

*Alphabetical  
by name  
D. J. ...*

ENDURANCE

Revision 4/28/01  
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**INT. BELOW DECKS OF THE SHIP 'ENDURANCE' - DAY**

Men rushing, barely able to stay upright while the ship shudders and shakes, its frame and planking screaming out as an enormous pressure from outside mounts.

The galley. Clouds of steam rise amidst the clang of pots of water spilling onto the fires of the range as two men try in vain to restore order.

The wardroom. Men toss personal belongings into duffel bags as they themselves are tossed.

In another tight room, scientific apparatus is thrown off shelves. Beakers and bottles shatter.

The floor of the wardroom bucks under the strain. Tongues of boards in the wooden partitions spring from their grooves with an explosive cracking.

One trembling man reads from his Bible as -

In the tiny engine room, iron floor plates buckle with loud clangs. The firemen shovel coal into the boilers, terrified that the rising water will cause them to explode.

The propeller shaftway. Freezing water rushes in where the ship's rudder and sternpost used to be. Three men have built an ineffective cofferdam hoping to stem the flow and caulk it now with torn pieces of blankets.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S CABIN - SAME TIME**

Frank Wild enters to find Ernest Shackleton, the Boss, trying to write as everything on his desk moves around him. Another shriek as the walls bulge. A mirror shatters. Deck timbers twist with deafening cries. Shackleton glances up. Both men, under the circumstances, are remarkably calm.

WILD

Looks like we've taken it in the neck  
this time, Boss.

SHACKLETON

Perhaps it'll make for a good story some  
day.

**EXT. THE SHIP'S DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

Shackleton and Wild emerge from below decks to see huge blocks of ice littering the deck. Timbers gape open. The ship screams under the pressure of millions of tons of ice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A group of exhausted men labor at the ship's pumps. Sixty sledge dogs howl and wail.

Shackleton steps past it all to the bow and looks down at the ice floes that choke and twist the ship in. A display of titanic power, accompanied by sounds like a gigantic train trying to grind its metal wheels to a stop.

Down on the ice, another group of men attacks the floe with picks and saws, trying to cut lines of weakness.

The ice trembles ominously.

Shackleton looks off into the distance at the universe of ice, where a crack begins, perhaps a mile off, huge hummocks of ice thrusting upward as if a monster is rising from below and closing in.

The ship's three masts are whipped violently.

The hull quivers and jerks convulsively in the floes.

The men watch helplessly as the line of hummocks races toward them, then *hits like a tidal wave* -

The ship is tossed upward and rolled over onto its side, men and dogs flung across the deck -

In the wardroom, other men and gear are toppled -

The galley. The pots fly off the stove; the men ducking -

The engine room. The men losing their footing -

The propeller shaftway. A spear of ice bursts through the hull of the ship, just missing a man. The floor quakes and buckles as water pours in on the men rushing to get out -

On deck. Shackleton has been knocked cold. His eyes open but seem unable to comprehend the enormity of the chaos. He sees a line of emperor penguins, calmly watching from a safe distance. And beyond, all the way to the horizon - ice - hundreds of miles of it, a planet made entirely of ice -

**INT. LONDON PUB (TWO YEARS EARLIER) - DAY**

Where a moment before the world was painted in cold, lifeless whites and blues, here it's bathed in the warm golden glow of a hearth.

Shackleton sits alone by the crackling fire, content it seems, to stare into it, hand on a pint of ale, as others in the pub drink and talk with friends.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Outside somewhere, a church bell strikes the hour like a summons, but Shackleton doesn't rush to answer it. Even as its peal is joined by voices of a boys' choir, he just sits.

Finally, he draws himself up, takes his time buttoning his formal Merchant Marine coat and straightening the Order of Knighthood medal pinned to it.

He has a last sip of ale, sets his drink down, and, on his way out brushes past our view of the glass and the obituary notice it's staining:

**Famed Explorer, Hero  
Sir Robert Scott Today Laid to Rest**

**EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY**

From high above, carriages and motor cars dot the street outside the great cathedral. The echoing voices of the choir singing '*A Mighty Fortress Is Our God*' continue over -

Shackleton, a bit drunk, coming past Royal Carriages and Royal Household Guards. In no real hurry, even though the ceremony has clearly already begun, he climbs the steps.

**INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY**

Beneath the soaring vault of the cathedral, sunlight streams down in dusty bars upon the angelic faces of the choir, those of the Royal Family, heads of state, distinguished mourners, the flag-shrouded casket, and -

Shackleton, sliding in next to his wife, Emily, and friend, Frank Wild, who almost manage not to comment with their looks to him, each other and some of those glancing their way, the discomfiting effect of his lateness.

The choir finishes. A minister solemnly approaches the pulpit and regards the great reverent silence a moment before addressing the illustrious gathering -

MINISTER

So this man died. And those who have read his last words, know what we mean when we say he was great ... Facing the final lap, he feared no danger. He did his best, and laid down his life like a true Christian gentleman.

Shackleton's attention is drawn by some punctuating sobs around him, those more deeply saddened by this loss than he, and regards them impassively as the minister continues -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MINISTER

Not once or twice in our rough island story have these qualities been shown but never more conspicuously than by the valiant leader of this noble expedition.

Wild steals a glance across Emily to Shackleton, who is now engrossed in the great vaulted ceiling above, which looks to him not unlike the hull of overturned ship. His wife's hand rests atop his, but he doesn't seem to notice or care.

MINISTER

Captain Scott lives in our minds, and will live forever in our memories as the greatest explorer of our time.

**EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - LATER - DAY**

The bells peal again as the crowds emerge. We find Shackleton, Emily and Frank Wild, anonymous it would seem, among them, coming down the steps. ⇒

Most of the reporters and photographers are congregated around the Royal Family, PM's and other dignitaries, but one Fleet Street scribe appears beside Shackleton.

SCRIBE

Sir Ernest, if you wouldn't mind, a quote, sir, for my readers about Captain Scott.

While he might rather comment while simultaneously getting closer to his conveyance, Shackleton has the presence of mind to stop long enough to say the words no one invited him to say at the actual ceremony -

SHACKLETON

Sir Scott was at the vanguard of the truly great, a man of valor, fortitude and intrepidity, venturing where only a few have dared before him and perishing for the glory of Great Britain.

Satisfied with himself, Shackleton begins to lead his group away, but the scribe tails him.

SCRIBE

As one of the very few yourself, sir, who has dared venture to the Pole, how might you compare his accomplishments to yours?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Well, I didn't reach it, did I.  
(his guard up now)  
As you know.

SCRIBE

Well, neither did he, precisely - at least not ahead of the Norwegians - which certainly was the goal. Still, I don't remember this sort of pomp upon your return.

SHACKLETON

Did I die, sir?

SCRIBE

No, you did not. Neither did you succeed. But neither did Scott, really. Yet all this. For, in effect -  
(looks for a word)

SHACKLETON

I'm not afraid of the word failure, if that's the one you're looking for. But does this look like failure to you?

SCRIBE

I guess that's my point.

SHACKLETON

I don't know *what* your point is, sir, and frankly am no longer interested in trying to find it. Scott laid down his life in pursuit of a dream and is rightfully entitled without your cynicism to be immortalized for it. Thank you.

Shackleton steps away again with his little entourage of two.

SCRIBE

Whereas you, more prudently, turned back 97 miles short of it.

SHACKLETON

(without looking back)  
That sort of bait won't work with me, sir.

WILD

But it will with me -

SHACKLETON

Frank -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Frank Wild has turned back to confront the reporter.

WILD

The true hero of the South Pole Expeditions is not Amundsen, is not Scott, but *this* man -  
(Shackleton)  
- who sacrificed fame, money - *and*,  
unlike this lot, immortality - for one  
reason: the safety of his crew.

SCRIBE

And you are who, sir, his publicist?

*publicist mean?  
publicist*

WILD

Someone who was there and returned and will take a swing at you where you stand if you care to risk one word more.  
(waits to see if he does)  
Good day then.

**INT. CARRIAGE - LATER - DAY**

The three of them ride along in silence; Shackleton, Emily and Wild. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

That was very impolitic of you, Frank. Wouldn't you agree, Emily?

EMILY

Quite.

WILD

Sorry, Boss.

They ride on listening to the clacking of horse hooves some moments more before Shackleton glances over at Wild.

SHACKLETON

All the same, thank you.

WILD

You're welcome.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDY - LATER - DAY**

Outside a leaded-glass window Shackleton's children can be seen playing on the considerable grounds of the estate, but he's looking instead at one of the many framed photographs of Arctic expeditions that cover the walls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

I can't precisely remember what I was thinking when I turned back. Isn't that funny.

He turns now to his wife, there in the room with him.

SHACKLETON

I know what I wasn't thinking. I wasn't thinking a reporter - years later - would speak to me like that.

EMILY

~~That~~ That wasn't a reporter. That was a jackass with a pencil and scuffed shoes.

*(miscu!)*

More to himself, as he returns his medal to its small velvet-lined box -

SHACKLETON

I also wasn't thinking about what praise for *almost* making it would sound like, or what medals given 'just for trying' would feel like to wear.

He hears his children's voices dancing on a silence but pays no attention to them. Eventually, with a shrug -

SHACKLETON

I don't know *what* I was thinking.

EMILY

I suppose it wasn't me and the children then, much as I'd like to hear it.

SHACKLETON

Sorry. I can't say that it was. And neither was it the lectures that would be cancelled. Or the pictures that wouldn't be published. Or the books that wouldn't be written. Or the piles of money that wouldn't come.

EMILY

We want for nothing, Ernest.

His look says what he doesn't have to. She answers it -

EMILY

This is *ours*, not mine.  
(the house; everything)  
It belongs to *us*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON  
Others would disagree.

EMILY  
Who.

SHACKLETON  
I think the question is who not?

EMILY  
No one thinks that. And if they did,  
who cares?

SHACKLETON  
Only someone who's always had enough can  
say that and mean it.

EMILY  
Now you're making me angry.

SHACKLETON  
It's not my intention.

EMILY  
No, you're trying to get me to say go  
again.

SHACKLETON  
I'm not.

EMILY  
Not that my permission has ever been  
required before.

SHACKLETON  
Even if I did go again - and made it  
this time - what would be the point? The  
Pole's been discovered. Everything has.  
Discovered, claimed and trampled upon.

EMILY  
Lucky for me.

It's not said unkindly. Quite the opposite. She loves him,  
even if she has to put up with this kind of thing from him on  
occasion. She gets up to leave him, though, now.

EMILY  
I'm going outside.

Shackleton watches after her as she crosses to the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHACKLETON

Emily?

(she looks back)

About that jackass reporter. Frank sure leapt to my defense quickly, didn't he.

She nods with a smile and leaves. He turns and regards one of the photographs: In the ice when he was younger. In his face he can see the excitement he once had. He listens to a ticking clock. To himself -

SHACKLETON

Whereas you did not.

**INT. WILD'S FLAT - NIGHT**

A pounding on a door drowns out the distant barking of a dog somewhere. Frank Wild, groaning, hungover, drags himself out of bed, stumbles through his darkened one-room, working-class flat, gets the door open and squints out at Shackleton on the steps, wide awake, rolled-up maps under his arm.

SHACKLETON

Look at this -

**INT. WILD'S FLAT - LATER - NIGHT**

A lamp switches on. A map is unfurled. Antarctica. A finger traces two paths down from the north across the Atlantic and the Drake Passage, stopping at the center point of the barren continent.

SHACKLETON

Amundsen. Scott.

He looks to Wild who nods as he considers the map and its many names of camps and coves and mountains written along the routes. [Shackleton takes his scarf, covers up the northern half of the continent, leaving only what's below:] ✓

SHACKLETON

All this is uncharted. Unknown. The last place on earth no man has walked. All of this. They left it for us.

Wild isn't smiling like Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

What.

WILD

Scott died getting halfway across.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

I know. *Only* halfway. That's the wonderful thing.

WILD

No, he *died*, going halfway, is what I'm saying. You're saying we'd be trying to cover the *entire* distance -

SHACKLETON

And trying very hard *not* to die, if that's your only concern.

(pause)

Is it?

Wild, who is not a deep thinker, thinks deeply about it now, and, eventually -

WILD

Well, yes.

The look he gives Shackleton asks, *Is that unreasonable?*

SHACKLETON

Frank. It's impossibility is the very thing that makes it worth doing. Surely you understand that.

Wild nods hesitantly. Shackleton returns to the map -

SHACKLETON

We take a ship through the Weddell Sea. Then, taking a page from Amundsen - though I hate to admit it - six or eight of us and a team of dogs, traveling fast and light -

**EXT. WILD'S FLAT - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

The lamp in the window of Wild's flat is the only one glowing on the entire block.

SHACKLETON V/O

- cross the continent, *past* the pole, *past* that offending flag of Norway, *past* Scott's footsteps ... and into a new world.

**EXT. LONDON - DAY**

A great burst of street noise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON V/O  
His Majesty, George V. I write to you  
with exciting news -

**INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY**

Shackleton is escorted along a great hall past portraits  
of royalty.

SHACKLETON V/O  
I will soon be announcing publicly my  
intention to lead a remarkable expedition  
whose sole purpose will be the restora-  
tion of Britain to the forefront of  
exploration -

**INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDY - NIGHT**

Shackleton at his desk, carefully writing the letter on his  
best stationery -

SHACKLETON V/O  
I would be honored, with your permission,  
to christen this remarkable endeavor: the  
Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition -

**INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - DAY**

Shackleton and his guide continuing down the corridor -

SHACKLETON V/O  
I would be further honored to describe  
to you - in person - the details of this  
bold undertaking -

**INT. BUCKINGHAM PALACE - CONTINUOUS - DAY**

Shackleton's escort leads him into a well-appointed room  
where a man stands, his back to us, at the window.

SHACKLETON V/O  
With your support I know we will be  
successful. Sincerest -

The man turns to face us and Shackleton. It is *not* King  
George.

POUND  
Sir Ernest. This is a great, great  
honor. I'm Leslie Pound, sir. Please  
sit down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There aren't more than a couple of choices. Pound is some kind of mid-level functionary.

POUND

His Royal Highness, I'm afraid, won't be joining us. He begs your forbearance. The storm clouds gathering over Europe, you know. Can I offer you something to drink?

Shackleton is stunned but tries very hard not to show it. King George, he is sure, wasn't too busy to meet with Scott, impending war or no impending war.

SHACKLETON

No. Thank you.

He notices his letter - hurriedly scribbled upon by another hand - resting on the man's desk.

POUND

You've come soliciting our blessing, I understand, for this brave undertaking of yours. You *have* it, sir, wholeheartedly. Along with, I'm sure, the nation's.

Shackleton just stares, waiting for more. But that seems to be it. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

I was hoping for that, yes. I was also hoping to remind His Highness, in person, of Great Britain's *unparalleled* record of exploration among all the empires of the earth ... that is until Scott's humiliating second best to the Norwegians.

Pound is taken slightly aback. It's unusual, not to mention very un-British, for one to state this truth about such a national hero. The man alters his tone:

POUND

Were you also, perhaps, hoping for some money?

SHACKLETON

No. No, I was *counting* on that.

POUND

Counting on us to kick in.

SHACKLETON

Of course.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

POUND

Frightfully expensive, this kind of thing, I imagine.

(pause)

How *much* were you counting on?

SHACKLETON

For risking my life and a crew of loyal British subjects to restore the prestige of our country, *and* His Royal Highness? All of it.

POUND

(pause)

You expected us to underwrite the *entire* venture?

SHACKLETON

I'm not sure how I could have expected less, given my reputation.

Pound regards the explorer - and perhaps his reputation too - in a silence. Finally -

POUND

I'm afraid we're in somewhat rather shorter supply of money than blessings at the moment, Sir Ernest; the threat of war and all.

(pause)

King George *has* authorized me, however, to allow you to keep the word *Imperial* in the name of your venture, if you desire, which should be a great help to you in the raising of funds elsewhere.

(pause)

Might I suggest the private sector?

Silence.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S OFFICES - DAY**

As a sign painter letters the glass on a door *Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition*, Shackleton paces beyond it.

WILD

They're investing nothing?

SHACKLETON

Nothing significant; not even enough for a bloody boat. Although they'll be quite happy to accept the glory we bring back, thank you very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILD

I've been looking at boats. I've come across one in particular that I -

SHACKLETON

We can't *afford* a boat. Which makes getting fifteen thousand miles south of London a little difficult.

(then)

*Have you tried the research community?*  
He actually said that. That's all I need - having to play nanny to a handful of -  
*scientists.*

**INT. MUSEUM - DAY**

Shackleton stands before a gathering of scientists from the *Royal Geographic Society* -

SHACKLETON

Scientific study could not be more important to the expedition's overall success, far outweighing any more romantic notions one might have. Indeed, without a capable staff of researchers on board, one could scarcely justify setting sail at all -

**INT. BANQUET HALL - DAY**

Shackleton stands before a gathering of businessmen.

SHACKLETON

Imagine if you will the name of your company painted on a lifeboat. Imagine that lifeboat suspended from cables on a great sailing vessel as it comes into London's East India Harbor, returned from its historic journey to cheering crowds. Now imagine *photographs* of this event in newspapers and magazines around the world - with your name, facing out and clearly legible - in every one of them.

**INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY**

Shackleton stands before another gathering.

SHACKLETON

How can I be a part of history? I can't come along, though I can think of nothing more exciting.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

I can't contribute financially for I have only pennies in my pocket, which I was planning to spend on candy.

He's addressing a roomful of school children.

SHACKLETON

What if I skipped buying candy one day? What if I invested it instead in the pursuit of knowledge and adventure? What if every schoolchild in the Empire did the same? Would it add up to anything significant? Would it help Mr. Shackleton and Britain?

(pause)

It would be as if you were along.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S OFFICES - DAY**

Shackleton sits at his desk looking over maps and listening to a sound: paper torn, the clink of coins, the dull thud as they're added to what must be others in a jar. He listens as long as he can stand it, then reaches for his coat.

**INT. BANK - DAY**

An old world place of business. Dark woods and whispers. Typewriter keys slap at an account form for *Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition* as Shackleton fills out a transfer slip.

BANKER

Emily I assume will be co-signatory to this account?

SHACKLETON

Mine will be the only signature required.

The elderly bank manager glances up briefly, but keeps typing. In a moment -

BANKER

Emily I assume is aware of the transfer of these funds.

SHACKLETON

Of course.

The man keeps typing. Shackleton leans close to an imperious-looking portrait to note the name of its artist.

BANKER

Shall I make a note, for accounting purposes, that this is a *loan* between the two accounts?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Note whatever you like, I don't care.

BANKER

Yes, but does she?

Now Shackleton studies the man, and -

SHACKLETON

Would you rather I withdrew the funds entirely, and opened the account across the street? That also would not require her signature.

BANKER

No, sir. Of course not.

SHACKLETON

Then let's finish.

**EXT. LONDON - DAY**

Hundreds of men congregated outside the *Imperial Expedition* offices. Wild addresses them -

WILD

The privilege of being aboard this historic voyage should itself be compensation enough. However, salaries will be paid, ranging from 12 pounds Sterling a month for able seamen - to 30 pounds monthly for the most experienced scientists among you -

**INT. IMPERIAL EXPEDITION OFFICES - DAY**

Shackleton personally interviews each of the applicants. Presently, an able-looking man sits before him as the Boss looks over his credentials.

APPLICANT

My field is meteorology. I was in the Royal Marines ten years and am a veteran of the Antarctic, three expeditions, with Scott on one of them, God rest his soul.

Shackleton glances up at the mention of Scott's name.

SHACKLETON

You were with Scott?

APPLICANT

Yes, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The man is proud of the association, but Shackleton is no longer interested in him.

SHACKLETON

Thank you, but I've already hired a meteorologist.

**INT. IMPERIAL EXPEDITION OFFICES - DAY**

A younger and less confident-looking man sits before Shackleton. The Boss studies *him* and not the papers he's brought. It's the man that's important to him more than the credentials.

SHACKLETON

Ever been in the ice?

HUSSEY

No, sir, can't say I have. I've been in the heat. In the Sudan.

SHACKLETON

The Sudan. Hmmm. We're not going anywhere near the Sudan. Know anything about meteorology?

HUSSEY

No, sir. No, my field, as it says there, is *anthropology*.

SHACKLETON

Anthropology, yes, but I don't need an anthropologist. Do you think we're going to find tribes of ice dwellers out there? We're going where no man has ever *been*. Maybe you could study *us*.

Shackleton grins. Hussey doesn't. He suddenly feels stupid for coming in. Of course Shackleton wouldn't need an anthropologist.

HUSSEY

I don't know *what* I was thinking. Just that it would be so exciting to be along.

Shackleton studies the young man. That's really the best qualification of all.

SHACKLETON

Some other skill. What else do you do?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

What. No, I like him.

WILD

What's his particular skill?

SHACKLETON

He hasn't one I could determine, other than his enthusiasm and the fact he made me laugh, which is worth more than all the scientists combined.

(points off)

Who's that?

WILD

That, I think, is a mistake. He says he's a painter. He says you left word for him to come in.

SHACKLETON

That's *him*. He's quite good. Hire him for sure.

WILD

We don't need a painter. We have a photographer. What on earth is he going to paint?

SHACKLETON

*Me.*

Wild thinks he's kidding. He isn't. His glance settles on another man waiting.

SHACKLETON

And that?

WILD

Applicant for captain. I'm not sure about him.

SHACKLETON

I have to say I like his looks. He *looks* like a captain.

**INT. IMPERIAL EXPEDITION OFFICES - DAY**

Shackleton sits with the captain, perusing his papers.

WORSLEY

Don't care for the cold to be honest with you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

I don't care for the sea all that much,  
just its ability to convey me where I'm  
going.

WORSLEY

I can get you there. That I can do.

SHACKLETON

That's all the job requires.

WORSLEY

Because I don't care to be walking  
around on any ice.

SHACKLETON

Nor will you be expected to. You and  
your men can watch us disappear over the  
spectacular Antarctic horizon from the  
comfort of the ship if that's more to  
your liking.

WORSLEY

Where's the ship harbored? I'd like to  
see her before we go any further.

SHACKLETON

Don't have a ship yet.

Worsley sighs. Shackleton regards it and him.

SHACKLETON

Are you trying to say in as few words as  
possible, Captain Worsley, you don't know  
why you bothered coming in?

Measuring Shackleton, who seems to Worsley rather too  
eccentric to entrust one's life to -

WORSLEY

Perhaps so.

SHACKLETON

Ah, but there's something drawing you,  
isn't there. You might not know its name  
but it's undeniably present in the deeper  
regions of your adventurous (heart) -

WORSLEY

It's the money.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON  
(pause)  
Ah.

**INT/EXT. IMPERIAL TRANS-ANTARCTIC OFFICES - LATER**

Shackleton and Wild stand at a window looking out at Worsley walking away from the building and across the street.

WILD  
He's very - ornery.

SHACKLETON  
Yes. I like that. In reasonable portion, that can be a wonderful asset.

WILD  
He has no respect for *you*; that much is clear.

SHACKLETON  
That too can be an asset. It'll force me to earn it.

**EXT. HARBOR - DAY**

Shackleton stands at the docks looking at a whaling ship. On its bow is painted *Polaris*. At the top of the tallest of its three masts the flag of Norway flaps in the breeze.

Shackleton, with Wild and Worsley, looks to Wild like this must be some kind of bad joke.

SHACKLETON  
Norwegian, Frank?

WILD  
I wish it were anything else, too, but it isn't. It's also the best ship I've ever seen in my life.

LARS V/O  
She was designed by Aanderud Larsen -

**INT. THE POLARIS - DAY**

Shackleton, Wild and Worsley move through the belly of the ship trying hard not to admire its craftsmanship too openly as its Norwegian agent escorts them around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LARS

Her construction was supervised by the renowned shipbuilder, Christian Jacobsen who chose only those master shipwrights who actually had been to the Arctic themselves.

(gestures around)

Solid oak and Norwegian mountain fir. Every timber selected individually by Mr. Jacobsen, cross-braced and fitted to the closest tolerance.

Shackleton is looking at one now, the bow beam, which is an extraordinary 8-feet thick.

LARS

She's the strongest ship ever built in Norway - or anywhere else.

**INT. THE POLARIS - DAY**

Now they're seated in the captain's cabin to do business.

LARS

Fifty thousand pounds is less than Mr. Christensen paid to have her built, but he's willing to take the loss if it will help further the plans of an explorer of your stature.

SHACKLETON

Yes, I'm sure that's the reason. Unfortunately, to further *my* plans, he needs to be willing to take a greater loss than that.

LARS

How much greater?

SHACKLETON

Twenty thousand pounds.

LARS

Oh, I'm afraid that's impossible.

SHACKLETON

I'm afraid that's all I have, and at that I've mortgaging my house.

Wild glances to him surprised. Shackleton nods, it's true. But the agent shakes his head no.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

You're authorized to turn down a cash offer of thirty thousand pounds?

LARS

I am, sir. I'm sorry.

SHACKLETON

So am I. She's a decent ship.

**EXT. HARBOR - LATER - DAY**

Fog. Shackleton is walking away between Wild and Worsley. Behind them in the mist, Lars can just be glimpsed watching them from the deck of the Polaris.

SHACKLETON

Keep walking. Don't look. He'll call out to us any moment now. Bloody Norwegians ... any moment now ... any moment now ...

*Guat*

**INT. LONDON PUB - NIGHT**

Wild is dead drunk, asleep. Shackleton, glass in hand, sitting in the same chair as before Scott's funeral, stares into the hearth.

CAIRD O/S

Mr. Shackleton?

The voice belongs to a Scot. Shackleton all but ignores it.

CAIRD O/S

I attended one of your presentations. Ever since I've been thinking about how much I'd enjoy going with you. Of course I can't. I'd never survive the voyage, much less the expedition itself.

(Shackleton isn't really listening)

But perhaps it would be as *if* I were along if I could contribute in some other way.

Now Shackleton's head slowly turns to take in the gentleman. He's quite elderly. Distinguished.

CAIRD

One thing you said in particular has stayed with me. About imagining one's name painted on a lifeboat. That would be worth a lot to me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Would it.

CAIRD

Oh, yes. The truth is I've never done anything very exciting in my life, except make money, which at a certain age, one realizes, isn't exciting at all.

Shackleton nods, though at his age, and with his background, nothing could be further from the truth.

CAIRD

Of course I'm probably too late, aren't I? I should have approached you sooner. No doubt by now you have more money than you know what to do with.

Shackleton, always the poker player, only half-nods as he studies this angel that has come to him in the form of an old man.

SHACKLETON

What is your name, sir?

**EXT. DECK, ENDURANCE (POLARIS) - DAY**

A photographer frames a shot of Shackleton posing with his new benefactor next to a lifeboat with the name James Caird painted on its bow.

SHACKLETON O/S

Tomorrow we set sail for the greatest remaining adventure on the planet.

Now he's standing with a group of reporters as the ship is loaded with supplies around them, mindful less of the danger of something falling on him than of his posture as the artist he hired, Marston, sketches the scene with him at its center.

SHACKLETON

The goal of this journey is singular - the greater glory of England.

REPORTER 2

(a whispered aside)

As opposed to the greater glory of Ernest Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

This magnificent ship and crew will deliver us to the northern side of the Antarctic continent -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton hesitates; he's noticed a man hurrying up the gangplank to whisper something to one of the reporters.

SHACKLETON

From there I shall lead five men to the Pole, and then beyond, all the way across the continent to the Ross Sea in the south, where a second ship will be waiting for us.

The reporter hurries off with the other man, a couple of the other reporters watching after them. Shackleton's glance finds Wild and tells him to go find out what's going on.

SHACKLETON

The six of us will cover 1500 miles in 100 days, and with each step, erase the margin of the untraveled world.

His glance to another seaman tells him to begin pulling on mast ropes.

SHACKLETON

Norway may have claimed the South Pole, but we will claim for Great Britain all that surrounds it.

As the Norwegian flag pulleys down past an ascending Union Jack, a cheer goes up with it, but it's mainly from the crew and not the journalists, several of whom, Shackleton sees, are now headed off the gangplank.

As the small band Shackleton hired begins playing *Rule Britannia*, Wild returns and whispers what he's discovered. Whatever the news is so startles him he can't respond.

**INSERT: A NEWSPAPER**

with the headline *Britain Declares War on Germany*.

**EXT. SHACKLETON'S HOUSE - DAY**

Shackleton and Emily sit in the garden of their estate. Neither speaks until, finally -

EMILY

You should just go.

SHACKLETON

I can't. Can I?

(he honestly doesn't know)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

If I leave without the blessing of the Navy, there will be those who'll say it's self-serving. Or worse, cowardly. If I stay, all the planning was for nothing. I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't.

EMILY

Maybe Lord Churchill *will* give you his blessing. He seems reasonable.

SHACKLETON

But *is* it reasonable to leave with war breaking out? I don't know what *I'd* say if asked.

They sit in the quiet, thinking. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

I've spent a lot of money.

EMILY

Well, at least it wasn't *ours*.

She smiles. He doesn't. Then *she* doesn't. She stares.

SHACKLETON

I had to. The private funds only went so far.

EMILY

How much?

SHACKLETON

Enough that if I don't go ... *and* succeed ... I don't know what we're going to do.

She glances from him to the house behind him, wondering perhaps if he's mortgaged it. He knows that's what she's thinking and nods, yes.

SHACKLETON

I'm sorry.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDY - NIGHT**

Shackleton sits alone in his study, despondent. Eventually slides open a drawer. Takes out not a pistol, but a sheet of paper. Begins writing a letter.

**INT. IMPERIAL TRANS-ANTARCTIC OFFICES - DAY**

Shackleton has called his crew of 27 men together and stands before them to deliver some news.

SHACKLETON

I've written to First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, informing him of my decision to suspend indefinitely the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Expedition and offer its resources to the war effort. This means the ship, its supplies, myself and those of you who agree, will be, upon the offer's acceptance, part of the Royal Navy.

Wild and several others look down at the floor in disappointment, but Shackleton holds his own head high.

SHACKLETON

I'm awaiting reply, and will appraise you of Lord Churchill's wishes as soon as they're received. Thank you all for your understanding and patriotism.

**INT. LONDON PUB - LATER - DAY**

The hearth. Shackleton in his usual chair, staring into the flames, glass of ale in his hand.

WILD

Boss?

Shackleton turns enough to see Wild standing before him with a telegraph envelope in his hand.

SHACKLETON

You open it?

WILD

Of course not.

He hands it to Shackleton, who looks at his printed name and wonders how one opens such a thing whose contents hold the key to whether you are a hero or a bum. He uses a pen knife. Slides the telegram out, reads it quickly and folds it back up without comment. Eventually -

WILD

What's it say?

Shackleton hands it to him. As Wild unfolds it, we see its single word message writ large: **Proceed.**

**EXT. EAST INDIA DOCKS - LONDON - DAY**

The prow of the great ship with its new name *Endurance* painted on it moves away from the docks and the hundreds who have turned out to see it and Shackleton off.

Emily and the children are among them, waving. And James Caird. Even the soldiers, who are themselves embarking on their own dangerous journey into the unknown as they climb onto troop ships, send up a cheer.

Shackleton waves to his family, allowing his smile to fade only when he knows they're far enough away not to see it, for he's clearly decided that if he's not successful this time, he'll die trying. — *different. he knows he's going to die!*

**EXT. OPEN SEA - DAY**

The *Endurance* leaps through the swells under full sail.

The men on her decks take time from their tasks to point out pods of accompanying porpoises racing at her bow as if escorting them to freedom.

Shackleton looks out at the endless sea ahead, completely at peace. Wild appears next to him.

SHACKLETON

We're outcasts again, Frank. No more warm beds. No more good food. No more twenty-year-old whiskey.

WILD

It's heaven.

SHACKLETON

Better. No bloody angels.

McNeish, the carpenter on board, and a religious man, presently hammering at kennel stalls, glances over from his work, but doesn't comment.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - DAY**

A steam engine dominates the space. Two large sailors are shoveling coal as Worsley and Shackleton enter.

WORSLEY

Stand for inspection.

SHACKLETON

Holness and Stevenson, isn't it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVENSON

Yes, sir. I'm Stevenson.

SHACKLETON

Let me say how fortunate I consider myself to have two such strong workers aboard. It's your stoking that'll get us through the ice.

The comment registers more on Worsley's face than the firemen's. Worsley made it clear to Shackleton when they met, didn't he, he has no intention of coming into any serious contact with ice and cold.

HOLNESS

Yes, sir.

Shackleton salutes them and leaves, Worsley following after him a little troubled.

**INT. SHIP'S GALLEY - DAY**

The ship's cook, Green, stirs at a pot. As Shackleton and Worsley come through, the Boss slows to sniff appreciatively at a bubbling pot. An unpleasant pause -

SHACKLETON

Dinner?

GREEN

It's dish washing, sir.

SHACKLETON

Ah.

**INT. BELOW DECKS - DAY**

Shackleton and Worsley continue along a corridor.

WORSLEY

The scientists are complaining their quarters are too small.

SHACKLETON

Scientists always complain. It's the one thing on this journey we can absolutely count on. You'll get used to it.

They've reached the quarters in question and peer in at the biologist and geologist - Clark and Wordie respectively - stowing glass tubes and other scientific apparatus in the cramped cabin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARK  
 (Scottish accent)  
 Sir Ernest, I wish to protest the  
 diminutive scale of our -

SHACKLETON  
 (cutting him off)  
 Remember, the first of any new species  
 found are to be named after me.

The scientists exchange a confused look before realizing it  
 must be a joke. They laugh a little nervously.

SHACKLETON  
 You think I'm kidding.

→ Don't need a live

He leaves them staring after him. Continues on with Worsley  
 down the corridor.

SHACKLETON  
 Too small? Perhaps they'd prefer I  
 throw their stuff overboard to make a  
 little more room. Or them.

Up ahead, Orde-Lees, the motor expert and veteran Royal  
 Marine, is in conversation with Wild. The man is irritated  
 and, seeing Shackleton, turns away from Wild.

ORDE-LEES  
 May I have a word?

SHACKLETON  
 You may have more than one.

ORDE-LEES  
 You know my background. I'm a man of no  
 small rank and accomplishment.

Shackleton nods, but honestly doesn't rightly remember what  
 Orde-Lees' background is precisely.

SHACKLETON  
 Yes, that's right.

ORDE-LEES  
 Then kindly instruct Mr. Wild that I will  
 not scrub decks, attend dogs, or perform  
 other such menial tasks more properly  
 assigned the common seaman, of which by  
 birth, education and experience I  
 certainly am not.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON

I understand. Mr. Wild, Mr. Lees will not be required to scrub decks, attend dogs, or perform other such menial tasks beneath his station.

ORDE-LEES

Thank you.

SHACKLETON

As I am not as highborn as he, I'll stand in his stead when you assign the work details.

WILD

Aye, boss.

Wild actually makes the note in the ledger he's holding. Orde-Lees stares dumbly at Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

Everything else all right?

ORDE-LEES

Uh ... yes, sir ...

SHACKLETON

Carry on.

Orde-Lees stares after the three men as they move on.

**EXT. ENDURANCE / HARBOR - BUENOS AIRES - DAY**

Seventy dogs are coming aboard, barking, sniffing and dashing around the deck.

Orde-Lees, off by himself, watches as others, more befitting their lowly stations in life, try to corral the mutts - only a few are actual huskies - into the deck's built-in kennels.

Shackleton signs some papers for the animals and pays for them in cash. As the agent turns away with his money and two young handlers, Shackleton regards his ship, awash with the dogs, and smiles to Wild.

SHACKLETON

The last official members of the expedition.

**EXT. THE OPEN SEAS - NIGHT**

Far out of sight of any land, the Endurance sails across shimmering moonlit waters to an opera of howling dogs.

**INT. WARDROOM - NIGHT**

The men, reading, playing cards, sipping tea before bed. One, in stocking feet, Hussey, is studying meteorology texts, reading as he walks to his locker to stow his boots.

He stares down at a pair already there poking out from beneath his hanging robe and parka. Confused, he parts the rack of clothes, revealing a frightened young man, the sight of which makes Hussey jump in fright himself.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S CABIN - NIGHT**

The discovery of the stowaway has disturbed Shackleton's standing for a portrait by Marston. The unfinished painting sits on an easel next to Shackleton himself as he regards the terrified young man with great displeasure.

SHACKLETON

Who are you? Speak up.

BLACKBORO

(terrified)

I came aboard with the dogs, sir.  
Originally, I'm -

SHACKLETON

You're *Welsh*, you don't need to tell me that; tell me this: What am I to do with you? Turn around? Throw you overboard?

BLACKBORO

(weakly)

Sir, the reason I've done this, and I apologize, is -

SHACKLETON

Speak so I can *hear* you if you're going to speak to me -

BLACKBORO

Sir, I'm almost unable to speak at *all* in your presence. I should be less in awe standing before King George himself. You, sir, are the greatest explorer of our time. Greater than Peary. Greater than Amundsen or Scott. I can hardly utter their names in the same breath as yours. *You* are the one people will remember in my opinion, humble as it is, and your bravery, the sole reason for my terrible act of deception.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Long silence as the muscles in Shackleton's neck begin to ease. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

I see. Yes, well. Good.  
(he nods; pause)  
Mr. Wild?

WILD

Yeah, Boss.

SHACKLETON

What do we need? A carpenter's assistant? A dog feeder? Anything?

WILD

Green, I suppose, could use some help.

SHACKLETON

(to Blackboro)  
Fine. You're the cook's assistant, young man. You're dismissed.

BLACKBORO

Thank you, sir. Thank you so much. I can't tell you how much this -

SHACKLETON

That's enough. Get out of my cabin.

BLACKBORO

Yes, sir.

**EXT. SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND - DAY**

Icy peaks drop thousands of feet into a fjord as the Endurance sails into view. The dogs' barking echoing out across the bay.

**EXT. GRYTVIKEN WHALING STATION - DAY**

Whale carcasses line the shore. Dozens of workers clamor over them, slicing at the blubber as others deposit it into huge cauldrons bubbling over smoky fires. Gulls circle over the bloody carnage, screeching as they dive to feast on the dead leviathans.

Thorlaf Sorlle, the Norwegian station manager, stands on the docks as Shackleton, Wild and Worsley come down off the *Endurance's* gangplank.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SORLLE

Sir Ernest. Welcome to South Georgia.  
I'm Thorlaf Sorlle.

SHACKLETON

Thank you. This is Wild, my second-in-command, and Frank Worsley, our captain.

They all shake hands as Sorlle begins escorting them toward the godforsaken village's few wooden structures.

SHACKLETON

You got my cable.

Sorlle nods that he did. Shackleton takes out a list, but Sorlle doesn't take it from him.

SHACKLETON

I've amended the list of supplies I'm going to need to purchase. In addition to the coal, sugar and flour, and the whale meat for the dogs -

SORLLE

I'm afraid I have some bad news.

**INT. WHALING LODGE - DAY**

A saloon-like place. Shackleton, Wild and Worsley are the only non-Norwegians in it. Sorlle unfurls a map, spreads it out across a table and gestures to areas on it, identified in a writing that contains slashes through the 'O's'.

SORLLE

The Weddell Sea, hemmed in as it is on three sides, traps much of the ice that forms each winter.

Shackleton throws a quick look to Wild that says, *Of course we know that; does he think we're stupid?*

SORLLE

This past winter there's more than we've ever seen. It's been cold, and the winds lighter than usual, preventing the floes from escaping to the west.

SHACKLETON

We're not headed west. Our destination is Vahsel Bay, way over here. If the ice is bad, we can slip in behind it along the lee shore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All this talk of ice, and the way they talk about it so nonchalantly, has Worsley very concerned.

SORLLE

That may be possible.

SHACKLETON

What would you suggest instead?

SORLLE

I suggest you try again next year.

Silence. Then -

SHACKLETON

Next year.

SORLLE

When conditions may be more favorable.

SHACKLETON

I see.

Shackleton, Wild can tell, is beginning to bristle, though outwardly he displays only a calm politeness.

SHACKLETON

And what if they aren't more favorable next year? Or the year after that. Or after that. How long should I wait do you think? Perhaps till I'm dead?

SORLLE

With all due respect, sir, have you learned nothing from the fate of your countryman?

SHACKLETON

And what should that be? To take no risks? If it were absolute certainty I was after, I wouldn't get out of bed. Here's the list.

He pushes the list of supplies across the map like a big bet in a high stakes poker game.

SHACKLETON

And when we've accomplished our goal, all the world will know your part in it.

SORLLE

That's what I'm afraid of. If your ship becomes trapped, then what?

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SORLLE (CONT'D)

No one will come for you. No one could get to you. And what the world would know is that I helped a man craft his doom ... and his crew's.

(pause)

I won't provision your ship, sir.

Another silence. Worsley is nodding to himself that what Sorlle is saying sounds reasonable to him; they'll try again some other time. But Shackleton just stares at all the Norwegian faces around him. Finally, to Sorlle -

SHACKLETON

I see. You've not been whaling in the Weddell Sea all winter.

SORLLE

We have. That's how we know just how bad it is.

SHACKLETON

You've been going in there and coming out, making money, yet none of your ships have been lost.

SORLLE

We have very long experience in polar ice navigation, sir.

SHACKLETON

So do a few Irishmen. Hard as that may be to believe.

A long look between them. Sorlle then glances down to the list on the table between them. Risking Shackleton's ire, he pushes it back across the map to him. Shackleton nods to himself. Wild takes a step back.

SHACKLETON

Let me understand. What you're saying is that you would withhold the supplies I need, that you would use your position as overlord of this smelly Nordic fiefdom of yours in the middle of nowhere to prevent me from reaching my goal.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

That you would do this *not* for my preservation, as you say - for you care nothing of me in all honesty - but in desperate hope of preserving the so-called accomplishment of one of your countrymen as long as possible, and the tenuous fingerhold on distinction held as a result by your pathetic little country, who's history, and people, as all the world knows and too often mocks *not* behind your back, are thoroughly dismissible in every other regard. ➔

Now there is a very long silence ...

**EXT. ENDURANCE / WHALING STATION - DAY**

The ship, as it steams out of port, is laden with more supplies, surely, than its crew could ever need. Her decks are piled high with coal and crates; tons of whale meat hang from the rigging in strips, food for the sledge dogs, in a frenzy down below from the dripping blood.

On the docks, Sorlle watches, at once disgusted and concerned, as the *Endurance*, smoke pouring from her funnel, disappears into the coastal fog like a ghost ship.

**EXT. ENDURANCE / WEDDELL SEA - DAY**

The *Endurance* rides the swells toward the first signs of ice - a berg, twice the height of the ship, rising from the depths like a huge ice sculpture, carved and polished by the sea.

SHACKLETON

Where's the man who hates the ice?  
(calls out)  
Worsley! *What are you doing?*

WORSLEY

*I see it. I'm safely avoiding it.*

SHACKLETON

*Avoiding it? Get as close as you can and come over here.*

Worsley hands the wheel, and strict instructions not to get too close, to 1st Officer, Greenstreet, then joins Wild and Shackleton. The Boss puts his arm around the Captain as the ship glides toward the icy cliff.

SHACKLETON

What do think of *this* ice?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

It's beautiful, there's no denying it.

SHACKLETON

And it's big enough to name. You may do the honors.

WORSLEY

What?

*Shackle*

SHACKLETON

Name it. It's been moving around this sea without one for years.

WORSLEY

Name it what.

SHACKLETON

Whatever you like. *Worsley Berg* if that sounds good to you.

WORSLEY

(thinks)

Rebecca ... a girl I once knew.

SHACKLETON

Done. Mr. Wild, make note.

As Wild does so in his ledger, Worsley watches in amazement. That's how it's done? To the Captain-and-berg-namer -

SHACKLETON

Look down. At how beautiful and mysterious your Rebecca is.

Worsley does, into the indigo water, at the ice stretching down and disappearing in dark blue depths. It almost makes him dizzy.

Shackleton hears a shutter click behind him and automatically turns to pose, but Hurley isn't photographing him, but the magnificent ice cliff.

SHACKLETON

For scale, James.

Shackleton strikes a pose. Alone.

**EXT. ON THE DECK - LATER**

As Crean, a huge, powerful man, moves and stacks crates to be taken below decks, one of the kenneled dogs lunges at him through the wooded bars, snarling and snapping.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:



Crean snarls back just as viciously, which only enrages the dog more, which only enrages Crean more. Macklin, the doctor on board, watches in disbelief as the man and beast loudly taunt each other as if for territorial rights. Finally, Macklin can take it no longer.

*Bill*

MACKLIN

You know, Crean, I'm told you'll get a better effort from the dogs if you treat them more like men.

*Love (E) Bill*

Crean turns to him, stares, and, in all seriousness -

CREAN

That's just what I'm doing.

**EXT. WEDDELL SEA - ANOTHER DAY**

An explosion of color. Bright sun sparkling on the sea. The Endurance crashes through bigger swells under full sail. The cranky carpenter, McNeish, approaches the Boss a little unsteadily.

MCNEISH

Sir?

SHACKLETON

Yes?

MCNEISH

It's Sunday.

SHACKLETON

Yes, and a lovely one at that.

They regard one another like speakers of different languages.

MCNEISH

I think we should be having fit and proper religious services, don't you? Certainly, at least, on Sundays.

SHACKLETON

(confiding in him)

I find them awfully dull, to be honest with you.

(looking out to sea)

I prefer instead to stand here and look the Almighty square in the eye.

(pause)

You're a religious man, are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MCNEISH

I am.

SHACKLETON

That's good. You and Jesus being fellow carpenters, you're in charge of seeing to it we enjoy good weather.

McNeish is thoroughly disappointed with the 'assignment.' Shackleton pats him on the shoulder and looks back out at the Almighty.

**EXT. WEDDELL SEA - TWILIGHT**

Ice. Dramatic and magnificent. A band of heavy pack ice several feet thick and half a mile wide. Beyond the band are huge icebergs painted in pastels by the twilight.

The crew has gathered on deck to watch, mesmerized by the grandeur, and a little wary of its scale. Wild approaches Shackleton, keeps his voice low -

WILD

Pack ice this far north?

SHACKLETON

Where are we do you figure?

WILD

Worsley says six hundred miles at least from Vahsel Bay.

SHACKLETON

Right.

(pause; then calls to Worsley  
at the helm)

*Furl your sails and ravel under steam  
till we find an opening.*

WORSLEY

What?

SHACKLETON

*Plow through the ice, Captain, she can  
take it.*

Wild glances away to avoid his impulse to disagree with Shackleton.

WORSLEY

For six hundred miles?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

You had nothing but confidence in this ship when we bought it. Suddenly you don't?

Worsley doesn't say it's not his confidence in the ship he's questioning.

**EXT. ON DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

The crew works at furling the sails as the ship skirts the pack's edge.

On the bridge, Worsley is watching tensely with Greenstreet when Blackboro arrives in his apron from the galley, wide-eyed, overwhelmed.

At the bow, Shackleton and Wild are blown by the wind, sprayed by the sea. Shackleton points to an opening in the pack and shouts back to Worsley -

SHACKLETON

*Here's our chance!*

Worsley swings the wheel and the *Endurance* enters the pack ice, an amazing half world, neither land nor sea.

Ice floes ride the swell, awash with pale colors in the twilight. Penguins watch the ship pass in dignified silence. The sea is alive with seals. Whales blow in the open pools - or leads - between the floes as huge seabirds soar overhead.

The men of the crew are silent, almost reverent, yet their anxiety is palpable. Deep booms like distant explosions come from within ice-blue caves carved by the sea in the enormous bergs.

GREENSTREET

There should be open seas on the other side.

WORSLEY

(pause)

Are you asking?

**EXT. THE DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

The ship moves along an open lead till it's blocked by a piece of a jigsaw puzzle of ice.

Worsley scales up to the crow's nest high atop the middle mast, passing Hurley who's clinging precariously to the rigging as he cranks his motion picture camera.

**IN THE CROW'S NEST / DECK**

Worsley looks out at the ice puzzle that stretches to the horizon.

WORSLEY

Oh, Jesus.

Recovering, he uses flags to try to direct Greenstreet down below at the wheel.

The rasp of ice scraping against the hull joins the ship's usual and more comforting noises of water-lap, timber-creaks and sail flapping like a tone-deaf new chorus member.

In the crow's nest, Worsley watches with keen anticipation as the ship makes impact with the floe, shaking a bit as it nudges against it -

Jostled, the silent crewmen below watch as a dark streak makes a jagged course in the floe, widening as the ship moves on into the lead it's created.

Up in the crow's nest, Worsley tries to laugh out loud if only to expel his anxiety, but little sound comes out.

Below, Shackleton turns to Wild with a qualified smile. They're not out of it yet but at least they're in water.

**INT. WARDROOM - NIGHT**

The men try to occupy themselves, reading and writing and playing cards - anything to take their minds off the sounds of the hull scraping against the floes.

In a moment the noise is joined by music and they look to where Shackleton stands, next to the phonograph. The music seems to calm those most anxious, as Shackleton hoped.

SHACKLETON

Anyone seen Leonard?

Someone points up.

**EXT. DECK - NIGHT**

Hussey sits with some of his meteorology equipment. At the moment he's consulting a text book, but puts it away quickly when he hears Shackleton emerge from below decks behind him.

SHACKLETON

What's the forecast?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HUSSEY

Uh ... well ... according to the  
barometer ... I ... I think it's going  
to get worse before it gets better.

(pause)

But that it *will* get better.

SHACKLETON

That's good. You're sure.

Hussey isn't at all, but nods. Then -

HUSSEY

No, sir. I'm not.

(pause)

But see that?

He points up at a strange dark streak in the sky.

SHACKLETON

What is that?

HUSSEY

That's called a water sky.

SHACKLETON

Is it.

HUSSEY

I think.

He starts to reach for a book, but thinks better of it;  
Shackleton pretends not to have seen.

SHACKLETON

Meaning: There's water ahead? Open  
seas?

HUSSEY

I think.

SHACKLETON

That's wonderful.

HUSSEY

Yeah.

Of course Shackleton knows what a water sky is, and also  
knows that definitely *isn't* one, but doesn't let on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON

It's getting a little cold out here.  
Maybe you want to come inside, I'll help  
you with your things.

(as they start gathering)

A water sky.

HUSSEY

Yeah.

**EXT. ENDURANCE - WEDDELL SEA - DAY**

The ship, *encrusted in ice*, churns through the floes.

The dogs howl while they and the men witness an 'ice-shower,' millions of delicate ice crystals filtering down over a dark frozen sea.

**EXT. THE PACK - ANOTHER DAY**

The Endurance steams along a lead in the jigsaw puzzle, passing close to a magnificent towering berg.

Worsley, in the crow's nest, puts his arm out as if he might touch it, then looks ahead and is surprised, then uncertain, then elated to see ahead in the distance:

A dark, rolling, ice-free ocean, stretching to the horizon.

WORSLEY

*Open water ahead!*

Down on the deck, the men cheer. Shackleton looks to a stunned Hussey, comes over and wraps an arm around the young lad's shoulder as if perhaps he willed this to happen with his water sky 'knowledge' alone.

SHACKLETON

Just like you said.

**EXT. WEDDELL SEA - DAY**

Spirits high, sails set, the ship races through to the open water, leaving behind a group of icebergs that glow in rich pinks and deep blues.

**INT. WARDROOM - EVENING**

The men sing a pub song as Hussey accompanies them on his fiddle. Shackleton glances over at Dr. Macklin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Doctor Macklin, didn't you tell me you could shout with the boys? I don't even hear a whisper.

Macklin joins in. Shackleton grins. Wild appears with Worsley.

WILD

Good news.

WORSLEY

We're but 200 miles from Vahsel Bay.

SHACKLETON

You're a polar ice explorer, Captain. Have a drink on me.

Clark, one of the scientists the Boss 'likes' so much, comes in with bagpipes and, eager to join in, readies the drone pipes like he's fighting a squid.

SHACKLETON

Mr. Clark, do you know the definition of a Scottish gentleman?

(Clark waits, curious)

One who can play the bagpipes but chooses not to.

The men around them laugh.

**EXT. WEDDELL SEA - DAY**

The *Endurance* sails parallel to the tremendous ice cliffs of the 'Barrier' that refract mirages everywhere.

**EXT. SHACKLETON'S CABIN - ANOTHER DAY**

Shackleton stands for the portrait which is now almost finished. Marston, with one of his finer brushes, is just adding a little highlight to the eyebrows when -

A sudden jolt smears the brush across the canvas as it and its artist are thrown aside. Shackleton too almost loses his footing as the ship shudders, rises up, then tumbles backward.

**EXT. SHIP'S DECK - MOMENTS LATER - DAY**

The dogs are in a frenzy. Shackleton emerges from below decks with Wild to find the ship engulfed in a heavy mist. They hurry to join Worsley on the bridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

Obviously we hit something.

SHACKLETON

Likely just a rogue chunk of ice.

They stare out at the mist, feel the wind rising, watch as it blows the mist away, revealing to their horror -

Heavy pack ice ahead, anchored by a number of giant bergs and no clear water, only brash ice that rolls at them in twenty foot swells.

WORSLEY

Good God.

SHACKLETON

(pause; calmly)

Furl the sails, proceed under steam.

We'll find a way through.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - DAY**

There is a studied calm among the men as the ship moves slowly into what appears to be open sea but isn't. They're in trouble, mired in the brash with more and more floes closing in on them.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - LATER**

The *Endurance* fights her way through a bizarre, nightmarish world of icebergs bobbing in the endless mush ice.

Hussey hears a change of timbre in the wind and looks up from his equipment. With more experience he'd know it was an approaching gale. Shackleton does know. To Wild -

SHACKLETON

Start battling everything down.

Wild starts to go, but then hesitates, squints ahead. Shackleton sees it too and watches as the channel is suddenly alive with seals, hundreds of them, heading directly for the ship - as if *fleeing* something terrible.

HUSSEY

Temperature's dropped another two degrees.

The migrating seals pass and disappear behind the ship.

**EXT. THE SHIP'S DECK - LATER**

The wind is at gale force now, whipping snow at the men who struggle to lash down equipment.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - LATER**

The *Endurance* looks like a child's toy in relation to the giant bergs sweeping toward her in the gale. She will dodge one on her port only to be slammed by one to starboard with thundering force.

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - DAY**

Vincent and McCarthy yell and curse as the storm bangs them around in their smoky hell.

**INT. BRIDGE - DAY**

Worsley battles the wheel as -

Out of the blinding snow, a huge berg appears dead ahead. Worsley swings the ship to port, avoiding a direct collision, but is hit broadside, throwing him to his knees. Blocks of ice rain down as Shackleton appears, helps him up, shouts -

SHACKLETON

*We need shelter. Get us to the lee of  
the berg to wait for the blizzard to run  
its course.*

The wind grows even stronger as Worsley tries to navigate around the berg. The noise is deafening -

**INT. WARDROOM - LATER**

Silence but for creak of timbers and the slap of cards as Shackleton shuffles and deals. The poker players - Worsley, Wild, Crean, Hussey and Shackleton pick up their cards.

Around them other men read, some write as best they can in the rocking ship. Someone tries to set the heavy needle down on the phonograph but it skims across.

Blackboro is pouring coffee for the Boss, but his hand shakes so badly - as do Worsley's, holding his cards - some sloshes over the rim of the cup.

Shackleton, without looking at him, reaches out and takes hold of the boy's hand and steadies it.

BLACKBORO

Sorry, sir.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Don't worry, she's a strong ship.

BLACKBORO

I didn't say I was afraid.

SHACKLETON

Neither did I.

He calls the bet with his free hand.

**EXT. DECK - MORNING**

The blizzard continues lashing at the ship, the wind threatening to rip the masts from the deck.

Crean, Macklin and Hurley are feeding the dogs, barely able to keep their footing. A bucket flies from Crean's grasp and disappears into the storm.

**INT. FORECASTLE - NIGHT**

The sailors in their bunks, but few can sleep, the wind so powerful it seems impossible the ship can withstand it, the howling so loud it drowns out the barking of the dogs. Blackboro tosses about.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S CABIN - MORNING**

We move across the logbook on the table:

*21 January, NW wind rises to gale force; 22 January, blizzard, no visibility; 23 January, blizzard still, temperature dropping below zero.*

We move across to the bunk where Shackleton stirs. He sits up, listens ... the ship is still; there's no sound of wind.

**EXT. DECK OF THE SHIP - DAWN**

Shackleton climbs up to the snow-covered deck and, to his amazement, finds the sun throwing the ship's shadow over an even field of ice crisscrossed with ridges, in every direction as far as the eye can see.

Even the dogs seem astounded into silence. Alone with them on the deck, Shackleton stares, trying to understand what has happened ... the wind has blown the pack together, cementing the ship in ice.

**EXT. CROW'S NEST - LATER**

Worsley peers out over the jagged ice with a spyglass.

Below, the men stare from the deck. Wild 'calmly' smokes his pipe. McNeish isn't nearly so sanguine, staring out at the white landscape -

MCNEISH

Dear God, what are going to do?

He meant not to say it aloud. Some of the men glance over. Shackleton too.

SHACKLETON

McNeish. Please. You're frightening the dogs.

Suddenly there's a booming, and a cracking as, a short distance off, a pressure ridge is thrown up, running toward the ship as if a giant animal is burrowing beneath the ice.

The ship shudders, heeling over several degrees - Worsley hangs on as the mast whips back and forth - the dogs bark and the men grasp for handholds as a hummock rises, two ice floes shoving against each other. In the crow's nest, Worsley steadies himself, lifts the spyglass and sees:

Ice. Ice. Ice. Something dark. Ice. Ice. Whips back to the dark thing. Focuses ... a thin, open lead snaking into the distance.

WORSLEY

*Open sea! Open sea ahead!*

**EXT. THE PACK - LATER**

A timber saw rips into the thick ice -

The ship's crew on the pack, mobilized at the bow, attacking the pack with picks and chisels - Shackleton and Wild working a two-man saw - Crean, swinging a pick like John Henry, ice chips flying.

The men, most confident they will soon reach the open water ahead, start a chant as Hurley films them working. Green and Blackboro wave to the camera.

HURLEY

No. No grins. Act like we're trying to stave off doom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton glances over with less than the general glee, knowing better than most that is what they're doing.

*put*  
*they're*

**EXT. THE PACK - LATER**

The crew still slaving away. Sweat freezing on their clothes. A meager channel to show for their effort. The Boss calls to Worsley -

SHACKLETON  
*Start ramming.*

**THE BOW OF THE SHIP**

crashes into the ice - smashes through a few hard yards before it's stopped.

**EXT. THE PACK - NIGHT**

Brutal cold. Clark and Wordie, the scientists, struggling with their tools, teeth chattering -

CLARK  
The sea's f-f-f-freezing as fast as we can clear it.

*= Cam on*

WORDIE  
S-s-s-simply b-b-b-beastly.

**EXT. THE PACK - MORNING**

As the crew, including Shackleton and Wild, toil at the bow, Hurley films. No one now is smiling or waving to the camera.

**EXT. ENDURANCE / PACK - LATER**

In a small channel, the bow rams the pack again -

The ship backing up, crashing into the ice to little effect -

Backing up again, black smoke belching, ramming, banging, ramming again -

**EXT. THE PACK - TWILIGHT**

The crew toiling on. Exhausted. Marston drops. Shackleton glances up. Dr. Macklin hurries over, but Marston says he's all right and picks up his axe. Shackleton watches a moment more, glances to Wild, then announces -

SHACKLETON  
*Pack it in.*

**INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT**

Maps and sextant readings. Shackleton, Wild, Worsley and Greenstreet huddled around the desk.

WORSLEY

It doesn't make sense. I've checked it three times. Maybe I -

SHACKLETON

You're not mistaken, we are moving. As much as it appears to be, this isn't land - it's a floe - and it's being carried by the wind and currents wherever the wind and currents care to carry it.

Go for it

GREENSTREET

Northwest.

WORSLEY

We were closer three days ago. Within sixty miles of Vahsel Bay and the continent. Now we're -  
(rechecks his navigation calculations)  
- just shy of a hundred miles away.

Shackleton steps away to think. The others watch. Only Wild knows what he's thinking. Ninety-seven miles is how close he came the last time. Here he is again.

WORSLEY

What do you want to do?

Shackleton doesn't say, if indeed he knows.

WORSLEY

What if you set out from here?

(pause)

Take what supplies you need for the additional distance. It's not *that* much further.

(pause)

If you wait and we keep drifting away, you may never get the chance again (to) -

SHACKLETON

(cutting him off)

A hundred miles over hummocky ice broken by leads of water? Pretend for a moment you only lack experience, man, and not common sense!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He holds Worsley in his contemptible stare, then turns and leaves. Wild calmly puffs on his pipe.

**EXT. ON DECK - LATER - NIGHT**

Wild finds Shackleton alone at the bow looking out at the horizon in the moonlit night. He seems perfectly calm now. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

Here we are again, huh Frank?

(pause)

And it's just as beautiful as before, isn't it.

(Wild nods; pause)

I was trying to tell Emily what I was thinking last time ... at the fateful moment, and I couldn't remember.

That was it.

They appreciate the view a few moments in silence before -

WILD

This is different.

(pause)

I must lack experience and common sense, too, because I know we can make it.

SHACKLETON

So do I ... But could *they*?

The rest of the crew left behind on the boat.

SHACKLETON

How would that be looked upon back home? If we made it and they didn't.

What would they think of that?

(pause)

What would we?

Wild knows that's what he was thinking when he took Worsley to task. Nods.

WILD

We're staying with the ship then?

Shackleton doesn't say. Looks back out at the horizon and almost shrugs. He doesn't know.

SHACKLETON

We're so close ... again.

**INT. WARDROOM - LATER - NIGHT**

All hands are gathered to hear Shackleton's plans. In a moment, he strides in with Wild and stands before the men like a British general, all confidence and no unnecessary words -

SHACKLETON

The possibility of getting free of the ice in this temperature can no longer be seriously considered. We shall therefore winter in the pack. The drift will carry us north, eventually to open sea. We shall then return to South Georgia, catch our breath, resupply and embark on our journey anew.

Some of the men are relieved, as if merely by saying it, Shackleton has willed it; others remain skeptical. One of those speaks up -

ORDE-LEES

There was a Norwegian crew caught in the Polar Night. They say -

SHACKLETON

Norwegians? Are we Norwegians? Are there any Norwegians here? Slipped on board with Blackboro perhaps; hiding in a locker at this very moment? We are *British*, sir, to a man.

Again some nod, some don't.

SHACKLETON

Right. Now, there's a great deal of work to be done. And it will be done equally by officers and seamen alike. And scientists.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - DAY**

The scientists struggle to cut blocks of ice from around the ship's rudder and, moaning, load them onto a sledge.

The sledge is pulled by others to where a group is building 'dogloos,' the blocks of ice stacked up and water poured over them, freezing like cement.

A little further away, Macklin, Wild, Hurley and Greenstreet are in various states of disarray attempting to harness teams of dogs to a choir of barking and snarling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton has taken Crean aside for a private talk. The huge mariner is not an intellectual.

CREAN

Don't care for dogs much, sir.

SHACKLETON

Worsley doesn't care for the cold, look where he is.

CREAN

I just mean, someone else, I'm sure, sir, would be better suited.

SHACKLETON

I disagree; I've seen how you communicate with them.

CREAN

Sir?

SHACKLETON

Barking at them.

CREAN

Oh, no, that's meant to keep them away from me.

SHACKLETON

And they understand that. They do keep away from you. You see my point.

Crean doesn't. Stares at Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

I need one more man to train a team and I have confidence you'll rise to the occasion.

CREAN

(pause)

Is this an order?

SHACKLETON

(thinks)

Yes.

Crean nods, resigned, and lumbers off toward the dogs. Shackleton watches after him.

*Wagot to the end*

**EXT. ON THE ICE - ANOTHER DAY**

Vincent and McCarthy, armed with rifles, are stalking some unseen prey a good distance away from the ship.

VINCENT  
Where'd he go?

MCCARTHY  
I don't know. There's not too many places to hide.

*Wagot to the end  
SE's the dog  
L's*

They come around a hummock and are suddenly cheek to jowl with a roaring sea lion. They stumble, drop the rifles. The seal lion takes off. The men recover and give chase. Gain on him. Drop to one knee to fire as -

Suddenly, directly between the hunters and prey, the floe erupts as a black and white snout with a monstrous gaping maw smashes through the ice and grabs the sea lion -

Blood sprays across the ice. Vincent and McCarthy, gasping for breath, stare as the killer whale sinks back down through the ice with its meal. Stunned, they can't move.

SHACKLETON O/S  
(from the ship; echoing)  
Bear in mind, lads: To a killer whale looking up through the ice, the shape of  
( a man differs little from that of a seal. )

*ru*

Vincent and McCarthy rush back stumbling toward the ship.

**EXT. ON THE ICE - DAYS LATER**

The dog drivers are feeding meat to their teams, Crean more gingerly than the others.

WILD  
She's not going to bite your hand off, Crean.

CREAN  
How do you know?

He finishes with the feeding and, as he's meant to do, counts his team to make sure none of his dogs - which all look the same to him - have wandered off. He comes up one short. Starts over. Comes up short again.

He looks around. Thinks he sees a shadow move in one of the dogloos. Trudges over to it. Looks inside. Sees a dog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREAN

What're you doing?

(pause)

Get out here or you're gonna go hungry.

(pause)

Be that way.

He trudges away. Then trudges back. Looks in again.

CREAN

What's the matter, something wrong with you?

From inside the igloo, we can't see what he sees. His eyes widen. Suddenly he's up, shouting -

CREAN

*Dr. Macklin! Something's wrong!*

**EXT. ON THE ICE - LATER**

Crean sitting alone on the ice. Dr. Macklin trudging toward him, grave expression on his face.

MACKLIN

Come here.

Crean follows him to the dogloo. Macklin gestures for him to take a look inside. Crean, more and more like a dog each day, gets down on all fours and peers in. From the deck -

SHACKLETON

*Are you a father then, Tom?*

Inside the dogloo, four pups being licked clean by their mother while suckling. Crean stares.

CREAN

Bloody miracle, in't it?

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - TWILIGHT**

The sun dips below the horizon. Alone on the deck, Shackleton and Wild watch and wait for something more to happen. The sun reappears briefly, then dips again out of sight.

SHACKLETON

Well, that's the last we'll see of it for a while.

Their glance is drawn to birds flying north across the sky to escape the polar winter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORDE-LEES

It's like returning to the Ice Age.

Shackleton sighs and turns away.

**INT. WARDROOM - WEEKS LATER - NIGHT**

The space is decked in bunting and flags. Shackleton emerges from behind curtains onto a makeshift stage lined with gas lights, and addresses the crew seated around.

SHACKLETON

Gentlemen. I feel I can claim with complete certainty that tonight we offer you a revue of the finest theatrics to be had anywhere on the continent!

He steps aside and the curtain rises to reveal a band - Hussey on violin, others on harmonicas - banging out a dance hall tune as Greenstreet, Vincent and McCarthy, attired in skirts and wigs, high-kick their way across the stage.

The appreciative audience applauds and claps along. Crean, though, can't; his arms are full of furballs - the month-old pups - as their mother lies curled up at his feet.

MUSIC hall  
MUSIC

Cher...

**EXT. THE PACK - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

The music echoes out faintly across the ice. Countless stars cast a shimmer over the endless pack. A fluttering suddenly blurs past foreground. Penguins fleeing to the north.

From high above then we see them, and the *Endurance*, tiny in the distance. Then we're descending, traveling fast over the slick ice, racing just ahead of a sound, trying to outrun it as builds in intensity like a stampede -

Kane

It's a hundred-foot wall of wind-driven snow, roiling over the pack, gaining speed, heading directly for the ship. We can now hear the laughter coming from inside it as -

The avalanche of polar wind slams into the *Endurance*, snapping at her rigging as -

**INT. WARDROOM - CONTINUED**

The festivities instantly cease as the shudder rumbles through the room. It fades away and everyone waits, as with an earthquake, to see if that was it or if there's more. Worsley stares at the walls, shaken, confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILD

The wind's shifting the pack.

Worsley, unsure if the information is meant to make him feel better or worse, nods.

Shackleton looks from face to frightened face as another rumble approaches. It hits, almost knocking him from his feet, but he climbs back up onto the stage -

SHACKLETON

Gentlemen, can I have your attention?  
I have an announcement to make. No, it's not evacuation instructions. I've been asked to set an artistic example.

Heads turn from studying the walls to him, which was his intention, to distract them from their fears.

SHACKLETON

Instead I will sing.

He whispers the tune he wants to Hussey.

HUSSEY

What key, Boss?

SHACKLETON

Key? Oh, that won't matter in the least, believe me.

Hussey begins. Shackleton clears his throat and 'sings.' Another jolt hits the ship, but fewer men pay attention to it this time.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - ANOTHER NIGHT**

A blinding snowstorm engulfs the ship, swallowing it from sight.

**INT. OFFICERS QUARTERS - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

Hurley and Hussey busy themselves scrubbing the floor. Other men lay about their bunks, reading or writing, playing cards, trying not hear the howling wind that strums at the ship's rigging.

**INT. FORECASTLE - SAME TIME**

The sailors here, too, on edge. To the sound of the wind is added that of a knife whittling wood; McNeish carving some kind of figure. In the bunk above him, Vincent stares at the ceiling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VINCENT

McNeish? What were you saying about those Norwegians? Caught in the polar winter? Did they starve?

MCNEISH

No. It was the constant night. No daylight for months on end. They lost their minds.

Blackboro lies in his bunk, wide-eyed, motionless. Vincent, in his, nods to himself.

VINCENT

Oh.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S CABIN - NIGHT**

A knock. The door cracks open revealing Hurley.

HURLEY

You wanted to see me, Boss.

SHACKLETON

Come in, come in. Something to drink?

HURLEY

No, thank you.

SHACKLETON

I wanted to talk to you about your photographic lights.

HURLEY

You want me to set them up in here for another portrait?

SHACKLETON

No.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - NIGHT**

Shackleton and Hurley are the only ones topside. The wind has stopped, but still the night is inhospitable. Hurley is clamoring down from the rigging. Drags wires across to an acetylene generator. Connects them and throws a switch -

From a distance, the ship and the area it's in suddenly lights up in a beautiful, welcoming glow.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - LATER - NIGHT**

Everyone is topside now, on the deck and on the ice, bathing in the light. The phonograph has been brought out and is playing a scratchy, but pleasant song

Several men play with the dogs. Crean is especially fond of his pups, which are now large enough to run alongside his team.

Other men are kicking a soccer ball around, slipping on the ice, as Shackleton watches satisfied - for the moment - from the deck.

**INT. FORECASTLE - ANOTHER NIGHT**

Wind and pressure again. Men trying to sleep, listening to scraping at hull under their heads like an animal trying to get in.

McNeish finishes carving a whale and sets it down beside several other figures he's managed to finish over the long winter.

**INT. GALLEY - NIGHT**

Blackboro washing pots and pans. Shackleton comes in with his empty coffee cup.

BLACKBORO

Let me get that for you, Boss.

Before he can, the ship suddenly shudders. Blackboro drops the pot. More than anyone else on board, he seems to be the one most likely to suffer the fate of McNeish's Norwegians.

SHACKLETON

Sorry you stowed aboard with the great Ernest Shackleton now, I imagine.

BLACKBORO

No, sir. No, I just - I was feeling today - I *think* it was today - I can't tell anymore - that I - don't have what it takes to make it through this.

SHACKLETON

Ah.

BLACKBORO

I look around at the crew, at their courage, and I know I (don't) -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Like who?

BLACKBORO

McNeish. Lees.

Shackleton's groan cuts him off, confusing the boy.

SHACKLETON

You're a fine cook's assistant, but an exceedingly poor judge of character - which makes me wonder about this judgement of yourself. McNeish and Lees?

BLACKBORO

They have great confidence in themselves.

SHACKLETON

Yeah. Like the mouse in the tavern.

Blackboro doesn't know what he means.

SHACKLETON

One night the mouse found a leaky barrel of beer - drank all he could, finished up - twirled his whiskers and looked around arrogantly. 'Now then,' he said, 'Where's that damned cat.'

His look to the boy says, Right?

SHACKLETON

Fortunately, for all of us, cowardice and courage aren't measured by feelings, but actions ... When the time comes to act, I know you will.

BLACKBORO

I wish I was sure of it.

SHACKLETON

You don't have to be. That's the other fortunate thing.

Shackleton claps him on the shoulder and turns to leave, the empty cup still in his hand.

BLACKBORO

Didn't you want some coffee?

SHACKLETON

No.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - NIGHT**

Hurley's lights are on again, allowing the men to work outside. Some are cleaning or repairing the ship. Others feeding the dogs.

The scientists have managed to poke a small hole to the water below and are presently bottling some in their specimen jars. Shackleton, bored, wanders over to have a look.

SHACKLETON

I see you're keeping busy. Any startling discoveries?

CLARK

We're measuring the plankton in the water. Plankton, of course, is the fundamental source of life in the sea and -

SHACKLETON

Excellent. Carry on -

CLARK

The plankton nourishes the smaller fish, which the larger fish, in turn, of course, feed on, which, of course, nourish the even larger fish -

Shackleton isn't listening anymore. He was just trying to make conversation. If he wanted a *lecture* he would have stayed at university longer. Now he just wants to leave -

CLARK

The plankton measurements are increasing. Which means, of course - I'm sure you can guess.

Is he waiting for Shackleton to answer? Is this a test? Perhaps, Shackleton feels, he *is* back in school.

SHACKLETON

I can't.

CLARK

Oh, come now.

Shackleton has no idea, and furthermore, wishes he'd never come over. He certainly never will *again*.

SHACKLETON

Honestly I can't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARK  
Plankton? The circle of life ...

*like this scene.*

SHACKLETON  
I don't know.

Clark sighs as if his worst student has disappointed him yet again.

CLARK  
Wherever we find plankton, Mr. Shackleton, we know for certain one thing: the other creatures - the birds, and seals that nourish us when we're stuck in the ice, through no fault of our own, for an entire winter - are never far behind.

Oh ... Yes. Shackleton sees. It's actually good news the scientists have for once. Clark holds up one of his dredged-water specimen jars and smiles.

CLARK  
Spring is almost here.

**EXT. THE SHIP'S DECK - DAWN**

The men stare at a slowly pinking sky. The sun peeks over the horizon.

SHACKLETON  
Good morning, boys.

The men applaud and shake hands, then watch as the sun sinks back out of sight again.

SHACKLETON  
Good night, boys.

**INT. WARDROOM - MORNING**

Blackboro sweeps at clumps of hair on the floor.

All around him the men are giving each other haircuts, trimming beards, making themselves presentable.

**EXT. THE SHIP / THE PACK - MORNING**

Out on the ice next to the ship, the entire group poses for a photograph. For the first time in ages, Hurley is able to make the exposure without the help of his lamps; the overcast sky providing him with enough natural light.

**EXT. THE PACK - LATER - DAY**

At the meteorology 'station,' Hussey consults his equipment. Around him, the pack is dotted with the crew engaged in various activities -

Vincent and McCarthy are poking around the outside of the ship with poles, pushing through thawing ice -

Crean is on the ice wrestling playfully with his dogs. He gathers the pups in his arms and poses with them for Hurley's camera -

Shackleton, Wild and Worsley are planted in chairs on the ice like beachcombers, smoking and sipping tea, looking very content. They turn to a happy voice as it announces to all:

HUSSEY

*We're above twenty degrees for the first  
time in four months.*

Just as the men begin to celebrate the good news, the ground suddenly trembles, squeezing the ship upward. It's like an earthquake, everything shaking violently. The dogs howl as the floe begins cracking like a mirror, swallowing anything that happens to be in the wrong place -

SHACKLETON

*Everyone on board! Get the dogs!*

All hands running across the shuddering floe, the dogs wailing as they're herded up the gangway. Pressure ridges spring up, demolishing several dogloos -

Crean hurries with his pups, but one jumps down and runs from the ship, ice opening up in its wake. His arms full with the others, Crean doesn't know what to do -

The last pup stumbling ahead of the cracking ice. Macklin swoops it up and runs with it for the ship, jumping over the ditches of water on the way -

He and Crean are the last men up the gangway as the ship lurches violently sideways, ice battering her sides.

CREAN

*Thank you.*

The remaining dogloos are crushed to powder.

SHACKLETON

*The rudder! Keep the ice off the rudder!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vincent and McCarthy rush to the stern, poling at the ice.  
Mighty blocks rise with the pressure -

The ship rocks. Suddenly it's flung 30 degrees to port.  
Gear, sledges, kennels and howling dogs are thrown around -

Worsley hurries to the lee rail and watches the ship being  
rolled till the lifeboats are nearly touching the ice -

Green, panic-stricken, looks like he might jump -

GREEN

*We'll all be crushed -*

Shackleton grabs him before he can leap -

SHACKLETON

Steady, man, you're scaring the dogs.

**INT. BELOW DECKS - MOMENTS LATER**

Dimly-lit by lamplight, Shackleton and Wild rush down a  
corridor.

SHACKLETON

If she can rise above the ice she'll be  
all right. If not -

MCNEISH

(appearing before them)

*We've got water rising in the hold.*

**INT. ENGINE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Water is rising here too. Shackleton and Wild arrive just as  
the firemen are about to get out -

SHACKLETON

We're going to need steam to operate  
the bilge pumps.

STEVENSON

If we take a hard knock the boilers could  
explode.

SHACKLETON

I'd like you to try.

**EXT. THE DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

Shackleton and Wild arrive on deck where men are at work on  
the hand pumps while the ship screams -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Take some of the boys onto the ice and  
cut the lines of weakness.

**EXT. ON THE ICE - LATER**

Wild and several other attack the ice around the ship with  
picks and saws -

**INT. BELOW DECKS - SAME TIME**

Freezing water pours in on McNeish, McCarthy and Vincent  
building a cofferdam to seal off the damaged sternpost area -

**ENGINE ROOM**

The water is inches deep. The iron floor plate buckle,  
overriding each other with loud clangs -

**ON DECK**

Shackleton, Worsley and others work the pumps -

**BELOW DECK**

McNeish and the others caulk the cofferdam with torn strips  
of blankets -

**ENGINE ROOM**

The terrified firemen courageously keep stoking the boilers  
as the water rises -

**ON THE ICE**

Pressure ridges form, lifting huge blocks of ice very near  
Wild and the others with their picks -

**ON DECK**

The ship is twisted fore and aft between two heavy floes,  
bending like a bow. Planking opens up four inches on the  
starboard side. Terrifying explosive sounds -

**BELOW DECKS**

McNeish and the others are plugging leaks when the sides  
buckle and give. A giant spear of ice plunges in on them.  
They rush out as the ship screams in agony -

**SHACKLETON'S CABIN**

Wild appears at the door, twisted off its hinges. Inside, Shackleton is writing as everything on his desk moves. His mirror shatters.

WILD

Looks like we've taken it in the neck  
this time, Boss.

SHACKLETON

(resigned)

Perhaps it'll make for a good story some  
day.

He closes his log book and begins gathering his things.

**EXT. SHIP'S DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

Hundreds of miles of ice being shoved and crunched like a  
jigsaw puzzle that doesn't fit.

Suddenly the deck buckles and the stern is thrown upward 20  
feet. The rudder and sternpost are torn out of the ship.

**ENGINE ROOM**

Wild arrives to find the firemen still working gallantly  
though the ship's sides have bowed in several inches.

WILD

Let down your fires, boys. We're  
taking to the ice.

**INT. BELOW DECKS - MOMENTS LATER**

As the men clamor up topside, Shackleton moves through the  
twisting, groaning underbelly of the ship making sure no one  
is being left behind injured.

For a moment he looks at - and admires - the 8-foot thick  
center beam - then watches incredulously as, defying all laws  
of nature he knows, it begins to slowly *bend* -

And it's then that he sees Blackboro, on the other side  
of it, watching it too, motionless with fear. Playing down  
the danger they're both in -

SHACKLETON

Let's go, son.

Blackboro doesn't move, afraid he'll be crushed if he tries  
to pass under the beam and it breaks. Calmly -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

That time we talked about has come.

Blackboro shakes his head no as his eyes watch the beam. Shackleton's dart to it, too, as it keeps bending -

SHACKLETON

Anytime now.

The seconds pass with the excruciating accompaniment of sounds of wood beginning to splinter, but Shackleton remains calm, waiting.

Suddenly, Blackboro sprints toward him under the quivering beam. Shackleton grabs him and they hurry out -

**EXT. ON THE ICE - LATER**

Things have calmed down. The men and dogs, surrounded by everything worth salvaging from the ship, stand on the ice, watching it writhe in the floe.

The only man still on board is Shackleton, raising the Union Jack on a mizzen gaff. (He takes a look at it flapping in the breeze, then at the men watching him down below on the floe.)

**EXT. ICE FLOE - LATER - TWILIGHT**

Dogs, sledges, lumber, provisions and the lifeboats lay scattered about a hundred yards from the dying ship.

The men, gathered, more or less, as an audience, watch the inevitable - the ship going down - as Hurley films it.

There's a sudden shudder and a cry that almost sounds like an animal as the *Endurance* tips, bow first. In a moment it's sinking, swallowed whole by the black deep, the last thing to disappear beneath the ice, the British flag, pulled down as if by a hand ...

It's gone. Silence. Shackleton walks slowly away.

He stares out at the endless ice. A single choir voice speaks to him as he gazes out, joined then by other boy's voices echoing ghostly.

They seem to be telling him he could still attempt to cross the ice. They'd all die, of course, but at least they would die trying, and like Scott, be immortalized for it.

He turns to look at the endless ice the other way, beyond the despondent congregation of men. They could, he supposes, try going that way, too, die, and be immortalized.

- Excellent  
(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Or they could stay where they are, huddled at the spot the ship went down, and simply wait for death here, and be immortalized.

The choir fades as he slowly heads back toward the men, who he knows await his instructions. Unfortunately, he isn't sure himself what they are. Eventually, Wild dares to ask the obvious -

WILD

What now, Boss?

The answer to that would also be the answer to his life. If only he knew. He looks from face to anxious face, pausing briefly on Blackboro's, in whose, like Wild's, he sees nothing but complete trust.

SHACKLETON

Now - ?

And he decides at that moment, knowing it's the last thing he wanted -

SHACKLETON

We go home.

The quiet proclamation is met with silence. Perhaps they didn't hear him. Perhaps they *did*, and that's the problem. Shackleton stands a little straighter.

SHACKLETON

Right. Assignments, Mr. Wild. Bring your ledger.

WILD

Aye, sir.

If he can find it. He rummages through the debris on the ice. Meanwhile, the men look to the next most senior among them - since Wild too has clearly taken leave of his senses - to speak for them.

WORSLEY

(carefully)

Sir Ernest?

SHACKLETON

Yes, Captain.

WORSLEY

I'm not sure how we would go about doing that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON

That's why you have me along. A little quicker, Mr. Wild.

WORSLEY

For one thing -

SHACKLETON

Yes.

WORSLEY

We have no ship.

SHACKLETON

No *ship*? Nonsense. We have *three* of them.

**EXT. THE ICE - DAY**

The words *James Caird* come into frame, then the rest of the lifeboat its painted on, then six men - harnessed like dogs - dragging the second boat across the ice.

Dropping back shows the entire primitive slave-like procession: the men pulling the boats; others on food- and supplies-laden sledges pulled by teams of dogs; individual men dragging sledges themselves.

**EXT. THE ICE - TWILIGHT**

The men have pitched tents in a temporary camp. Blankets are gathered from the sledges. Pots steam over open fires fueled with planks taken from the *Endurance*.

In one of the tents, Shackleton, like a battle commander, confers with his lieutenants Wild and Worsley over some maps spread about.

SHACKLETON

Three hundred and fifty miles to the northwest lies Deception Island. How much of that is ice, we have no way of knowing. But if we can make it, food at least will be less of an issue.

Shackleton's two least favorite crew members - the high-born Orde-Lees, and the irritable McNeish - approach, but the Boss ignores them.

SHACKLETON

It's uninhabited but there *is* an old chapel there, built by whalers. That's important to me, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MCNEISH

Figured it would be, given dire enough circumstances.

Shackleton looks up from the maps to see McNeish standing there, smiling smugly as if he always knew once things got bad, Shackleton wouldn't be so cavalier about his faith.

SHACKLETON

I meant we could tear it down for firewood, McNeish; and I'll expect you to help. ✓

McNeish can do nothing more than stare.

SHACKLETON

Was there something else?

ORDE-LEES

We have only eighteen sleeping bags. For twenty-eight men.

SHACKLETON

Put the men's names in a hat and we'll draw for them. The others will be issued what blankets we have.

(Orde-Lees doesn't leave)

What.

ORDE-LEES

You don't think disbursement according to seniority would be more appropriate?

SHACKLETON

If I did I would have said so. Do what I told you - and leave my name out of it. I'll be fine with a blanket.

Orde-Lees stares, nods. Leaves with McNeish. Shackleton returns to the matter at hand.

SHACKLETON

How much ground did we cover today? Five miles, you think?

WILD

More like three.

WORSLEY

More like two.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SHACKLETON

We have to travel lighter. Tell each man he's to limit himself to two changes of clothes and two pounds of personal gear and I'll tell them why.

**EXT. TEMPORARY CAMP - MORNING**

Shackleton stands before the men.

SHACKLETON

One can travel in the ice burdened with equipment to meet every contingency - or sacrifice such preparedness for the sake of speed ... In case you're wondering, Scott believed in the former.

Shackleton tosses a gold watch onto the ice. Then a gold cigarette case and several gold sovereigns. ✓

**LATER - A BIG MOUND OF STUFF ON THE ICE**

as it's added to: axes, chronometers, an ophthalmoscope, socks, lenses, jerseys, chisels, saws, telescopes, McNeish's carvings, Hussey's violin case, books -

Hurley films the growing pile, then removes the film magazine and dumps the camera, keeping only one small still camera -

Shackleton watches as Marston tosses away some small framed photos of his family. And Clark, debating whether or not to throw in his bagpipes.

Shackleton makes the decision for him, taking it out of his hands and throwing it onto the pile with a wheeze.

Lastly, Shackleton throws out a Bible.

MCNEISH

Bloody bad luck that.

Shackleton glances over at him, then turns away.

**EXT. THE ICE FLOE - DAY**

Shackleton and Wild lead the way with a team of dogs hauling a sledge, carving a path through the ridges and hummocks.

Behind them come the other dog teams and their sledges, working hard in the deepening snow as the men struggle to keep the sledges from overturning.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

In the rear, Worsley leads the boat-sledges, which, sinking in the snow, force the harnessed men to strain forward nearly parallel to the ground.

Worsley's concern grows, especially when the boats bump and scrape over chunks of ice.

**EXT. THE ICE FLOE - LATER - DAY**

They've reached terrain they can no longer see beyond. McNeish's look to Shackleton says he brought this miserable development on himself by throwing out the Good Book.

Blackboro, having scouted ahead, returns over the mounds of ice and snow and, out of breath, reports to the Boss -

BLACKBORO

It's pretty rough.

SHACKLETON

And then? After that?

Blackboro is about to say *'after that, more of it,'* but catches a look from Shackleton. Worsley catches it, too, but no one else.

BLACKBORO

And then ... then it's flat again beyond.

It's a complete lie, but it's the one Shackleton wanted. Surely he told the boy beforehand, whatever you do, don't come back bearing hopeless news.

SHACKLETON

Good. We'll camp here and attack this little rough area in the morning.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY CAMP - TWILIGHT**

A cold wind breathes through the camp. Depression settles over the men like inescapable weather. Hussey, sitting alone staring at the sky, senses someone behind him and turns to find Shackleton standing there, the violin case in his mittened hand. Hussey is confused.

HUSSEY

I threw that away.

SHACKLETON

And I wondered why. I thought I said unnecessary items.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

Music is not unnecessary - except of course in the case of Clark's bagpipe-playing.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY CAMP - LATER - EVENING**

The general mood has improved greatly with the addition of Hussey's fine violin playing. The occasional laugh even cuts through the music, bridge games and quiet conversation. McNeish begins a new carving.

**INT. TENT - SAME TIME**

Worsley lets himself in Shackleton's tent. The Boss, writing in his diary, doesn't look up.

WORSLEY

I went ahead and took a look at the terrain myself.

SHACKLETON

Ummm. Did you. And what did you see?

WORSLEY

That we'll damage the boats, perhaps irreparably, dragging them over it.

Shackleton finishes a sentence in his diary, blows on the ink and looks up.

SHACKLETON

Do you have an alternate suggestion?

WORSLEY

Wait.

SHACKLETON

For what?

WORSLEY

For the floe to thaw.

SHACKLETON

How long will that take? Of course, neither of us can say, can we. It could never happen; this floe could be ... ancestral. Perhaps we should name it.

WORSLEY

I still say we should wait.

SHACKLETON

And I don't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton dips his pen back in the ink well. Worsley isn't satisfied. Doesn't leave. As Shackleton writes -

SHACKLETON

Captain, look at the men.

(neither looks)

They think they're on their way to an island and that everything's going to be all right. They think they have a hand in shaping their destiny.

WORSLEY

They *'think'* they're on their way to an island?

SHACKLETON

Can I guarantee it? No. Can I give them hope? Yes. If you take that away, if you ask them to do nothing but wait - indefinitely - they'll succumb to depression.

WORSLEY

Destroy the boats and they'll succumb to death.

They consider one another in a silence. Shackleton glances back down to his work, dismissing Worsley.

WORSLEY

I don't lie to my men.

SHACKLETON

Then that's a failing on *your* part.

Worsley leaves. Shackleton looks up, watches after him.

**EXT. THE CAMP - NEXT MORNING**

The men are loading the tents and supplies to trudge on, harnessing the dogs and themselves to the sledges and boats, when Shackleton appears on an icy rise to address them -

SHACKLETON

Men. I've decided we're going to stay here and wait for some of this damn ice to thaw.

*That's a good thing!!*

A cheer erupts from the ranks. The relieved boat-towers happily tear away their harnesses. Shackleton's glance finds Worsley, who truly can't believe he was listened to.

(CONTINUED)

*Why don't  
we change his*

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

We should now set about making the camp hospitable and inviting to any and all visitors. Mr. Wild has the assignments.

*Why?  
Lipton to  
Woods key*

Another roaring cheer of approval. But Shackleton, as he comes down off the rise, to Wild looks less than certain he's made the right decision.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

The Victrola sends scratchy music out across the ice.

The idea of permanence - even temporary permanence - cheers the men as they set about staking tents, constructing new dog-loos, hammering together primitive lean-to structures from planking salvaged and carried from the ship.

Green and Blackboro meanwhile consolidate and arrange the food supplies. While it appears quite adequate at the moment - there are a lot of mouths to feed, both human and canine.

SHACKLETON O/S

Thank you, gentlemen.

Leaving one group of men staking a tent, Shackleton drags a sledge with some books on it to another group doing the same.

SHACKLETON

Any donations for the Imperial Trans-Antarctic Lending Library?

Some of the men happily rummage through their personal stuff to contribute a book or two.

SHACKLETON

Cards will be issued and, alas, late-  
~~return~~ fees rigorously imposed.  
(they add their books)  
Thank you, gentlemen.

McNeish is only man not participating in the book drive, watching Shackleton unhappily.

MCNEISH

I thought you threw away your books.

SHACKLETON

I threw away a book, McNeish. I kept a couple others I like more.

*them*

**EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT**

A filthy sheet of sail cloth serves as a screen for Hurley's magic-lantern show. The men are gathered before it, shivering as they stare enviously at images the photographer took on an earlier journey - this one to some palm tree dotted island.

HURLEY

Ah. A beach on Java. Temperature never below 80. Lovely.

*84*  
*frustrated now!*

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

*62*

A light wind blows as Wild, Worsley and Shackleton stand around Hussey's meteorological station.

HUSSEY

It should be warming up by now, but it isn't. The temperature's dropped again.  
(Shackleton throws Worsley a look)

It's the decreasing barometric readings, though, that concern me more.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - TWILIGHT**

A blizzard. The lean-to structures blowing apart. Men fighting to keep from losing the tents. Books sliding across the ice, the wind tearing out pages. The dogs howling.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - ANOTHER DAY**

The storm has passed, but it's still quite cold. The men are rebuilding the camp with much less good cheer; this time it's more like work.

SHACKLETON

What's the time, Frank? I stupidly threw out my watch.

*Reply: Really?*  
*Does it matter?*  
*What time is it?*

Wild fishes around for his.

**THE 'GALLEY' - LATER**

Shackleton approaches Green and Blackboro re-shelving the supplies scattered about by the blizzard. The hammering from the working men echoes.

SHACKLETON

Charlie. I want the men to have tea exactly at four each day, whether we can afford that luxury or not.

CONTINUED:

GREEN

Sure, Boss.

SHACKLETON

The longer we're away from civilization,  
the more we need it.

(pause)

A proper tea. With cakes.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

It must be four o'clock. The men, looking very civilized indeed, dot the white landscape with steaming cups of tea and cakes. Wild and Worsley are even playing chess.

WORSLEY

You never doubt him, do you.

WILD

No.

Wild studies a move. Worsley studies him. Eventually -

WORSLEY

I'm not one for such blind faith.

WILD

Oh, it's not blind. It's from long experience.

Wild still doesn't move. Regards the many traps Worsley has devised on the board.

WILD

This expedition is a walk in Kensington Gardens compared to when we tried for the Pole. A thousand miles on foot we went. At seventy below. I wanted to die.

(pause)

We were down to three thin biscuits a day. Can you imagine that?

(pause)

And that man forced upon me his one breakfast biscuit and would have given me another had I allowed him. You can never know what that meant to me. I'll never forget it. A thousand pounds Sterling wouldn't have bought that biscuit. That's the Boss.

A sudden shout takes him out of his reverie -

*Regey's park  
Hyde park  
St. James' Park*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CREAN O/S

Hey -

Wild, Worsley and everyone else look to where Crean lies flat on his stomach, peering into one of the dogloos.

SHACKLETON

Are you a *grandfather* then, Tom?

Crean pulls himself to his knees, smiling and holds up four fingers.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT**

The sail cloth is the curtain of a stage now. Shackleton stands in front of it on the ice, lit up by gas lamps, and addresses the audience -

SHACKLETON

And now, from Manchester, by way of Buenos Aires and parts unknown, making her first appearance on the Imperial Stage, the lovely, the talented - *Miss Perce Blackboro*.

The crowd applauds and hollers, but no one comes out. Shackleton slightly parts the curtain.

SHACKLETON

You're on.

BLACKBORO O/S

I'd rather not, sir.

SHACKLETON

Listen to that reception.

BLACKBORO O/S

No, sir, please.

SHACKLETON

Come on.

Blackboro finally steps out dressed as a girl. And he looks like a girl - clean-shaven, with eye make-up - standing there awkwardly on the stage. The audience is beside itself.

Shackleton nods to Hurley who begins to bow a traditional Irish love song on his violin. And Blackboro begins to sing.

His voice is *beautiful*, high and perfectly pitched; hardly the voice of a man.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A hush falls over the crowd as he sings, reminding them - which was certainly not the intention - of the women they left behind.

Everyone is still as the voice speaks to them in its melancholy lilt. Indeed the only things moving anywhere at this moment in the whole of Antarctica it seems, are Crean's new pups cradled in his arms.

As Shackleton looks out over the plaintive faces of the crowd, even he feels the tug of homesickness. Perhaps this wasn't such a good idea having Blackboro sing ...

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

Shackleton walks to where the scientists sit hunched over the chessboard. They glance up briefly, noting his arrival, then back down again without a word. Maybe he'll go away. It kills Shackleton to do it, but he admits -

SHACKLETON

I'm curious about the plankton.

CLARK

What would you like to know about it, Sir Ernest?

SHACKLETON

What the levels are at.

CLARK

The levels? I wouldn't know. We haven't checked for quite some time now.

SHACKLETON

And why is that?

CLARK

Because there isn't any. Nothing lives here.

Not once did he look up. Shackleton glances off to see his hunters - Wild, McCarthy and Vincent - returning toward camp in the distance. Their rifles are shouldered and their sledge empty. Shackleton looks away ... to the dogs lounging around the camp.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

The chow line. Orde-Lees, as is his custom, at the head of it. Blackboro ladles him half a bowl of stew, then glances to the next man in line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ORDE-LEES  
Care to fill it up, mate?

BLACKBORO  
Can't. Rations are cut by half  
beginning today.

*1/2 rations  
Boss's order.*

Orde-Lees has trouble comprehending that, a man of his station.

ORDE-LEES  
What the hell are you talking about?

BLACKBORO  
Boss's orders.

Orde-Lees trudges off, no doubt to have a word with the Boss, passing Crean, who's feeding his dogs half their usual amount. He speaks to them apologetically -

CREAN  
Yeah, I know. It's not much, is it.  
(shrugs)  
Boss's orders.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - NIGHT**

Worsley tries to sight stars with his sextant between clouds moving across the night sky.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S TENT - LATER - NIGHT**

Worsley reports his findings to Shackleton and Wild, pointing to a map featuring the Weddell Sea.

WORSLEY  
We're drifting in a slow, clockwise  
circle -

SHACKLETON  
Of course -

WORSLEY  
Past the 12 - and away from Deception  
Island.

SHACKLETON  
We missed it?

WORSLEY  
We missed it and we're drifting faster  
than we could ever travel - on land or  
sea - to catch up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

We should try -

WORSLEY

We should wait. Let ourselves be drawn to the east, as we are now, toward South Georgia Island -

SHACKLETON

That could change any day. And change back again. In which case we would effectively be going - nowhere.

WORSLEY

This is my advice. As a mariner.

SHACKLETON

To wait more.

Worsley nods. Shackleton contemplates the map, the readings, and Worsley himself ...

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

The weather has not improved; it's only gotten worse. Several of the men try to warm their hands over Green's cooking fires as several others dismantle the lean-to structures that stoke it.



VINCENT

(Cor) - it's cold.  
(shouts)  
What's the temperature?

*Fuck  
Blaney Gouvier*

Hussey, a little ways off with his equipment, shouts back -

HUSSEY

Sixteen below.

WORSLEY

Oh, bugger off, Hussey!

HUSSEY

It is.

WORSLEY

Rubbish.

And Worsley will prove it. He tramps over to the younger man to have a look himself, and finds it is indeed sixteen below. Loud enough for the others to hear -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

*It's sixteen above zero. You should stick to violin playing.*

HUSSEY

(quieter)

No, sir, look, it's -

WORSLEY

(fiercely)

Shhh.

Back at the fires, the men missed that last part.

HURLEY

Sixteen above zero. That's more like it. That's not so bad.

Worsley tramps away past Shackleton, who smiles to himself at the Captain's lie to his men.

**EXT. THE ICE - TWILIGHT**

A ghostly choir echoes across the vastness.

CHOIR

*God rest ye merry gentlemen, let nothing you dismay -*

**EXT. BASE CAMP - SAME TIME - TWILIGHT**

The place - and the men - have deteriorated. Beards are longer and less well-kept, the faces more gaunt. They're all grouped together, singing the carol in the snow. It continues over -

**EXT. THE ICE - LATER - NIGHT**

Shackleton, standing away from the camp on the floe alone, staring off to the north. To himself -

SHACKLETON

Happy Christmas, Ray ... Cecilia ... little Edward ... sweet Emily ...

He hears footsteps, but doesn't turn to them. In a moment, Wild appears at his side. Shackleton points -

SHACKLETON

London.

*a sense that it's X-mas  
massive Xmas for  
play w/idea*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILD

Fog and soot and crowds of people.  
To be honest, I'm in no great hurry to  
get back.

only  
y

SHACKLETON

Well that's good, (because I don't know  
we will get back. To be honest. →)

1st  
adjunction  
too

WILD

Happy Christmas, Boss.

He hands Shackleton a small present wrapped in a dirty  
handkerchief.

SHACKLETON

Frank. I don't have anything for you.

WILD

That's all right, didn't expect anything.

Shackleton unwraps his gift. A single biscuit. And suddenly  
he is as emotionally moved as we've seen him - though being  
English, and Shackleton - he does well hiding it.

SHACKLETON

Thank you, Frank. I shall treasure it.

(pause)

Until I get hungry.

They shake hands, which for them, is a great display of  
sentimentality.

More footsteps. These with greater haste. Blackboro appears  
at a trot.

BLACKBORO

Boss -

SHACKLETON

What is it?

BLACKBORO

It's Charlie. I asked him what was  
wrong and he replied, 'it's all run out.'  
What's run out? The tea and cakes, he  
said. Is that all? 'Yes, young man,' he  
said, 'just that ... and my will to  
carry on.'

**INT. TENT - LATER - NIGHT**

Shackleton parts the flaps of the tent. Inside, Charles Green the cook, sits alone, head down. Shackleton pulls up a crate. Sits. And, very matter of factly -

SHACKLETON

How you getting on, Charlie?

(no response)

You're thinking we've been out here a lot than you expected. And you know what that means, don't you.

(Green nods without looking at him)

So do I, since I'm the one who has to pay you by the month.

Now Green looks up with dried tears on his face. Blinks.

SHACKLETON

What're you gonna do with all that money when we get home?

Green is puzzled by the thought. Shackleton notices silhouettes on the canvas; men gathering outside to listen.

GREEN

I don't rightly know, Boss.

SHACKLETON

And then, of course, there's the other thing.

GREEN

What other thing?

SHACKLETON

The treasure.

GREEN

The treasure, sir?

SHACKLETON

Captain Kidd's treasure. Hundreds of thousands of pounds buried near Trinidad. I'm going after it after this. I've been planning it.

GREEN

(pause)

Have you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON  
I'd be glad to have you along.

GREEN  
(pause)  
I'd like that.

SHACKLETON  
Done.

They shake on it. Shackleton gets up to leave.

SHACKLETON  
First, though, we got to get out of here.

GREEN  
Right. Thank you, sir. Merry Christmas,  
sir.

SHACKLETON  
Merry Christmas.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

Blackboro pours Orde-Lees a quarter cup of stew. He stares at it, then at Blackboro.

BLACKBORO  
Boss's orders.

ORDE-LEES  
This is bloody ridiculous.

He throws the bowl on the ice and trudges off. Some dogs hurry over to lap it up.

**EXT. BASE CAMP AND ICE - LATER - DAY**

Orde-Lees, on a pair of cross-country skis, rifle slung across his back, poles away from camp. Shackleton notices.

SHACKLETON  
Where the devil is he off to?

WORSLEY  
(as he eats stew)  
He's a bloody idiot. Said he was going to find some meat.

SHACKLETON  
And you let him go?

~~SHACKLETON~~  
~~WORSLEY~~

~~SHACKLETON~~  
~~WORSLEY~~

Handwritten notes in a circle:  
[Illegible scribbles]

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

One less mouth to feed.

Worsley shrugs, spoons at his stew. Shackleton suddenly knocks the bowl from his hand.

SHACKLETON

I wasn't first to reach the Pole and probably won't be first to cross the continent, but I have never lost a man under my command. If that bloody idiot is the first then by God you'll be the second.

(shouts)

*Lees!*

He hurries after Orde-Lees, calling to Wild as he runs -

SHACKLETON

Bring a rifle.

Wild grabs one, and runs after Shackleton.

SHACKLETON

*Lees! Get back here! I'm ordering -*

ORDE-LEES

*Oh, go to hell -*

Orde-Lees poles faster and increases the distance between them. Glances ahead again just as -

The ice erupts as a huge head and teeth rises up through it directly in front of him. Digging at the slick ice with his poles, Orde-Lees fights to stop his glide short of the gaping maw. At the last instant, the killer whale slides back down into the water, but Orde-Lees tumbles into the hole it made.

#### **UNDER THE ICE**

Silence. Orde-Lees' legs and skis kicking at the freezing water, trying to propel the rest of him back onto the ice -

#### **ATOP THE ICE**

Shackleton and Wild running toward the fallen man thrashing in the water. Before they can reach him, he gets himself out and runs toward them -

#### **UNDER THE ICE**

The skis sink down past a gliding view of the ice and shadows of the running men above, then sweeps around fast as the killer whale circles back -

**ATOP THE ICE**

The floe shudders hard as its hit from below right under Orde-Lees' boots, throwing him across the ice. Shackleton and Wild reach him, drag him and run -

**EXT. BASE CAMP - LATER - NIGHT**

Orde-Lees is still shivering - not so much from the cold since he's wrapped up in blankets, but from fear. Shackleton and Wild look at him a long moment, then turn and leave.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - DAY**

Shackleton, flanked by Wild and Worsley, addresses the assembled men.

SHACKLETON

We are presently as close to any land as we are likely to get. Southwest of Elephant Island -

*There's a whale would down the*

He looks to supply the distance, but Worsley doesn't know.

SHACKLETON

A hundred miles or so. We'll pack up today and leave tomorrow with as much as we can carry.

There's no great elation; they all know how tough it's going to be.

SHACKLETON

I should like to like to see the dog drivers in my tent.

**INT. SHACKLETON'S TENT - DAY**

The five dog drivers, including Crean, have assembled.

SHACKLETON

We are all but out of store of whale meat. We had hoped to replenish it with seals and the like, but have been very unlucky hunting these past months.

*Let's*

(pause)

My first priority has to be the men. To take their food from our own dwindling reserve to feed the dogs would be unconscionable of me.

(pause)

(MORE)

*exacty!! let's see it!*

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

I've given orders to Mr. Wild, Mr.  
Vincent and Mr. McCarthy to destroy them.  
I'm sure you understand.

Long silence. Finally -

CREAN

All of them?

SHACKLETON

Yes.

The men file out in silence, the last to go, Crean.

SHACKLETON

Tom. I'm sorry.

Crean nods it's all right, but it isn't.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - TWILIGHT**

The men pack without speaking to one another, cringing a little at each distant gunshot that echoes out across the ice every few seconds. No yelps. No barking. Just the gunshots of various calibres.

Finally it's over, and Crean looks up from his work as the three men given this most difficult job appear from behind a distant rise with their rifles and pistols, and walk slowly back toward the camp.

**EXT. BASE CAMP - MORNING**

The camp is abandoned. Everything gone except for another pile of things deemed too heavy, or unnecessary, to drag with them any longer -

The Victrola and records, the library of books, a chair, more tools, the dog harnesses, a British flag.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY TERRAIN - DAY**

The boats are hauled with great effort across the rough terrain, grinding against sharp ice one moment, sinking into snow the next.

Shackleton and his team cut through a massive ridge with the *James Caird*, like building a road through a mountain. Behind them some distance back, Worsley leads a team with the second boat. Farther behind them, Wild's men drag the third boat.

WILD

Crean! Give me a hand!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Crean, in Worsley's group, slips out of his harness and trudges back to Wild, who's out of breath.

WILD

I don't know how you expect me to make any progress at all carrying your stuff.

Crean doesn't know what he means. Wild parts the top of his parka. One of Crean's young pups is inside.

**EXT. ON THE ICE - NIGHT**

Heavy snow falls down on the tents. They're spending the night on the rough icy terrain.

**INT. TENT - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

Men crowded together in their sleeping bags and blankets, trying to stay warm. Crean has his dog, which helps.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY TERRAIN - DAY**

The team in back struggles to get a boat up a steep slope. Wild, like a rowing captain, calls out -

WILD

One, two - three.

The men pull as one, but the boat only moves a couple of inches. Wild calls out again, and again the men pull; the boat scraping forward a few more inches. To himself -

MCNEISH

This is bloody stupid.

**EXT. TENT - NIGHT**

Wild emerges from his tent to where Shackleton waits.

WILD

Yeah, Boss?

Shackleton gestures with his head to where Crean and a few others sit with the dog near a fire. Wild knew it wouldn't be long until it was discovered and now hangs his head.

SHACKLETON

That was inspired.

Wild looks up, surprised by the Boss's reaction to his deception.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON  
I only wish I'd done it.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY TERRAIN - DAY**

The back-breaking slave-like hauling continues over more rough terrain. Worsley stumbles, gasping with exhaustion, looks like he can't go on.

In Wild's team, McNeish too is gasping for breath, slips out of his harness and slumps onto the snow. Concerned for him, Wild hurries over.

WILD  
What's wrong.

MCNEISH  
What's wrong? Nothing. I'm quitting.  
I've had enough.

Wild regards him a moment and the other men, waiting to see how he'll handle this. He tries empathy -

WILD  
Look, I don't like it any more than -

MCNEISH  
Then you're saner than I thought, take a seat.

A couple of the others laugh. Wild is not amused, knowing exactly where this kind of thing could lead if he allows it. He changes tacks.

WILD  
Get up and get back to work.  
(no response)  
McNeish, I'm giving you an order.

MCNEISH  
And I'm refusing.

WILD  
Then you're guilty of mutiny.

MCNEISH  
That's ruddy nonsense. The ship's gone, so the articles we signed no longer have any legal bearing. We're free to obey or not as we see fit.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOLNESS

He's right, you know, Mr. Wild. That's the law of the sea.

WILD

Don't be bloody ridiculous.

STEVENSON

We shouldn't be breaking our backs like this anyway; we're only wearing ourselves and the boats out. We've been talking about it amongst ourselves.

Wild stares at him, then turns to Blackboro, scared now.

WILD

Go get the Boss.

**EXT. THE SAME PLACE - LATER**

Shackleton strides purposefully toward the mutinous men as he listens to what Blackboro is telling him. Worsley trudges slowly behind them, rifle slung across his back.

Shackleton and Blackboro arrive. The entire group of 'traitors' are lounging against the boat, having a smoke. Shackleton looks at McNeish.

SHACKLETON

What's this all about then?

MCNEISH

I know my rights. Our wages and obligations ended when we abandoned ship. Meaning we're free to do what we want. Any *real* commander would know that.

SHACKLETON

That's not true. The articles you signed specifically stated that wages would be paid until the ship's crew returned to port. So, too, then, your obligation to obey the commands of the ship's master - whether on board, in boats or on shore.

MCNEISH

That's a lie.

SHACKLETON

Is it? I can show them to you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MCNEISH

Fine. Do it. Go get them.

Shackleton doesn't. His bluff has been called and he has nothing to back it up.

MCNEISH

And even if it were true, you're not technically the ship's master. Captain Worsley is. He commands the ship's hands - when there's a ship - which there isn't.

Shackleton looks to Worsley hopelessly. Exhausted himself, Worsley doesn't look like he has any fight left in him. But then he adjusts the rifle slung over his shoulder and calmly informs McNeish -

WORSLEY

This is a ship. We are moving on the seas at this very moment. This is a ship and I am its captain ... but I take my commands from the Boss.

(to Shackleton)

What are my orders, sir?

Shackleton looks at Worsley with surprise and gratitude.

WORSLEY

Shall I shoot him? Say the word.

SHACKLETON

Let your men rest a little longer, Captain, then carry on.

WORSLEY

Aye, sir.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY TERRAIN - DAY**

The hauling continues, McNeish doing his share.

**EXT. HUMMOCKY TERRAIN - DAY**

The men rest. They're down to one-biscuit meals and take as much time as possible eating it.

Blackboro takes off one of his boots and rubs at his foot through the sock. Shackleton glances over.

BLACKBORO

Just my feet, sir. They're cold.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

You're only wearing one pair of socks,  
what do you expect.

GREENSTREET

He gave his other pair to Lees when he  
fell in the water. Lees never gave them  
back, of course.

Shackleton groans to himself.

BLACKBORO

I'm also feeling a little seasick.

Shackleton looks to Dr. Macklin. He shrugs. Maybe the boy's  
losing his mind. The scientists sit nearby.

CLARK

I'm feeling a little seasick myself.

WORDIE

So am I now that you mention it.

SHACKLETON

What are you all, mad?

MACKLIN

Maybe dizziness from lack of food.

But now Shackleton himself suddenly feels dizzy as he looks  
ahead at the hills of ice - which seem to be tipping slightly  
back and forth.

SHACKLETON

Now I'm feeling queasy.

MACKLIN

Sit down, sir.

Shackleton doesn't. He looks up - at a giant snowy white  
petrel gliding high overhead toward the rise -

He begins walking in the same direction as the bird's flight,  
then breaks into a trot, then runs, up the hills blocking his  
view ahead, stumbles, drags himself up, hurries forward,  
reaches the top and sees:

The ocean dotted with floes. Seals swimming on the surface.  
Whales sounding between towering bergs. Groups of emperor  
penguins standing at attention on the icy shore. Birds  
soaring over the water.

It's the most beautiful sight he's ever seen.

**EXT. THE ICY FLOE SHORE - TWILIGHT**

Green and Blackboro serve the men feast-like portions of fresh-killed meat. Orde-Lees, wearing Blackboro's socks on his hands like mittens, holds out his plate for more. The boy hesitates.

ORDE-LEES  
Come on, boy. More.

Blackboro stares at the socks but doesn't ask for them. Gives Orde-Lees more cooked meat.

It's as if they're all on a great ship, the floe rising and falling, high but gently, in the swells.

Worsley has pin-pointed where they are and shows Shackleton on a map.

WORSLEY  
Elephant Island ... us.

SHACKLETON  
How far?

WORSLEY  
Fifty-two miles.

SHACKLETON  
You thought it would be a hundred and fifty.

WORSLEY  
Happily, I was wrong.

Shackleton pushes his plate away and addresses the men -

SHACKLETON  
Do you realize, boys, we are about to embark on the greatest open boat journey in the history of polar exploration?  
(they cheer themselves)  
This is what we came for. Not to cross the continent. It was this. *This* is adventure.

They cheer again. Shackleton finds McNeish's face in the crowd.

SHACKLETON  
McNeish? At this moment, you are the most important man on this crew.  
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON (CONT'D)

We will all be relying on your skills to shore up these boats. If they're not seaworthy, I don't think I have to tell you, neither will we be. Can we count on you?

McNeish, perhaps the most disliked member of the crew, stares at Shackleton, still stinging from the mutiny episode. Finally, he nods.

MCNEISH

Aye, sir.

**EXT. THE ICY FLOE SHORE - MORNING**

Master carpenter McNeish hammers at slats of wood wrapped with cloth, fitting them into a boat's holes and cracks like fine inlay. Marston holds out a ruler to him -

MCNEISH

I don't need any rulers.

The rest of the boys are loading the boats as the floe pitches and yaws in the swells. Suddenly it begins cracking under their feet and they scramble to finish - none more so than McNeish, trying to get one more slat into one more crevice.

SHACKLETON

*Launch the boats!*

The men clamor aboard them as the disintegrating floe pitches them onto the sea. Shackleton, in the bow of the *James Caird*, shouts to the others -

SHACKLETON

*Pull the oars, lads! This way!*

(points off)

*To So-Ho!*

**EXT. THE SEA - DAY**

The oarsmen row stiffly, exhausted from the grueling trek that got them here. Others crouch in the bows poling away floes as the boats pass towering icebergs.

The sky is alive with terns, Cape pigeons, petrels and fulmars. Whales too are everywhere - blues, greys and killer - coming so close the boats could be upended.

**EXT. ICE CAVE - NIGHT**

The boats are lashed together in an iceberg cave carved smooth by the sea.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dried strips of meat in handkerchiefs are distributed by Green and Blackboro, passing from hand to hand, each taking three pieces. Orde-Lees takes four ... then puts one back, ties the handkerchief and tosses it to the next boat.

It's kind of eerie. Every lap of water against the boats echoes. Hussey listens as he regards the ceiling of the huge cave and its smooth, bowled shape. He opens his violin case.

Shackleton, in another boat, hears the echo of the violin bow setting against the strings, but doesn't know what it is. Then the most beautiful music he's ever heard in his life fills the place. Awed, he listens, then glances to Wild.

WILD

I'm thinking the same thing.

SHACKLETON

It's more beautiful than Westminster  
Abbey.

*Re Abbey*

**EXT. THE SEA - DAY**

The weather has worsened dramatically. The three boats traveling under oars are pelted by sea spray as they rise and fall in the swells.

A deep hoarse noise from below. Shackleton looks down. Is it a whale? Suddenly, the ice floes around them begin to circle as a riptide from the depths of the sea pulls them into its grip.

He swings the bow of the *Caird* starboard and shouts to the other boats to do the same. The oarsmen in all three boats dig in and fight against the swirling current that threatens to drag them under. Ice, already, is being sucked down.

Two of the boats get free of the tide's grip, but the third, the *Wills*, Shackleton sees to his horror, doesn't.

He swings the tiller. The oarsmen stop rowing when they realize the Boss is turning them around.

SHACKLETON

*Row!*

The oarsmen hesitate but a moment before obeying the command. The little *Caird* finishes its turn and starts back on its suicidal path toward the rip.

The *Wills*, caught in it and leaning precariously, takes on water. As it swirls past the arriving *Caird* a rope is flung.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

*Tie it off on the bow!*

Just before the motion carrying the *Wills* yanks the rope away, its men get it tied down. Now both boats will survive or be lost together. The oarsmen dig in again mightily and fight the rip as more and more ice is dragged down around them. Finally, they get clear.

**EXT. THE SEA - ANOTHER DAY**

The boat's compass has been shattered. Worsley consults his pocket compass, its needle fluttering *NE* as water washes over it.

He's at the stern of the *Docker*, holding the tiller as the *Caird* and the lucky *Wills* follow past wave-worn bergs shaped like sea monsters and castles.

Orde-Lees, on board the *Caird*, catches a crab as a swell falls away leaving his oar airborne, his hand smashing into the gunwale. He groans and pulls off his mittens - Blackboro's socks - to survey the damage.

The next wave washes his sock-mittens overboard. He grabs at them desperately as they begin to sink.

ORDE-LEES

*No!*

They're gone. It takes a moment for the horror of it to sink in. He slumps back, the oar forgotten, staring at his unprotected hands like a death sentence.

Shackleton, at the tiller, takes off his own gloves, taps Orde-Lees, and holds them out in offering.

Orde-Lees can scarcely believe what he's seeing. In a great show of strength, he shakes his head.

ORDE-LEES

No. I can't.

Shackleton holds the gloves over the side of the boat.

SHACKLETON

Then here they go.

Just as they're leaving Shackleton's grasp, Orde-Lees pounces, takes them, pulls them over his cold hands and looks back up in gratitude - but Shackleton has already turned back to the tiller as if nothing of consequence has occurred.

**EXT. THE SEA - AFTERNOON**

The boats, under sail, are hammered by a northeast swell. They struggle up a mountain of water whose face is a quarter mile long, and at the top are sprayed with seawater in the shrieking wind.

**EXT. THE SEA - ANOTHER DAY**

Calmer, but still overcast. Crean checks on the pup living in his parka.

The *Docker*. Worsley's sextant sits unused on the planks at his feet as he checks his compass again, then 'looks at' the wind direction. He seems a little confused by it.

From the *Caird* -

SHACKLETON

Are we all right, Captain?

Worsley nods and points off the port bow.

WORSLEY

That way.

Aboard the *Caird*, Shackleton glances to Wild.

SHACKLETON

Do you realize what he's doing?  
He's had but two clear skies to take sightings. The rest of the voyage has all been dead reckoning with that tiny compass.

Shackleton looks out on the endless expanse of ocean.

WILD

And if he's wrong?

SHACKLETON

(pause)

That would be unfortunate.

**EXT. THE SEA - ANOTHER DAY**

The oarsmen try to propel their craft where Worsley has told them to - directly into the wind. As he scrutinizes his little compass again, other men bail out water. To the tillerman -

WORSLEY

Tad more to starboard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the *Caird*, Shackleton, at the tiller, regards Blackboro. The boy is exhausted and shivering nearby.

SHACKLETON

You know, no one has ever set foot on Elephant Island before ... I'm going to make sure you're the first ashore.

Blackboro smiles but once Shackleton has turned his attention away again, the boy's smile fades.

**EXT. THE SEA - DAWN**

Silence. Mist rising from a flat frigid sea.

Distant forms appear in the mist. Outlines of boats.

Shackleton, locked to the tiller of the *Caird*, asleep. The sun begins to penetrate the mist, and as the rays of light reach his face, his eyes react to -

SHACKLETON

Men -

The voice is so weak and hoarse, none of the freezing, sleeping men heard it. He clamors over some of them and takes a set of oars himself.

His rowing is clumsy, weak. The squeaking, his rasping breath, begin to wake a few of those around him. He tries to yell back to the other boats behind him, but again, it's just a whisper -

SHACKLETON

Take to your oars -

Wild wakes, stares at the Boss, rowing. Hoarsely -

SHACKLETON

Morning, Frank. Listen, could you do me a favor and holler to the lads back there to row? I've about lost my voice.

Wild nods, but does nothing of the sort. Instead he turns to look at what Shackleton is rowing toward -

A series of peaks rising through the mist in the distance like ... a line of elephants.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND - MORNING**

Thousand-foot glaciers against a savage coast. Waves smashing against the sheer cliffs, hurling water a hundred feet into the overcast sky.

The boats, under full sail, heave into view on the crests of waves and careen toward a tiny spit of gravel beach -

Skidding in over a reef the men tumble into waist-high surf, grabbing at halyards to drop the sails, and bow lines to pull the boats ashore. Calling across to Worsley -

SHACKLETON

You *did* it, Frank.

WORSLEY

I have no idea how.

SHACKLETON

It doesn't matter if you know. You got us here and every one of us owes you his life.

Remembering his promise to Blackboro, Shackleton calls out to the men struggling with the tow lines -

SHACKLETON

Wait -

(to Blackboro)

Come on, son. You first.

Blackboro doesn't move, just looks at him. Shackleton cheerfully pulls the boy up - can't see him grimacing in pain - jumps into the surf with him and pulls him toward the shore.

SHACKLETON

This is as far as I go. From here you go it alone.

Blackboro struggles through the water a couple more steps without the benefit of Shackleton's help, then drops to his hands and knees, the surf surging around him.

SHACKLETON

You're not there yet, get up.

BLACKBORO

I can't, sir. I can't ... move.

Shackleton stares at him, confused.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND BEACH CAMP - LATER**

If anyplace on earth could be less hospitable than the Antarctic pack ice, this island is it.

The tents are pitched but are in danger of being ripped to shreds by the ferocious wind howling down the steep cliffs.

**INT. TENT - SAME TIME - DAY**

Macklin removes Blackboro's socks, revealing horribly blackened frostbit toes.

**EXT. TENT - LATER - DAY**

Apart from the others, Macklin shares his prognosis with Shackleton and Wild.

MACKLIN

Gangrene's already set in so the question isn't if I'll have to cut, but when. And how much. Even then, it might not save him.

**INT. TENT - LATER**

Shackleton comes in, sits down next to Blackboro, who looks over to him courageously.

BLACKBORO

Dr. Macklin says it doesn't look so bad.

SHACKLETON

He told me the same. That's lucky.

(pause)

Why didn't you tell anyone?

BLACKBORO

I didn't want to be a burden.

SHACKLETON

A burden? McNeish is a burden. Lees is a burden. The wind and the seas and the unforgiving ice that claimed our ship are burdens.

Silence as Blackboro watches Shackleton, who seems to be at the point of exhaustion from it all.

BLACKBORO

I've disappointed you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON  
You've disappointed no one.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND - NIGHT**

The tide has risen and threatens to push them all the way back against the glaciers behind them. Men hack at the icy cliff with the few tools they still possess, trying to carve out an alcove of protective shelter from the punishing wind.

Tent stakes are yanked from the ground as the wind whips at the canvas. A 10-gallon pot is lifted by the unseen force and sent sailing out over the sea where it disappears.

**INT. TENT - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

Wild and Worsley consider one another as Shackleton records the day's events in his diary. The other men of the tent lay huddled asleep as the winds howl. Eventually, quietly -

WORSLEY  
Did you know?

SHACKLETON  
(as he writes)  
Did I know - what, Captain Worsley.

He does know what Worsley means, and Worsley knows he knows from his uncustomary formality.

WORSLEY  
That upon reaching this ghastly place,  
we would long for the days of being hope-  
lessly lost on the ice.

SHACKLETON  
(keeps writing)  
How could I have known that; I've never  
been here. No man has except in passing.

WORSLEY  
Neither, apparently, has any wildlife.

It's true; they haven't seen a single living thing apart from themselves since they rammed onto the beach of this horrible wind-swept island. Shackleton keeps writing -

SHACKLETON  
It was a destination. We needed a  
destination. It was the closest one.  
And now we're here. At this moment,  
that's all I know. If you like, as  
soon as I know more, I'll tell you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Never once did he look up. His pen keeps scratching at his diary. Worsley looks back at Wild, who has closed his eyes to sleep.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND BEACH CAMP - MORNING**

Smoke from a cooking fire blackens the shallow alcove the men have cut into the glacier. As many as can fit, huddle there eating their morning meal; the rest just outside it.

They look up as Shackleton approaches from his tent. There's a gravity to his measured steps. Wild and Worsley stop eating and study him as he arrives. The others take notice one by one, and fall silent. He waits until he has everyone's attention, and smiles pleasantly.

SHACKLETON

Good morning.

(they mumble back; pause)

I left my home in London with a five-man expedition team, sixteen sailors, two artists, a biologist, a geologist, a cook and, as I would discover, a stowaway.

(pause)

I find myself this morning privileged to be in the company of the finest twenty-seven explorers I've ever met.

(pause)

You can take Robert Scott. Amundsen. All the legendary names as far as I'm concerned - and throw them out the door. Because for the ability to dare, and to do the impossible, give me the twenty-seven men of this crew. Any day. Any clime. Anywhere in the world.

The men stare at the Boss, moved. But where is it going?

SHACKLETON

Which makes this the hardest moment of my life because now I have to leave you.

(pause)

This place can't sustain us for more than a month or so. We need to get to the next stop on our long journey home. That place is South Georgia, and our whaling 'friends.'

HOLNESS

Across the Drake Passage?

SHACKLETON

Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Has Shackleton lost his mind? Which of them will tell him?

STEVENSON

But the Drake, in winter, *can't* be crossed. Certainly not in a *lifeboat*.

SHACKLETON

Nonsense. It was impossible to get this far and we did it. I'll get there.

With *who* everyone seems to be thinking at the same time. Who is this nut going to take *with* him on his suicide mission?

SHACKLETON

I'll be taking five of you with me. We will cross the Drake, get a proper ship, return in four or five weeks to pick you up, and then all sail home together.

No one says anything. Most try to appear inconspicuous lest his glance fall on them. It settles on McNeish.

SHACKLETON

McNeish, I'm going to need you to fix up the *Caird* for me. You can use whatever you need to fortify her from the other boats. Make her strong.

MCNEISH

She'll be stronger than Noah's Ark.

SHACKLETON

Good. She'll need to be.

CREAN

Boss. Even if you make it through the Drake, South Georgia is an awfully small target to hit in a 22-foot boat.

SHACKLETON

Captain Worsley will find it. He can find anything, as he has already proven. He found this speck of an island in the middle of the Antarctic seas; he'll find that one.

Worsley looks ill. He didn't know until this moment he'd be aboard Shackleton's six-man lifeboat crew, and tries now to hide his unease. As Shackleton walks away, Wild, too, looks after him. The Boss didn't mention *him*.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND BEACH CAMP - LATE AFTERNOON**

Nature has added a new element to her calamitous repertoire: rain. It whips around in the gale-force winds as McNeish supervises work on the *Caird*.

The boat is in homemade 'drydocks,' up on stacks of rocks, filled with sea- and rainwater to check for leaks. And there are many; the hull is like a sieve.

**EXT. ANOTHER AREA OF THE BEACH CAMP - SAME TIME**

Wild, with his ledger, stands with Shackleton under a canvas canopy, jerked about by the wind and pounded by the rain.

SHACKLETON

Worsley will be navigating of course.  
I want Crean along. I'll take McNeish  
and Vincent so no one else has to deal  
with them. And one more -  
(thinks)  
McCarthy.

Wild dutifully writes the names down without comment, but thought he, of all people, would be accompanying Shackleton, as he always does, on this final journey. And Shackleton knows very well that's what he's thinking.

SHACKLETON

Frank - I need you *here*. You're the  
only one I trust to keep order. To keep  
the men well.

WILD

Nobody's going to take orders from me.

SHACKLETON

Yes, they will.

Wild thinks not.

WILD

And when winter hits? And the food  
begins running out? And Blackboro is -  
dead - and others are (dying) -

SHACKLETON

I'm going to be back in five weeks.

WILD

And if you're not?

Shackleton would rather not imagine it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WILD

I'm not a leader of men. I don't know how to lead. You know that. I know how to serve.

Shackleton does know that, and studies Wild. Eventually -

SHACKLETON

What did you think when I hired Hussey as our meteorologist? A man who at the time knew nothing on the subject. You thought I was crazy. You can say it.

WILD

I questioned it. But I see now it was because of his skill as a musician, which has worked out well I have to say.

SHACKLETON

Why did I hire you the first time we came down here?

WILD

That I've no idea. I certainly don't play the violin.

SHACKLETON

You'd barely been on a boat.

It's true. Thinking back, there was no good reason for Shackleton to have hired him.

*employed*  
SHACKLETON

I hired you because of this moment. ✓

(nothing from Wild)

Have some faith I know what I'm doing.

Wild would like nothing better, but can only manage a shrug. Shackleton walks away leaving him feeling alone in the world.

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND BEACH CAMP - THE NEXT DAY**

McNeish caulks the Caird's seams as other men sew at sails. Planks have been cannibalized from the other two boats on the beach to raise the Caird's gunwales two feet. Shackleton comes over to survey the work.

SHACKLETON

What are you using to caulk her?

MCNEISH

Marston's oil paints.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Paint? You think *paint* can withstand  
seawater for 700 miles?

MCNEISH

It better - if I'm going to be on board  
with you.

Macklin approaches them.

MACKLIN

The boy wants a word.

**INT. TENT - LATER**

Blackboro tosses in a high fever, eyes closed, face  
glistening with sweat. Shackleton sits down beside him.  
Puts a hand on his brow. The eyes open. Stare.

BLACKBORO

Boss ... I'm ...

SHACKLETON

You're frightened. Good.

BLACKBORO

(pause)

That's good?

SHACKLETON

Of course. You can use that. It's come  
in handy for me many times.

Blackboro isn't sure how, but nods. Then, with admiration -

BLACKBORO

You've never lost a man, in all your  
adventures.

SHACKLETON

That is correct. And I'm proud of  
that fact, young man.

Blackboro gestures for Shackleton to come closer so he can  
tell him a secret.

BLACKBORO

You don't need to worry. I don't count.  
I'm not on the crew list ... So even if I  
die - you still - you see? No one will  
ever know.

Shackleton regards the boy for a long moment. And -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

How long have you been with us, Perce?  
A year and a half? Do you think in all  
that time I never entered your name in  
the ship's log? I did it ages ago.

BLACKBORO

Why? Why would you do that?

SHACKLETON

Because you do count.

⇒ Say it  
some other way

**EXT. ELEPHANT ISLAND - DAWN**

All the men, except for Blackboro, have assembled on the shore to see the Caird off. A few last minute preparations - like Hussey yanking on the sail canvas he helped tailor.

MCNEISH

Enough, Hussey -

HUSSEY

I'm trying to make sure it's strong  
enough to -

MCNEISH

I know. But I'd rather not know, so  
stop it.

Shackleton is meanwhile shaking hands with the men who each give him some version of 'good luck.' He notices Marston off by himself, staring hopelessly at the ridiculous craft. The Boss goes over to him.

SHACKLETON

Back in five weeks. After which, I'll  
be wanting to commission a new portrait  
to replace the one in the ice. Maybe  
right here in this setting.

MARSTON

Yes. Yes, of course.

Marston nods, but doesn't believe for a second Shackleton will return. They're all going to die here. First Blackboro - then the rest.

SHACKLETON

Oh, I have something of yours I've been  
meaning to return.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He takes a small handkerchief-wrapped parcel from his parka and hands it over to the artist, who finds inside: the little framed photographs of his family.

SHACKLETON

You must have dropped them.

Marston could not be more grateful to Shackleton for rescuing them from the scrap heap.

MARSTON

Thank you.

### AT THE CAIRD

Worsley helps drag the little boat into the shallow water. On shore, Shackleton has approached Wild. They stand there a moment not knowing what to say. Finally -

SHACKLETON

Watch out for Lees.

(Wild nods)

And here, you'll need this if - if something happens. Just tuck it away.

A folded piece of stationery. Wild pockets it, whatever it is, and the two men shake hands.

WILD

Good luck.

SHACKLETON

Good luck to you.

### DARK CLOUDS

are rolling in off shore. Swells crash against the rocks. McCarthy and Vincent climb aboard and pull Shackleton in as Crean hands over his pup to Green and announces to all -

CREAN

*Any man who even thinks of eating my pup in my absence will answer for it upon my return.*

He climbs aboard with Worsley, leaving a few men still in the water to steady the boat. McCarthy and Vincent raise the mended sail and the heavy wind quickly fills it, propelling the boat away.

BLACKBORO

*I'm on the master log, Boss!*

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton looks back to see Blackboro struggling to stay upright outside his tent

BLACKBORO  
*I won't forget!*

Shackleton waves back and even attempts a smile as the *Caird* sails toward the storm clouds awaiting it.

On the tiny strip of beach, Wild watches the boat draw away, then reaches in his pocket to read the note the Boss left.

SHACKLETON V/O  
To Mr. Frank Wild. Dear Sir, in the event of my not surviving the journey, you will try your utmost to rescue the men of the *Endurance*. You are in full command. I have complete confidence in you and always have. Please convey my love to my family, and tell the others we did our best. Your friend, Ernest Shackleton.

Wild looks up as he slowly folds and tucks the note away. The boat is just a speck on the water now, and in a moment, not even that. The men watch after it, and remain standing there once it's entirely gone. Silence. And, finally -

WILD  
Right. Let's get to work fashioning some proper shelter.

...No one moves. — *fs*

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - TWILIGHT**

Worsley is at the tiller, with Shackleton standing alongside. Great masses of ice rise and fall about the little craft with ominous hollow echoes. As Shackleton rolls a cigarette -

SHACKLETON  
You know ... I've always felt I was destined to make great open boat journey ... I knew it would happen some day.

Worsley, much more concerned about their chances - at least on the surface - stares at Shackleton as one might a madman. A swell hits the boat and splashes across the deck, but it's as if the Boss didn't notice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Strange to think those same stars are shining this very moment on some lucky buggers sipping cocktails in Tahiti.

Worsley feels the tiller trying to tug away from him as the seas grow steadily rougher.

WORSLEY

You might want to sit down, Boss.

Shackleton pays no attention, licks at the cigarette paper and pats at his pockets for a match, proclaiming -

SHACKLETON

On land, courage and boldness will see a man through nearly anything. Ah, but at sea ... there's no escape. An enemy one can't hope to conquer. Only avoid defeat. Eh, Frank?

He matches at his cigarette just the boat is hit again by a wave. Water sprays across him but miraculously the cigarette stays dry enough for him to puff. Worsley stares.

SHACKLETON

I for one know nothing at all about such sailing as this.

A large wave comes crashing over the deck.

**EXT. THE SEA - NIGHT**

The boat is tossed around in the night seas.

**INT. BELOW DECK - NIGHT**

Lightning flashes across the faces of those huddled in the cramped cabin eating. Everything not tied down - including them - is thrown about. The thunder hits, but Shackleton remains calm.

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - DAY**

Calmer. Worsley tries to take a sight through great clouds overhead. A rogue swell hits, nearly pitching him overboard, but McCarthy and Vincent grab him.

**INT. BELOW DECK - LATER**

Soggy navigational tables and maps. Shackleton waits as Worsley makes his calculations, then reports without great enthusiasm or despair, but rather just the facts -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

We've made 128 miles.

SHACKLETON

That puts us in the Drake then.

WORSLEY

Yes.

The others looks around as if perhaps expecting something monstrous to occur. Shackleton shrugs tentatively.

SHACKLETON

It's not as bad as all that.

**EXT. THE SEA - SAME TIME**

The *Caird* can be glimpsed in the distance as dark clouds gather. The wind begins to breath ominously in response to Shackleton's comment.

**INT. BELOW DECK - SAME TIME**

Tight on Shackleton and Worsley as they glance to the sound of the changing wind.

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - LATER**

The seas are *huge*. A blizzard rages. The *Caird* and its men at the mercy of the waves that rise high above them.

Worsley struggles at the tiller while Shackleton and Crean work a pump, trying to bail out the sea that comes crashing in relentlessly.

As the little boat sinks deep into the trough of a giant wave the sound of the wind fades and the sail stops flapping. It's eerie: the world seems to have stopped. But looking up, the men see the giant wall of a forty-foot wave.

It's a wild ride as they climb to the crest of the wave and the wind strikes like bomb, the surging water enveloping them in clouds of spray.

The sea breaks over the decking, soaking everyone, pummeling Worsley who gasps for breath.

Now the boat is like a sailboard speeding down the face of the huge wave. As they drop into another trough Worsley yells to Shackleton and Crean -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY

*We can't sail in this! We've got to  
put down a storm anchor, face her into  
the wind and wait out the storm!*

Shackleton nods and crawls to the hatch as the boat rises up another crest. Shouts down to McCarthy, Vincent and McNeish who are crammed into the narrow bow panicked.

SHACKLETON

*McCarthy, Vincent, help Crean take down  
the sails! McNeish, fix a storm anchor!  
You can use the oars!*

The boat is suddenly free-falling down the wave and the men down below are literally lifted up, then slammed back down.

**ON THE DECK - LATER**

In the failing light, the little boat climbs the giant waves and drops back into the troughs as Crean, McCarthy and Vincent struggle to take down the sails.

A huge wave crashes over them, nearly washing Crean overboard before the other two catch him and pull him back on.

Worsley, at the tiller, wipes at the spray in his eyes.

SHACKLETON

Steady, Skipper.

The men up front pass the sails back to Shackleton who shoves them below decks and shouts to McNeish.

SHACKLETON

*McNeish! Let's have that storm anchor!  
McNeish?*

**BELOW THE DECK**

McNeish has come unglued, crouched in the bow just staring as icy water pours in on him from above through the cracks he tried to caulk with paint.

SHACKLETON

*McNeish!*

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - NIGHT**

The storm rages. The boat is gone ...

Then it appears atop the crest of a huge black swell, no sails, Worsley alone on the deck at the tiller.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It plunges down sideways until the bow is jerked by the storm anchor, staggers up the next wave, plummets down again -

**INT. BELOW DECKS - SAME TIME - NIGHT**

Though Shackleton sits in front of McNeish, the carpenter stares beyond him somehow, at nothing. Quietly -

SHACKLETON

McNeish?

McNeish is gone, somewhere else ... adrift.

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - NIGHT**

Snowflakes cascade down from the dark sky.

The rope of the storm anchor, lifting off the water, pulls taut, slacks, disappears into the sea again -

Later, the same rope and the same behavior, only now there's a thin coating of ice on it. It disappears again -

Later. The rope is stiff, encrusted in ice the thickness of a man's arm -

**INT. BELOW DECK - DAWN**

Snow floats down through the open hatch. Icicles hang inside the hull. The equipment, too, is coated with ice. The wind now longer howls outside. It's eerily quiet.

The men appear dead, frozen together clutching each other. As Shackleton stirs, a cocoon of thin ice covering his face and clothes begins to crack like a shell.

**THE DECK - MOMENTS LATER**

Shackleton's head appears above the hatch. He looks aft to where Worsley sits asleep, his hand frozen to the tiller, his boots cemented into ice, looking like a figurine inside a bizarre snow globe.

The entire deck of the boat is covered in thick ice, and listing dangerously to one side. Shackleton disappears a moment, then reappears with an axe, crawls on his hands and knees to the area of heaviest ice and begins chipping at it to right the boat.

A swell bumps up against the boat; not hard, just enough to start Shackleton sliding. He tries to grip the ice, and his hands slide away. He can't believe it; he's sliding toward the edge of the boat, about to fall in, when -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Worsley emerges from his icy tomb, reaches out and grabs him. They regard one another a moment in silence.

**EXT. THE SEA - DAY**

They are under sail again, making progress under calmer, but still very cold skies.

**ABOARD THE CAIRD**

Shackleton is at the tiller. Worsley hanging on the mast trying to take a sight from a cloudy sky. Crean and Vincent and McCarthy are bailing. McNeish is no more than ballast. All are exhausted. To Shackleton -

WORSLEY

It's no good. I can't get the sun.

SHACKLETON

What's your guess?

WORSLEY

By dead reckoning, I put us ... 90 miles from South Georgia.

SHACKLETON

That's not bad, Frank. If it's true.

(pause)

Do you think it's true?

WORSLEY

Taking into consideration we've been in storm-tossed seas with winds at gale force, and have had clear skies for only three sightings in all this time - ? No. No, I think I'm hoping.

SHACKLETON

How much could you be off, do you think?

WORSLEY

It doesn't really matter. If we miss it by a mile - or fifty - we still miss it ... and the next land is the Cape. Three thousand miles away.

Shackleton - and the others - ponder that eventuality.

SHACKLETON

I'm not worried. I know you'll get us there.

Worsley forces a weary smile.

**EXT. THE CAIRD AT SEA - MORNING**

The *CaIRD* sails blind through mist. Worsley sits at the tiller searching for a sign of land and consulting his little compass. Shackleton is asleep nearby. The others are below. Worsley looks up at a sound, like a bird flapping in the wind overhead.

WORSLEY

Boss?

Shackleton stirs. Worsley points. Shackleton looks. There's nothing there.

SHACKLETON

What.

WORSLEY

I thought I heard a bird. Just now.  
(listens some more)  
I guess not.

But then the sound is there again, and this time lower. They look up as a very large bird sails overhead.

WORSLEY

I wasn't crazy. There it is.

SHACKLETON

That's a cormorant, Frank.

WORSLEY

Is it.

SHACKLETON

Yes ...  
(as they watch it)  
Some birds as I'm sure you know, can navigate thousands of miles across open seas. Not so, the cormorant. It never strays more than 15 miles from land ... So look sharp.

WORSLEY

I am.

They peer into the misty clouds ahead expectantly.

WORSLEY

If we've sailed past, even a quarter mile, I'll never be able to beat back against the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

Then it must be straight ahead of us.

Shackleton, ever the optimist, decides that's where he'll look, staring into the mist.

WORSLEY

Wind's picking up.

Shackleton nods but does not give up his vigil. He hears the sails snap taut and feels the boat picking up speed. The bow knifes through a swell, spraying them. The boat gains even more speed.

WORSLEY

Really picking up.

They hear a strange muted booming up ahead in the mist. They're headed straight for it, whatever it is, and headed there fast.

Suddenly, in an instant, they sail out of the fog bank into sunlight and see - the stark glacial cliffs of South Georgia Island dead ahead.

SHACKLETON

Frank, there it -

WORSLEY

*Watch your head, coming about!*

He swings the tiller hard and the *Caird* heels away from the island. Shackleton looks at him in shock.

SHACKLETON

*What are you doing? That's it.*

Worsley points. Shackleton realizes what Worsley already has: that the booming sound belongs to fifty-foot breakers exploding against the island's steep glaciers -

He also realizes Worsley's tack has not worked. The sails are flapping uselessly and they're headed right for the waves and icy cliffs -

WORSLEY

*We're caught! The current's taking us in!*

Crean pokes his head out at this unfortunate moment. Looks from the pounding doom that awaits them ahead, to Worsley who swings the tiller again to put her back into the wind.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WORSLEY

*Coming about! I'm turning her back under sail! At least I can steer!*

Shackleton ducks as the Caird comes about and resumes her mad rush to destruction under a full sail.

CREAN

Is that South Geor -

SHACKLETON

Yes -

WORSLEY

*Look for an opening in the cliffs!*

The boat is rapidly approaching the fortress of glacier walls and towering peaks.

SHACKLETON

*There!*

WORSLEY

*Really?*

SHACKLETON

*Yes. But it's not very wide!*

The Caird rises on the crest of a wave and Worsley sees Shackleton's 'opening.' From this distance it looks as wide as a postal slot.

Worsley steers for it - rocks jut up from the sea - the boat swerves to miss them and flies toward the cliffs - then picks up even more speed as it catches a huge wave - and soars down the face of it ... into the narrow opening -

The crew hangs on as the boat streaks past the looming cliffs threatening it on either side -

White-water from the crashing wave foams over the deck and sends an oar swinging out; the jagged walls immediately shred it. From below, rocks reach up to attack the hull, clawing at the planks, tearing through, letting water rush in at McNeish, who just stares -

Worsley wipes at the spray as he struggles to steer and see ahead. The sheer face of a cliff suddenly looms directly in front of them. They're heading straight for it when Worsley spies a slight jog and fights to turn the craft into it -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The wave explodes against the glacier just as the *Caird* veers away, sliding toward a small rocky beach nestled in the cliffs. The last of the wave pushes them ashore and leaves them there, the forlorn *Caird* on its side.

It takes them all a long moment to realize what has happened. There's are no cheers ... but they've made it.

**EXT. SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND - NIGHT**

The men have passed out in a glacier alcove. Outside it, a storm thunders.

**EXT. SHORE - SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND - MORNING**

Worsley and Shackleton stand at the water's edge comparing the contour of the shoreline to its representation on a wet and tattered map: a vague, unexplored broken line.

WORSLEY

We're on the wrong side. The whaling station is over there on the north side.

We can't get around those -

(the shore cliffs at either end of the beach)

We can't sail around them; we'd never get past the breakers -

He trails off as Shackleton turns and looks at the huge mountain behind them, its peaks disappearing into the mist.

SHACKLETON

Right. We'll climb.

Worsley glances from him to the peaks.

WORSLEY

I didn't say that.

SHACKLETON

I said it.

WORSLEY

You know how high they are?

SHACKLETON

Does it say there?

(on the map; Worsley shakes his head no)

You know why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WORSLEY  
(takes a guess)  
No one's ever climbed them?

Shackleton nods, smiles. Worsley doesn't.

WORSLEY  
The men can't climb. They can scarcely walk.

SHACKLETON  
I can walk. I walked over here. Crean can walk. I'll take him with me. Bring a ship back around and get you and the others.

It's decided then. Shackleton turns to leave. Watching after him, Worsley hates what he's about to say -

WORSLEY  
I'll go with you.

Shackleton turns back, considers him for a long moment.

SHACKLETON  
Have you ever climbed a mountain before in your life?

WORSLEY  
(smiles)  
Never.

**INT. ICE CAVE - ELEPHANT ISLAND - TWILIGHT**

Crean, Shackleton and Worsley sit inside the cave packing meager supplies. Every so often they glance out to McNeish, still in shock, involved in some mindless activity involving a screwdriver and the beached *Caird*.

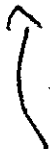
SHACKLETON  
We're not taking the boat, McNeish. I told you that. We're climbing.

McNeish seems not to have heard, keeps 'working.' Vincent and McCarthy, by the fire, ignore them all.

SHACKLETON  
McNeish. You don't need to work on her anymore. We're not taking the boat.

McNeish finally stops. Lingers in carrying a handful of screws. Sits with them. Stares.

*A new foul*  
*A food*  
*sub*



CONTINUED:

Reaches out for one of the extra boots next to Shackleton's supplies. Begins turning the screws into the soles. Without looking up -

MCNEISH  
So you don't slip.

The mountaineers stare as he works more screws into the boots like studs in snow tires. For all his emotional handicaps, McNeish is a genius.

**EXT. GLACIER CAMP - DAWN**

The three men staying behind watch as the mountaineers trudge away. Shackleton glances back and waves.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

The studs in their boots grip the ice as they struggle up a steep slope. At a level spot they stop to catch their breath and look back at the shoreline far below. Ahead, the view goes on forever: jagged 10,000-foot glaciers. Worsley consults his map, shakes his head.

WORSLEY  
Useless. The interior is completely uncharted. Nothing's on it. I have no idea which way to go.

SHACKLETON  
Dead reckoning, Captain. It's my specialty, too.

Worsley looks around hopelessly, then follows after Shackleton.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

A brilliant sun beats down on the men. Now they're tied together with rope, Shackleton in the lead as they stumble up a snow summit. Arriving, all three are heaving in the thin air and sweating heavily.

SHACKLETON  
Down on the ice ... I vowed never to complain about heat again. I *almost* feel like complaining it now ... but I won't.

Crean peers over the thousand foot drop set in their path.

CREAN  
Cheer up, Boss, I think I see some shade just down (there) -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The ice beneath his boots suddenly collapses and he disappears over the edge - pulling Worsley off his feet and over the edge behind him. Shackleton drops to the ground and wedges his boots at the ice, the studs digging in, stopping him from going over as well -

Silence except for a low breathing of wind. Crean and Worsley dangling from the rope into space.

Shackleton starts to pull, hand over hand, lifting the 450 pounds of combined weight at the other end of the rope inch by inch -

Worsley's fingers finally reach and scrabble at the ice, trying to grip the edge as Crean tries to find *anything* to grab. Nothing. One of Worsley's feet swings back on top of the ledge, the screws biting into the ice.

He crawls to Shackleton, takes hold of the rope with him, and together they pull.

The edge. The rope inching up. A hand appears, fumbles, grips. Then the other. Then Crean's face.

CREAN  
Blimey, Guv!

*chirp  
on a bike.*

*Slit, slit  
Guv'nor!!*

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - NIGHT**

Stars shimmer over the icy peaks. The mountaineers asleep on one of them. Frost has formed in their hair and beards. Wisps of vapor rise from their mouths.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

Trudging, panting, Worsley stops, hands on his knees.

WORSLEY

I have to rest. We're lost anyway.

No one argues. Indeed, they're relieved at least one of them had the good sense to say it. Shackleton looks up as he struggles to catch his breath. He can't see the top of the slope they're on; it rises and disappears into fog.

**EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY**

Crean, tied to the others as he trudges behind them, watches as the mist ahead first swallows Shackleton in the lead, then Worsley. All he can see then is the rope itself stretching into the fog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Worsley, too, can see nothing ahead or behind but the rope. Shackleton, the same, as he moves through the enveloping fog.

It's as if each man were alone, as if no one existed in the world but himself. Each can see nothing but his gloved hand in front of his face; can hear nothing but his own breath, which, with each step feels like it may be his last.

Abruptly then, Shackleton's face breaks through the veil of fog. He almost pitches forward, and realizes it's because the icy mountain under his boots has leveled off.

He stops. Stares ahead as Worsley is birthed from the fog. He, too, stops and looks as Crean comes through.

The three of them stand there in front of the wall of fog, motionless atop an uncharted mountain whose height has never been measured, staring down at -

#### **A WIDE CLEAR VISTA**

of the little Norwegian outpost of Grytviken on South Georgia, set down at the edge of its shimmering bay dotted with whaling ships at anchor.

#### **EXT. GRYTVIKEN WHALING STATION - DAY**

Two boys on the edge of town, cautiously poking at a dead bird, look up at -

Three gaunt, hairy scarecrows walking slowly toward them, flanked by the mountain no man has ever climbed. *scary*

As the strange men come past, the boys prudently take a step back, then tentatively fall in behind them. —

People peek out from behind curtains as they pass. A small crowd gradually begins forming - following them at a careful distance.

Shackleton glances to Worsley to share with him his last morsel of wisdom -

#### **SHACKLETON**

The most exciting part of exploring,  
Frank? Arriving back right where you  
started.

The three men and their growing entourage come past the whale carcasses and boiling vats. Workers stop what they're doing to look at the three scraggy strangers. Ahead, they can see Sorlle, supervising work that ceases around him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks up. The three gaunt figures stop in front of him. A long silence as he studies them. And finally -

SORLLE

Yes?

He doesn't recognize them. They are, in fact, almost unrecognizable to us.

SHACKLETON

We must look a sight. This is Second Officer Thomas Crean. This is Captain Frank Worsley. My name is Shackleton.

Sorlle is apoplectic, unable to comprehend the presence of these apparitions.

SHACKLETON

You were right. The weather was ... quite intemperate.

Sorlle glances to the bay for their ship. It isn't there.

SORLLE

Where did you come from?

SHACKLETON

Most recently, from there.

He points back at the mountain towering into the mist.

SORLLE

But that's ... impossible.

SHACKLETON

(smiles)

I know.

**INT. HOUSE - LONDON - EVENING**

A fire crackles in a hearth. A bell chimes. Emily crosses through a different, smaller house - past her two-years-old children - slowing before she reaches the door.

Every time there's a knock or a bell she feels it: is it good news or bad? Is it her husband finally returned or someone to tell he's not going to. She takes hold of knob and pulls open the door revealing ... a sailor.

EMILY

Yes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAILOR  
(Norwegian accent)  
Are you Mrs. Shackleton?

EMILY  
Yes.

He holds out an envelope with her name written on it in her lost husband's hand.

SHACKLETON V/O  
Dearest Emily -

**INT. HOUSE - LONDON - NIGHT**

Seated by the fire, she reads the letter -

SHACKLETON V/O  
By the time you receive this letter,  
the whole world will know what kind of  
man I am -

**EXT. THE DRAKE PASSAGE - NIGHT**

A schooner caught in a horrendous storm, battling high seas.

SHACKLETON V/O  
What kind of man, the world will say,  
leads 27 of his countrymen to edge of the  
earth - only to leave 22 of them there to  
die - and all for his own pride?

A wave slams through the wheelhouse, knocking the ship's captain and Worsley to the planking.

SHACKLETON V/O  
I have been trying for months to return  
to the men I left behind on an island in  
the Weddell Sea. Repeatedly we have been  
beaten back by weather in the Drake so  
severe we cannot cross it.

Shackleton, Crean and the schooner's crew grapple with the sails as a wall of water rises up.

SHACKLETON V/O  
We are about to attempt our fourth  
crossing, but do so with such dread as  
I cannot describe.

The bow slams into another towering wave, completely enveloping the ship. Miraculously it emerges on the other side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON V/O

The men could have survived a month. Perhaps, with luck and great initiation, two. Perhaps with an unmatched will and a miracle they could have survived three. But it is now more than four months passed, and I know what I'm going to find.

**EXT. THE SEA - DAY**

The schooner has survived the storm and sails now in calmer seas toward Elephant Island in the distance.

SHACKLETON V/O

The world will condemn me, and it'll be right to do so, for as well as had I used a pistol, I have killed them. I have condemned *them* to death.

Tight on Shackleton standing at the bow looking at the deserted, foreboding island ahead, not a flicker of hope on his face.

SHACKLETON V/O

Oh, Emily, if only *some* of the men survived this ordeal I imposed on them, perhaps I could live with my shame. If only *one* survived and I could return him to his family and watch them embrace him, perhaps I could go on living.

But there's no one. Not a soul on the awful beach.

SHACKLETON V/O

I'm sorry that by simply once having cared for me, you will suffer the condemnation meant for me. I'm sorry for our children, for they'll suffer it too. I'm sorry ... for it all. Ernest.

A plaintive howling that could be Shackleton's own tortured voice finishes the letter. But rather, it belongs to a full-grown scavenging dog that appears on the beach.

Shackleton keeps his vigil without a word. The dog tires of its howling and begins inspecting some bones on the beach. Crean and Worsley exchange a look. Are they human bones?

The dog looks across the beach. The men on the schooner follow its sightline to - a figure. The figure looks seaward but from this distance Shackleton can't tell who it is. Instead of a name, he intones:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SHACKLETON

One.

Another figure straggles out onto the beach.

SHACKLETON

Two.

Another figure appears. And another. Another ...

SHACKLETON

Three. Four. Five. Six. Seven.  
Eight. Nine. Ten. Eleven ...

One of them is struggling to raise a plain flag made of ripped tent canvas on a mast-pole stuck into the ground.

SHACKLETON

Twelve. Thirteen. Fourteen. Fifteen.  
Sixteen. Seventeen. Eighteen.  
Nineteen. Twenty ...

That's it. Twenty. He can make out their faces now, and doesn't see Wild's or Blackboro's among them.

WORSLEY

I don't see the boy.

CREAN

Or Wild.

They watch as the 'flag' stops half way up the mast - half-staff - the symbol of mourning for the dead - and Shackleton glances down at the deck as one looks down at the sod at a grave -

#### ON SHORE

Tight on the 'flag' ropes, caught on a rusted iron rigging guide on the mast pole. Below it, annoyed with the job -

ORDE-LEES

(grumbling)

Goddamn it -

He finally manages to shake the halyard free of its impediment and the 'flag' begins to rise again.

#### ON THE SCHOONER

WORSLEY

(a whisper)

Boss - ?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Shackleton looks up again - as the 'flag' on the beach reaches the top of the mast - and then sees -

- Wild, supporting a limping Blackboro on homemade crutches, appear from the ice cave.

Shackleton finally allows himself the trace of a smile as Frank Wild holds up his smoking pipe in triumph.

**EXT. EAST INDIA DOCKS - LONDON - DAY**

An explosion of color and sound. We are back in London, and the harbor is busier than ever with freighters and trawlers, troopships and troops.

There is only a small crowd waiting as the *Endurance* crew returns on a South American vessel.

The ship docks and the men - clean-shaven, well-dressed - come down the gangplank, some into the arms of waiting wives, children and friends.

There are no reporters.

Crean disembarks with his dog, unfamiliar with the leash around its neck. Blackboro hobbles down on crutches with Wild, Worsley and Shackleton.

Sir James Cairn watches as the battered lifeboat bearing his name is lowered, having no idea - yet - of the climactic part it played in the survival of the men.

Shackleton kneels to embrace each of his children, the youngest clutching a small British flag, then rises again to embrace Emily.

Letting go finally, he glances across to Wild standing some distance away with Worsley and Blackboro. No one turned out to meet them. They stand there looking a little lost, like the Three Musketeers in need of an errand. Eventually, deadly earnest -

WILD

Where to next, Boss?

As Shackleton smiles, Hurley - *still* on the job - takes a photograph of him. The image freezes in black and white as -

A solitary choir voice begins to sing 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,' and -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Legend: **Breaking his promise to Emily that he would never go *anywhere* again, Shackleton returned to the Antarctic six years later with eight members of the *Endurance* crew.**

The single voice is joined by others in the boys choir, and continue over -

**EXT. SOUTH GEORGIA ISLAND - DAY**

A windswept hillock high above the sea.

A lone figure stands before a simple Celtic cross that has fallen in the wind onto a small mound of stones marking the only grave up here.

Legend: **On the journey, he suffered a heart attack and died off the coast of South Georgia.**

The figure kneels to plant the cross back into the earth like a flag.

Legend: **Sir Edmund Hillary, first man to stand atop Mount Everest, said of exploration: *For scientific discovery, give me Scott. For speed and efficiency of travel, give me Amundsen. But when disaster strikes, and all hope is gone, get down on your knees and pray for Shackleton.***

The lone figure rises back up turns to leave, and we see that it's - Sorlle. Whaler. Norwegian. Outcast. Keeper of Sir Ernest Shackleton's primitive grave.

As he comes past to start back down, the vista is revealed in all its forbidding beauty: the hillside, the shacks of the whaling station, the great ships moored in the bay, and the sea stretching off forever ...

*Beautiful !!!*