

SHIP

Douglas Williams

Winner of the American Theatre Critics Association's Osborn Award

Representation:

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Cast

Nell - Female, 20's

Caitlin - Female, late 20's early 30's

Jeremiah - Male, 20's

1.

Nell stands at center dressed in, what looks to be, a jankey replica of a sailor's uniform from the mid 1800's.

She is in the cabin of a huge wooden whaling ship, giving us a tour.

NELL

Welcome aboard the Charles W. Morgan! The world's oldest surviving merchant vessel and the *only* surviving wooden whaling ship.

In the world.

She was constructed in 1841 at the Jethro something shipyard in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Construction and rigging on this beast cost over \$32,000!

Yikes!

In total she brought home over 54,000 barrels of sperm and whale oil and over 150,000 pounds of whalebone! Cool!

Um.

Her crew

It took about 33 crewmen

Crew-people to

Steer the Morgan. On a voyage. These scallywags were not only Americans, but ranged in

But represented a buncha races and nationalities. They also

They

...

Can I just start over? I'm gonna start over.

Nell turns and looks down at a small note card.

NELL

(to herself)

Come on

I didn't even laugh at the sperm part.

She pockets the note card and spins around.

NELL

Okay.

Welcome to the Mystic Seaport!

Welcome aboard the Charles W. Morgan!

Welcome...

You're very welcome here. Aboard.

Goddamn it!

Nell reaches to pull out her note cards again.

NELL

I can get it.

Caitlin, in modern clothing, appears from the shadows. She's been watching.

CATILIN

I thought it was...really / great

NELL

That was shit. I did it perfect before you got here.

CATILIN

Are you supposed to do some kind of accent?

NELL

An accent? No. Come on.

...

Wait. Should I?

CATILIN

Like a sailor's accent?

NELL

What's a sailor's accent?

CATILIN

You know. Like

(a hesitant cockney accent)

Welcome aboard...

Gov'na.

...

CATLIN

Give it a sorta authentic sorta

Y'know

...

Sounds like a no on the accent / thing--?

NELL

Yeah that's a no.

...

CATLIN

Did you wanna run it one more--?

NELL

Nah.

CATLIN

So the dock?

NELL

Let's get fucked up.

Lights.

2.

Night. A foghorn blows in the distance.

A small, busted dock that sits on the Mystic River across from the Seaport and the Charles W. Morgan.

Nell and Caitlin sit on the dock in beach chairs, each sipping from a beer. A six pack sits nearby.

NELL

Tickets? I mean really.

What a waste. My talents are being *wasted*.

They have like a *golden* opportunity right in front of them and they don't even--

I would be the most badass tour guide the Seaport ever had. And I'm stuck tearing tickets.

And cleaning.

CATILIN

Wait so how'd you get the keys to the ship?

NELL

They make me lock up.

CATILIN

Oh. So that's like

Some responsibility.

NELL

Yeah but I need to be in *front* of people. I need some crony locking up for *me*. After I drop some fuckin' whaling ship, fuckin' sperm oil knowledge on these people.

I'm destined for the bigger and the better.

(looking across the river at the ship)

And that ship is the only non-shitty, halfway legit thing in this town.

It's basically my only option.

CATILIN

Yeah.

NELL

You think anyone's ever fucked down there before?

CATLIN

What?

NELL

Sometimes when I'm locking up I'm like "How could anyone *possibly* fuck down here?"
Like are there special positions that are more agreeable to the high seas?

CATLIN

I mean...probably? Humans are resilient and resourceful creatures.
Don't fuck anyone down there.

NELL

I didn't *say* I was gonna--

...

I can't promise that.

Nell finishes her beer.

She reaches down and grabs another one out of the six pack.

CATLIN

Nell.

NELL

What?

...

NELL

I've only had two.

...

NELL

I can have three beers. It's not like
Can you just chill out?

Nell opens the beer.

NELL

Plus it's Friday. Like what am I *supposed* to do? Not drink? Pfff.

CATLIN

It's Tuesday.

NELL

Oh for real?

She shrugs. Swigs.

CATLIN

So about mom.

NELL

Yah.

CATLIN

I think we should do something for her--

NELL

Just so you know I'm like broke right now, like

CATLIN

I know.

NELL

I'm not totally in the position to *do* something

CATLIN

It's not gonna

NELL

I'm not in the position to like *host a thing*.

CATLIN

No one's gonna host a--

It's not gonna cost money.

NELL

Good because I am brooooooooooooooke

CATLIN

I want us to put a list of songs together for her.

NELL

Oh. Okay. What like a playlist?

CATLIN

Yeah but

NELL

Okay.

CATLIN

Like curated.

NELL

Yeah yeah.

CATLIN

Maybe forty songs.

NELL

Forty. Okay.

...

NELL

Did she *ask* for this?

CATLIN

Yeah.

NELL

Okay.

CATLIN

In a way.

NELL

What did she say. Like what did she *literally*

CATLIN

She asked me to put together a playlist for her.

NELL

Random but okay.

CATLIN

For her funeral.

NELL

For her *funeral??*

CATLIN

Yes.

NELL

Oh my god.

CATLIN

I know.

NELL

Is everything okay?

CATLIN

Yeah. So far. Nothing has

NELL

What.

CATLIN

Changed. With the treatment.

NELL

Okay.

CATLIN

Yeah.

NELL

So she's fine then.

CATLIN

I mean, she's not *fine*.

But yeah, they're still confident that the whatever--
The chemo will be successful.

NELL

So she's just being dramatic.

CATLIN

Okay Nell, I think she's *allowed* to be--

NELL

No, like of course! I'm just saying it sounds a little
Dramatic.

CATLIN

It is, but I think we need to
I think she's just freaked out.

NELL

This is so intense.

CATLIN

I know.

NELL

When did she ask for this?

CATLIN

Last week.

NELL

She asked *you* for this playlist.

CATLIN

It would mean a lot to me if we did this together.

NELL

Well she doesn't want us to do it together.

CATLIN

Yes she does.

NELL

She asked *you*.

CATLIN

Well what I need is for you to

NELL

No way. I would go crazy. She drives me so fucking crazy.

CATLIN

If you just

NELL

She doesn't think I can make a playlist, that's fine.

CATLIN

That's not what she's

NELL

Yes it is.

I don't know what I have to do to prove I'm a normal person now.

CATLIN

Don't make this a

NELL

She clearly thinks I'm too stupid and unstable to do some pathetic homework assignment for her.

CATLIN

Nell, what the hell?

NELL

Whatever. She does.

...

CATLIN

I thought we could each do twenty songs. And write something for each one. Like a reason why we picked it. How it reminds us of her.

...

CATLIN

It would mean a lot.

NELL

How are you gonna package it?

CATLIN

I don't know yet.

NELL

Is this like a Spotify thing or a CD thing.

CATLIN

I don't know.

...

CATLIN

But maybe you could include some of your street art. Like a print or

NELL

I'm not doing street art anymore.

CATLIN

Or like make one of your short films.

NELL

Bro, I haven't made a film since high school. I don't even know where my camera is. And they were corny af.

CATLIN

Well I thought they were really good...

...

NELL

I have to think about it.

...

CATLIN

Oh you got something delivered today. I grabbed it on my way over.

Caitlin reaches into her bag and pulls out a box from Amazon.

Nell takes the box.

NELL

Oh fuck yeah.

CATLIN

What is it.

Nell opens it. Shows it to Caitlin.

NELL

Guinness Book of World Records. New edition. Pre-ordered this bish.

She looks at it.

NELL

Damn. These covers are so gaudy.
Here look.

(she holds it up)

Like what is this?

She moves the book back and forth. The image moves when she moves it.

NELL

Is that supposed to be some kinda janky hologram thing?
Do they think they're impressing us with this?

CATLIN

And that green is like
Blech.

NELL

It's like the worst green.
Show some respect for the people inside this thing.
Show some respect for the people who dedicate their lives to *real* achievement.
Because this is just, ugh.

CATLIN

Janky hologram.

NELL

I should design this.
They need to hire *me*.

CATLIN

Well...

Nell gives it another long look.

She puts it under her chair.

CATLIN

You can look through it if you want. I'll just sit here.

NELL

No it's fine. I'm gonna wait 'til we get home.
I have this whole process with new editions.

...

CATLIN

That kid who grew his fingernails crazy long moved back to town.

NELL

His name is Jeremiah. And yeah I know.
I went to his house.

CATLIN

You did?

NELL

Yeah.

CATLIN

I didn't know you knew him.

NELL

Yah. We went to high school together.

CATLIN

Right right.

NELL

And he didn't just *decide* to grow his fingernails crazy long. He was born with an extremely rare condition that made his fingernails grow super fast. Triple the speed and triple the strength. It's like a gift.

CATLIN

Mutant fingernails.

NELL

And he woulda broken the world record one day if it weren't for the accident.

CATLIN

Damn.

NELL

It's actually really sad.

Caitlin takes a swig of her beer.

NELL

And I don't like *know* him know him.

CATLIN

What?

NELL

I know *of* him. Like--

CATLIN

And you went to his *house*?

NELL

Yeah.

CATLIN

Did you freak him out?

NELL

What? No! I was just welcoming him back.

CATLIN

You freaked him out. You know like all this stuff about him.

NELL

Everyone knows! He's basically famous.

CATLIN

No he's not. He's 'fingernail guy' and you're stalking him.

NELL

I was welcoming him back. He was fine. He was not freaked out.

CATLIN

What did he say?

NELL

He said that

...

He wouldn't see me actually.

CATLIN

Nell! Stalker!

NELL

Listen, you're making this weird and this isn't weird. It was a very normal visit.

I'm not a loser. I'm not a stalker so just

CATLIN

Okay but you *sort of* are.

NELL

I think he's depressed probably or

His mom answered the door and she was really nice and she understood.

She seemed proud of him but also worried and so she appreciated that someone came to welcome him home. It wasn't weird.

CATLIN

Do you think she recognized you?

NELL

Dunno. Maybe. No.

So he wouldn't see me so I left a note for him.

CATLIN

What'd the note say?

NELL

It said something like:

Hey Jeremiah. It's me Nell. We went to high school together. Welcome back.
I'm sorry about your car crash.

CATLIN

That's what happened?

NELL

Yeah. He was thrown from the car. All ten of his fingernails snapped right off.

CATLIN

(skeeved out)

Oh god, *errrrrr*

NELL

I know, *so sad*. His mom runs his Instagram account and posted this like *super* sad note about it.
And then I said some other stuff that I forget. But *then* I said:
Just so you know you're a real inspiration to a lot of us here in Mystic.
Especially me.

CATLIN

He might think you're making fun of him.

NELL

Yeah but I'm not. This town fucking blows and nothing good happens here, but he actually got out
and did something. He's a legend. In my book he's a legend.
And then I said:
I'd love to grab a beer so I can welcome you back in person.
And then that was it. And then I said
Signed Nell.

CATLIN

Baller.

NELL

I really wanna see those fingernails.

CATLIN

Wait. But aren't they like all smashed up?

NELL

Ugh, don't even say that because that would be like *so* tragic.

CATLIN

Anyways, he's been coming to the library.

NELL

WHAT?

CATLIN

I said he's been coming into the library.

NELL

You've seen him?

CATLIN

Yeah. Like a bunch of times. I checked his books out for him yesterday.

NELL

What the fuck? Why didn't you

How do you know it's him. You don't even know what he looks like.

CATLIN

He's got, like, things on his hands.

NELL

What things.

CATLIN

Like

Bandages.

NELL

Holy shit. Holy shit.

CATLIN

Yeah.

NELL

Jeremiah Cukor is checking books out at *your* library.

I'm coming.

I'm gonna come over yeah?

It's cool if I come over?

CATLIN

To the library?

NELL

Yeah. I'll stack books. I'll do whatever.

Be a person who gives away their labor for free.

CATLIN

A *volunteer*?

NELL

Yes! Exactly.

CATLIN

So you can meet the fingernail guy?

NELL

Jeremiah. Yes.

...

CATLIN

Okay that's sort of against the rules.

NELL

What is?

CATLIN

Like, you're supposed to *want* to stack books.

NELL

I do!

Also is that even true?

Are there rules about like volunteer *motivation*?

CATLIN

Yes!

...

CATLIN

Okay no, but in theory--

Listen I'm not just hiring some volunteer so they can stalk a patron of my library.

NELL

It's the *public's* library!

And this isn't stalking! We went to high school.

We were in the trenches together. We're buds.

CATLIN

You said you didn't know him.

NELL

Also I'm not just some volunteer.

I can't believe you even said that. I'm your sister. Come on.

CATLIN

Right but still--

Nell grabs the Guinness Book of World Records from under her chair.

NELL

Also, like, this.

Come on. I speak the language.

I speak this weirdo's language.

I'm begging to volunteer at your library right now.

CATLIN

Nell....

NELL

Fine. I'll do the stupid playlist.

CATLIN

Was that so hard?

NELL

Yeah. No.

So then I can

CATLIN

Yes. You can volunteer.

...

NELL

She's gonna be pissed when she realizes some of the songs are from me.

CATLIN

No she's not. It's going to mean a lot to her.

NELL

Yeah. Well

CATLIN

And you need to write something.

NELL

I thought you said I could do my street art.

CATLIN

You need to write something really nice. For each song.

Nell sighs and leans back in her chair.

NELL

...Funeral playlist.

CATLIN

It's what she wants.

NELL

So when can I come by the library? I gotta get in the zone. Gotta get the lay of the *land*.

CATLIN

He usually comes in on Mondays.

NELL

Perf.

Caitlin props her feet up.

Nell puts up the hood on her hoodie.

CATLIN

(motioning to the book under Nell's chair)

Can I

Nell bends down and grabs it. Hands it to her.

Caitlin opens it and starts reading.

After a time:

CATLIN

(re: whatever she is reading)

Oh my god...

NELL

Don't say anything please.

I want to be surprised.

Caitlin keeps reading. The fog horn blows in the distance.

Nell takes a swig from her beer.

Lights.

3.

The fiction section of an old library.

Jeremiah, a young man with bandages on his fingers, looks through the stacks.

He gingerly holds a small stack of books.

Nell enters with a book cart, and tries to play it cool.

NELL

(edging closer to Jeremiah)

Ppsst.

...

NELL

Ppppsssssssssssstttttt Shredder Chillal.

JEREMIAH

What?

NELL

Shredder Chillal. The fingernail king. You woulda beat him one day. I know it.

JEREMIAH

Ummm

Nell turns to him.

NELL

Hold up, you've never heard of Shredder Chillal? His fingernails were like whooooo long.

JEREMIAH

(pronouncing the name correctly)

Shridhar.

NELL

That's what I said.

JEREMIAH

I know Shridhar. He's basically my mentor.
Was my mentor.

NELL

No shit!

(putting out her hand to shake)

Nell Shemely.

Oh, right. You're bandaged.

(she pats him on the shoulder instead)

I read about what happened. With the car accident. I'm sorry by the way.

JEREMIAH

Do you...work here?

NELL

Nah. Well today I do, but I'm sorta over it.
You didn't get my note did you?

JEREMIAH

Your what?

NELL

I went to your house and left a note.
With your mom.

JEREMIAH

That was you?

NELL

Yeah.

JEREMIAH

Okay.
Yeah I got it.

NELL

So...

You wanna grab a drink or something?

JEREMIAH

Ummm.

NELL

You don't have to.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

But you should.

...

NELL

Also this is a platonic offer.

JEREMIAH

I sort of got that actually.

NELL

Cool.

I just wanna welcome you back to Mystic.

JEREMIAH

That's okay.

This is fine. As a welcome.

NELL

Oh.

...

JEREMIAH

Um. Do you know if you have any books by Diana Souhami in stock?

NELL

Who even knows? Here, lemme check your stash.

She motions for his small stack of books.

He looks at her, then hands them over.

NELL

(looking through the titles)

Nice. Master and Commander?

Mutiny on the Bounty?

The Sea-Wolf?

How come I've never seen you at the Seaport?

JEREMIAH

I've never been.

NELL

What??

Jeremiah shrugs.

NELL

You grew up in Mystic and you've never been to the Seaport? We went on like a million field trips in high school.

JEREMIAH

I didn't go on field trips. I didn't go anywhere. Not after I started growing my fingernails.

Jeremiah looks at his hands.

NELL

Oh man you gotta go. Now that you're, like

(motioning to his hands)

Mobile? You gotta go. There's this whole period seaside village thing that's straight out of a Melville novel.

JEREMIAH

Really?

NELL

Yeah bruh. We have a church, a tavern, a *blacksmith*. And that's just the village. Come see me at the harbor and you'll really flip.

JEREMIAH

What's in the harbor.

NELL

Oh nothing, just the world's last wooden *whaling ship*. Charles W. Morgan to be exact. I'm a tour guide.

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

Yes.

The Morgan is like it's own vibe. Fully haunted. In a good way. You'll see. In the South Pacific the crew had to fight off *cannibals* one time. And you can actually go on this ship and like be a part of that. You can *feel* that energy.

JEREMIAH

Whoa.

NELL

It's awesome, like nothing else.
I can show you.

JEREMIAH

Um. Okay.

NELL

Really?

JEREMIAH

(looking down at his stack of books)

I've never actually been on a ship. Not a real one, like the Morgan.

I'd like to see it.

NELL

Nice. When do you wanna go?

JEREMIAH

Well, lemme see. I'm free on

NELL

Wait wait wait, know what? We should go *tonight*.

So much better at night. No tourists, place to ourselves, it's awesome.

JEREMIAH

It's open at night?

NELL

No. But I can sneak us in. I have keys. I go at night to practice for when I become a tour guide.

JEREMIAH

I thought you *were* a tour guide.

NELL

No not yet. They're idiots. I'm like a golden opportunity for them, they just don't know it yet.

Plus I need people to practice on so this'll be perfect.

JEREMIAH

(now hesitant)

Oh. Yeah. Totally, totally.

NELL

Great.

JEREMIAH

Only

I don't think tonight is the most, um, conducive with my

NELL

Listen you can go home, crack open a book and have little old Jack London tell you about the sea.

Or we can get on an effing whaling ship to-*night* and see it for ourselves.

...

JEREMIAH

Okay. Let's do it.

NELL

Nice. Let me grab my shit.

JEREMIAH

Right now?

NELL

Yeah. Let's grab a pint at Noah's to get the juices flowing and then head over.

JEREMIAH

You can just leave?

NELL

Hell yeah. I'm a volunteer.

"Let's shag ass."

(calling her quote)

Jack Nicholson. The Last Detail.

That's us right now. We're the sailors.

JEREMIAH

I don't think they were sailors. I think they just had the hats.

Lights.

4.

Jeremiah and Nell sit in the first mate's bunk in the lower deck of the Charles W. Morgan.

They're both half naked.

They've clearly just had sex.

However Nell is in full-on tour guide mode.

NELL

(big, performed)

...Over an eighty year whaling career the Morgan embarked on 37 voyages with most lasting three to five years! Three to five years of eating, washing and living here. Below deck.

The journeys were long and arduous. A sailor's meager diet consisted mostly of hardtack, also known as pilotbread

Shipbiscuit

Or cabin bread!

(breaking from her routine)

You think anyone has fucked down here before?

JEREMIAH

Um--

NELL

Like another tour guide? I mean this thing is old. There have been tour guides working here for, like, ever.

JEREMIAH

I'm not sure.

NELL

Oh! Or even like the sailors. Do you think they had sex with each other? During their arduous journeys?

JEREMIAH

...Maybe.

NELL

But maybe *not*. We could be the first.

We could be the first people to ever have sex aboard the Charles W. Morgan.

That would be legit. I never get to be the first to do anything.

You want me to keep doing the tour?

...

NELL

You okay?

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

How long are you staying in Mystic?

JEREMIAH

Like, indefinitely.

NELL

Cool.

Jeremiah shrugs.

NELL

Are you gonna grow your fingernails out again?

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

You should.

JEREMIAH

No. I don't

I'm just gonna get a job and do that. My uncle owns the True Value so

NELL

What? True Value?

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

You're gonna work at True Value?

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

Noooo man. Do not do that. Do not do that.

JEREMIAH

Why not?

NELL

Because you're the guy who grew his fingernails crazy long! You're famous. You got out and actually *did* something.

You can't just fade into the background like everyone else.

You can't turn into the guy who works at True Value selling paint.

JEREMIAH

I think I'd rather be the guy who sells paint.

NELL

Don't say that. I'm serious. You did something *so* real and now--

Do you still have your fingernails that broke off?

JEREMIAH

What?

NELL

Do you still have them?

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

Nooooo! Ugh, man. That sucks. You could have done something with those. That could have been your new job. Like an exhibit.

JEREMIAH

I don't / think anyone--

NELL

What was it like? Like an average day, what was it like. Were you making like a million dollars?

JEREMIAH

Um. No.

NELL

Oh.

JEREMIAH

I mean, yeah it sounds kind of stupid now. I didn't really make any money, Shridhar booked most of the big events since

NELL

Since he's the fingernail king, right.

JEREMIAH

Was the fingernail king. He cut his off.

NELL

I knew that.

JEREMIAH

So yeah, he was the busy one. But for me it was more like, um, parades. Like 4th of July parades? Labor Day? One time.
In like, Trenton.

NELL

Trenton! Wow. I saw that on the Gram! It looked fun.
Wait but how'd you like sleep? Your mom never posted about stuff like that.

JEREMIAH

I had this weird like sling set up thing by my bed. To rest my hands in. My dad helped me make it.

NELL

And how'd you like, drive.

JEREMIAH

My mom would drive me.

NELL

So how'd you like, text.

JEREMIAH

I...wouldn't.

NELL

Oh my *god*.

JEREMIAH

It sounds stupid now.

...

NELL

Having sex with you sort of reminded me of this documentary I saw right before I dropped out of college.

JEREMIAH

Really? Uh, what documentary? Like a porn documentary?

NELL

What? No. What's a porn documentary?

JEREMIAH

I don't know.

NELL

It was about these guys who have sex with, like, dolls.

JEREMIAH

Oh.
What?

NELL

They have sex with these really expensive dolls. The dolls look life-like and these guys pick the hair they want and the eyes they want and like the *ethnicity* they want. And they're just obsessed with their dolls. Like they give them names and stuff?

JEREMIAH

And this reminded you of...me?

NELL

Oh *completely*, but the documentary isn't even really about these guys. It's about this woman who repairs the dolls. She's got some specialty business that fixes sex dolls. And these guys ship their dolls to her, and it's like heartbreaking to watch. They put their dolls in this big wooden box, that's like this coffin looking thing? It's seriously like so sad. These guys aren't those 4Chan incel fucks either. It's this old BBC doc, so they're like these gentle sad British nerd-boys that strap their sex dolls into the coffin-box and *kiss* them good bye and go like:

(British accent)

Ta ta, lovely. Cheerio.

Swear to god.

And then ship their dolls off to this woman.

Anyways, she's like her own story. She's like this sex doll expert. She's the best.

And there's this one part that I was just thinking of when we were having sex where she's like repairing this one doll's vagina.

The walls of her vagina are like worn through.

Like worn down.

This guy has fucked his doll so many times that the rubber fake vagina liner had worn through.

And this repair woman looks at it and goes "Yup. Seen this before."

And I was like what!

This is a whole other level I have just never experienced before.

Like I know lonely. I am familiar.

But this is something else. This guy has spent so much time alone

Fucking a doll

He's done that so often that he broke part of it.

He broke the vagina.
Like how is that a thing that happens in this world?
He went beyond what a sex doll was manufactured to endure.
Like...*that's* loneliness.

...

JEREMIAH

Sorry.

NELL

Why are you sorry?

JEREMIAH

It's obviously not good if I made you feel like a sex doll.

NELL

Oh.
No man.
You're the doll.

JEREMIAH

I am?

NELL

Yeah. You didn't get that?

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

You just, like, laid there while I fucked you.

JEREMIAH

Right.

NELL

Clearly you're the doll.

JEREMIAH

Shit.

NELL

Nah man, own it. Be the doll.

JEREMIAH

I guess I'm a little out of practice. Because of my fingernails I sorta missed out on certain things.

NELL

Yeah, yeah...

Wait so are you a virgin?

JEREMIAH

Um.....I *was*?

NELL

(smiling, this all finally making sense)

Whhhoa.

JEREMIAH

I guess I should have--

NELL

Damn.

JEREMIAH

Sorry.

NELL

Nono, it's all coming together now. Your sex doll move and your just general lack of

(she makes some kind of gesture that represents their crappy sex)

Yeah, got it. Can't fuck with mondo fingernails. Can't take the *risk*.

JEREMIAH

Right.

And my whole life was about protecting and maintaining these things. Anytime I traveled or attended an event, it was always about the fingernails.

And now...

I'm just trying to figure out how to be a normal person again.

NELL

Same same.

JEREMIAH

(looking around the cabin)

Thanks for bringing me here Nell.

NELL

Yeah of course.

What's your deal with ships? Like all those books you had.

JEREMIAH

I dunno.

NELL

Yeah y' do! Come on Last Detail! Come on Seawolf!

JEREMIAH

It's gonna sound random but I think I'm feeling sorta landlocked?

NELL

Whoa. I'm stealing that.

JEREMIAH

So this one time when I was a kid, my mom got her raffle ticket pulled at the village fair and we won this little sailboat.

NELL

Holy shit, jackpot!

JEREMIAH

It was just a little JY, for like tooling around.

NELL

So *fance*.

JEREMIAH

Well it was the village fair, so this one was, like--

NELL

Shitty, yeah.

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

Even better.

JEREMIAH

So we win the thing and go like, umm what's a sailboat? Like, how do you work this thing?
We have no idea. But my mom was like *into it*. She's intense--

NELL

Yeah, she's *crazy*.

JEREMIAH

Yeah like--
Wait, you know my mom?

NELL

I...
No but I met her the other day when I stopped by your house.
She's not crazy, she seemed very nice.

JEREMIAH

So that whole summer my mom would take me and my brothers out on this boat.
And we'd just try to, like, figure it out.
We'd be in the harbor across from Lord's Point trying to just not flip the thing. Trying to figure out
how to switch the jib over, how to tack.

NELL

Become the Seawolf.

JEREMIAH

Actually, yeah because this one day - I don't know what it was. The wind was right and the sea was calm and

NELL

Melville vibes?

JEREMIAH

Serious Melville vibes. We just kind of knew today was the day we were gonna take this thing out of the harbor and past the point.

That mom was going to sail us out into ocean.

So she points us out of the harbor, she lets out the sail, my brother pulls in the jib. And suddenly we catch the wind and just take off. The whole boat starts tilting really far--

NELL

Heeling.

JEREMIAH

Right. We're heeling like crazy. Like water is getting in the boat

So my brother Kyle switches over to try to balance us out, so we don't capsize.

And now we're *cruising* - first time we've ever gotten our little JY moving like this.

And the wind is howling - it's so loud. I mean we're three feet away from each other just *yelling* and can still barely hear each other.

But then my mom leads us out past the point

She sails us out into the open water

And suddenly there's silence.

The wind is still taking us. We're still going just as fast, but it's quiet now. It's calm.

Like we're in a movie almost. Just, gliding.

And we all look out

And the ocean just goes *on...*

...

JEREMIAH

I started growing my nails that next school year so that was the last time I was out on the ocean.

My mom and my brothers would still sail every once and a while.

She sold the boat a few years ago after they all went off to college.

So now that I'm back home

I guess I'm just--

NELL

Landlocked.

JEREMIAH

Yeah. I think I am.

(he looks around the ship)

But I've never been on a ship like this. A real ship.
And it just blows my mind that this thing used to sail like we did that day.
Built by hand.

NELL

Construction and rigging on this beast cost over \$32,000.

JEREMIAH

Jeez.

NELL

Which was like a fuck ton of money back then.

JEREMIAH

And it's still here. And it, like, floats.

NELL

Well duh.

JEREMIAH

But I mean.
After like hundreds of years.

NELL

Since 1841.

JEREMIAH

(looking around)

Whoa.

NELL

Here here. Listen.

They sit in silence and listen as the boat rocks back and forth in the water.

Jeremiah closes his eyes and feels the ship rock, he looks like he's in heaven.

NELL

So if we're revealing things like virginity status and Seawolf origin stories I should probably tell you something real quick that's totally not a big deal, but you're gonna find out about it at some point because everyone fucking knows so I might as well just tell you.

JEREMIAH

Oh. Um. Sure.

NELL

(hurried, self-conscious)

It's just that the moment you mention my name to anyone - like *anyone* - it's gonna be the first thing that comes up because everyone in Mystic is obsessed with going behind my back and talking shit like they know me. They have literally nothing better to do in this town, it's sick and actually really unfair.

JEREMIAH

Right.

NELL

So whatever.

So you might as well hear it from me.

It's really not a big deal though.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

...

NELL

After I dropped out of Three Rivers I was an idiot and was dating this shit stack of a guy and we did a lot of drugs.

JEREMIAH

Oh.

NELL

Okay?

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

But I'm not like some junkie alright?

JEREMIAH

Yeah. No. Of course.

NELL

It was like

It was nothing.

We'd sit in my mom's attic when no one was home and we would do drugs.

JEREMIAH

Understood.

NELL

Yeah.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

Right.

JEREMIAH

Like, what kinds.

NELL

All kinds. Whatever was, you know, available.

JEREMIAH

Like...coke?

NELL

Yeah. Sometimes.

JEREMIAH

Um. Oxy?

NELL

Yeah.

...

JEREMIAH

Heroin?

NELL

Yes.

JEREMIAH

Whoa.

NELL

It was stupid.
We were bored.

JEREMIAH

In an *attic*?

NELL

Not like an *attic* attic. You didn't have to pull a thing-y down to get into it.
It's like a loft?

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

Yeah.

But then I sorta fucked up. Me and my mom were already kind of on the outs. I wasn't staying at her house because we had this like crazy fight. And because I was just generally being a major piece of shit at the time.

Anyway she left for the weekend to go visit her sister in Vermont, so me and this guy basically, um, we basically broke into her house, to get fucked up in this attic.

JEREMIAH

Oh my god...

NELL

Only my mom came home early and, like, found us up there. Passed out, and like. Yeah. Yeah.

...

Annnnd so she freaked and said she was gonna call the cops and that she never wanted to see me again. So

So after that me and this guy were basically sleeping on the soccer fields under the viaduct on the reg until my sister sat me down for an intervention thing.

But even then my mom still like *refused* to be there which was fucking horrible and--

...

So yeah. Whatever.

So Caitlin made me agree to do the rehab thing so I did the rehab thing and got better and now I'm back.

...

NELL

But this was all like six months ago and it's totally fine and I'm fine now.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

Yeah.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

I just thought you should know.

Since we just like fucked on this ship, it felt like the right thing to do.

JEREMIAH

Thanks.

NELL

But don't be weird about this. You have to like promise me.
Don't be like everyone else in this fucking town.

JEREMIAH

I won't.

...

Did your dad come to your intervention?

NELL

He left when I was in high school.

JEREMIAH

Oh.

...

NELL

This sounds like I'm trying to make this such a *thing* right now. Like I want you to cry for me or some shit but I *don't*. Okay? I'm just trying to get this story out of the way.

JEREMIAH

Did your ex-boyfriend shoot it between your toes or something?

NELL

What? No!

JEREMIAH

Sorry--

NELL

Gross!

JEREMIAH

I heard that somewhere.

NELL

What kind of question is that?

JEREMIAH

So stupid.

NELL

I would shoot it *myself*.

JEREMIAH

Right.

...

JEREMIAH

How many times?

NELL

This is pretty much my least favorite subject.

JEREMIAH

Right, sorry.

They sit in silence as the boat sways softly.

...

JEREMIAH

How did the movie end? The sex doll movie.

NELL

I dunno. I sorta forget. It was weird.

...

NELL

I think one of the guys like gave up his doll in this really dramatic way.

Like his family was so pumped for him.

People were like...clapping.

JEREMIAH

Hm.

NELL

Yeah.

JEREMIAH

Sounds

NELL

I know.

...

Suddenly the bunk breaks under their weight. They both crash to the floor.

Lights.

5.

Night.

Nell and Caitlin are both sitting on the dock.

Nell now has one of her arms in a sling. An injury from the fall.

A small portable speaker sits nearby. It's playing Brandy (You're A Fine Girl) by Looking Glass.

Nell drinks a beer and they listen to the music.

...

NELL

I used to think about working my way up to blacksmith.
Post-tour guide.
It's by far the most popular attraction.

CATLIN

Tourists love the smitty.

NELL

Plus after your training you know how to like make stuff. Not just for the Seaport, but for your everyday life. I could just build you something out of iron. You know?

Caitlin softly nods.

NELL

Like a...
I dunno. What's something they make out of iron?

CATLIN

Bear traps.

NELL

Yeah but
Like rings? Rings made out of iron?

Caitlin sbrugs.

NELL

Maybe I could make rings. Start my own business on the side.

CATLIN

Who makes rings out of iron?

NELL

Not engagement rings. Like badass iron rings. For those steampunk kids that hang out under the drawbridge.

And for manly men who can't *possibly* wear a gold wedding band. They need something made of iron! You know?

CATLIN

Mmm...

NELL

And I would just be this fucking hot lady blacksmith -- which they've never even had before by the way.

CATLIN

A hot lady blacksmith?

NELL

Yeah it's always been some old guy with a sooty beard.

CATLIN

Boo.

NELL

But I'd be all toned and jacked from the blacksmithing.

And I would build the sweetest shit.

(she drinks)

Whatever. It wasn't going to happen anyway. Calvin won't ever retire from blacksmithing.

That guy is gonna die pounding on some molten hot metal.

...

NELL

I hated being on that stupid boat all day anyway. My talents were being wasted.

CATLIN

Yeah...

NELL

Kathy wouldn't even let me try to fix the bed.

It only broke in like one place.

If I was a fucking blacksmith I could have fixed that thing.

CATLIN

Sally is leaving the library in two weeks. She's moving to Denver.

NELL

Denver??

CATLIN

Um yeah?

NELL

Sorry I don't know why I said it like that. I've never been to Denver.

CATLIN

I know.

So I can put a good word in for you if you wanted to interview. At the library.

NELL

Yeah maybe. But like, everything's so crazy I can't even think about that right now.

CATLIN

Okay well you sort of have to.

NELL

No I know.

CATLIN

Like, you *sort of* need a plan.

NELL

Chiiiiiiiiill. Don't even worry about it.

CATLIN

Yeah. Except I have to, actually.

NELL

Except you don't. I'm an adult, so you can just let me figure it out.

CATLIN

Only you not having a job effects me too.

NELL

Yeah but in like the most minute way.

CATLIN

Ummm, not really. I can't cover your half of the rent, Nell.

NELL

Okay well I'm not asking you to. Also I have like a full \$300 saved up so it's completely fine.

Caitlin gives Nell a look.

NELL

It is! I have so many prospects, it's not even funny. It's like insane.

I could have a new job tomorrow, I just wanna take a few days to, like, weigh my options.

So relax.

The song ends. The next one starts to play. It's Ran Ran Ran by Pavo Pavo.

Nell pulls out her phone and starts scrolling.

CATLIN

When do you get your cast.

NELL

Broken elbow so I don't get one.

CATLIN

At all?

NELL

Yeah. I broke it weird, so they said to just let it chill. Elbows are like that I guess. Can't cast 'em.

CATLIN

Does it hurt.

NELL

Like a mother fucker.

CATLIN

Who took you to the hospital?

NELL

I just took an Ube.

CATLIN

I would have taken you.

NELL

Yeah it was late though so

CATLIN

You still could have called me. I would've driven you.

NELL

It's all good.

...

CATLIN

Did you not want me there?

NELL

What? No. It was late. I took an Uber. It was nothing.

...

Wait why would I not want you there?

CATLIN

Because.
I don't know.

...

CATLIN

They didn't give you anything for the pain?

NELL

Really?

CATLIN

I'm just asking. There are signs.

NELL

Like what.

CATLIN

Like you smell like cigarettes. You bought a ginger ale at the A&P.

NELL

Oh my god, *so?*

CATLIN

Look I'm not saying this is a problem. But when it was--
When you were using those were signs.
And I'm not an idiot.

NELL

Okay well maybe you are because they didn't give me anything for the pain.

CATLIN

Nothing.

NELL

Tylenol 3 when I first got to the ER, but that's--

CATLIN

Ugh, Nell...

NELL

What? It's Tylenol!

CATLIN

Tylenol 3 isn't--
That has *codeine* in it.

NELL

Whatever, I had a broken arm.
The guy wrote me a script but I didn't even get it filled.

CATLIN

Wait, what?

NELL

Yeah.

CATLIN

What was the prescription for?

NELL

I didn't get it filled.

CATLIN

Why didn't you tell me?

NELL

Um, pretty sure I just did.

CATLIN

What was it for?

NELL

I don't even know! Do you want to see it?

CATLIN

I do actually.

NELL

Fine, I'll show it to you if I didn't already throw it out.

CATLIN

Fine.

NELL

Jesus, Cait. Can I just enjoy a ginger ale without some lecture?

CATLIN

I'm not worried about the ginger ale. Okay?

I'm worried that you're popping pills and--

NELL

Did you just say "*popping?*"

CATLIN

Or whatever you call it.

NELL

One! *One* pill.

CATLIN

Okay. I get it.

NELL

That a doctor gave me.

CATLIN

And you wonder why it freaks me out when you take an Uber somewhere in the middle of the night.

NELL

To a *hospital*. I was trying to do something on my own.

CATLIN

Okay but can you just say that this isn't a problem.

Can you just tell me you're okay?

NELL

I'm fine!

CATLIN

That this is all--
That drinking beer isn't part of some bigger problem?

NELL

Oh my godddd with the beer.

CATLIN

Because you have to tell me if it is.

NELL

I'm allowed to drink beer. Like it's *allowed*.

CATLIN

Don't do this again.

NELL

This stuff is like 4%, it's basically water--

CATLIN

We can't go through this again, Nell.

NELL

This. Is not. A problem.
You don't have to *do* anything. You don't have to worry.
I got this on *lock*.

Caitlin gives her a look like "this isn't funny."

NELL

I am fine.
Seriously. I *am*. Okay?

Caitlin nods.

NELL
(shrugging)

I just fuck with ginger ale.

The music plays for a time.

NELL
(re: the music)

Can we switch this please?

CATLIN

Why.

NELL

Because it's shmeh.

CATLIN

It is not meh.

NELL

I said *shmeh* which is worse.
 Mom doesn't even listen to this dream-wave shit.

CATLIN

Hey, I've played this for her.

NELL

And what'd she say?

CATLIN

This is a good song

NELL

Did she say: Fuck yeah! Play this at my funeral!

CATLIN

It's a good song!

NELL

It's not good, it's tolerable and it's not something you'd play at someone's--

CATLIN

So you go.

NELL

I'm saying you don't play it at a *funeral*

CATLIN

Play one of yours.

NELL

I'll go after. Just switch to your next one.

CATLIN

No we should play something off your list.

NELL

I wasn't trying to shit on your songs Caitlin, I was just

CATLIN

Yes you were.

But I want to hear some of your songs.

Nell sighs.

She takes out her phone.

NELL

Okay fine just lemme

She scrolls through her phone.

NELL

Ummm...

She keeps scrolling.

CATLIN

Any of your songs.

NELL

I just wanna find the right one.
Oh hererehere.

Nell stands and plugs her phone into the small speaker sitting on the dock.

She plays 'Redbone' by Childish Gambino.

NELL

Eh?

CATLIN

This is

NELL

Legit right? I fuckin' love this song.

CATLIN

She doesn't know this either Nell.

NELL

I know but this is *so* mom. Like young mom?
Like young mom walking somewhere?

Nell sways with the song.

NELL

(to the beat)

Uh.....uh.....

This is her. This is mom.

CATLIN

Play another one.

NELL

What?

CATLIN

Play another of your songs.

NELL

C'mon I'm still

Caitlin stares at Nell.

NELL

Uggh. Fine.

Nell grabs her phone and scrolls.

NELL

Uhhh

CATLIN

Can you just take this seriously please?!

NELL

I am! What are you talking about

CATLIN

You're just scrolling through Spotify.

NELL

No I'm not

CATLIN

You haven't prepared anything--

NELL

Yes I have! I have a playlist. I have a whole thing.

CATLIN

How many songs?

NELL

Like
Like all twenty. Almost.

CATLIN

Have you written anything?

NELL

Written any what.

CATLIN

I told you we have to write something for each

NELL

Oh oh oh. I thought you meant
Yes.

CATLIN

So you have?

NELL

Yarr.

CATLIN

You've written something for this song.

NELL

Mm hm.

CATLIN

Can I hear it?

...

NELL

You said I could do my street art.

CATLIN

Nell...

NELL

Look, I've been busy with the--

CATLIN

I can't keep doing this. This is so typical.

NELL

Cait--

CATLIN

You tell me not to worry and that you're an adult but you can't even put together a list of songs!

NELL

I *can* I just haven't yet--!

CATLIN

I'm not gonna keep doing this with you.
With *either* of you. I'm done being the go-between.

NELL

I'm not *asking* you to be the go between--!

CATLIN

For the last year it's been on me. Taking care of my mom *and* my sister!
I need some fucking help here, okay?

NELL

I'm trying to--

CATLIN

You know how much *work* it is to be the only one helping mom with this shit?
Like, emotional labor aside - just physically being there and driving her / to the--

NELL

Yes, I know this has been fucked--

CATLIN

And then I get a text from you about getting caught sneaking around a sail boat--

NELL

It's a *whaling* ship--!

CATLIN

And getting fired. Again.

Like, I have my own stuff going on, you know.

I *also* have a life. It doesn't revolve around you and mom--

NELL

Umm hello? You think I *think* that??

CATLIN

And literally all I'm asking is that you pick out a couple songs.

NELL

It's more than just--

CATLIN

That we give her something from both of us.

But to you it's clearly just some bullshit homework assignment--

NELL

I don't think it's *homework*--

CATLIN

--then can you understand that this is important? For her *and* for me?

NELL

Yes. I understand that you--

CATLIN

Well show me! I need you to *finish* something!

You go on and on about all your weird schemes.

One day it's street art. Or short films. Or making *rings*!

NELL

Jesus Christ, that was a *joke*--

CATLIN

But when I ask you to do something for your *family*
Something that might actually be a first step toward you and mom *talking*, you can't--!

NELL

Well if you let me speak I'm trying to say this is hard for me!

CATLIN

Keep deflecting. I have yet to even see you try.

NELL

No listen. I can't just jump back into this shit with mom and send her songs and write her love letters like everything is cool!
It's just a playlist, I get it. But you're asking me to--
I can't force myself to forget everything that happened and like,
And be there for her when she wasn't there for me. Alright?

CATLIN

...

NELL

I was ready to get better but she didn't even show up. She boxed me out.
Fucking gave up on me.

...

CATLIN

You two are exactly the same. *Exactly*.

NELL

What.

CATLIN

She's said all the same things about you.

NELL

...

CATLIN

Pushed away. Boxed out. You repeat each other's excuses.

NELL

I never boxed her out.

CATLIN

She drove all the up there and you wouldn't see her.

NELL

Okay, but she *never* actually--

...

That's not how I remember it.

CATLIN

Look, I know you two aren't--

That this isn't easy.

But this is me asking for this Nell. I'm asking for your for help this time.

You wanna show me that you're okay now?

Prove it. *Please.*

...

CATLIN

Nell?

Lights.

6.

The supply room in back of True Value. Jeremiah is in his True Value uniform.

He holds up some hardware supplies for Nell. Wood, a hammer, etc.

JEREMIAH

I can provide supplies to fix the bed. I get a deal on them.

NELL

Well--

JEREMIAH

And the scraps are free.

I'm learning how to build things now. With my hands. No whaling ships just yet but I can come by and try to help rebuild the bed. After hours.

NELL

Yeah thanks but I already thought of that and asked if I could fix the bed. And they said no.

JEREMIAH

Oh.

NELL

And then I got fired.

Jeremiah puts the supplies down.

JEREMIAH

Shit.

NELL

Yeah so

JEREMIAH

Shit. I'm so sorry.

NELL

This is all you wanted to show me?

JEREMIAH

I feel like this is sorta all my
Shit.

NELL

You could have told me about this over the phone.

JEREMIAH

Well I also

NELL

Or like texted or

JEREMIAH

I know. But I actually have something else I wanted to
As a
Like as an apology.

NELL

Oh.

Jeremiah takes a deep breath. Prepares himself.

Then he moves over to a shelf.

He reaches down in back somewhere and pulls out a big long box.

He puts it on the bench.

NELL

Oh no fucking way.

He opens the box. We the audience can't see inside, but we know...

It's the fingernails.

NELL

I thought they were destroyed.

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

Can I

JEREMIAH

What.

NELL

...

JEREMIAH

(moved)

You want to touch them?

She nods.

JEREMIAH

Go ahead.

She reaches and touches one.

NELL

Whoa.

These are amazing.

Can I pick 'em up.

JEREMIAH

Sure.

NELL

I'll be super careful.

JEREMIAH

I don't care.

Nell softly picks one up, though only slightly. The fingernails remain out of the audiences' view.

She looks at it.

She looks at her own fingernails.

Jeremiah also seems hypnotized by the fingernails. But on his face he wears a look of disgust.

Nell looks up and sees this.

NELL

What?

JEREMIAH

Nothing.

This is the first time I've seen them since the accident.

NELL

No way.

JEREMIAH

They're different than I remember.

NELL

How come yours grew so fast?

JEREMIAH

They didn't really know exactly.

Something to do with my Keratin proteins.

NELL

Souped-up Keratin proteins?

JEREMIAH

Something like that.

NELL

Lucky...

Jeremiah looks down at his fingernails. Then starts to gather the wooden scraps to put them away.

JEREMIAH

I cut 'em every day now.

NELL

Dude, *why?*

JEREMIAH

Sometimes I wish you and me got to hang back when I was in that stupid parade in Trenton
Or like--

(gesturing at the box)

Back when I was still *in this*.

Because the last few years have been sorta hard, to be honest.

NELL

(earnest)

Oh. I'm sorry...

JEREMIAH

No it's--

I dunno. Look...

I was a weird kid growing up.

NELL

(this is obvious)

Oh?

JEREMIAH

I always knew my fingernails grew, like, differently.

Which I thought was just another thing that was wrong with me.

But this one day in sixth grade, at the library, I opened the Guinness Book of World Records and saw Shridhar in there.

And I was just like, whoa. He's like me.

His picture is in this book and people are fascinated by what he can do. And at that moment I remember thinking...

Oh my god. These things can make me *famous*.

And it was the best! I let 'em grow and before I knew it they're flying me and my mom to Lake Placid. And then we're off to Reno.

And there are people in these cities who don't even know me, but they want to *meet* me.

My mom put a whole--

Like a whole big scrapbook together of all my newspaper clippings and all these photos.

And sometimes in my hotel room I'd open that book

And flip to the empty pages in the back and be like

That's where my Guinness Book clipping is gonna go.

...

But then things started getting hard.

I'd lose feeling in my hands. Quite often.

Travel became impossible. And then *everything* became impossible. The smallest things.

It was all sort of

Spiraling.

Soon they were finding signs of, um, severe nerve damage - which if you've seen Shridhar's hand, is what made it so twisted and mutilated. And the doctors told me that if I kept going..

(looking down at his hands)

That that was going to be me one day too.

But even then, it felt like I was too far in. That I didn't have any other choice.

Because this was my fate now.

No matter the pain and isolation.

This was my story.

NELL

Listen, I know that feeling

Of something starting small and manageable but then, um

Spiraling.

But you should know that in *this* moment, these aren't something to be ashamed of.

You should know that what you did is something incredible. It doesn't belong locked away in a box.

Actually. Know what we should do?

JEREMIAH

What.

Nell walks over to Jeremiah and takes some of the scraps from him.

NELL

We should use this stuff to build a case.

JEREMIAH

For what.

NELL

For these fingernails! A display case for the exhibit, like I was saying on the ship.

JEREMIAH

Oh, ehhhh

NELL

Remember?

JEREMIAH

Yeah I do but--

NELL

(looking more closely at the supplies)

This is perfect actually! It wouldn't even be that hard. We build a case, stain the sides.

JEREMIAH

I don't know if

NELL

Get some plexiglass for the top like a real museum

Boom. Exhibit.

JEREMIAH

People don't wanna see an exhibit about some guy's failed world record.

NELL

Right but we don't say like: oh he *failed*.

We say: here are some humongous fingernails that are fucking *amazing!*

JEREMIAH

Right.

NELL

You know what I'm saying?

JEREMIAH

Yeah yeah. I get it, but
That just sounds like the most depressing exhibit I've ever heard.

NELL

Nooo! Come on! This is redemption right here. This is fingernail redemption!

JEREMIAH

Nell, I just wanna sell paint--

NELL

Once we build the display case, then we flesh out the rest of your story on these like *other* displays. Your life story. And also, like, the thing you were saying about the proteins? That's a display too. And we set them all up leading to this. A maze of displays just like at the Seaport. And then the fingernails are the finale.
I can get my sister to let us do it at her library! The lobby!

JEREMIAH

No one wants to see these. They're disgusting.

NELL

No. They're not.
People would come! *So* many people. Listen, we need to do /this!

JEREMIAH

NO!

...

JEREMIAH

I'm sorry. No.
I'm not--
I don't want people looking at these things.
I don't want anyone to see them.
I don't think *I* even wanna--
I used to be so proud of these.
Now it hurts to even look at them.
All I see is time wasted. For something ugly and stupid.

NELL

Jeremiah, these *aren't*--

He looks at her sadly. Nell softens.

She approaches the fingernails. She looks at them.

NELL

I wish you could see what I see.

I see a kid who discovered he had a gift.

A really really *odd* gift. One that any other person might've kept hidden.

But you were like: Fuck. That. This is something my body can do and I'm gonna embrace it.

And that takes guts. And dedication.

That can be your story now. Not the pain and the loneliness.

You did something special. Not a lot of people can say that, but you can.

When I look at these, that's the story I see.

And I think taking these things out of this box might help you see that too.

JEREMIAH

I'm just...embarrassed.

NELL

Well let me try.

I'm never going to break a world record, and I can't even make a playlist without--

But *this* is something I can do.

I know how to tell this story.

...

NELL

I'll produce the entire thing. I'll pay for it, I'll build it, and I'll be the tour guide.

If you don't like the direction I'm going in, I'll adjust.

If you don't like the finished product, we scrap it.

But just let me try.

Let me turn this into something you can be proud of again.

...

JEREMIAH

Okay.

Lights.

7.

Lights up on Nell.

She examines wooden scraps sitting on a small workbench.

She takes out a tape measure and measures a piece of wood.

She takes a pencil from behind her ear and makes a mark. Then she starts to saw.

All of this is rather difficult for her, with her arm in a sling. She appears in pain from time to time.

Yet, she continues her work. Her sawing is a pleasing, almost rhythmic sound.

In another space, lights up on Jeremiah. He is in his True Value uniform.

Before him is a small can of paint. He pries it open with a screwdriver and stirs it.

While Nell struggles with her arm in a sling, Jeremiah is enjoying learning how to use his hands again.

Nell's sawing and the clink of Jeremiah's stirring create a sort of song.

After a time Nell starts to hammer two pieces of wood together.

Jeremiah softly hammers the paint can shut. This too, joins with Nell's action to make music.

Their dance, and the music they are unknowingly creating, swells as they continue their work.

In another space, lights up on Caitlin.

She sits in front of a computer and considers songs for her playlist.

She plays snippets of songs that fit perfectly with the music Nell and Jeremiah are creating.

She pauses and types on the computer, adding another sound to this symphony.

This montage and the sounds they generate continues for a time as Nell's display case takes shape.

Nell rights her display case and gently puts a piece of plexiglass on top of it.

Caitlin and Jeremiah both separately begin to wind down their action.

Nell stands back and looks at her work. It actually looks pretty great.

Lights down on Caitlin and Jeremiah.

Nell smiles.

Lights.

8.

Nell sits on the dock alone, she has a phone to her ear and is reading from a small notepad.

In another space, Jeremiah sits in front of a small computer, also with a phone.

They are talking to each other.

_____NELL
And then the next picture is of the pillows I want.

JEREMIAH
Okay hold on.

He clicks on the computer.

NELL
See 'em?

JEREMIAH
Purple?

NELL
Nice, eh? Found 'em at the Emporium. They're holding them for me now -- they look okay?

JEREMIAH
These are for...

NELL
The display case. The fingernails need regal, awesome pillows to rest on. Purple is regal as fuck, right?

JEREMIAH
Yeah.

NELL
If you're good with them I'm gonna buy 'em.

JEREMIAH

Sure.

NELL

Awesome.

Nell makes a note to herself on the notepad.

NELL

Also I still haven't heard back from Shredder about getting a quote so I thought we might have better luck if you reach out? If you wouldn't mind.

JEREMIAH

Oh. Okay. I could try. We haven't talked for a while.

NELL

It would be a huge help.

I'm hoping to get the press release out by Friday so it would be a huge huge help.

JEREMIAH

I'll try. Who is the, um, press release, like, going to?

NELL

All the local rags: New London Day, Mystic River Press, but also The Hartford Courant, Providence Journal, the Times--

JEREMIAH

The *New York Times*?

NELL

I did some digging and got an email. They probably won't come but maybe they will.

JEREMIAH

Whoa.

NELL

I know! Wouldn't that be *so* fucking legit?

JEREMIAH

Yeah, I guess.

NELL

So I'll send more updates when I get the pillows in the case.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

It's coming together, right?

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

Awesome.

(skimming her notepad)

Annnnd I know there was something else I wanted to--

JEREMIAH

Who *is* coming? Besides the
Like is there an invite list or

NELL

Oh tons of people. Like a shit ton of people.

My sister. Um.

I set up a whole Facebook invite. You didn't get that?

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

(writing herself a note)

Ooo that's my bad. I'll make sure you see it.

Response has been great so far. Very encouraging. Social media response has been *very* encouraging.

JEREMIAH

Okay.

NELL

Oh! Also, my fucking old *boss* might come. Is that alright?

JEREMIAH

From the Seaport?

NELL

Yeah, isn't that nuts?

I sent her this email on a whim like glamming this whole exhibit up but seriously thought there was no way she was even gonna respond.

Only then she emailed me back and was like: Sound good, I'll try.

JEREMIAH

That's great.

NELL

Yeah so it's like

Not like I'm *banking* on this or anything

But it's like, what if I she came and was like super impressed and I ended up getting my *job* back. Or like a *better* job.

JEREMIAH

That would be amazing.

NELL

But I'm not banking on it. It would just be a nice surprise.

JEREMIAH

I really hope that happens.

NELL

Yeah but I mean if this takes off

Our exhibit

Then like *this* could be my job. And I can just tell the Seaport to suck my dick.

JEREMIAH

Right, but

NELL

I know, I know. I'm just saying. It's an option.

JEREMIAH

Is your mom coming?

...

JEREMIAH

Sorry, I just thought--

NELL

Yeah. Most likely.

I haven't officially like invited her yet but

JEREMIAH

Yeah no--

NELL

Been busy.

And I'm waiting for the right time.

JEREMIAH

Sure. And I know you said that the two of you were--

NELL

(cutting him off)

Yeah.

...

JEREMIAH

You're just working your ass off so she should definitely like
See that. Like your boss coming would be great too, but

NELL

No I know.

She's gonna come.

...

NELL

But also her schedule is usually like all fucked up because of her treatment so I just need to find the right time to ask.

JEREMIAH

Her treatment?

NELL

For her cancer.

JEREMIAH

Oh.

NELL

I didn't tell you that?

JEREMIAH

No.

NELL

Yeah. She's got cancer.

JEREMIAH

Oh my god. I'm so sorry.

NELL

Thanks.

JEREMIAH

Is she okay?

NELL

Ummmm

Yeah. She's

I mean she has breast cancer so not really.

JEREMIAH

No, of course. Ugh. That's so
But she's like--?

NELL

It's not like *dire*. I don't think.
I know she's doing the chemo thing and that that's a process but I guess it's gonna be okay.
Eventually.
That's what they're telling Cait at least. Like, thank god for modern medicine!

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

I'm not even saying that ironically, okay? Like, I *mean* that.

JEREMIAH

No, of course. I know that, Nell.

NELL

So yeah. It sucks.

...

I still don't really see her. I get most of the details from my sister.

JEREMIAH

I'm sorry.

...

I'm sure she'll be okay.

NELL

Thanks.

JEREMIAH

The things the human body can do.. The things we're able to survive.

NELL

I know, right?

JEREMIAH

Like that lady that got struck by lightning over and over.

NELL

I'm sorry - what??

JEREMIAH

Oh just the--

The lightning lady! She's in the book. *Was* in the book back in the 70's
Remember?

NELL

(a little embarrassed)

Not sure I've gone back that far yet.

JEREMIAH

Well she got struck by lightning twice in one year.

And people couldn't believe that she survived - like there were people that actually *didn't* believe her.

Thought she was just making it up or something.

But a few months later she got struck by lightning a *third* time

And everyone is all like: Jesus Christ here we go again. With the lightning lady.

Only *this* time when she got hit, she was wearing this red baseball hat

And the hat had these *lightning* holes in it.

So she donated it to this Guinness World Record museum in New York.

And people would come from all around to see it.

They just couldn't believe that the human body could survive that kind of trauma

But this woman did.

And the hat was proof.

NELL

That's amazing.

JEREMIAH

I don't know your mom, obviously. But when I picture her, I sorta picture the lightning lady.

Like. *Strong*.

...

NELL

Thanks for letting me do this Jeremiah.

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

NELL

I think you're gonna be really proud.

JEREMIAH

Yeah. Me too.

NELL

Right so

I'm gonna call my

I have a phone call to make so

JEREMIAH

Bye Nell.

Lights down on Jeremiah.

Nell moves to center.

She dials on her phone.

She holds it to her ear. It rings and rings.

Someone picks up on the other end.

MOM

Nell--?

Nell hangs up the phone.

She looks down at her phone then puts it back in her pocket.

Lights.

9.

The lobby of the library.

Caitlin is dressed for a special occasion. She is hesitantly looking through a tote bag that sits on a chair.

She can't seem to find what she's looking for.

Nell enters hurriedly, also dressed nicely.

NELL

I need help moving the --

(spotting her rooting through the tote)

What are you doing in my bag?

CATLIN

Oh. Sorry. I was--

NELL

I need help moving the case. Come 're.

They both exit.

...

They both enter again moving the display case into place. It has a sheet over it.

NELL

And move your end to the right a smidge?

Caitlin adjusts.

Nell checks her watch.

NELL

Okay okay.

CATLIN

Like that?

Nell examines the placement of the case.

NELL

That's good.

She removes the sheet. The display case holds the velvet pillows but no fingernails.

CATLIN

Where are the fingernails?

NELL

Jeremiah's bringing them.

CATLIN

(looking at her own watch)

Well I hope he's on his way.

NELL

He's got time.

Nell starts searching high and low rather frantically.

CATLIN

Parking is gonna be a mess.

NELL

I saved a spot for him out front. Put an orange cone over by the, the--

CATLIN

You should put one out for mom too.

NELL

Do you have like a

Like a

One those uh

Nell tries to mime it, but it's not making sense.

CATLIN

A wha?

NELL

Like a
A spray?

(motions to the display case)

To clean?

CATLIN

Windex?

NELL

Yeah.

CATLIN

I'll take care of it.

Caitlin moves and finds some Windex.

Over the following she cleans the top of the display case.

Nell starts replacing trash bags.

CATLIN

There's another cone in the supply closet.

NELL

A cone?

CATLIN

For mom. I said you should put another one out to save her a spot too.

NELL

Mom's not coming.

CATLIN

What?

She didn't want to come?

NELL
(searching for them)

We need a--

CAITLIN
Nell.

Nell stops.

NELL
I didn't tell her.

CAITLIN
Why not?

NELL
Because I don't need the--
If she came tonight I'd be going fucking crazy. She makes me so fucking crazy.
Plus I wouldn't even be able to say hi which would make her like so pissed.
I have too many hands to kiss and babies to shake.

CAITLIN
You should tell her.

NELL
I'm gonna. After tonight. After we get the press in here and everything goes smoothly.
Cait, help me.

Caitlin moves and finds one. She replaces it herself.

NELL
(looking to do something else)
And then--

Caitlin moves to her sister. She puts her hands on her shoulders.

Nells stops and breathes.

They sit down on a nearby bench together.

CATLIN

Okay?

NELL

Yeah I'm fine. I'm just--

CATLIN

It's great. It looks great.

NELL

(she checks her watch)

Okay. I guess we're good.

Caitlin rubs her back. Nell looks around the room.

CATLIN

Any word from Jeremiah?

NELL

He'll be here.

Softly, Nell removes her arm from her sling and tries to stretch out her broken arm.

NELL

Oooof.

CATLIN

Should you leave it in the thing?

NELL

Nah, I'll be good.

Oh. Fuck. I forgot I have something to show you.

(she looks at her watch again)

We don't have enough time.

CATLIN

What is it.

NELL

It's--
Here.

She pulls out her phone. She fumbles with it. Hits a few buttons and waits.

NELL

It's not fucking loading.

CATLIN

What.

NELL

Whatever. It's my playlist. Or one song at least. But like
Also a short film sorta.

CATLIN

You found your camera?

NELL

Nah. I just took a bunch of old family photos and did this thing on iMovie.

CATLIN

What thing?

NELL

If my fucking phone would work I could show you.
It's like a montage. Of these pictures of you and me when we were kids. Mom too.
Set to one of my songs. I just did one so I could show you.
If you were into it I was gonna do the rest of my playlist.

CATLIN

Oh.

NELL

It's basically a Ken Burns rip off. I dunno. I'll show you later. It's sorta crappy honestly.

CATLIN

That sounds... / amazing.

NELL
(re: her phone)

Oh here we go!

They both look at Nell's phone.

Lights fade. A projection of Nell's iMovie montage.

Old photos of a teenage girl in Mystic cross fade as I'll Be Your Mirror by The Velvet Underground and Nico plays.

10.

Night. The dock.

Caitlin sits in her chair.

Nell is lying flat on the dock, face down.

NELL

I should have updated the Facebook event more.
I should have put up pictures or like polls or something.
I think you can do polls now.

...

Fuck.

CATLIN

It's okay.

NELL

Was this whole thing like so embarrassing?

CATLIN

No.

NELL

Should I just fucking kill myself?

CATLIN

Stop. It was totally fine.
I thought your tour was great.

NELL

Holy shit do *not* remind me.

CATLIN

Really.

NELL

There was only one person!

CATLIN

I was there too.

NELL

And the display case was empty!

I was giving a tour about some doucher who grew mutant fingernails and there were no fucking fingernails!

CATLIN

Yeah but you were *so* funny.

NELL

Kill me.

CATLIN

Plus I think that lady was from the Mystic River Press.

NELL

No that was my old boss Kathy. She hated it.

CATLIN

That's not what she told me!

NELL

I'm gonna die.

CATLIN

She seemed really impressed, I'm not just saying that.

NELL

I'm gonna fucking kill that fucking asshole Jeremiah, and then I'm gonna go die.

CATLIN

Nell.

NELL

I saw you rooting through my bag earlier.

CATLIN

...

NELL

You were.

CATLIN

I'm sorry.

NELL

It was for oxy. The prescription was.

CATLIN

...

Nell pulls a piece of paper out of her pocket.

NELL

I didn't fill it, Cait.

(holding it out to her)

See?

CATLIN

I don't have to.

NELL

No, take it.

I want you to keep it.

Caitlin softly takes the paper.

NELL

I'm not mad. I just want you to have it.

Caitlin looks at the prescription.

NELL

I can do this, you know.

CAITILIN

I know.

Behind them, Jeremiah slowly enters holding the fingernail box.

JEREMIAH

Um. Hi.

Nell springs up and rushes Jeremiah.

NELL

Where the fuck *were* you?!

JEREMIAH

I want to apologize.

Nell begins to push Jeremiah.

NELL

You just fucking left me there!

JEREMIAH

I know--

NELL

I busted my fucking ass building an entire exhibit for *your* fingernails and you fucking ghosted me!

JEREMIAH

I wanted to--

Here.

Jeremiah holds out the box to her.

NELL

What the fuck is this.

JEREMIAH

You can have them.

NELL

I don't want your fucking grimy ass fingernails! I needed them two hours ago!

She pushes him again and then recoils.

NELL

(reaching for her elbow)

Arg! Shit.

She turns and walks it off.

NELL

What the fuck am I supposed to do with those now.

JEREMIAH

I thought you could still--
I'm sorry...I'm not--

NELL

What.

JEREMIAH

...
I wasn't in a car crash.

CATLIN

What?

JEREMIAH

I hate these things. I hate everything about them.
I hate that these came out of my body.

NELL

How'd they break off?

JEREMIAH

I did it.

CATLIN

(skeeved out)

Eeeeeeeeeehhhh. Oh my god that makes my teeth hurt.

JEREMIAH

It's not like I pulled them out or anything.

CATLIN

Oh my god, stop.

NELL

Cait.

CATLIN

I'm sorry I'm sorry. Blech.

JEREMIAH

I just couldn't be attached to these anymore.

I couldn't let this be my story.

So I took a pair of my mom's scissors and that was it.

NELL

But your souped up Keratin proteins...

JEREMIAH

I know but

Sometimes I think about the woman who was struck by lightning.

She has something inside her that makes her strong.

Not weird proteins, but actual *power*.

People travel from all around to see her hat, because it's proof of what she's able to do.

And I wanted something like that too. Some sort of proof...

(looking down at the case)

But this isn't it.

These fingernails didn't make me feel powerful at all.

They made me feel sick. And brittle...

He hands the case to Nell. She takes it.

JEREMIAH

If you want to put them in that case
You can.
But I don't want to ever see them again.
And I don't think I can come see your exhibit.

NELL

You could have told me this yesterday. Or even, like, a few hours ago.

JEREMIAH

I know. I tried to come.
I sat in the car with these things in the back seat and I just...couldn't.
I'm sorry.

...

NELL

Come 'ere.

Nell leads Jeremiah out to the end of the dock.

She stands there, and then hands the case back to Jeremiah.

NELL

Go ahead.

JEREMIAH

What.

NELL

Like a what-do-you-call-it. Sailor's funeral or whatever.

JEREMIAH

Oh.

NELL

Ooo no, *Viking* funeral. So much better.

JEREMIAH

You sure?

NELL

Yeah. Let's do it.

Jeremiah takes the case.

CATLIN

Waitwait! Let's do some like, uh, flowers? Err

She looks around. Jeremiah and Nell glance at the ground as well.

JEREMIAH

Just seaweed.

NELL

And bird shit.

CATLIN

Damn.

NELL

Here, what about this.

Nell takes out her lighter and lights it.

NELL

Flaming bow and arrow would be ideal but whatever.

JEREMIAH

Yeah.

Jeremiah bends down and places the case in the water.

Maybe the "water" is the audience and they can pass the case around so everyone can touch it.

Maybe the case can float away and then above us all. Either way...

JEREMIAH

It floats...

They watch together as the case floats away.

JEREMIAH

Feels good.

NELL

I know the feeling.

JEREMIAH

Yeah?

NELL

Yeah bruh. This recovery shit is long and grating but also, like, fucking *boring*.
The day to day just feels so stupid small.
But moments like this are where it's at. Moments like this are super nice.
So don't forget this.

JEREMIAH

I won't.

Caitlin mimes shooting a arrow into the sky. She makes sound effects as she does so.

CAITLIN

That's the flaming arrow, fyi.

NELL

I see it.

JEREMIAH

Me too.

Lights.

11.

The Charles W. Morgan. Below deck.

Nell is in the same old fashion sailor outfit she was wearing in the first scene.

Caitlin stands nearby.

NELL

(going through all this rather quickly, a review)

And then I pass out pieces of hardtack for everyone to try.

(miming)

Here ya go here ya go here ya go.

And then I say:

(in a cockney accent)

Jump ahead to 1924 and the Morgan was nearly destroyed when a steamer caught fire and drifted into this port quarter.

Luckily she was saved at the last second when Mystic firemen came to the rescue just in the nick of time.

CATLIN

Whoa.

NELL

Then I come over here and go:

(accent)

The Morgan underwent restoration by Captain George Fred Tilton in blah blah blah. Boring part I'm gonna skip for right now.

And then it's:

Now follow me to the stern of the ship where our journey continues.

And then I'm done in here and we go up to the deck.

CATLIN

And then what.

NELL

There's a spot up there where people can get their picture taken but we're not gonna do that tonight. I'll just finish in here and be done.

CATLIN

Nice.

NELL

Yeah?

CATLIN

Yeah. It was great. You'll be great.

NELL

Thanks.

CATLIN

So we're pro accent now?

NELL

Yeah I dunno, what do you think?

CATLIN

I think yeah dude, it was my idea!

NELL

Okay you didn't *invent* the accent, so slow your roll.
It was good though?

CATLIN

Yeah, def. Super good.

NELL

Okay cool. My official test isn't until next week so it's good that we're

CATLIN

Also what the hell is the *cannibal* thing?

NELL

I know right? Isn't that fucking *nuts*?

CATLIN

That actually happened?

NELL

One hundred percent. Fucking *cannibals*.

(sitting down)

Kathy said I could go back to ticket tearing if I didn't pass my first time out.

CATLIN

You'll pass. You got it.

NELL

Thanks. If I nail this dress run later tonight I'll feel better.

CATLIN

Just act like we're not here.

NELL

No, I need to work on my eye contact. Kathy says private tours can say more about your tour demeanor than a group of 50.

CATLIN

Oooo *private* tour--

Caitlin's phone chimes.

She takes it out of her pocket and looks at it.

CATLIN

She's parking.

NELL

Okay.

CATLIN

Another five minutes or so.

NELL

Yo you think anyone has fucked down here?

CATLIN

You know you've already asked me this.

NELL

So what do you think.

CATLIN

...Did *you* have sex down here?

NELL

You think I'm the first?

CATLIN

Damn, *really*?

NELL

Badass, eh? In a *ship*? That's pretty badass. I could be the first.

CATLIN

Yeah that's pretty good, I guess.

NELL

What's your best spot.

CATLIN

I dunno.

NELL

Come on! Best spot. First one you think of.

CATLIN

I don't know! The beach?

NELL

Nice.

CATLIN

No that's lame. I have a better one. Ummm

...

Oh! Okay this sounds kind of weird but in a tree one time?

NELL

What? With who?

CATLIN

Roger Blanchard.

NELL

NO. FUCKING. WAY.

CATLIN

I know, right?

NELL

You fucked Roger Blanchard? In a *tree*?

CATLIN

Twice.

NELL

How'd you even *do* that?

CATLIN

It was sort of a huge tree. With a big arm thingy like this.

NELL

Amazing.

We hear some soft creaking from the upper deck.

They listen. Footsteps.

NELL

That's her.

CATLIN

You ready?

NELL

Yeah. Stand over here.

Nell begins leading her to a spot.

We hear more footsteps. Nell listens.

NELL

Wait. Where the fuck is she going.

CATLIN

Does she know how to get down here?

NELL

Fucking shit.
Can you go up there?

CATLIN

Yeah yeah.

NELL

But like
You gotta give me some time.
I wanna be in character when she walks in. I want the world to be like *set*.

CATLIN

Okay.

NELL

So count to like twenty.
No count to *fifty* and then both of you come down together.

CATLIN

Okay.

NELL

My costume looks good?

The footsteps begin again, heading in a different direction.

NELL

God what is she *doing* up there?

CATLIN

You look great. It's gonna be great.

NELL

Thanks. Fifty.

CATLIN

I got it.

Caitlin exits, we hear her walk up to the upper deck.

Nell looks around the space and begins quietly counting to herself.

NELL

50...49...48...47

She adjusts a few things then stands back. Then she remembers something. Moves to one side.

She dims the lights very low. The ship becomes alive somehow in this low light.

NELL

32...33...34...

Nell looks around and smiles. She finds her light and stands in position.

NELL

13...12...11...

Nell's counting trails off. She stands there in silence.

The ship softly creaks and sways with the tides.

Black out.

END OF PLAY.