day, ma'am. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MALEFICENT:** *(Aside.)* Ah, the lovelorn are so easy to manipulate. *(Villainous laughter. Catches REGINALD'S eye, pantomimes a cigar. REGINALD begins to reach for it.)*

**PRUCILLA:** Come along, Reginald. We will have a much better view from over here. *(Grabs REGINALD'S arm and drags him OFF DOWN LEFT. MALEFICENT follows them OFF, frustrated. JONATHAN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT with his mop. He stops CENTER, looks around suspiciously, and then EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT with CAPTAIN.)* I am so used to the kissing of the hand in Germany that I thought nothing of it. When I felt her tug, I thought that she might be falling as the boat pitched. I held on so she could keep her balance.

**CAPTAIN:** So it was a simple misunderstanding. I thought as much.

**VANDALL:** Of course. Und then that brute of a sailor started questioning my more than noble motives.

**CAPTAIN:** I will have a talk with the lad about making assumptions. But I cannot be too harsh, he really saved my bacon by fixing that pressure gauge.

**VANDALL:** *(Through gritted teeth.)* I am so happy for you. I do not mean to alarm you, but I believe that barbarian might have designs on your daughter.

**CAPTAIN:** More like my daughter might have designs on him.

**VANDALL:** Her?

**CAPTAIN:** I know. He does not have a high social standing, and he did falsely accuse you. On the other hand, he saved the boat, and I cannot fault his instinct to protect my daughter.

**VANDALL:** Naturally.

**CAPTAIN:** I will have a talk with him. Excuse me, but I must check into the pilothouse. *(EXITS UP RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** That was a close one. Und this is why it is never a good idea to get distracted by women. Either they do not understand you, or worse yet, they do understand you und end up double-crossing you. *(BLYTHE ENTERS DOWN LEFT in disguise.)* Guten morgen.

**BLYTHE:** *(Trying the Indian bit again.)* How!

**VANDALL:** Well, the sun is shining, I am healthy... you know, if you have your health...



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**BLYTHE:** No, no. I am part Indian.

**VANDALL:** Oh... *(Going with the Indian flow.)* How!

**BLYTHE:** My grandfather, he was a Sioux.

**VANDALL:** Nein, I meant—

**BLYTHE:** Oh, I see. How!

**VANDALL:** How!

**BLYTHE:** You really do not recognize me, do you? It is I, *(Removes his disguise.)* Blythe Lee Cheetum! *(Puts his disguise back on.)*

**VANDALL:** What a masterful disguise. But why are you here?

**BLYTHE:** I wanted to see my rival ruined with my own two eyes. When is it going to happen?

**VANDALL:** Do not worry. My first plan was foiled by a meddlesome deckhand, but it would have taken days. My new plan will have a much more satisfying visual component. In the dim light of dawn, I was able to slip unseen und sabotage this steamboat's paddlewheel. Shortly after pulling out from this stop, the paddles will fall off und we will be adrift.

**BLYTHE:** I cannot wait to see it! This will teach Steerwell to charge reasonable prices for exceptional service. If he were to succeed, it would have ruined my business. I must go and find the perfect spot from which to watch the festivities. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(Starts to head out DOWN LEFT but runs into the POSHMORES ENTERING DOWN LEFT.)* Guten morgen.

**REGINALD:** Good—

**PRUCILLA:** Good morning. I do not believe that we have been introduced. We are the Poshmores. I am Prucilla, and this is Reginald.

**VANDALL:** Und I am Vandall VonLech. My word, what a magnificent necklace!

**REGINALD:** That—

**PRUCILLA:** This is the one and only "Heart of the River."

**VANDALL:** I am surprised that you are wearing it with all these sailors around.

**REGINALD:** You—

**PRUCILLA:** You think I should be worried?

**VANDALL:** I would be. Even amongst the passengers, you cannot always trust that people are who they say they are.

**REGINALD:** What—

**PRUCILLA:** What would you do to keep it secure?

**VANDALL:** I would have the captain lock it in his safe.

**REGINALD:** Well—



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**PRUCILLA:** That sounds much more secure than Reginald's plan. We shall speak to the captain at once. *(She and REGINALD EXIT UP RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** Und once we are adrift, with all the confusion, commotion und chaos, I shall slip into the captain's quarters und steal the necklace. It will be a nice little bonus to this job. I am confident that my dear old friend is still using the same combination for his safe. *(Villainous laughter. EXITS DOWN LEFT.)*

**JUSTIN:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT with JONATHAN.)* Thank you for your help. That was excellent work, and we finished just in time.

**CAPTAIN:** *(ENTERS UP RIGHT.)* Mr. Stalwart! Just the man I need to speak to.

**JUSTIN:** And I also need to speak with you, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** About what?

**JUSTIN:** I noticed that one of the paddles on the paddlewheel seemed to be loose. On closer inspection, all of the paddles were loose. We would not have made it far before they fell off. I grabbed Jonathan, and we fixed them posthaste. We are now shipshape and ready to sail, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** Good work, men.

**JUSTIN:** We were just doing our duty, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** I would say this falls into the category of "above and beyond."

**JUSTIN:** Thank you, Captain. There was something you needed to talk to me about?

**CAPTAIN:** That can wait. *(Aside.)* I was going to tell him not to jump to conclusions. Now, I want him to jump a while longer. Better safe than sorry. *(To them both.)* Men, *(Looks around to make sure they are alone.)* suffering from both a defective pressure gauge and loose paddles in just two days is mighty strange. I personally made sure every inch of this boat was shipshape. I think we have a saboteur. Do not alarm the passengers, but keep your eyes peeled for anything out of the ordinary. If you find something, report to me immediately.

**JUSTIN/JONATHAN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(CAPTAIN EXITS UP RIGHT. MODESTY ENTERS DOWN LEFT. JUSTIN and MODESTY see each other and become doe-eyed.)*

**JONATHAN:** *(Notices this and decides to excuse himself.)* I am going to... check the bulkheads. *(EXITS UP LEFT.)*

**JUSTIN:** Miss Steerwell.

**MODESTY:** Mr. Stalwart.

**JUSTIN:** Might I have a word with you, Miss Steerwell?



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**MODESTY:** I should be able to spare a moment, Mr. Stalwart.

**JUSTIN:** Thank you. Please, have a seat.

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Such a gentleman! *(Sits on the barrel.)*

**JUSTIN:** Miss Steerwell, there is something I wish to discuss with you. I am afraid that, yesterday, I could not help but overhear you and your father discussing a certain matter.

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Oh, dear! Did he overhear me talking with Father about him? I pray not. I would be mortified!

**JUSTIN:** I feel that I must be honest with you. And it is with a heavy heart that I must tell you...

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Why must he pause so long? The suspense is enough to put me in a tizzy!

**JUSTIN:** ...that I...

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* These pauses cannot be good. I await his next words with dread.

**JUSTIN:** ...am not...

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* He is not. My hopes are shattered. Just say the words and put me out of my misery.

**JUSTIN:** ...of high social standing. *(Hangs his head.)*

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Oh, woe is me! I... wait a moment. What did he say? *(To him.)* I am so sorry, but could you repeat that, please?

**JUSTIN:** I am not of high social standing?

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Whew! That was a close one. *(To him.)* Mr. Stalwart, what you overheard was my father's qualification for a suitor. We have spoken since, and he has agreed that, perhaps, that is not the most important qualification for a suitor.

**JUSTIN:** You have... he did... it is not?

**MODESTY:** Yes, yes, and a most resounding yes!

**JUSTIN:** *(Aside.)* Oh, joyous day! I feel as though a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. Dare I continue? I must, or I feel that I should burst. *(To her.)* In that case, may I ask you your opinion on something?

**MODESTY:** I give you my permission to ask me my opinion.

**JUSTIN:** How would you feel if someone... that is, someone you know... if that someone... that someone, in this case, being me... if he, I mean I... were to consider asking... and very serious consideration, I might add... consider asking about the possibility... depending on how you feel, of course... about the possibility of asking the captain... that is to say, your father... but you know that already... if your father might consider...

**MODESTY:** *(Aside.)* Please let him finish this thought before I become an old maid.



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**JUSTIN:** ...might consider giving me permission to court his daughter. *(Aside.)* Well, that was easy.

**MODESTY:** My opinion would be that you ask him at your first available opportunity, though I do recommend that you compose your thoughts on paper first.

**JUSTIN:** You mean...

**MODESTY:** Yes. *(They BOTH breathe a heavy "love sigh" in unison.)*

**JUSTIN:** I must now return to my duties. I would not want to be derelict. My burdens will be light with the knowledge that I will soon see you again. *(EXITS UP LEFT.)*

**MODESTY:** What a man! *(PRUCILLA and REGINALD ENTER UP RIGHT. MODESTY'S joy is overflowing.)* Mr. and Mrs. Poshmore, how absolutely lovely to see you!

**REGINALD:** And—

**PRUCILLA:** Someone certainly seems in a good mood today.

**MODESTY:** That would be me. And how are the two of you this beautiful day?

**REGINALD:** I—

**PRUCILLA:** We are doing quite well.

**MODESTY:** I am happy for the both of you. Now if you will excuse me, I must check in on the kitchen staff. Have a glorious day! *(Practically floats OFF DOWN LEFT.)*

**PRUCILLA:** I swear, Reginald, chattering away with a girl young enough to be your daughter. *(He begins to react, but she raises her eyebrows in all of her haughty glory, and he demures.)* When we meet the Hillshires, I want you to be on your best behavior. *(REGINALD pulls out his cigar and pats his pockets.)* If you must, but be quick. Meet us at the shuffleboard court. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**MALEFICENT:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT. Aside.)* What luck! I thought she would never leave his side. Now I have but to make my little puppet dance. *(Villainous laughter. To him.)* Your Majesty! *(Curtsies.)* I tremble with the anticipation of basking in your royal presence. *(REGINALD blushes and giggles.)* I would succumb to your royal will, if you but shower me with your... largesse. *(REGINALD blushes and giggles.)* Give me but a small token of your favor, like the necklace that your wife always wears when she berates and degrades you. Place that one small token about my throat and the keys to the kingdom shall be yours.

**REGINALD:** Oh, I could not possibly do that.

**MALEFICENT:** Have I displeased you in some way, my liege?

**REGINALD:** No, never, quite the opposite. I am not able to because my wife has locked her necklace in the captain's safe.



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**MALEFICENT:** Why did she do that?

**REGINALD:** I think she got the impression from Mr. VonLech that it was not safe to wear it.

**MALEFICENT:** Mr. VonLech? *(Aside.)* Zounds! That dirty, backstabbing, double-crossing little rat. He must have figured out my scheme. This will put him... *(Counts up the numbers.)*... at least three double-crosses ahead of me. Well, two can play at this game. All I need do is to bewitch one riverboat captain, and to toss this excess baggage. *(To him.)* I see what was going on here. You were but toying with my affections.

**REGINALD:** I—

**MALEFICENT:** Be gone from my sight so that your visage may not remind me of the heartless treatment I received at your hands.

**REGINALD:** But—

**MALEFICENT:** Be gone! *(Weeps. REGINALD, bewildered, EXITS DOWN RIGHT. To AUDIENCE.)* Now to take care of Vandall VonLech, that lying snake in the grass. He thinks he can come here and be all handsome and suave and charming and debonair and pull one over on me? *(A moment of girlishness.)* I wonder if maybe he followed me here. Oh, snap out of it, girl. He is not to be trusted. I will get that necklace, and I will get the better of him, or my name is not Maleficent Syreen. *(Villainous laughter. LIGHTS DOWN.)*

End of Scene Three

ACT ONE
Scene Four

LIGHTS UP. Early evening, day two. CAPTAIN ENTERS DOWN LEFT while JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. They are on patrol and meet at CENTER.

**CAPTAIN:** Anything?

**JUSTIN:** No. You?

**CAPTAIN:** Nothing. *(They continue their patrol with the CAPTAIN EXITING DOWN RIGHT and JUSTIN EXITING DOWN LEFT. Brief pause.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT and MALEFICENT ENTERS DOWN LEFT. They are both crouched down in a tippy-toe sneak. Once they are both fully on, they see each other and FREEZE for a beat. They both pretend to be doing something other than sneaking such as picking up a coin, tying a shoe, etc. They then stand up and meet at CENTER.)* Good evening.

**MALEFICENT:** Good evening.

**VANDALL:** Out for a stroll?

**MALEFICENT:** Yes. You?



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**VANDALL:** The same.

**MALEFICENT:** Well... good night.

**VANDALL:** Good night. *(MALEFICENT EXITS DOWN RIGHT. VANDALL watches her leave and lets out a heavy sigh. Looks around to make sure he is alone, then steps forward and "looks" over the front of the ship. MALEFICENT pokes her head around the corner DOWN RIGHT and watches him. He leans forward a bit, spreads his arms out to the side and says.)* "I'm the king of the world!" *(He luxuriates in the moment for a beat, then gathers himself and EXITS DOWN LEFT. MALEFICENT has been watching this the whole time. She steps ON and "looks" over the front of the ship. She leans forward a bit, spreads her arms out to the side and says.)*

**MALEFICENT:** "I'm the queen of the world!" *(CAPTAIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT in time to hear this and watches her. She luxuriates in the moment for a beat, then gathers herself and turns to find the CAPTAIN there.)* Oh, I am so embarrassed.

**CAPTAIN:** No need to be. Passengers have been doing that for the last two days. *(Perplexed.)* I have no idea why.

**MALEFICENT:** *(Slips into seductress mode.)* You know, Captain, I did not realize how big and strong you are. How handsome you look in your uniform. *(CAPTAIN sniffles.)* What is wrong?

**CAPTAIN:** I am sorry, but my dear departed wife used to tell me how handsome I looked in my uniform. *(Pulls out a handkerchief and delicately dabs at the corners of both his eyes. Blows his nose with a loud honk.)*

**MALEFICENT:** No doubt you miss her terribly.

**CAPTAIN:** Yes.

**MALEFICENT:** You are a good man, Captain. Carry on.

**CAPTAIN:** Thank you. *(Gathers himself and EXITS UP RIGHT.)*

**MALEFICENT:** Manipulating a man who truly loved his dear departed wife will take too much time. Vandall might make his move at any moment. However, I do not need to beat him to the necklace when I can simply wait for him to take it and then take it away from him. *(Villainous laughter.)* Besides, it will give me a chance to see him again. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(Pokes his head ON DOWN LEFT. Looks to make sure the coast is clear and then ENTERS, carrying a bundle over his shoulder. To AUDIENCE.)* At last an opportunity arises. I thought that insufferable Justin Stalwart would never stop his patrolling. But even he must eat some time. While he is taking a break, I shall break this boat, with this! *(Reveals the bundle of dynamite from behind his back.)* No more subtle plans. No more drawn-out



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schemes. Direct und to the point! *(Sets down the dynamite next to the barrel.)* I have but to light this fuse und then my job, und this boat, will be finished. *(Pats his pockets.)* Yes, just light this fuse... with a match... any match. *(Breathes a heavy sigh and drops his head.)* Okay, I have but to return to my room, get a match, return here, und light this fuse, und then my job und this boat will be finished! *(Villainous laughter. EXITS DOWN LEFT. CURTAIN.)*

End of ACT ONE

Act II — 15 min!

ACT TWO

Scene One

CURTAIN UP. Moments later. JUSTIN and JONATHAN ENTER DOWN RIGHT. They are carrying sandwiches. JONATHAN is limping.

**JONATHAN:** It feels like there is a rock my shoe.

**JUSTIN:** Let us stop and take care of it, then. We cannot afford to be a man down.

**JONATHAN:** Thank you. *(Sits on the barrel and fidgets with his shoe.)*

**JUSTIN:** I still cannot believe that someone is out to sabotage our maiden voyage.

**JONATHAN:** *(Notices the bundle of dynamite.)* Justin?

**JUSTIN:** Yes, I know the captain believes it, and I cannot fault him for that belief. It certainly is a strange set of circumstances.

**JONATHAN:** *(Tugs on JUSTIN'S sleeve.)* Justin?

**JUSTIN:** Yes, Jonathan? *(JONATHAN points to the bundle.)* Ah, yes. *(Casually walks over and picks up the bundle.)* I must admit that this certainly adds credence to the captain's theory. I believe this may be exactly the kind of thing that he would want us to report about. *(JONATHAN nods, and they EXIT UP RIGHT with the dynamite.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, carrying a single match.)* At last, my plans will come to fruition! I have but to light the fuse und then my job und this boat will be finished. Where is my fuse? Where is my dynamite? I could have sworn I put it right here. Und that was the last of my dynamite. Blast! Or rather, lack thereof. *(PRUCILLA and REGINALD ENTER DOWN RIGHT. PRUCILLA sees VANDALL holding a match, walks over to him, and plucks it out of his hand.)*

**PRUCILLA:** Thank you. *(Walks over to REGINALD and hands it to him.)* There, now there will be no need for you to ask women of questionable repute for a match. *(REGINALD turns with an "I'm sorry" shrug, and is yanked OFF DOWN LEFT by PRUCILLA.)*

**VANDALL:** Und that was my last match. Double-blast! Now, I must plan yet another new strategy. *(LIGHTS DOWN.)*

End of Scene One



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LIGHTS UP. Day three. CAPTAIN and JUSTIN are CENTER.

**CAPTAIN:** Has the situation been explained to all the men?

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** And they understand that we cannot alarm the passengers?

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** Good! Until we find this saboteur, I want patrols around the clock.

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** That will be all, Mr. Stalwart.

**JUSTIN:** Captain?

**CAPTAIN:** Yes, Mr. Stalwart.

**JUSTIN:** There was one other matter that I wished to discuss with you.

**CAPTAIN:** What is it, Mr. Stalwart?

**JUSTIN:** I was hoping that... I mean, I wanted to ask... actually, it's more of a request...

**CAPTAIN:** Mr. Stalwart, has this anything to do with the saboteur?

**JUSTIN:** No, Captain.

**CAPTAIN:** Then let us discuss it after he is caught.

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(CAPTAIN EXITS UP RIGHT. To AUDIENCE.)* I think I should have taken Modesty's advice and written that down. *(EXITS UP LEFT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT, talking to himself.)* Hmmm. Something to do with the rudder, perhaps? Or the steery thing in the pilot house? Nein. Drilling a hole in the hull? Nein.

**BLYTHE:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT. To VANDALL.)* I do not know if you are aware of this, but we still seem to be traveling toward St. Louis, and, curiously enough, we seem to be on time.

**VANDALL:** I am aware of this. Und are you aware that there were already three separate attempts to change that? All of which were thwarted by sheer dumb luck?

**BLYTHE:** I am paying you for sabotage, not excuses.

**VANDALL:** Und you will get your money's worth. I admit that the addition of these patrols will make things more difficult, but I will come up with a plan to stop this vessel.

**BLYTHE:** *(Throws up his hand in exasperation.)* How?

**VANDALL:** *(Sighs in exasperation and raises his right hand.)* How!

**BLYTHE:** No! I mean how are you going to do it?



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**VANDALL:** Oh. Do not worry on that score. I always come up with a plan.

**BLYTHE:** See that you do. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(To AUDIENCE.)* This one is a stumper.

**MALEFICENT:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* Well, well, well. If it is not my old friend, Mr. VonLech.

**VANDALL:** I am afraid that I am not in a sparring mood today, meine liebchen.

**MALEFICENT:** Really? I believe this may be a first.

**VANDALL:** I have a lot on my mind.

**MALEFICENT:** Anything I can help with? *(Aside.)* As if I did not know.

**VANDALL:** *(Aside.)* I am not sure that I can trust her, but two heads are better than one. *(To her.)* Very well. I lied to you earlier... I am here on the job.

**MALEFICENT:** Yes, I know.

**VANDALL:** You know?

**MALEFICENT:** Yes, you are here for the necklace.

**VANDALL:** Necklace? What necklace are you... Oh, there is a necklace, but that is more of a situational bonus. How did you know about— That is why you are here! You are after the necklace.

**MALEFICENT:** Of course. I assumed when you talked to the Poshmores about using the captain's safe... If you are not here for the necklace, then what?

**VANDALL:** Sabotage. Delay the ship, money-back guarantee, Captain is ruined... that sort of thing. I am sorry about the necklace. I had no idea.

**MALEFICENT:** And you should be sorry! Destroying all my hard work. That was some sabotage.

**VANDALL:** I said I was sorry. If Justin Stalwart had not interfered, I would not have known about the necklace.

**MALEFICENT:** Justin Stalwart?

**VANDALL:** Ja. He fixed the pressure gauge so I tried for the paddlewheel. He was not even supposed to be near the paddlewheel. I have no idea what he was doing there.

**MALEFICENT:** *(Realizes.)* Oh!

**VANDALL:** *(Senses a shift of attitude.)* Oh?

**MALEFICENT:** I needed him out of the way. I did not know... it was unintentional, I assure you.

**VANDALL:** Now who is the saboteur?

**MALEFICENT:** That is very childish of you.



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**VANDALL:** All right! Truce? We have obviously been stepping on each other's toes.

**MALEFICENT:** Agreed.

**VANDALL:** Let us put our heads together und solve our mutual problems. *(Offers his arm.)*

**MALEFICENT:** Just like the old days. *(Takes his arm. They laugh together back and forth, pleasant laughs, that build into raucous villain and villainess laughs as they EXIT DOWN LEFT. LIGHTS DOWN.)*

End of Scene Two

ACT TWO
Scene Three

LIGHTS UP. Moments before midnight, day three. VANDALL and MALEFICENT flank a huge anchor at CENTER. They are breathing heavily, having just positioned the anchor.

**VANDALL:** Now we have the anchor in place. Und are you sure that she got the letter?

**MALEFICENT:** I handed it to her myself. I did not have a chance to read it. What all did it say?

**VANDALL:** Rainbows, butterflies, und all that sappy stuff, followed by urgent that I see you, tell no one, meet me at midnight... you know, the usual. By the way, your idea to check the work logs to forge Justin Stalwart's signature was brilliant.

**MALEFICENT:** Why, thank you! I figured that while I was checking on the timing of the patrols, I might as well get an authentic signature. *(Waxes romantic.)* He seemed like the type that might have sent her little notes... *(Corrects herself.)* ...and all that garbage.

**VANDALL:** Thank goodness we never went in for all that... *(Almost sorry for it.)* ...folderol.

**MALEFICENT:** It is almost time.

**VANDALL:** Do you know how you will distract him? I will need plenty of time, you know.

**MALEFICENT:** Do not worry. I cooked up a little something special just for the occasion.

**VANDALL:** *(Looks deeply into her eyes.)* Have I ever told you that you are beautiful when you are plotting?

**MALEFICENT:** Not nearly enough.

**VANDALL:** You vixen.

**MALEFICENT:** You scoundrel.

**VANDALL:** It is time. *(Sneaks OFF DOWN LEFT.)*



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**MALEFICENT:** *(Watches him leave and sighs. Then gets into character. JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN RIGHT. She grabs JUSTIN immediately, and they spin around so that his back is to the anchor.)* Excuse me, can you help me, please?

**JUSTIN:** If it is within my power, then I shall do so. What seems to be the matter?

**MALEFICENT:** I was awoken by the sound of men talking just outside of my door. I did not hear everything they said, but they mentioned something about the "stern" and how "this should take care of it for sure." They sounded very scary.

**JUSTIN:** No reason to be worried, ma'am. I shall gather some men and investigate. You go back to your room and try to get back to sleep.

**MALEFICENT:** Thank you, kind sir.

**JUSTIN:** No, ma'am. Thank you for doing your civic duty. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT.)* You truly are a marvel to behold when you are working.

**MALEFICENT:** Flatterer!

**VANDALL:** Wait for me by the captain's quarters. As soon as I am done here, we will purloin the precious periapt. In his grief, he will not think to check his safe, und we can slip away from the funeral party tomorrow unnoticed.

**MALEFICENT:** Do not get distracted and toy with her for too long. The patrols will resume once they realize it is a wild goose chase. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**VANDALL:** Und now to secret myself. *(Tippy-toes behind the anchor and is "hidden" from sight.)*

**MODESTY:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, thinking she is alone. Walks to CENTER, stops and looks to and fro. To AUDIENCE.)* I do not see my beloved anywhere. He sent me a lovely letter and asked me to meet him here. I hope that nothing is amiss. His letter seemed most mysterious. *(VANDALL jumps IN from behind the anchor and pounces upon her. He places a gag in her mouth before she can scream. During the following, he is dragging her over to the anchor and tying her to it with a length of rope. She is struggling and making mumbling noises, but not enough to deter his actions.)*

**VANDALL:** Aha, at last I have you! There is no one to save you now. I hate to waste such a precious commodity, but I know that the widower captain will be devastated by the loss of his dear sweet daughter. In his grief, he will stop the ship and not make his five-day deadline. In the chaos und commotion Maleficent Syreen und I will slip away with the "Heart of the River" und be well-paid to boot.



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*(Once again overcome with her beauty and innocence.)* Of course, you need not perish, meine liebchen. Agree to run away with me, und I shall spare your life, und we will live the life of Riley.

**MODESTY:** *(Gagged.)* Mm-mm-m-mmmmmmmm-mmmmm-mm!

**VANDALL:** What was that? *(Pulls down the gag.)*

**MODESTY:** *(Matter-of-factly.)* I said "No, no, a thousand times no."

**VANDALL:** *(Replaces the gag.)* That is what I thought you said. Very well, your fate is sealed. I have but to toss you und this anchor over the side... *(Struggles trying to move the anchor, but cannot budge it.)* ...of the boat... and then... wait for... *(Tries several different methods to no avail. Finally, he pauses, panting.)* Perhaps if you lifted with your legs while I push?

**MODESTY:** *(Reacts incredulously.)* Mmmm!

**JUSTIN:** *(ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)* Hold fast, you scurrilous cur!

**MODESTY:** *(Still gagged, she "grabs" the anchor and lifts it with her legs, then hops a few hops toward JUSTIN. Mumbles something very long that matches her next spoken line.)* Mm-mmmm! Mmmm-mmmmmmm-mmm... *(Etc.)*

**JUSTIN:** What was that? *(Pulls down the gag.)*

**MODESTY:** I said, "My hero! Vandall has tied me to this anchor and plans to do away with me so that we will not reach our destination in time and my father will be ruined! Miss Syreen is in on it as well!"

**JUSTIN:** *(Replaces the gag.)* That is what I thought you said.

**MODESTY:** *(Still gagged, she mumbles but is almost intelligible.)* Really?

**JUSTIN:** Jonathan suggested that I check the rest of the ship. For some reason, he did not trust Maleficent Syreen. Now I am glad that I took his advice. The jig is up, Vandall! You might as well surrender and make it easy on yourself.

**VANDALL:** Never! I have not lost. With an anchor of this size, two bodies may be disposed of as easily as one. All I have to do is to defeat you!

**JUSTIN:** *(Unbuttons his cuffs and rolls up his sleeves during the following.)* While you most certainly deserve the thrashing I am about to give you, I want you to know that it gives me no pleasure. I only resort to violence as a last resort. We shall follow the Marquess of Queensberry rules. You may cease your pummeling at any time by crying "uncle" or by falling unconscious.

**VANDALL:** You seem rather sure of yourself, but there is something that you do not know. In my extensive travels, I have become a master of the fighting style... *(At this point he does a brief comical*



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*martial arts kata—ends in a martial arts pose—then his lips move but the words come from OFFSTAGE and do not synchronize.)* "... speaking words that do not synchronize with your lips."

**JUSTIN:** Wow! That is very impressive. Although... your left shoulder should be just a little bit higher to give you better balance.

**VANDALL:** *(His lips move, but again the words come from OFFSTAGE.)* How do you know this?

**JUSTIN:** Because I have also traveled extensively and, as it just so happens... *(He also does a brief comical martial arts kata, different from VANDALL'S—ends in a martial arts pose—then his lips move, but the words come from OFFSTAGE.)* ...I am also a master of this style. *(VANDALL and JUSTIN fight, kung-fu style. There is a lot of back and forth throughout. [NOTE: Athletic/gymnastic actors can add flashy moves as acceptable to the overall flow—i.e., don't allow JUSTIN to look outclassed. Depending on your choreography, lines can be added, like "You fight well", "So do you," "If you think that is something, watch this," etc., but the words must come from OFFSTAGE while the actors move their lips. If your anchor is large enough, then it will be taller than MODESTY, and when VANDALL is on the ropes, she can deliver the "coup des grace" by leaning forward and knocking VANDALL unconscious with the top of the anchor.] The ENTIRE CAST ENTERS during the end of the fight and watch. In the end, of course, JUSTIN wins.)*

**MODESTY:** My hero!

**JUSTIN:** Thus ends the threat of Vandall VonLech!

**CROWD:** *(Ad-libs.)* Hooray! Hoozah! Yay! *(SOUND EFFECT: ALARM SIREN. Ad-libs.)* What is that? What is going on? What is happening? Why are alarms going off?

**CAPTAIN:** *(Over the murmuring din.)* Oh, no! *(CROWD goes silent.)* It cannot be!

**CROWD:** *(Turn to him and speak in unison.)* What?

**CAPTAIN:** That is the iceberg warning!

**CROWD:** *(In unison.)* The iceberg warning? *(In unison they slowly turn to look front. Slowly their mouths open and their eyes widen and their heads raise up as though looking at a tall iceberg in front of them. SOUND EFFECT: CRASHING. They are all tossed to and fro in unison (à la Star Trek.). The screaming and the crashing noises continue as CURTAIN FALLS. Ad-libs from behind the curtain.)*

Have the band play!

We are sinking!

Make for the shore!

Oh, the humanity! *(Etc.)*



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**JUSTIN:** *(From behind the curtain.)* Women and children first!

**REGINALD:** *(From behind the curtain.)* I cannot swim!

**CAPTAIN:** *(From behind the curtain.)* I have you!

End of Scene Three

ACT TWO
Scene Four

CURTAIN UP. On shore, a few minutes later.

**CAPTAIN:** *(From OFF LEFT.)* It is shallow enough we can stand here. *(ENTERS LEFT, helping REGINALD and followed by PRUCILLA. They move as if they are "wading" out of the water.)* Just a little ways farther. You can make it. *(Ad-libs as necessary until they are roughly CENTER.)*

**PRUCILLA:** *(To CAPTAIN.)* Thank you, thank you, thank you, Captain. *(To REGINALD.)* Oh, my darling, I do not know what I would do without you. *(Covers his forehead with kisses.)*

**REGINALD:** Well, I will have to almost drown more often.

**JONATHAN:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, helping MALEFICENT.)* Captain, keep your eye on this one and do not let her sneak away. I will check the shore for any others. *(EXITS DOWN RIGHT.)*

**BLYTHE:** *(ENTERS DOWN LEFT, coughing.)* I have never seen such a thing.

**CAPTAIN:** Glad to see that you are safe, Mr. Bod-hee. *(JUSTIN ENTERS DOWN LEFT, helping MODESTY.)* My daughter! You have saved her.

**JUSTIN:** Fortunately, as a sailor, I am quite handy with knots. *(MALEFICENT has started tippy-toeing toward DOWN LEFT.)*

**JUSTIN/CAPTAIN:** Stop right there! *(MALEFICENT stops. To one another, in unison.)* Why were you stopping her?

**CAPTAIN:** Jonathan said to make sure she did not get away.

**JUSTIN:** Modesty said she was part of that villain's plan.

**JONATHAN:** *(RE-ENTERS DOWN RIGHT.)* Everyone made it ashore, except for Vandall VonLech.

**MALEFICENT:** He is gone? Really gone? I cannot believe it. I always thought that one day... but no, it shall never be. The one man who could really understand me... gone. The one man I could really relate to... gone, gone, gone. *(During the speech, VANDALL ENTERS DOWN LEFT in a dress and covering his face with a fan.)* I did not realize until it was too late... until my one true love was gone.

**VANDALL:** *(In shock, lowers the fan.)* I am your one true love?

**MALEFICENT:** Vandall! It is you! *(Runs to him and wraps her arms around him.)*



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**VANDALL:** Meine kleine liebchen! I feel the same way about you! You are the only one who can understand me. I just could never trust you!

**MALEFICENT:** Nor I you, my darling!

**JUSTIN:** Such is the nature of evil-doers, untrusting because they themselves are untrustworthy. I shall fetch the nearest magistrate.

**JONATHAN:** There is no need. I am Oliver Worthington, a Pinkerton man. I was hired by the Poshmores to travel incognito and keep an eye on the "Heart of the River."

**PRUCILLA:** My necklace! I had forgotten. Now it is at the bottom of the river.

**JONATHAN:** No, madam. *(Pulls the necklace from his pocket.)* I took the liberty of switching the necklace for a cheap copy. I could not be sure when they would strike.

**PRUCILLA:** Thank you.

**BLYTHE:** I shall go and fetch some rope so that you may tie these scoundrels up.

**VANDALL:** Hold it right there! If I am caught, then you are caught, too. That is the man who hired me. He is Blythe Lee Cheetum! *(No one reacts. Moves to BLYTHE and removes the disguise.)* In disguise! *(ALL gasp in shock and amazement. JUSTIN corrals the villainous trio and "guards" them.)*

**CAPTAIN:** Well, his plan worked. My boat is sunk, and I am ruined.

**PRUCILLA:** No, you are not. You saved my husband's life. The least we can do is to replace your ship and any lost earnings.

**JUSTIN:** *(Motions to JONATHAN. JONATHAN moves to him and takes his place as guard. JUSTIN approaches CAPTAIN. Very formal.)* Captain, Mr. Stalwart requesting permission to court your daughter.

**CAPTAIN:** Permission granted, Mr. Stalwart.

**JUSTIN:** Aye aye, Captain. *(He and MODESTY stand side by side, exchanging furtive glances for a moment.)* Miss Steerwell. *(Holds out his hand toward her.)*

**MODESTY:** Mr. Stalwart. *(Reaches out and places her hand in his. BOTH giggle. OTHERS cheer as CURTAIN FALLS.)*

END OF PLAY



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