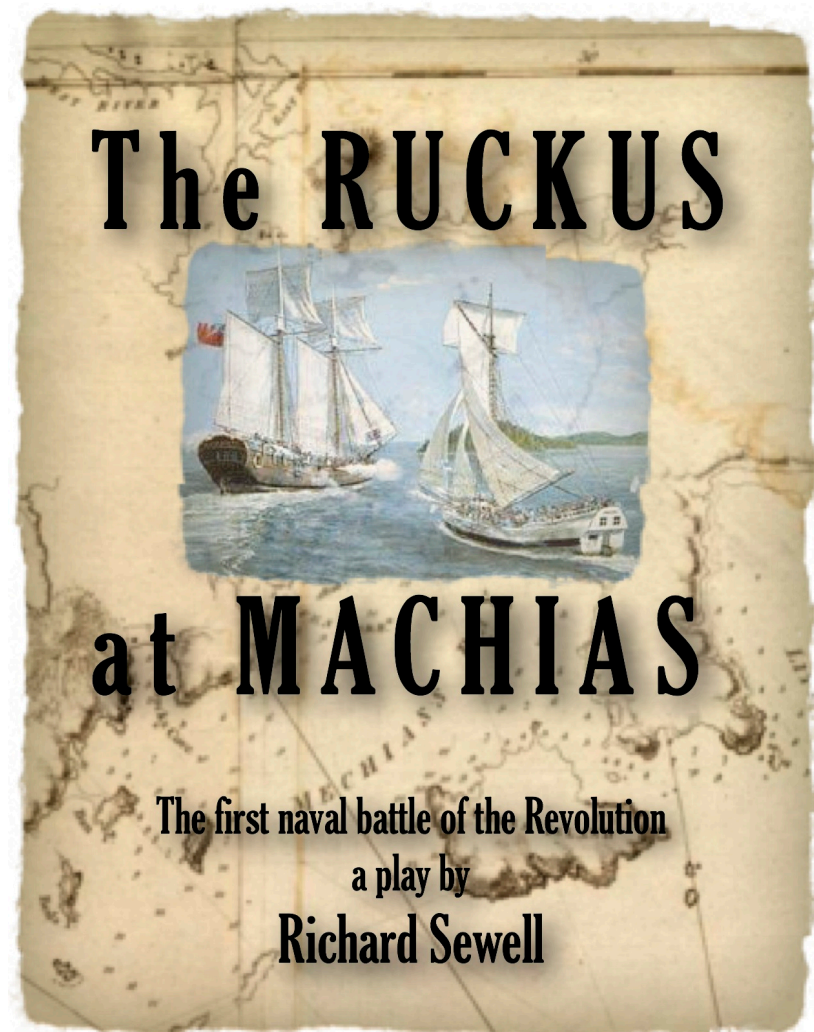


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Newport, Maine

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THE RUCKUS AT MACHIAS

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Setting: In and around the Machias settlement (in what was then Massachusetts) June, 1775. Platforms irregularize and define playing areas. Recessed light sometimes glows as a hearth from the downstage edge of the platform which indicates (among other things) the Weston's cabin. To one side stands a lectern, to the other side a small table where Margarete will bring a chair to write – or, depending on staging and space, the table may come and go. The background is a dim projection of spruce spires, varied with glimpses of a shadowy cabin shape, a starry night, ship rigging, etc. In a small venue much can be achieved in the way of moon, stars and tree shapes just with overhead projectors or a power point device. A tall shaft that is liberty pole, ship mast or just a tree might stand up center. The actors move rough benches at need. The stage directions presuppose stage lighting. Adjust at need for a daytime, outdoor production, making sure scene flows into scene without interruption.

CAST (7m 5w)

HANNAH WESTON, an 18 year old housewife

JOSIAH WESTON, her husband, not much older (and Voice 1)

REBECCA WESTON, Josiah's 17 year old sister (Voice 2)

BENJAMIN FOSTER, the mill-master (Voice 3)

O'BRIEN, a shaggy lumberman/sailor (Voice 4)

REVEREND LYON, a clergyman in his forties (Voice 5)

ICHABOD JONES, a Boston merchant with a house in Machias, (Voice 6)

MARGARETE, Jones's niece, from Boston (Voice 7)

MRS. JONES, Jones's second wife, a Quaker (Voice 8)

CAPTAIN JAMES (SHAMUS) MOORE, a very young officer in command of the Margareta (Voice 10)

FIRST OFFICER SPILLER, British naval officer, who also plays A MACHIAS MAN & WABANAKI MAN (Voice 9)

GRANDMA, O'Brien's grandmother & WABANAKI WOMAN (Voice 11)

The music.

Melodies for the hymn "The Spacious Firmament" (sung on page 21) and for this play's version of "Flout 'Em and Scout 'Em" (sung on pages 8, 10, 35, are given at the end of the document.

Hannah sings variants of "Sweet Jane" on page 5 (<https://youtu.be/qDZVUbAWXyE>) (a rough music copy is at the back of the document)

and "Sweet England" is sung on page 20 (<https://youtu.be/kADYLECB-jg>) I urge the actress doing Hannah not to try to reflect the artistry of the countertenor, Alfred Deller, found on these cuts. For Hannah these are not art songs but simple folk tunes heard from her grandmothers. (a rough music copy is at the back of the document)

THE RUCKUS AT MACHIAS by Richard Sewell. The American Revolution's first sea battle. 7M 5W (some play multiple roles) About 100 minutes. *(Perfect for Professional, Community, College/University and High School production.)* Starvation threatens the people of Machias, Massachusetts Colony, (now Maine) in June of 1775, when a British warship accompanies a local merchant returning from Boston with supplies. Machias was a lonely lumber camp in dire need of food, powder and shot. Instead of providing the lumber demanded by the British to build barracks for British soldiers near Boston, the desperate citizens erected a Liberty Pole to commemorate the fighting at Lexington and Concord. As the British navy was the undisputed master of the world's oceans, the enraged Captain then ordered the warship to fire on the community, causing the townsfolk to muster their meager resources -- axes, pitchforks, and a few small arms -- which enabled the patriots to capture the British armed cutter, *Margaretta*, moored in their harbor. How that tiny community thumbed its nose at King George and captured a warship makes a fascinating page of history and gives a thumbnail sketch of the dynamics of all rebellion. As if the citizens weren't bold enough, after rechristening the *Margaretta*, they send her out as a part of the new Colonial American fleet. WINNER: 2002-2003 Fremont Centre Theatre Playwriting Contest in California. **ORDER #3040.**

RICHARD C. SEWELL grew up among artists in rural Maine. After Bard College and the Army Language School (Russian), he taught high school, directed, acted, wrote, wandered... The production of his dance-play, *Winter Crane*, at the University of Wisconsin, 1968, led to the co-founding (with Robert Joyce) of The Theater At Monmouth, a union classical rep company in 1970. It also led, indirectly, to a professorship at Colby College, beginning 1974. TAM and Colby, into this century, continued to be his main workplaces, as actor, director, and teaching theater generalist.

His *Wat Tyler* was produced by Nathan LeGrand at the Piccolo Spoleto Festival in SC, 1988. *Winter Crane's* professional premier was at the Fountain Theater in Los Angeles, 1990, and his adaptation of Lessing's *Nathan The Wise* opened at NYC's fine Pearl Theater in 2002 and was revived there 2008-09. His playful verse adaptation of Calderon's *Phantom Lady* had a staged reading at The National Shakespeare Theater in DC in 2007 as part of their Re-Discovery Series. *The Ruckus at Machias, Correro's Masks, In Divisiblunder, A Day With Darkness* and numerous one-acts have won awards. His political one-act, *The Antigone In Warsaw*, is available from Baker's Plays/Samuel French.

He and actress Kim Gordon have been married almost 40 busy years and live in Portland, Maine, where the theater scene thrives.

NOTES:

Since I began my teaching career in high schools I know what parental reactions can be. For high school or middle school productions, directors can temper the very few bits of rough language if they must. But please, remember you are doing students no favor if you try to modernize! If we only hear what we already know, we never learn anything!

As David Mamet, Harold Pinter, Tennessee Williams and all playwrights since Shakespeare have known, people's individual ways of speaking are intimate, inextricable parts of their thought processes, of their characters, their souls. Shouldn't this be as true in plays set in other times as in those with contemporary settings?

As a theater person (AEA actor and artistic director of a union company for many years) I have a conviction about theater's obligation to language. It is our principle tool. Theater is one of the few places left in our world where the public ear can be challenged to make the flexible leaps of understanding which are the essence of poetry. Our impulse to simplify, to dumb-down, to use only words.

YOU WILL FIND A GUIDE TO THE LANGUAGE AT THE END OF THE PLAY

to **Agatha Fullam**, and **Marjorie Sewell**,
two who gave me a sense of this little patch of the earth – and so much more!

ACT I

(The cast strolls on. Foster and Josiah, after whispering about the presence of the audience, urge Hannah Weston to the front. Hannah comes forward and bows us a quick curtsey. She is very direct, but she has to conquer a natural shyness: so large an audience frightens her, "more than deep woods or smallpox.")

HANNAH: Hannah Weston.

(Wiping her hands on her apron, she discovers she is holding a wooden spoon, and blushes.)

If you're all staying for supper, I hope you're not against licking your fingers. There aren't enough table tools in all Machias for the number of you. Not that you wouldn't be welcome! But when even just one drops in on us Westons he gets a wooden spoon. I had six good pewter ones once... but, that's a story yet to tell, isn't it? In good time. Josiah Weston is a fine whittler, and I always think succotash and pat-ridge tastes better off birch than off any metal poured. We're plain folk down our way, none of us ever said differently. My people sailed down from around Scarborough, 1769. I was twelve... and met Josiah.

(He stands near, watching her proudly.)

Clearing hayfields is a work Reverend Lyon here would call a "laborious luxury." It's work we can't afford yet in Machias. So the smell of salt hay brought us here.

FOSTER: *(rising in place, illuminated briefly, working with a file to set the teeth of a huge up-and-down saw)*

The woman means first you timber off your land, and that needs your oxen, and they needs your hay. But, where's your hay for the oxen before you've timbered off? We're still at the first turn of the dance, you'd say, still timbering. Machias has hay marshes, ready to hand. So.

(FOSTER's light fades.)

HANNAH: Ben Foster... helped raise the church. I don't know any necessary things Ben Foster didn't have a strong hand in. Mill master, mill owner in part... So... the smell of salt hay brought us here.

O'BRIEN: *(He has an ax and shaggy beard, buckskin coat and mane of uncombed hair.)* The smell of burnt trees sent us here. Summers of sixty-two and sixty-three were dryer than Christ on Friday. There was forest fires from the white mountains to the sea, down around Scarborough. I well remember the flames, scudding overland, full sails of flame in the tree rigging - like all Hell's armada. Not so bad for farmers, in the long of it. The burning cleared the land with a vengeance. But it was damn-all hard on ax men and sawyers. We're all lumbermen down here. Sap, salt and rum.

HANNAH: That's one of the O'Briens, more's the pity.

(Josiah flicks a nervous glance of divided loyalty; she mends her speech.)

I didn't mean that as it sounds. O'Briens don't what you'd call curse, they just open their mouths and it comes out. We always got along with the O'Briens. Always. They were neighbors. So. Forest fires took Scarborough, the sons of the soil stayed, and the woodsmen were drove off down East.

(quickly)

Were driven off. Elbow room makes good neighbors better, I guess. When Josiah and I were wedded, we came to live a good way from the settlement...

JOSIAH: We agreed as how we would.

(grins)

She thought I was too wild in town – was in hopes the wilderness would tame me.

HANNAH: I never thought any such! We settled on his woodlot is all. Our cabin sits up Chandler’s River, twenty-odd mile of pushing overland through underbrush, or canoeing down Machias river when the water is high.

(SFX: A crow calls, she looks up.)

Sixteen mile as the crow flies.

(pause)

At times I wish I was a crow...

(The settlers speak chorally, in semi-silhouette.)

VOICE 5: What would a crow see, over Machias?

VOICE 6: Blue and black of spruce and pine,

VOICE 7: Furry steeples of spruce

VOICE 8: And fans of pine,

WOMEN’S VOICES: Impervious.

VOICE 9: No country behind us to fall back on:

WOMEN’S VOICES: The wilderness is impervious.

VOICE 9: Tents of the encamped, besieging forest,

Pitched on ruffled hills on hills on hills. . .

VOICE 3: God got to making them and just forgot to stop.

VOICE 10: Pointed firs upend on points of rock

Poked into steel blue, choppy tidal wash. . .

VOICE 11: Some weathers, even the waves look pick-id.¹

VOICE 1: And here, betwixt the spikes and spires of locked forest

And the chilly glitter of the bay...

VOICE 2: The ragged land’s hem, ironed flat,

The salt marsh, level with the wind.

VOICE 11: Lookin’ soft as lamb’s wool in the sun.

VOICE 3: Even that is pretty spiky, though.

VOICE 2: Pick-id.

VOICE 11: Wouldn’t you think that poor ox would cut his mouth up awful, chawing that? Like eating a bale of broken china.

O’BRIEN: *(emerging from silhouette)* And heaths², big open bogs you can walk dry-shod.

VOICE 3: Where pitcher plants grow,

Catching their fill of the dew.

VOICE 5: That’s what a crow would see.

VOICES 7, 8, 9: Spruce trees, spruce trees,

¹ "Pick-id," meaning sharp-pointed, rhymes with "wicked"

² He says "hayths," rhyming with "faiths." See pronunciation notes at the back of the play.

VOICE 11: Souging spruces...

VOICE 10: The wilderness impervious.

O'BRIEN: I've seen lighting that had to stand tip-toe to strike one of those God-all tall spruces - and still hit it below the belt.

VOICE 6: Flat marsh.

FOSTER: *(emerging from silhouette)* It makes you feel . . . spread out when you come from being too long in the woods. Jamie Coolbroth one time was most of a morning crossing a half acre of it. We boys by the mill watched him. Every rod or two he'd stoop over. Been in the woods so long, he was blazing his trail on spears of grass.

VOICE 11: Blazing? Blazing drunk, I guess.

VOICE 7: Open water... shining so you wink.

VOICE 1: Ben Foster, do you know where every ledge is, under this whole bay?

FOSTER: Hhn! I know where they ain't.

LYON: *(emerging from silhouette at the lectern)* A good answer.

FOSTER: Come to think, I pro'bly do know where they all are. I've been milling, late years, not sailing, but you don't forget. A place you've been a boy all over gets mapped inside you till it's like one of your Carabee³ tattoos: it never wears out of you.

LYON: *(writing)* A crow could survey eighty family homesteads in and around Machias...

HANNAH: There's our Reverend Lyon.

LYON: ...and cabins and lean-tos of some hundred more single men. One hundred and eighty bands of smoke from hearth to heaven on a chilly morning, praise the Lord! Providence bestows its bounty not as generously here as elsewhere, but with a justice more open to earthly eyes. A man here gets what his industry and care can earn him, barring natural calamity.

O'BRIEN: We'd bar a lot more calamities if we had more farms here.

FOSTER: It'll come. I had two dozen hill of corn in last spring, myself. They'd have done well, but for the drought. No seed corn, this spring.

O'BRIEN: A lumber camp's like a jeezly baby: we can't feed ourselves.

(There is a murmur of assent from the settlers. "That's God's truth," etc.)

LYON: An English settlement you would call it, meaning Scotsmen, Irishmen, two Blacks, some part Indian.

(As Foster and O'Brien fade, the Reverend gradually gets worked up.)

Rather call it "American." That word suggested whooping savages to our forefathers, but I say the people of these colonies are in a way toward becoming what the Good Book calls a "nation", that is, a people unto themselves, aiming at their own goals, earning their own goods, enduring their own griefs and even, by God's Grace,

(pounds his lectern)

establishing their own government.

(JONES rises sternly. His silent wife is beside him. This merchant is sour and direct when sure of himself, nervous and forcedly genial under pressure. He is the only Machias man in a powdered

³ from the Caribbean

wig.)

JONES: Reverend. You somewhat overshoot the mark!

(Townsfolk depart, murmuring, all but Reverend Lyon at his lectern and Hannah.)

HANNAH: The Joneses. Merchant Jones used to say Reverend Lyon should stick godliness and let the government go, but not many agreed. That was the wedge that split the log for us, I suppose. Sundered us, made us kindling. Not that any one body alone bears the blame, or the credit, for the ruckus.

LYON: We all play our parts.

HANNAH: Wonderful man, Reverend Lyon. He could read music off the page, like print, and write it too, out of his own head.

(Reverend Lyon waves this compliment off and leaves. She smiles.)

How I do stray off, if you let the bars down! You'll meet the Reverend and the rest, in a bit, but first - my sister-in-law, Rebecca.

(Rebecca upstage, is bent over, picking strawberries. She has a bucket, a bowl and two knives with her.)

That would be in June of 1775, a day or two before the ruckus. It wouldn't be all that much of a story if 'tweren't real - but it was real, is real. Rebecca was visiting, almost living, at our cabin up Chandler's river. Years later Josiah finally let on that he'd asked her to stay. Toward the end of that winter he'd fretted that I was turning queerly with lone living. I wasn't. There, she looks just as she did alive. All the Westons were good-looking people.

REBECCA: Look at that spot on my cuff.

HANNAH: Cut yourself?

REBECCA: It's strawberry. Prettier than blood. Wouldn't we dress fine if that red dye was fast?

HANNAH: You'd gobble 'em all before ever we could boil up a dye-kettle.

REBECCA: Back of our home place there come up beds of them! Berries big as thumbnails. Where sawdust has lain two winters, they grow lovely.

HANNAH: Bending down to berry pick is the one time I'm uneasy in the woods.

(She sits with bucket and knife and starts eel-skinning. Rebecca joins her with another bucket. The skins will go in one bucket, the skinned eels in the other.)

REBECCA: What do you mean?

HANNAH: Not scared. Just uneasy in my skin. There's such a lot you can't see around you when your face is down in the shrubbage.

REBECCA: I don't think of you as ever scared.

HANNAH: It's Granny's stories from King Philip's War. Every night, from when I was three to when I was eight, those red men carried me off till I woke myself yelling. Such tales to tell a little one!

(An eel body almost escapes out of the bowl.)

Uhh! They still flop!

REBECCA: Your nightmares?

HANNAH: These eels.

REBECCA: They are livelong, aren't they?

(She tugs at eel-skins and peers into her bucket.)

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Fowler's folks eats them heads and all.

HANNAH: We don't.

(sings to the tune of "Sweet Jane" in the back of the script)

Full seven years I labored hard
A digging of my wealth,
And though I lived on salty lard
I never lost my health.

REBECCA: Hannah. S'pose you had pick of anything. Anything in the world?

HANNAH: I'd settle for getting these critters into brine before Josiah comes. He said last night if he had to look at another eel he'd pitch in the river and join 'em.

REBECCA: He'll eat what's set before him. If you'd grow'd up sister to him, you wouldn't take him so to heart.

HANNAH: A wife ought to take her man to heart. It's in scripture.

REBECCA: You're so good is scares me. Compared to you I'll go straight to Hell.

HANNAH: Rebecca Weston, you'll do no such thing!

REBECCA: Well, it'll be a tighter squeak for me. I haven't the gift for being good just natural.

HANNAH: I'm all of eighteen. It settles you, being married and answerable and ... getting old and all.

REBECCA: If I had any one thing at command, I'd take a real looking glass, like the Stillman's. It makes a room so handsome. Set a candle by it and you've two candles: it's frugal that way. It's like having a matched pair.

HANNAH: What would such a great gawk as I want with a matched pair of my face? There is something foolisher yet than a looking glass! A clock, with lettered numbers.

REBECCA: When Josiah was out you could see just how late he was and do your worrying proper.

HANNAH: It would be company, ticking away like a cricket.

REBECCA: You're lonely out this way. I'll come more often, 'long as the water's high 'nough for canoeing. I'm not coming through the woods! I thought Ma tried to give you our clock - and you wouldn't take it?

HANNAH: It's the one time Josiah and I ever had words. I'd wrapped it in the quilt to bring safe and he thought I'd hid it on him; still does I guess. He's so proud, he wouldn't bring a thing away from Mother Weston.

REBECCA: Stubborn, her and him! Well, we had to sell the clock this winter past.

(nods to Hannah's small gasp of surprise)

Mr. Stillman agreed to take it in trade for flour. Though he had little enough in store. Was this as bad as the clam year was?

HANNAH: The clam year was worse for weather. It's the trouble down to Boston this time.

REBECCA: I think King George is just selfish - and stubborn. Like Ma. When someone's stubborn as that, there is nothing you can do with 'em.

HANNAH: Oh hush.

(sings, again to "Sweet Jane")

Farewell my love, I must be gone
Across the roaming sea.

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My chest is packed, I must embark
With all my company.

REBECCA: Think Captain Jones might have brought a looking glass this trip?

(Josiah Weston, gloomy and bitter, stands in the door.)

HANNAH: If he did, we couldn't afford it. If he ever comes.

REBECCA: He's just got to come. Up where they're cutting, the men said there aren't three weeks' provisions in the whole town.

JOSIAH: He's come.

(The women rise.)

HANNAH: Josiah. I was worried for you.

JOSIAH: The Polly is in, with cargo, and Cap'n Jones has sold us out to Governor Hutchins and his Hessians.

HANNAH: How do you mean, "sold us?"

JOSIAH: Damn me if I can understand it.

HANNAH: It's not like you to swear before me.

JOSIAH: I'll just wait and let you swear first, then.

HANNAH: What ails you?

JOSIAH: I'd stopped in on the O'Brien boys, and they'd had word down that way that the Polly was sighted, back from Boston, so we went on into town. Captain Jones didn't come alone - there's an armed schooner with the Polly, "escorting" her. Jones says they wouldn't let him out of Boston harbor without it.

HANNAH: An armed schooner? Whatever do they want?

JOSIAH: Trouble.

REBECCA: Way off here?

JOSIAH: *(prods in the eel pot with his knife)* To the fire of Hell with Jones!

HANNAH: I married a clean-mouthed, loving man, and I know his voice. That isn't you talking, it's those bully O'Briens. You've brought home half the ill tempers of the settlement, sticking to you like burdocks.

JOSIAH: Don't you ever think I have any mind of my own?

HANNAH: I do think you've a mind of your own, and all I ask is that you cleave to it - as I do.

JOSIAH: Jones must have had an idea how it would set with the men, to put in with the Royal Navy behind him. He came ashore with

(scornful)

a paper, a pledge to protect his property - and his person, the pompostorous varmint! We were to subscribe to it before we could buy any provision.

REBECCA: Half his crew sailed with him just so we could have our necessaries! And a pretty price he's asking, too, I'm sure!

JOSIAH: There's more. In that same paper, we've got to go along with Jones's bounden oath that he's to return to Boston with lumber, and Stillman and the O'Briens say that lumber is to build barracks for Hessians.

HANNAH: Well, that does set us all in a cleft stick.

(pause)

Maybe Ichabod Jones is in a manner caught, too. If that's the only way he could come home from Boston... there it is. We need those goods. He brought 'em.

JOSIAH: That's what folks said, when they signed.

HANNAH: Beggars can't be choosers, Josiah. Don't take it on yourself so. Eel broth tonight, but tomorrow I'll put something real nice on the table. What are Jones' prices like? Seems as if there's enough lumber piled up with your mark on it so we wouldn't have to fret ourselves for onst.⁴

JOSIAH: Hannah... He's only selling to them that signed... and I didn't sign.

(The light narrows in on the pair)

I wasn't alone.

HANNAH: Whatever will we do?

JOSIAH: Whatever comes to hand, but my name on that paper don't come to hand.

(disembodied voices as the light dims)

VOICE 5: I didn't sign it.

VOICE 9: I didn't sign.

VOICE 10: I didn't sign it.

HANNAH: You did as you knew right, dear.

(The light on the Westons is gone.)

VOICE 5: I wouldn't put my mark on it neither!

VOICE 11: None of my menfolk'll sign it.

VOICE 9: If they didn't sign on, how was I to, I ask you?

VOICE 8: Name's Marjorie Coolbroth and I got six hungry youngsters, but let the heaven's fall, I don't sign.

O'BRIEN: Not one O'Brien signed, and that's six of us, counting Da.

(The light finds him on high ground: he and Foster stare seaward. He has a telescope in hand and a newspaper in his belt.)

I suppose you'll sign, Ben Foster?

(grins)

FOSTER: *(spits)* Ayup. Just after our tomcat puts his mark to it.

O'BRIEN: *(slides down the tree)* One thing Jones brought free to all - and I bet his heart's breaking out in spots that he can't charge for it - the news! There's been pitched battles, not just at Lexington and Concord, out west too, in Ticonderoga. Blood flowed thick on both sides.

FOSTER: It had to come.

O'BRIEN: Seems like it's been a thumping Jehosaphat of a spring.

GRANDMA: *(totters up)* Have ye heered it, Johnny? Ain't it the turrible thing?

FOSTER: What's terrible?

GRANDMA: They were this morning telling me how King George came with his men against the people of Lexington, and conquered 'em.

O'BRIEN: Con-cord, Gran. The town of Concord. And we won!

GRANDMA: *(unconsoled)* Do you tell me so? Isn't it Ireland all over again.

(She starts on her way.)

Turrible, turrible. You best be good to your Da, Johnny.

⁴ "once," pronounced "wunst"

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(She turns, tugs at him, shakes him a little and towsels his hair.)

He takes his politics powerful hard.

(She goes.)

O'BRIEN: *(to her back)* I'm not Johnny, Gran. I'm the other one.

(To Foster)

My wife's brother was on the Polly.

(producing tattered newsprint)

He fatched⁵ home this copy of the Mass'chusetts Spy. He says fighting's all they talk of up to Boston.

(points)

And there rides the King's ship in Machias harbor.

(Foster and he swap Spy for spyglass.)

FOSTER: It being as hot as they say in Boston, it's queer, them sending an armed cutter down as far off as here.

O'BRIEN: Ships they have in plenty. They're here for lumber, and what that puts in my head is, those nearer to Boston must not be selling.

FOSTER: It appears so.

O'BRIEN: We boys are going to send 'em back with somewhat to talk about in the city, by Hell's blue blaze! Me and my brothers and some fellers are setting up a Liberty Pole, for Lexington and Concord - tall enough for the King to see it across the water!

FOSTER: I'll give you the tree for it!

(Blackout. Loud voices of men. SFX: the sound of an axe biting into a tree. We see them unclearly in the dim of lantern-shine. They cluster in front of the table and their roistering masks Margarete's entrance. Rum passes freely as they sing "Flout 'Em and Scout 'Em." ⁶)

MEN'S VOICES: Flout 'em and scout 'em,

Flout 'em and scout 'em,

Thought is free

As a bird in the air or a fish

In the deeps of the sea.

O'BRIEN: Timber away!

(SFX: the crackle and sweeping crash of a felled tree followed by a mighty whoop from the men.)

Out the way!

MARGARETE: *(She appears at the table, quill in hand, in a Boston gown unlike any we've seen so far. She reads, crossing her Ts.)* Dear friends. By one tallow dip, this 10th night of June, from the ends of the earth. I can scarcely make my impressions pass in review, so mixed and unsettled are they, like troops mustered new.

(She shapes words; her Ps, Ds and final Ts are like the popping of tiny champagne corks.)

First, of my James, Midshipman Moore. Captain Moore, for before we left Boston Admiral Graves was

⁵ fetched

⁶ music at the end of the document

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pleased to commission him. James is kinsman to the Admiral and he tells my uncle that the Admiral had been but awaiting a fit occasion to advance him. I sailed under the command of my intended who - only think! - has christened his ship the Margareta after me. I observed James' quality at sea. He shall be an Admiral. He treats his men with no low familiarity; games gentlemanly at cards with his officers, and how handsome he looks in his regalia you may imagine. At Boston my cousins were quite smitten, though James never gives me cause for jealousy. Uncle Ichabod sailed not on his sloop, the Polly, but with us, acting the duenna. But my Captain occasionally found me alone at the rail, quite by chance. In Nova Scotia we shall be married,

(Sharing a wonderful, wicked secret)

by a Pope-ish priest, if none other be found there. That would wag tongues at Boston, but I think marriage is above faction in religion and am bold to suppose there may be as much of God in Rome or Nova Scotia as in Boston or Siam. When next we meet, style me Mrs. Moore.

(A knock.)

Come?

MRS. JONES: Margarete, art thee yet burning candle?

MARGARETE: *(stands and curtsies perfunctorily)* I was just finishing some correspondence, Aunt.

MRS. JONES: Wilt thee take tea before bed?

MARGARETE: How very kind. Have you chocolate? Tea makes for controversy, even in the best houses now at Boston, and I'm quite in the habit of chocolate. If you'd just have a cup sent up, I'd be most grateful.

MRS. JONES: *(flummoxed for a moment)* I believe there came a box of it. I won't disturb thee.

MARGARETE: Not at all. Good night.

(She returns to read over her letter as Mrs. Jones goes.)

Machias is the bleakest place imaginable; only made supportable by the presence of my dear James - and the solicitations of my Aunt, who proves old-fashioned

(Here Margarete dips quill again and adds a mischievous phrase.)

and plainer than second wives commonly are. Sights there are none. A cousin Steven Jones, has gruffly offered to escort me to a nearby shell heap, accumulated by long feasting of Indians upon clams. I shall forgo the marvel. Apropos of clams, people here are in want, and I have tasted the extremity into which they are driven. The unloading of goods was delayed, owing to the bad dispose of people here and Uncle's carefulness. So, 'though there were good provisions aboard the Polly, Aunt had nothing in house to offer us but eels and clams. The sight of urchins digging the reeking mud for clams long since settled the question to my appetite. Commend me to the pearly oyster or to no shellfish. I dined slenderly. I suppose my Aunt coarsened by Uncle's keeping her here away from the turmoils of the city - or is he, I wonder, keeping her away from the glances of society? She is not a Boston woman and I draw from her nothing about her family. Natives here - savages, they seem on brief observation - are crude. At the moment there are lanterns and a bonfire in the town square, or dusty field that serves for town square. Rum is not in such short supply...

MRS. JONES: *(enters without knocking, with a tray with a tiny china cup)* Thy Uncle Ichabod has closed the shutters downstairs and made fast the doors. I wish Captain Moore had stayed the night.

MARGARETE: He promised me he'd come ashore again for breakfast.

MRS. JONES: *(not able to put down the tray till Margarete moves her writing)* I'm sure thee findest little to

write a letter of, here.

MARGARETE: I was writing of your kind hospitality for one thing. Letters are my vanity. From the desk, even a simple person may seem witty. If this year next I have reply from a young clerk gone out to Bombay, my letters will have circled the Earth.

MRS. JONES: Here's thy chocolate. Thy Uncle, when to home, has his last tea upstairs.

MARGARETE: You have brought it up yourself. I had thought a servant would have...

(She realizes there is no servant.)

How thoughtless you must find me.

MRS. JONES: I bring the tray down in the morning.

(There is a roar of roistering from outside and a fragment of "Flout 'Em and Scout 'Em.")

MARGARETE: Is that... Indians?

MRS. JONES: It's not.

MARGARETE: *(peering out)* Those men are raising a maypole out there! They are a month or more behind the calendar.

MRS. JONES: It is what they please to call a "Liberty Pole," their futile⁷ insult at King, country and thy Uncle Ichabod. Our best way is to hold our heads up, look elsewhere and behave ourselves quiet.

MARGARETE: That's disgraceful!

MRS. JONES: It is harmless. Those men have been neighbors. Ichabod has dealt honestly in business. That I trust they'll remember. And he doesn't like the stamp tax better than others do, and has said so. That, I trust, they'll remember.

MARGARETE: But he's a loyal subject...

MRS. JONES: That I trust they'll forget.

(Picks up candle.)

MARGARETE: We'll see what Captain James Moore says about their liberty pole in the morning!

(Candle blown out, blackout. SFX: Cock-crow.)

LYON: *(out for a dawn stroll)* We stir here with the first eye of the dawn. I lift up mine eyes unto the hills. Even in June in these latitudes we use all the light we can get.

(Looks about)

The bonfire is still smoldering in front of the meeting house. Tavern. The same thing.

(SFX: a loud snore.)

Jamie Coolbroth is snoring in the dew. He had a little more rum than he wanted to carry home in him, I'm afraid. Mrs. Coolbroth is long suffering - within reasonable limits. Out on the water the Margareta is a ship shaped of soot, a shadow on the turn of the tide, so quiet you can hear the creak of her windlass.

VOICE 11: *(off)* Jonah! Obediah! Wallace.

LYON: Someone's youngsters skipped off before breakfast for a look at her. They'd rather smell a ship than taste johnny cake.

VOICE 11: *(sharply)* Wallace! Obediah!

LYON: *(squats)* Come out from under the meeting house, boys, I see you. Good morning. Run now. Don't fret

⁷ she says "few-tile"

your mother. Hold on. Hold on! James Tolliver Avery! Have you been all night in town with the men? Now, sir, you will march double time to your boat, and you will sail down the bay home while the tide is with you. Boys who do drink ere they can shave,
Turn gallowsbait or galley slave.
Your parents will have grieved anxious these twelve hours.

(watching the culprit go)

No rude answer? "And the lord closed the wild beast's mouth." Youth runs very wild here, as is natural, I suppose. There is quick wit and spirit in little James Avery, and a gutter-pirate's tongue. I was wrong. The youngsters didn't come just to gape at the Margarettta, they came to look at the liberty pole - and Jamie Coolbroth. The Coolbroths we have with us always, but a Liberty Pole

(looks up.)

is another matter. Fifty feet of limbed, straight spruce. It was a custom among the Greeks and Romans; I can't recall where I read that. It was a custom in New York a couple of years back. And however odd a custom, there's no doubt at to its meaning.

(He is getting worked up.)

It means we believe the whole purpose of a government is to assist and benefit its people, and that when it turns to harass and undo them, it is not a government, it is a tyranny.

FOSTER: *(strolls in behind him)* Working out your sermon, Reverend?

LYON: In a fashion, Benjamin. Quite a tree you gentlemen planted us.

FOSTER: Think it will grow?

(O'Brien joins them.)

CHILDREN (VOICES 2 & 7: (off) Saw and see, Liberty tree,

Jacky shall have a new master...

LYON: It seems to have taken root.

O'BRIEN: Went that high over night. God knows where she will be in a hundred year.

LYON: Lord send these roots rain.

O'BRIEN: I got two dozen brass ship's bells banging in my head this morning.

FOSTER: Look down away.

(nods)

O'BRIEN: *(after a long stare)* Jones and his Royal escort.

FOSTER: His royal hobbyhorse.

O'BRIEN: Don't you hate a white wig?

LYON: The young Captain seems well governed. I spoke with him yesterday. There is no need to cast up a hasty account against the man.

(Spiller, Jones and Captain Moore approach, talking. Moore is twenty-five, finely uniformed, likeable.)

MOORE: . . .been once in the Mediterranean and twice across the line.⁸

SPILLER: And lost at cards in both hemispheres.

⁸ the line = the Equator

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JONES: All very well for a bachelor, but mat-ri-mony, as they say, is a matter o' money.
(His chuckle as his own pun peters out when he sees whom they have met.)

Good morning to you, neighbors.
(Neither Foster nor O'Brien respond.)

LYON: Mr. Jones. Captain Moore. Sir.

JONES: Good day to you, Ben Foster.
(Foster still does not speak.)

Yes.
(Jones and Moore are almost past them when O'Brien spits on the ground at their heels. Moore turns.)

MOORE: *(after meeting O'Brien's eyes for a second or two)* What do you call this pole, my man?
(Tense pause.)

LYON: *(interposes into the silence)* I should call it a spruce, sir.

MOORE: *(After another brief pause, he smiles)* And I call that a very good answer.
(Easing off the tension)

If you'll oblige me a little after noon at the tavern here, sir, a can of Jamaica with you
(Including Foster and O'Brien)
and with any man who'll drink an honest health.
(He nods and turns to go.)

O'BRIEN: I call it a Liberty Pole.
(Moore stops, then the others do. Moore does not turn but the air electrifies.)

A Liberty Pole!

MOORE: I suppose
(Turns slowly)

I must ask if it celebrates the taking of some particular liberty?

O'BRIEN: Lexington. And Concord!

MOORE: Men died at those places.

O'BRIEN: Is that a threat?

JONES: Now, now...

MOORE: It is a fact. If it will mollify your feelings, I lift my hat in respect to the dead of either party.
(Does so)

Courage may not take sides... though honor does.
(Dons his hat again)

Good morning.
(O'Brien is baffled. Jones and the officers would go, but Margarete arrives.)

MARGARETE: What have we here, James?

JONES: Nothing. Nothing at all.

MARGARETE: You're looking like a bear at the stake. Wish me a good morning, Captain Moore.

JONES: People are gathering...

MOORE: The best of mornings.

MARGARETE: And now, tell me what is happening.

MOORE: This gentleman just explained me the meaning of the pole, that's all.

O'BRIEN: And this genteel man just doffed his hat to it. That's all!

MARGARETE: You didn't!

O'BRIEN: Let's hear him deny it.

LYON: (*smoothly*) The pole is merely a symbol, sir. An expression of feeling in the town.

SPILLER: An expression of treason.

LYON: Many of us here, perhaps all of us, profoundly regret the mismanagements and exactions laid upon us by those of His Majesty's government who, having no exact knowledge of our affairs, govern with a heavier hand than they comprehend. This is a symbol of sympathy with our fellow countrymen near Boston who protest that rule. Now, a symbol represents not an act, but a thought only, and by all just law, sir, thought is free...

FOSTER: What are...

O'BRIEN: Quiet, Ben. The Reverend's all right.

MARGARETE: (*seeing Moore bow slightly to Lyon*) Will you endure this?

MOORE: Reverend, this side of treason, thought is free.

LYON: On any side of any subject, Sir.

MOORE: Call the pole a thought then.

(Looks up)

A very high thought. Let me add a thought and we'll call all square. I'll send a detail over from the Margareta to fly the King's flag from this spruce. That's only a symbol, remember, and one good thought deserves another.

(Lyon's disgruntled gesture of dismay says he can do no more to avert hostility.)

O'BRIEN: The devil you will!

FOSTER: Not in Machias.

O'BRIEN: You fly that damned curst rag on this tree and...

MOORE: Silence. I remind you I serve His Majesty. A few words more could hang you. I am sorry for all this, but it seems the pole must come down.

FOSTER: That pole was planted unanimous by your men of Machias!

JONES: Not unanimous.

MOORE: With or without their unanimity, sir, it must come down. Come, gentlemen. You've made your gesture. Now I must make mine.

O'BRIEN: Must come down! Easier spoke than done, my young Captain.

MOORE: Will you choose to disregard an order originating not from me but from the government whose officer I am?

O'BRIEN: We'll dare maintain our principles.

MOORE: My orders are peremptory and must be obeyed. That liberty pole must be taken away or - it will be my painful duty to fire upon the town.

(He turns to go. All are startled.)

LYON: Sir, Mister Jones, Foster... a moment. In the name of reason, let a little patience prevail here. We are all

now hot and hasty...

JONES: Right! I say that pole is not unanimous in any degree. Let me get the town together, Moore. I'll eat my ears if I haven't influence among them, those that are sane, and we can settle this peacefully.

FOSTER: You want those ears salted or pickled?

JONES: Peacefully, Ben Foster. I've loaned you good money, more than once, on fair-square terms... You too, O'Brien, and you know it.

(Draws Foster aside.)

Can't you see I'm between the fires? Why,

(A nod toward Moore)

I'm almost that boy's prisoner you might say.

(To all)

We all want peace and fair play, all above board. You'll see, Captain Moore, Lyon has the right idea. We'll call a town meeting and all you must do is give us time.

FOSTER: And time enough we had a meeting.

JONES: A day will come the town will thank me for this. Come along Moore. Margarete.

(Starts off)

No stroll this morning. Breakfast is cooling.

(He goes out with the Officers and Margarete.)

O'BRIEN: So is Hell.

(Spiller, the last of the party to leave, glances back and cocks his hat. O'Brien looks up at the pole. The light begins to focus in on the three Machias men.)

Well, she's still up there.

LYON: So is Providence, we must believe.

FOSTER: Ayup.

(Blackout.)

(Jones, Moore and Mrs. Jones are at Jones's hearth.)

JONES: I've sent word around to the wiser heads in the settlement to stop to see me before the meeting. They should be here by this.

(Mrs. Jones purses her mouth as he checks his watch.)

No fear, my dear. Mine's a respected voice.

MRS. JONES: Thee hasn't had to pass the last month here.

JONES: Even that O'Brien fellow, the surly one, was not himself this morning. A hard night, I suppose. His father will talk sense to him. It must be your role to stand inflexible and our role to come around.

(Winks jovially at Moore)

You look very glum.

MOORE: If you knew how I have chafed to see just this kind of quarrel blown up over a bubble, when a quiet word or a laugh might have puffed it away. I have judged other officers very harshly for such tomfoolery, and why should I forgive myself?

JONES: You dealt with them very coolly, sir, very coolly.

MOORE: I was an ass. But I couldn't let go by an insult to the colors and the King. Now it may very likely come to shots and blows.

JONES: Not likely! The town will fall to its knees. Let me read you a letter

(Takes a paper from his vest)

entrusted to me from citizens here to the representatives of the Continental Congress in Boston.

MOORE: They expected you to deliver a letter to rebels?

JONES: Settlers here are hardly witty in politics. Governor Gage had dissolved the Colonial Congress but, on the other hand, the Congress had deposed Gage, as they see it. When I sailed, there seemed to them no knowing who would be in command of Boston. Fearing embargo from either camp, I carried letters to both parties.

MOORE: You seem to have banked your fire pretty well on both sides.

JONES: I saw no reason to outrage feelings here by refusing to pocket a letter.

(reads)

To the Honorable Congress... et cetera. "Iron chains of tyranny," and such nonsense... "Egyptian bondage..." You see our local preacher's style. Here is the point. "We, the distressed inhabitants of Machias beg leave... to spread our grievance at your feet. We dare not say we are the foremost in supporting the glorious cause of American Liberty..." They dare not, note that!

(The townspeople of Machias are emerging in a cluster on the far side of the stage)

"but we affirm that we have done our utmost..." Their utmost is already done, note that. "We have not even purchased goods of persons whom we suspect to be inimical to our country, except by necessity..." They always bought from me, however. "Divine Providence has cut off all our usual resources. A very severe drought last fall prevented our laying in sufficient stores,

(The townspeople, clustered in dim light, speak the letter. Perhaps individuals take individual phrases. All speak the last three words.)

ALL: ... nor have we this spring been able to procure provisions. Our laborers are all dismissed, our mills stand idle, almost all our vessels have forsaken us, our lumber lies by us in heaps and, to complete our misfortunes, all our ports are to be shut up the first of July next. We must add that we have no country behind us to fall back on, nor can we make our escape by flight; the wilderness is impervious and vessels we have none. The wilderness...

(more faintly)

impervious.

(They fade from view)

JONES: *(Again reading.)* "You are our last, our only recourse from famine and all its horrors." And so they beg I be allowed to continue commerce. They cannot refuse you. They are desperate.

MOORE: I still wish that I had not provoked them.

(Margarete enters before Moore sees her.)

It was boyish vainglory on my part. If Margarete had not come along just then I would not have played the fool so.

MARGARETE: That is very ungenerously said, Captain Moore.

MOORE: I didn't see you, Margarete.

MARGARETE: *(teasing)* Since you feel at liberty to blame me behind my back, I shall walk with my cousin to view the shell heap.

(She goes out.)

MOORE: Margarete!

(He starts to follow.)

JONES: Don't let the pretty hussy trouble you.

MOORE: But she does trouble me.

(He is gone.)

JONES: *(chuckles)* A man about to marry is a cat on coals. Our Captain Moore seems a little weak kneed, my dear.

MRS. JONES: I can't agree. A very thinking young man, between tempers.

JONES: *(taking out his watch to shake it)* A cat on coals!

MRS. JONES: Ichabod. Nobody is going to come see thee before this meeting.

(Blackout. All except Moore, Margarete and Mrs. Moore gather. There's a babble of simultaneous voices:)

VOICE 1: Tax and vexation! Lumber ain't the half of it. Shut up.

VOICE 3: They think we'll set on our thumbs and starve?

VOICE 4: It's nothing but a fool pole. Where's the rum? Bernham, the rum!

VOICE 6: And us shut up in embargo July first!

(...and more. A spot picks up Foster at the lectern, gaveling for silence. Only a tight area around Foster is clearly illuminated, the cast is a dim crowd, except for Josiah, front and isolated, who is making up his mind to speak.)

FOSTER: I call this session into order. Quiet there. You know well enough what commands His Majesty's officer has issued. We want to go on record as to what steps the town wishes to take in respect to that pole.

JOSIAH: *(strides over to share the light)* The liberty pole ain't the whole issue! The issue is, are we going to allow Captain Jones to sail back to Boston. There are logs on the wharf for pickets and palisades, and sawn boards for barracks - we know that's what they'll be for. Continental Congress asked all citizens....

JONES: *(coming to the lectern)* Just a minute, young man!

FOSTER: You're out of order, Jones.

JONES: He's out of order. There's a deal of wind expended these days on the subject of liberty. Well, I'm at liberty to sail my own ship, with my own goods, at my own pleasure. We're called to settle that pole and I'll thank you to leave my ship to me, Mr. Chairman.

JOSIAH: It is our business. Didn't we have to sign, agreeing to let you return, if we were to buy anything?

JONES: And didn't you sign?

VOICE 9: No! Not many of us.

JONES: Well, you will, and you know it.

REBECCA: Come out here! The Margareta's moved in close, and her gun ports are open!

(Murmurs sweep the crowd. All turn front to stare.)

FOSTER: Well, there's your threat. All those in favor of removing the liberty pole, say "Aye."

JONES: *(after a pause)* Aye.

FOSTER: Those opposed?

ALL: *(except Jones)* Opposed!

JONES: *(leaping up next to Foster)* You're all mad? We're under threat of those guns! And if we're bottled up here and I can't make another run to Boston...

FOSTER: In a pinch, there's some others of us here could captain a ship.

VOICES: Sit down. Me-yow! Quiet Jones. Play dead! You're out of order. Cheers for Cap'n Foster! Foster and O'Brien!

JONES: Hear me! Don't imagine because I had Captain Moore to my house that I can stop him. He's a young powder-eater.⁹ He'd as quickly blow us to Kingdom Come as look at us if we stand between him and his duty. We know what bull-headed fight-pickers Irishmen are.

O'BRIEN: Aye, Jones, and we know what Welshmen are too: thieves!

JONES: I'm not a Welshman! I'm an American!

FOSTER: *(dryly)* Glad to hear you've joined us.
(General laughter and whoops.)

I then call it resolved that the liberty pole...

JONES: I demand a reading of the rolls! This meeting is not well enough attended to make us a quorum!

O'BRIEN: Too many of your friends stayed away?

JONES: I'm within rights and you know it, Foster. Call roll or dissolve the meeting!
(uproar)

VOICES: 4, 5, 9, 10 & 11: *(as the spotlight fades toward blackout)* Mr. Chairman! Call it resolved! Listen here, listen here! Long live liberty, say I! Ben Foster!
(We see Rebecca pulling Josiah's sleeve.)

REBECCA: Josiah, will you get back up river? Hannah had the queerest spell just before I came away. Tried to hide it, but she was as pale as a fishbelly. I promised her you'd be to home before morning.

JOSIAH: And you didn't have brains to tell me till now?
(He rushes off. She follows. Blackout.)

(Margarete and Mrs. Jones are together at Jones's house; Mrs. Jones peers at Margarete and her embroidery.)

MARGARETE: China silk, for a handkerchief for him. The motto will read, "I love you, Moore, each day."

MRS. JONES: Yet thee art sometimes very hard on Captain Moore, Margarete.

MARGARETE: *(smiles)* Yes, aren't I? He is so earnest and strict with himself. I must tease him out of that, or one day he'll try to be strict with me.

MRS. JONES: He has plenty to worry and tease him just now. When a man is rowing thee through rough water, don't stand up in the boat.

MARGARETE: *(as Jones enters)* Maybe I'm a bit the rebel myself.

MRS. JONES: Well, Ichabod?

JONES: It was a close thing. They've all gone lunatic for that heathen pole.

⁹ a powder-eater *(hot-head; eater of gun-powder)*

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(He notices that Margarete has not gotten up; his nerves betray him into a savage snap.)

You will rise, young Miss, when your Uncle enters the room! No rebels under my roof!

(Margarete jumps up.)

You never saw the like of it. All I could do was postpone the meeting till Monday in hopes that over the Lord's Day they'll come to their senses - if they've got any.

(He sits painfully.)

MRS. JONES: Whatever wilt thee tell Captain Moore? He's obliged¹⁰ now to stick... by his guns.

(Margarete is about to speak.)

Margarete. Go and make thy Uncle a cup of tea.

(She gives Margarete a stern look: the startled girl obeys.)

It's as bad here as at Boston, isn't it?

(Setting a pillow under Jones' leg)

I wish we'd never come down this way. The whole land may fall a-flame. Ichabod, hast thee searched thy heart for certainty thee art standing upon the right side of the wall?

(Jones frowns but says nothing.)

If he does have to turn his cannon on us...

JONES: Then he'll be mighty careful of his aim, because Margarete is under this roof and she stays under this roof.

(Their light dims out.)

(A background of stars and tree shadows. Reverend Lyon strolls to a moonlit window where Benjamin Foster is cleaning his long rifle.)

FOSTER: Why, hello, Reverend. It's late.

LYON: There's some special interest in the service tomorrow.

FOSTER: Yeh?

LYON: Three different fellows have asked me, very casually, if it was still sure that Jones and Moore and his officers were to come to church.

(pause)

FOSTER: Asked, did they?

LYON: Something's in the wind.

(pause)

FOSTER: Is it?

LYON: And Foster, I want your word that manslaughter is not intended.

FOSTER: *(looks up for the first time, then, slowly)* In church?

LYON: That's no very direct answer.

FOSTER: Nobody's going to get killed, if we can help it.

LYON: Then can you tell me why you are cleaning that, by night?

FOSTER: Are you objecting, or peevd at being left out? What do you do when you run out of cheek to turn? I

¹⁰ "obleegeed", rhymes with "besieged."

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say you put your back to a corner and you show your teeth. Put it that they're going to see tomorrow that we have weapons.

LYON: Precious little shot, Ben...

FOSTER: They won't see that.

LYON: I shan't say I like it, for I don't, but they shall hear tomorrow that we have wits as well, and whatever comes, I share the consequences.

FOSTER: (*puts out his hand*) You're a man of the cloth, but there's gristle in you.
(*They shake.*)

You read us a good sermon.
(*Blackout.*)

(*Josiah and Hannah appear.*)

JOSIAH: You'll be all right now. Becky'll stay again...

HANNAH: Josiah Weston. Do you think that's what I'm worried about?
(*changes the subject*)

I've hunted high and low for that spare bag of shot. I can't think what's become of it.

JOSIAH: (*grins uncertainly*) I guess you're not too eager for me to have it.

HANNAH: That's an awful thing to say! I tell you I can't think, and I can't.

JOSIAH: I won't need it, most likely. The sight of the rifles is what counts.

HANNAH: Jones must have brought some powder kegs in cargo.

JOSIAH: They haven't unloaded 'em, I hear tell.

HANNAH: That Jones!

JOSIAH: Well, there's a sight more powder in town than shot at any rate. It's shot we're in want of.

REBECCA: (*hurries in*) Mr. Drisko says hurry if you're going with them. They're to paddle down to Machias tonight and lay up across the brook from the meeting house till service time. Think they'll hang Jones?

JOSIAH: Some would like to.

HANNAH: Are you sure you're doing right to join?

JOSIAH: I spoke out, right in town meeting, Hannah! It just came ripping out of me. I told Jones off. I've got to go.

REBECCA: Be proud, Hannah. He spoke wonderful.

HANNAH: (*Hannah seizes Josiah.*) You've got to come back to me you know. You know why!

JOSIAH: All we aim to do is take this Captain Moore prisoner, and Jones if we have to. Now look after yourselves. Just don't fret.

(*He goes.*)

REBECCA: That's easy said.

HANNAH: I'm so riled, my hands are all gone numb.

REBECCA: Lets work your big quilt a while. There's not going to be any killing.

HANNAH: Oh, there is, Rebecca. A child could see it! What'll they do with the officers after they capture 'em? There's no prison in Machias but the root cellar at Berham's tavern! Do they think to lock them into somebody's cupboard? Or hole them up in a beaver lodge?

REBECCA: Well, they must have some plan. Josiah wouldn't lie to you.

HANNAH: Then somebody's lied to him.

REBECCA: I dare say they don't have any plan at all.

HANNAH: That makes it the worse.

REBECCA: The men won't start anything 'cause they haven't powder nor shot, and the gunboat won't fire 'cause Jones won't let 'em risk his house.

HANNAH: (*hugs her*) It's real nice to hear someone talk sense!

REBECCA: Now. Where's the quilt?

HANNAH: In the sea chest.

REBECCA: (*reads the chest lid*) "God save all within for Mary Dustin."

HANNAH: (*as Rebecca gets out the quilt*) That chest come two months across the water with great grandmother's folks. They were daring women back then.

REBECCA: What we needs is a chapman¹¹ to come round now and then with needles and ribbands and tinware, and a little news. Ma says the one up to Scarborough came twice a year.

HANNAH: He'd have a far trudge, 'tween customers. You are one for thinking upon everything that should be, that isn't.

(They work, singing to the tune of "Sweet England"¹².)

Oh I came from sweet England, my father and me,

We were two months a-tossing, a-crossing the sea,

And its often I wept my salt tears on the main,

Wishing God I was back in sweet England again.

When we reached the plantation where trees were so thick...

REBECCA: What's Josiah's shot bag doing here in the quilt?

HANNAH: There's where it's got to! Rebecca, you can run faster...

REBECCA: (*on her feet*) They took both canoes. They're gone by this.

HANNAH: Josiah will think I hid it on him!

REBECCA: Oh, he won't! No more than a quarter pound of shot in it anyway.

HANNAH: Becky, stir the embers and kindle up a fire!

(She drags a bench to the edge of the light and stands on it, back to us, to reach over her head into shadow.)

REBECCA: What are you up to?

HANNAH: Getting out the lead-ladle... and the shot mold.

REBECCA: Whatever are...?

HANNAH: There's to be fighting. Josiah is not going to be in it without shot. Get the bellows!

REBECCA: But you haven't got any metal to...

(But she gets the bellows)

HANNAH: I've got six pewter spoons.

¹¹ common peddler or itinerant tradesman

¹² music at the end of the document

REBECCA: Your marriage spoons!

HANNAH: And when it's done, you and I are going to Machias.

REBECCA: They've taken both canoes.

HANNAH: Then we'll go overland.

(Rebecca works the bellows)

REBECCA: There's not metal enough in six spoons to make...

HANNAH: We're going around collecting, and I'm not asking other women for shot metal till I've melted my spoons.

(She crouches in the fire shine and plies a spoon to break it.)

REBECCA: Twenty miles. All woods... in nighttime!

(The spoon breaks. Rebecca gasps.)

HANNAH: We'll get there. We'll get there.

(Takes out the next spoon.)

Besides, I haven't been to service since the ice went out!

(We see them last in the fire glow. Fade out.)

(The cast gathers for the service in the Machias meetinghouse. The light finds them on their rows of benches midway through Addison's hymn, The Spacious Firmament On High.¹³ Only Lyon is well illuminated, the others are dim.)

VOICES:

The unwearied sun from day to day
Doth his Creator's power display
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty Hand.

LYON: Be seated. My text this morning is from Exodus, chapter 2, verses seven and eight. "And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people, which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmaster" - which word 'taskmaster' Josephus glosses as oppressor and tyrant - "for I know their sorrows. And I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land, through the wilderness unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey."

JONES: *(leaping up)* Look out, Moore! James!

MOORE: The window! To the window!

(He leaps up followed by Spiller; as he bounds away there is a crash of glass. Voices overlap chaotically.)

VOICE 3: To Hell with Jones, get the Captain.

VOICE 4: Where's the officers? Out of the way!

VOICE 5: Stop those men! Halt or a halter!

VOICE 6: Hurrah for Liberty. Look at 'em hop it!

VOICE 7: Stand out of the way. Out!

¹³ music at the end of the document

VOICE 8: It's a church! It's the Sabbath!

VOICE 9: Liberty pole, you pole cats! Liberty!

CHILDREN'S VOICES: Saw and see, liberty tree! Look at 'em go it!

(The milling crowd ends faced upstage; Jones and the Officers are gone. Through the jostle Grandma O'Brien emerges picked up in a light spot. She speaks to us.)

GRANDMA: I never shall furgit it. The young Captain jumped clean cross me lap and right through the winder, wig and gold lacings and all. It was raised, you see, being high June, but he carried away the upper sash with him and before I could as much as think to scrabble out of the way, Jones clumb over me and after him and out, and then so help me if Miller Foster wasn't after clambering over me too. Well, thinks I, that's enough of that and up I jumps and the next thing it seemed like all six of my own O'Brien boys was trying to throw me out the winder! I just took a-holt of the sashes and hung on for dear life, and wouldn't I have bit 'em bloody if I still had my teeth? It's a turrible curse being hard of hearing. It wasn't for more 'n an hour I found out what had been going on. Captain Jones, ye see, had looked out and spied armed men coming over the crick - the boys from up river and away - and he sung out, warning his officers...

(SFX: A cannon shot. The Machias folk all turn front, flanking Grandma and staring out toward us in unbelief.)

Thunder, is it now? What is it?

(SFX: another cannon shot.)

JOSIAH: They're firing on us.

FOSTER: Yup.

(The small cluster stares, very still, till the light is gone.)

INTERMISSION

16 further pages in Act Two (with the lead sheets for the songs at the end of the document and the notes for the historical language setting of the show.)