HEROES AND VILLAINS
ENTERTAINMENT



1041 NORTH FORMOSA AVENUE, FORMOSA BUILDING, SUITE 202, LOS ANGELES, CA 90046
323•850•2990 VOICE • 323•850•2991 FAX
WWW.HEROESANDVILLAINS-ENT.COM

OCRACOKE

Written by

Ari Eisner

AGENCY:
APA
310.888.4200

MANAGEMENT:
HEROES AND VILLAINS ENTERTAINMENT
323.850.2990

WHITE LETTERS ON A BLACK SCREEN:

1718. England's war with Spain is over. Privateers who had worked in Queen Anne's service soon found themselves unemployed. Some of these men chose to stay on the high seas as outlaws, living by a violent skillset of pillage and plunder.

It is the Golden Age of Piracy.

The following is inspired by true events.

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST INDIAN OCEAN - DAY

Vast expanse of roiling blue.
No land in sight.

TITLE: THE WEST INDIAN OCEAN
H.M.S. SCARBOROUGH, BRITISH MAN-OF-WAR

Startling in scope. Twenty-five gun ports to a side.
The ship is all hubris, a juggernaut on the open water.
The word SCARBOROUGH emblazoned across her stern.

EXT. H.M.S. SCARBOROUGH - DAY

CAPTAIN FRANCIS HUME presides over a crew of 125 men.
Exudes an arrogance we'd expect from this vessel's commander.
He walks and talks to --

IAN, a lad of 8, rushes to keep up with him.
Scribbles Hume's dictations for a class project --

HUME
...There are thirty guns on this ship. Three masts at over two hundred feet long and we are primed by sails, not...
(distaste)
...oars. The man-of-war is her majesty's most formidable weapon operating on the open sea.

Ian writes frantically. Doesn't want to miss a word.

HUME (CONT'D)
Have you gotten everything I've said?

IAN
Yes, Uncle Francis.

HUME
(how many times do I have to tell you?)
“Captain Hume,” when we're onboard.

IAN
Right. Sorry, Unc-- Captain Hume.

HUME
You'll have the finest account of all your classmates.

IAN
Will we encounter any pirates?

HUME
A true pity for them if we do. The only thing worse than being sunk by the Royal Navy is to be held captive by us. Only to end with a hanging after they've stood trial.

Hume’s words have clearly rattled the boy.

HUME (CONT’D)
No cause for fear, Ian. Not as long as I’m in charge. Her Majesty doesn’t fold under my command.
(Ian smiles, re: his notes)
Makes sure you put that in, too.

LOOMIS (O.S.)
Captain! Port side!

Hume rushes to the port side. Ian follows. FIRST MATE LOOMIS has a spyglass to his eye. Hands it to Hume, who peers through. Sees --

A large floating ship.
Bobbing there in the water. Not doing much else.

Its BLACK SAILS BILLOW and SNAP.
Three masts. An array of cannons and guns.

Although not quite the size of the *Scarborough*, there’s something ominous about the vessel. Vaguely threatening.

This is the *QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE*.
Blackbeard’s ship.

Its trademark Jolly Roger flaps wickedly in the breeze --
A skeleton piercing a heart, toasting the devil on its right.

HUME
Ian, stay yourself in my quarters belowdecks.

The kid doesn't move. Frozen at the oncoming vessel.

HUME (CONT'D)
Now!

The kid scurries off.
Hume peers through the spyglass again.

HUME (CONT'D)
You recognize that flag, Mr. Loomis?

LOOMIS
It's Blackbeard, sir.

HUME
(a grin)
Indeed.

LOOMIS
What's she doing?

HUME
Nothing. They're not moving at all.

A beat as the mystified officers stare at the ship.

LOOMIS
I thought she'd be larger.

HUME
You call that small?

LOOMIS
From tales. I was sure they'd outsize us.

Hume looks at Loomis. Smirks. *No chance.*

HUME
Fire a series of warning shots. A good look at us may sway them to come quietly.

For just one second, we see the slightest pause in these men.
Then they move off. Hume stays focused on *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

HUME (CONT'D)
(couldn't be more pleased)
If they fight or surrender, we're making history today, Mr. Loomis.

The BOOM of CANNONS echoes from the gun deck. Enormous, menacing SPLASHES erupt just shy of *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

A long, tense beat. Then --

HUME (CONT'D)
Send marksmen into the crosstrees.
Open and occupy every gunport.

The edge in his voice makes the men scramble frantically.

LOOMIS
No pirate ship has ever attacked a naval dreadnought.

HUME
And I aim to keep that record untarnished.

LOOMIS
They're moving!

Queen Anne's Revenge slowly draws towards them --

Water LAPS rhythmically at the base of the ship --
A sound that should soothe actually grows maddening --

MARKSMEN with MUSKETS scale the *Scarborough*'s rigging.
Despite his arrogance, Hume is no idiot -- his men need to move faster.

Below, the sounds of cannons ROLLING and LOCKING into place.
Hume surveys his weaponry. Feels a lot better now.

Queen Anne's Revenge closes. And then, movement on the ship --
Their Jolly Roger begins to SLOWLY LOWER.
The WHIPPING sound of the flag slaps across the water.

LOOMIS (CONT'D)
Should I believe what I'm seeing?

Blackbeard's Jolly Roger descends as they drift closer.
Hume, distrustful, watches intently.

LOOMIS (CONT'D)
They're surrendering.

The marksmen hold their positions.
Gunners at the cannon await for Hume's signal.

-- Only it doesn't come.

Because Blackbeard's Jolly Roger drops out of sight.
The pirate vessel is now completely quiet.
Both ships bob side by side on the water.

HUME
So he's not a complete imbecil--

He's cut off as CANNON FIRE blasts from *Queen Anne's Revenge* --

A cannonball SHEARS OFF Loomis' head and most of his chest.
He's blown out of frame in a burst of RED MIST.

More cannonballs bombard from the pirate ship.
The sound is DEAFENING. Like being inside a drum.

The rigging of the *Scarborough* is struck. Snipers CRASH painfully to the deck. The lucky ones die quick.
One man, IMPALED by a strut, won't stop screaming.

The Jolly Roger on *Queen Anne's Revenge* ascends. Another round of FIRE from her gunports barrages the *Scarborough*.

The Naval ship is ROCKED hard.
Hume is thrown to the deck. Thick SMOKE fills his lungs.
His eyes. Loomis' blood covers his body like warpaint.

HUME (CONT'D)
Fire! Fire! All you've got!!

The *Scarborough* issues its own volley of cannonfire --
But *Queen Anne's Revenge* is already onto firing again --

Shrapnel-laden grenades EXPLODE across the *Scarborough*'s deck. RIP into soldiers. The Naval crew HOWLS in agony --

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BELOW DECKS - DAY

The anguished screams of the *Scarborough*'s men blend with BLACKBEARD'S LAUGHTER. He's an intimidating sight --

Long coat flows out behind him. Pistols on his chest.
Unruly, mangy hair matches a thick, black beard. Fiery eyes.
Having the time of his life --

BLACKBEARD
I thought man-of-war vessels were supposed to be tough.

As if on cue, a cannonball SLAMS into *Queen Anne Revenge*'s hull. Knocks several pirates off their feet.
Even Blackbeard stumbles. Then smiles. Likes the fight.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
That's what we're looking for.

Behind him, boatswine GARRET GIBBENS -- large, stout, a brute -- hands GRAPPLING HOOKS to pirates. Chooses one for himself.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Hold off on those, Mr. Gibbens.
We'll not board them.

GIBBENS
You said we're not to sink them.

BLACKBEARD
We'll not do that either.

ISRAEL HANDS, first-mate. Lean, blonde, a thinker --

HANDS
Then what is our aim, Captain?

Blackbeard only grins at him.
Gives him a friendly slap on the cheek -- *just wait.*
Looks at Gunner PHILLIP MORTON.

BLACKBEARD
Mr. Morton, another round to her deck,
if you please.

The cannons are loaded with BROKEN GLASS, HOOKS, RUSTY NAILS and METAL. They SCRAPE frighteningly, sliding down the barrels.

Gibbens looks genuinely <u>disappointed</u> --

GIBBENS
Wait. We're really not trying to
sink them?

INT. H.M.S. SCARBOROUGH/GUN DECK - DAY

Despite returning fire, this ship is getting its ass kicked.
A wall EXPLODES. Drives countless SPLINTERS into nearby men.

EXT. H.M.S. SCARBOROUGH - DAY

Hume crawls over bodies as the ship is pummeled around him.
Pink and gray matter is sprayed across the deck --
Desperate screams from every direction --

He picks up a grenade next to a fallen navy officer.
HURLS it onto the deck of *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

A half-beat.

And then the grenade is flung <u>back</u> onto the *Scarborough*.
Hume dives for cover as it DETONATES. SHRAPNEL flies --

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/GUN DECK - DAY

Blackbeard addresses his pirates on cannons --

BLACKBEARD
Aim for her deck. Not the hull.
Don't cease-fire until I say.
(then)
Israel.

He heads up towards the main deck, Israel Hands in tow.

EXT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/MAIN DECK - DAY

Blackbeard and Hands emerge into the fight.
Observe the razing of the *H.M.S. Scarborough*. Satisfied.

BLACKBEARD
How we doing, Caesar?

Blackbeard address quartermaster BLACK CAESAR -- muscular, former slave. A twisted sense of humor --

CAESAR
There are some sights prettier than
a sunset, Captain.

The British Navy ship's deck is enshrouded in swirling smoke.
Shrieks emanate from within it.
The *Queen Anne's Revenge* continues to hammer away.

HANDS
I still don't understand this plan.
If we're not boarding them or
destroying them, what are we doing?

Blackbeard just stares at the *Scarborough*. At length --

BLACKBEARD
Waiting.

But Israel's still nonplussed.

CAESAR
Captain! They're moving.

HANDS
Shifting to engage other firepower?

BLACKBEARD
I don't think so.

And indeed the *Scarborough* is MOVING.
Only she's turning <u>away</u> from *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

Blackbeard and his men watch --
The British Navy is <u>running away</u>.

CAESAR
They're fleeing!

BLACKBEARD
Tell the men on cannon to stand down.

HANDS
(to Blackbeard; not a good thing)
You wanted to humiliate them.

From his mannerisms, it's clear Blackbeard considers Hands more than just a member of his crew. He's a friend.

BLACKBEARD
You would've done different, Israel?

HANDS
They'll hunt us now. Like they've hunted no other.

Blackbeard wears a beaming smile. A proud moment for him --

BLACKBEARD
Yes.

EXT. GOVERNOR'S MANSION/VIRGINIA - DAY

TITLE: VIRGINIA

An opulent estate overlooking the Atlantic Ocean.
Adjacent to a NAVAL BASE.
NAVAL SHIPS pass in and out of the harbor.

INT. GOVERNOR SPOTSWOOD'S OFFICE - DAY

GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD'S office is covered with commendations and medals.

This is a man who will <u>never</u> let you forget who he is.
He is, at the moment, <u>apoplectic</u> --

SPOTSWOOD
We do not run from pirates.

Captain Hume stands before Spotswood's desk, chastised.
His arrogant swagger completely gone.

HUME
They took us by surprise.

Spotswood flips through the *Scarborough*'s tattered LOGBOOK.

SPOTSWOOD
It reads here that the *Scarborough*
fired the initial cannon of the fray.

HUME
A warning shot.

SPOTSWOOD
(dry)
I don't think they heeded.

He drops the logbook on his desk, disgusted.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
For five months, you've gone unaccounted for, drifting god-knows-where and now you decide to wash up on my shore.

HUME
Our rudders and navigational equipment were destroyed. We were ashamed--

SPOTSWOOD
And so you should be.
(then)
Who else have you told of this?

HUME
It's not something our crew boasts, sir.

Spotswood turns to look out his window. His POV --

THE HARBOR JUNKYARD

From this angle, we're afforded a birdseye view --

The *Scarborough*. Once formidable. Now a beat-to-hell skeleton in pieces. Bloodstains streak the deck.

Spotswood stares at the damaged ship. Says nothing.
Hume fidgets nervously.
Then, almost more to himself than Hume --

SPOTSWOOD
You are bigger. You are stronger. You are a vessel of Her Majesty's Royal Navy and you are not bested by gutter scum.

-- Like a mantra. Gets his wheels turning. He spins --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
All that remains of your crew will keep this story to yourselves.

Crosses to his desk, opens the logbook. Finds the pages he was looking for and TEARS THEM OUT as he continues --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
You were never here, Captain Hume.
We never had this conversation.
And you never had any encounter
with a pirate named Blackbeard.

He hands the doctored logbook back to Hume.
Places the torn-out pages on top. Off them --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
Burn those.

He turns back to the window.
Hume watches him. Then skulks out of the office.

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT - NIGHT

TITLE: THE NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
H.M.S. GALLANT, PRISONER VESSEL

To call the sea CHOPPY would be an understatement.
The British Naval dreadnought, the *GALLANT*, powers along.

INT. H.M.S. GALLANT/PRISONER PEN - NIGHT

Cramped space. The boat ROCKS on the unsteady waters.

A line of six PRISONERS are shackled to connecting HAND IRONS. They look rather green from the vessel's motion.

Two men stand guard over them --

LIEUTENANT TOL JARET, 20s, more bulk than brains.
LIEUTENANT ROBERT MAYNARD, 30s. Compact. Fresh-faced.
Maynard's eyes reveal an intelligence far above his task.
Oh yeah, he's also the hero of this story.

Currently Jaret's head is buried in a bucket.
Puking his guts out.

Only one prisoner seems to maintain composure --
REED DANTON, the grimiest of the bunch. Eyes fixed on --

Maynard. Who glares right back. Also steady as a rock.
Nasty stare-down between these two.

Jaret sits up from his bucket.
Wipes sweaty hair off his face. Tries not to barf again.

DANTON
(to Maynard)
Gave you the important job, eh?

Maynard doesn't respond. Just keeps eyeing him.

DANTON (CONT'D)
You rubbed someone wrong, so they stuck you down here with skinny.

Meaning Jaret, who barfs again. A few BUTTONS POP off his naval jacket. As the ship bucks, they roll everywhere.

JARET
Shut up.

On hands and knees, he searches for lost buttons. No one seems to notice the one that bounced off Danton's shoe. He surreptitiously covers it with his foot.

Baits Jaret some more.
Draws attention to the Navy man's GAUDY RING --

DANTON
Where'd you get that ring, lardy? I know a whore in Port Royal with several just like it.

JARET
Not another word!

Goes back to his business. Finds a few buttons. Tries pinning them back on. He's clumsy. It's pathetic.

DANTON
(to Maynard)
Pity.

Maynard rises, starts to cross the room.

DANTON (CONT'D)
Getting scared, Maynard?

MAYNARD
Not scared. Just the sudden urge to relieve myself.

Maynard opens a side door, revealing an open-air area with a single railing. No latrines back then. The ocean was the toilet. Maynard shuts the door behind him.

Danton watches Jaret pin his buttons back on as the ship is buffeted by the sea. Eyes on the distracted lieutenant, he lowers himself to the floor. Claws the fallen button --

Turns it over, touches the fastening pin's sharp point. One more glance at Jaret before bringing the pin to his manacles.

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT/SECOND TIER - NIGHT

Maynard finishes taking his leak.
Looks out at the black expanse of ocean.
A longing in his eyes for a better life than this.

A THUD from the prisoner-pen jolts him out of his thoughts.
Grabs the door, but something bars it from the other side.

INT. H.M.S. GALLANT/PRISONER PEN - NIGHT

By unlocking his restraint, Danton released all six prisoners.
A chair jams the door Maynard exited a moment ago.

Jaret's on the floor, stripped of his gun and sword.
He's got his hands held up in a surrendering gesture.

Danton grabs the back of Jaret's jacket and yanks it up over the lieutenant's head. Blinds the heavyset man with it.

As the other prisoners chuckle at this --

DANTON
Up.

They storm up the stairs --

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT - NIGHT

The six prisoners charge out, lock the floor-door to the prisoner pen behind them. They observe the sailors on deck --

This being so late at night, only a smattering of Naval men are present and awake.

PRISONER #1
Do we have a plan?

DANTON
Charge them.

Five prisoners close on the skeleton crew.
Take them by surprise. While unbeknownst to all --
Danton hurries off in the other direction.

INT. H.M.S. GALLANT/PRISONER PEN - NIGHT

Maynard bangs hard on the door from the outside.

MAYNARD (O.S.)
Jaret! What's happening? Jaret?!

Jaret untangles from his jacket.
Yanks the chair from the door. Maynard hurries in.
Bounds up the stairs.

JARET
I think they locked it.

Indeed the door to the upper-deck won't budge.

JARET (CONT'D)
It happened so fast. They overpowered--

But Maynard's not even listening. He crosses back --

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT/SECOND TIER - NIGHT

Maynard climbs onto the railing. Looks up --
RUNGS and DIVOTS line the *Gallant*'s hull.

Maynard grabs the nearest. And climbs.

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT - NIGHT

The five prisoners have disarmed the few sailors at the wheel. Have them all face down and bound on the deck.

PRISONER #1
Let's see if shit floats.

The other prisoners laugh.

ACROSS THE DECK

Maynard -- red-faced with strain -- pulls himself over the railing. Observes the scene at the wheel.

A prisoner draws a sword. Raises it above the prone sailors. This is about to get very ugly.

Maynard's brain is in overdrive. Takes in his surroundings. Analyzes options. Moves before he wastes another second --

Yanks a lever on a wench.
The ship's enormous SAIL BOOM swings hard and fast --

SLAMS brutally into the five prisoners.
They're knocked like bowling pins to the deck.

The crewmen leap to their feet.
Restrain the prisoners.

Maynard joins them.
But something's not right --

MAYNARD
Where's the sixth?

The injured prisoners only groan. He grabs one. Presses his chest, where he was hit by the boom. The guy HOWLS in pain.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Danton. Where is he?

The prisoner only yells. Clearly doesn't know.
Maynard looks at the CAPTAIN --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
There's one missing.

CAPTAIN
(pointing)
There!

All heads whip to the railing.
But it's only Jaret, dragging his large self over the rail.

Maynard and the crewmen scour the boat.
Under tarps... in crates... behind doors... Nothing.
Suddenly Maynard stops, looks out at the railing.

MAYNARD
Jaret!

Jaret hurries over to him.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Wasn't there a longboat stationed there?

Jaret shrugs. Of course he doesn't know.
Maynard moves to the railing, sees empty hooks where a longboat was once suspended.

And out in the ocean, about a football field away --

DANTON

Steadily rows away from the *Gallant* in a longboat.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Come about!

He spins, at the wheel is still a mass of commotion where the sail boom is being repaired.

Looks back out at Danton in the water.
And we see it in his face --
Losing is not something Robert Maynard does very well. So --

Fuck it.
He DIVES OFF THE BOAT.

Splashes into the ocean and swims with all he's got.

EXT. OCEAN/LONGBOAT - NIGHT

Danton rows with a shit-eating grin on his face.
Closes his eyes, enjoying his freedom --

That's when his boat TIPS violently, dumps him in the water.
Maynard hurls himself into the boat from the other side.

Danton flails. Gasps --

DANTON
I can't swim.

MAYNARD
Pity.

Danton's eyes go wide.
Maynard lets him sweat another beat.
Then grabs the convict. Hauls him into the boat. Cuffs him.

EXT. NAVAL YARD/VIRGINIA - DAY

A small, but significant ceremony is underway --
COMMANDER TANNIS presides over Maynard and Jaret.

COMMANDER TANNIS
For outstanding conduct and exemplar bravery, you are receiving a commendation for valor in service under Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

Medals are looped around Maynard and Jaret's necks.

Jaret beams. Super-proud. Clearly feels deserving.
Maynard's eyes flash to him, then back straight ahead.
He is otherwise expressionless as the commander drones on...

EXT. NAVAL YARD/HARBOR - LATER

Maynard and Jaret approach the docked *H.M.S. Gallant*.
Sailors and workmen scurry about her deck, repairing.

Jaret's entranced by his new medal. Wears it around his neck, but holds it so he can view his reflection --

JARET
I can see myself!

MAYNARD
Yeah, it goes with your ring.

As Jaret tries to decide if that's a compliment or insult --

SHIPMAN ALLCOT (O.S.)
Maynard! Jaret!

They look up -- SHIPMAN ALLCOT heaves something large over the side of the deck --

DAMAGED MANACLES. The ones Danton broke through.
They CLANG heavily at the ground in front of Maynard and Jaret.

MAYNARD
Hey!

SHIPMAN ALLCOT
That goes to scrap.

He turns away, disappears back onto the ship.

MAYNARD
We were just honored. Is he serious?

JARET
(looks at the manacles)
I think he is.

Maynard exhales. The two set to lifting --

EXT. HARBOR JUNKYARD - DAY/LATER

As one might expect, heaps of junk and scrapmetal.
Maynard and Jaret struggle to balance the heavy manacles.

JARET
(straining)
Here?

MAYNARD
What?

Jaret drops his end. The BANG of metal on metal is jarring.
Maynard YELPS at the sudden shift in weight. Drops his end.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

JARET
You said to drop it.

Maynard shakes his head.

JARET (CONT'D)
Should we carry it further onto the mound?

MAYNARD
What's the difference?

Jaret shrugs.
Maynard looks at the junkyard. Sighs. *This is my life.*

His eyes fall on something towards the rear of the scrap --
An area SECTIONED OFF by a large BLACK CURTAIN.

Maynard starts to climb over junk towards it.

JARET
What're you doing?

MAYNARD
Stay here.

JARET
I don't think you should--

MAYNARD
Shh.

He clambers over jagged, precarious footing to the curtain.
Peers behind it. Sees --

A partially-demolished man-of-war. Scorch-marks obscure the word "SCARBOROUGH", making it barely readable.

GLASS BOTTLE SHARDS are wedged deep into the ship's hull.

WORKMAN (O.S.)
Get away from there!

Maynard turns, sees a filthy WORKMAN standing with Jaret --

WORKMAN (CONT'D)
You have no business here.

MAYNARD
I was just curious.

WORKMAN
Area's restricted. You can't be there.

MAYNARD
I'm a lieutenant.

WORKMAN
You can't be there, <u>sir</u>. Off ya go.

As Maynard starts back --

EXT. MAYNARD HOUSE - DAY

Establishing a quaint home.

INT. MAYNARD HOUSE - DAY

Modestly furnished. Maynard and his wife DORA, six months pregnant, at the kitchen table. She studies her husband's commendation medal.

MAYNARD
(blase)
Big deal.

DORA
It is a big deal.

MAYNARD
They want to reward me, they can promote me to a better pay grade.

DORA
Robert.

MAYNARD
I mean nothing to them.
(then)
This has to change.

DORA
What has to change?

MAYNARD
This. This house. Your clothes.

DORA
This house and my clothes are fine.
(then)
You were just honored. That's a wonderful thing.
(he drops his eyes)
But it's not good enough for you.

MAYNARD
You said it, not me.

DORA
Robert. Robert, look at me.
(he does)
For once, can you be happy with what you have?

He stares at her. Her eyes full of love. Beat.

MAYNARD
I am.

He takes her hand. Kisses it.
She watches him. Knows him better than he knows himself --

DORA
You could just be... happier.

MAYNARD
You said it, not me.

And before she can respond, he kisses her. Grabs her playfully, returning the love she clearly feels for him.

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

The ship is docked.

INT. H.M.S. GALLANT/PRISONER PEN - DAY

Maynard works to repair the floordoor the prisoners broke through. Nearby Jaret and Shipman Allcot attach new manacles to the bench --

JARET
How much is he offering?

SHIPMAN ALLCOT
One hundred pounds for Blackbeard.
Forty for any other pirate commander.

Although not part of the discussion, Maynard overhears it. The strikingly high number gives him pause.

JARET
(whistles)
A hundred?

SHIPMAN ALLCOT
That's what I hear.

JARET
He must be even worse than they say.
(then)
So why now?

SHIPMAN ALLCOT
Hell if I know.

They continue hammering away at the manacles.
Off Maynard --

EXT. H.M.S. GALLANT - DAY

Commander Tannis and Maynard walk the deck.

COMMANDER TANNIS
From what I understand, the governor is hand-picking men for the job.

MAYNARD
Then why post a bounty at all?

COMMANDER TANNIS
I'd imagine he wants the best man.

Tannis sees Maynard’s wheels turning.

COMMANDER TANNIS (CONT’D)
This is out of your depth, Robert.

MAYNARD
I can’t stay where I am forever, Commander.

COMMANDER TANNIS
It’s pointless discussing. You'd never procure the assignment anyway. No one gets in to see the Governor.

INT. GOVERNOR SPOTSWOOD’S OFFICE - DAY

Spotswood reacts to a statement --

SPOTSWOOD
Beg your pardon. Who are you and how did you get in here?

REVERSE reveals Maynard, looking formal as ever. Commendation medal hangs on his neck.

MAYNARD
Lieutenant Robert Maynard of Her Majesty’s Royal Fleet, sir. I was recently awarded a commendatory medal of valor by Commander Tannis.

SPOTSWOOD
And that gained you an audience with me?

MAYNARD
Evidently.

Spotswood shoots a disapproving look through his open door where his SECRETARY, a teenage boy barely old enough to shave, sits at a desk. The kid wears a sheepish expression.

SPOTSWOOD
I see.

Spotswood rises, closes the door HARD in his secretary's face.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
And you want to lead the hunt for the pirate Blackbeard.

MAYNARD
Very much so, sir.

SPOTSWOOD
Have you hunted pirates before?

MAYNARD
No sir.

SPOTSWOOD
Done battle with one?

MAYNARD
I've transported countless criminals on prisoner ships.

SPOTSWOOD
Criminals. Common criminals?

MAYNARD
How would you define "common," sir?

Maynard's hubris amuses Spotswood.
The governor absently touches a THICK FILE on his desk.

SPOTSWOOD
You think you've seen the worst of humanity.

MAYNARD
I've seen bad.

SPOTSWOOD
You have no idea. We may be talking about the devil incarnate.

Maynard stifles a chuckle at the extreme metaphor.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
He held an entire port hostage for five days.

MAYNARD
Charleston.

SPOTSWOOD
So you've heard of what he did there.

MAYNARD
It's renown, sir.

SPOTSWOOD
Not a person, not a ship, but an entire harbor. Completely under his control.

MAYNARD
I am aware.

SPOTSWOOD
That was but one of his deeds. A man whose morality is limited only by the bounds of his own sadistic imagination.

MAYNARD
When can I get started?

Spotswood sizes him up. At length --

SPOTSWOOD
I admire your enthusiasm young man, but this assignment isn't for you.

Spotswood rises, starts to escort Maynard out --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
A clever tongue may have gotten you through my door, but that's as far as it will get you.

Spotswood reaches for the doorknob when --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
Your experience in this area is just too limited--

MAYNARD
I'm aware of what a pirate can do. Particularly this specific pirate. I saw what he did to the *H.M.S. Scarborough*.

And Spotswood stops. That landed.

SPOTSWOOD
Who told you about the *Scarborough*?

MAYNARD
No one. I saw her. Or, what was left of her. The broken rum bottle shards piercing her hull weren't fired by any navy ship. That's a pirate's grapeshot.

Spotswood appraises him.

SPOTSWOOD
Uh-huh.
(then)
And what makes you think that was, in fact, Blackbeard's doing?

MAYNARD
Do you have as high a bounty out on anyone else?

Spotswood considers that. And smirks. Then --

SPOTSWOOD
Are you aware this is an illegal assignment?

MAYNARD
Sir?

SPOTSWOOD
Governor Charles Eden of North Carolina granted Blackbeard a royal pardon. The man's a private citizen. We've no legal right to hunt him.

MAYNARD
And yet you are.

SPOTSWOOD
A fiend like that doesn't simply stop being what he is. He's laughing at us with our laws and morals. The bounty is from my own, personal fund. Not the Navy's.
(then)
Does this discourage you?

MAYNARD
Evil is evil. No matter what type of document it's been issued.

SPOTSWOOD
I see.
(then)
None of this precludes the fact that you have information you shouldn't.

MAYNARD
That bell can't be unrung.

SPOTSWOOD
I suppose that depends on what you plan to do with said information.

For a long beat, neither speaks.

MAYNARD
I can find this man, Governor. I can find him and I can stop him.

Spotswood locks eyes with Maynard. Then crosses to his desk --

SPOTSWOOD
Sources tell me he's somewhere along the north eastern seaboard.
(lifts a THICK FILE)
This is everything I've personally labored to anthologize on the pirate. Treat it as you would a bible.

Maynard takes it from him.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
Congratulations, Lieutenant. You've just wagered your life.

Off Maynard, his world about to change --

EXT. DOCK - DAY

Two sloops -- the *RANGER* and the *JANE* (the larger of the pair) -- are loaded with men and equipment.

Maynard shares a private goodbye with Dora at the quay's base. Her face is confluence of emotions -- love... pride... fear.

DORA
Becky Mathers said she heard he sets flames around his head. Dangles them from his hat.

MAYNARD
She'll just believe anything, won't she?

DORA
You don't have to do this, Robert. We can find money other ways.

MAYNARD
I hear crime on the high seas pays well.

She smiles. Changes the subject --

DORA
I made this for you.

Hands him a satchel. A RED FABRIC tucked inside. A few nearby sailors take notice. Jaret's among them. He loads up the *Ranger.*

Off them --

DORA (CONT'D)
You don't have to take it out now. It's a blanket.

Maynard nods a thanks. Notes his wife studying his face --

MAYNARD
What are you doing?

DORA
What?

MAYNARD
It's like you're trying to burn my face into your mind. I'm going to be fine, Dora. Better than fine. You believe me?

She nods. They embrace. In her ear --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
I'll come back richer than we ever dreamed.

They separate. She appraises him a moment longer.

DORA
Just come back.

EXT. SEA - DUSK

The *Jane* and *Ranger* sail under a purple post-sunset sky.

INT. JANE/MAYNARD'S QUARTERS - DUSK

Maynard's at his desk, Spotswood's near-sacred file in front of him. He opens it. The first page --

CASE FILE OF EDWARD TEACH, AKA BLACKBEARD THE PYRATE
COMPILED BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA
FOR PRIVILEGED EYES ONLY
PROPERTY OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

Maynard turns the page --

1680. BORN OUTSIDE OF KINGSTOWN, JAMAICA

There is no further information on this sheet.

Save for the stamp on the lower half of the page --

COMPILED BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA
FOR PRIVILEGED EYES ONLY
PROPERTY OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

Maynard reacts. That's a little odd. Turns the page --

1683. MOVES TO BRISTOL, ENGLAND

That's all she wrote.
Oh, and below that --

COMPILED BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA
FOR PRIVILEGED EYES ONLY
PROPERTY OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

MAYNARD
Is he joking?

Maynard turns the page. Another single sentence --

1693. MOTHER REMARRIES

And need we add --

COMPILED BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA
FOR PRIVILEGED EYES ONLY
PROPERTY OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

Maynard thumbs through the thick file -- all of it one or two sentences, all marked with Spotswood's proprietary stamp.

Maynard closes the file. Blows air.

INT. JANE - DUSK

Impromptu mess area. The crew eats dinner.
One man, WILDER, sets a hearty piece of meat on his plate.

Reaches out of his seat to pour himself a drink.
When he returns to his seat, the meat on his plate is GONE.

Looks to DEMELT, the man next to him --

WILDER
Did you take my meat?

DEMELT
Mmm?

WILDER
Did you take my meat?

BARELY INTELLIGIBLE through a mouthful of MEAT --

DEMELT
No.

He cracks himself up. Even Wilder laughs --

WILDER
Asshole.

Maynard approaches. The crew makes room for him to sit.
He does. Drops the file on the table like it's worthless.

MAYNARD
Too many trees were sacrificed for this.

DEMELT
The governor's notes aren't of much use, lieutenant?

MAYNARD
A wedding gown isn't of much use to me, Mr. Demelt.
(off file)
There isn't a word for what this is. There's one sentence per page. Followed by an incessant reminder that the governor compiled and owns the file. Who would be proud of that is someone more enlightened than I.

He sighs. Looks at the food on the table --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
What is that?

WILDER
Salted meat.

MAYNARD
I can see that. What kind of meat?

WILDER
(pointedly, to Demelt)
I wouldn't know.

Demelt picks a particle of food from his teeth. Examines it, confused as to what it is --

DEMELT
Neither would I.

MAYNARD
Give me some.

They pass Maynard a piece of meat. Under which, Demelt thumbs through Spotswood's file. Beat.

DEMELT
Who is Benjamin Hornigold?

MAYNARD
Who?

DEMELT
Says here Blackbeard served under him in his formative pirating years.
(turns a page)
He was Blackbeard's mentor.

Maynard calls to first-mate BAKER at the table's far end --

MAYNARD
Mr. Baker, have you heard of a Benjamin Hornihold--

DEMELT
Hornigold--

MAYNARD
Hornigold. He's a pirate. That name mean anything to you?

BAKER
He was a pirate. He retired.

MAYNARD
Retired?

BAKER
That's what I heard.

MAYNARD
Did you happen to hear to where?

EXT. JAMAICA/BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD'S HOUSE - DAY

Sweeping, beautiful land.

INT. BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD'S HOUSE - DAY

Retired pirate BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD is hardened and gruff. A no-bullshit look in his eye matched by tone of voice --

HORNIGOLD
That's correct, I am a retired and pardoned pirate. Point of fact, I'm shifting into anti-piracy and the hunting down of said outlaws.

REVERSE reveals Maynard across from him.

HORNIGOLD (CONT'D)
So if you're here to arrest me, someone's about to look pretty goddamn stupid.

Swigs a drink. As he will continue to do throughout the scene.

MAYNARD
Just came to ask a few questions.

Hornigold puffs up. Always ready to toot his own horn --

HORNIGOLD
And what is it I can tell you?

MAYNARD
I wanna know about Blackbeard.

Hornigold's expression changes. He seems to deflate.

HORNIGOLD
That wasn't a question.

MAYNARD
I can phrase it like one if you'd prefer.
(then)
Did you not just tell me you shifted into hunting pirates?

HORNIGOLD
This is different.

MAYNARD
Here we go. The devil incarnate, right?

Hornigold doesn't respond, takes a drink.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
This shouldn't be difficult. You're a pardoned man now, a citizen.

HORNIGOLD
So's he. Or haven't you heard.

MAYNARD
I've heard. I just don't believe he'll conform. And I don't think you do, either.

Hornigold shifts in his seat. Maynard presses further --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
You were his mentor.

HORNIGOLD
That's one word for what I was to him.

MAYNARD
I'm going to catch him.

Hornigold appraises him. Then chuckles. Off Maynard --

HORNIGOLD
You're serious. That's even funnier.

He laughs harder.

MAYNARD
You don't know anything about me.

HORNIGOLD
And you clearly don't know anything about him.

MAYNARD
So tell me.

Maynard's even tone gets through. Hornigold pours a drink --

HORNIGOLD
He was born a thief.

HARD CUT:

EXT. BRISTOL, ENGLAND - DAY

TITLE: 1693

A beautiful day.
Then a PIRATE DROPS into frame under a GALLOWS.

He's got a NOOSE around his neck.
Hits the end of his rope with a hard SNAP.

He writhes and kicks, jackknifing his legs.
Rarely did hangings end quick and painlessly.

PULL BACK over a crowd of onlookers to find EDWARD TEACH, 13 with his father, BAILOR. Edward is transfixed by the dying pirate, jerking and struggling.

BAILOR
That is what becomes of thieves, Edward.

Bailor's stare is hard.
Truly disapproving and worse, <u>disappointed</u>.

Edward won't meet his eyes, still locked on the pirate.

BAILOR (CONT'D)
Edward. Edward, look at me.
(Edward does)
There are ways to right our wrongs.

Edward holds his father's look. Reaches into his pockets and pulls out KNICK-KNACKS -- a tiny stone battleship, a fish sculpture, a miniature flag --

Bailor nods as Edward hands them to him. His face drops as his kid's run of stolen souvenirs seems to go on forever.

BAILOR (CONT'D)
We're going to return these.

He places the stolen items in a satchel. Ushers his son away. As they go, the bloodthirsty crowd CHANTS --

CROWD
Lonnerbee! Lonnerbee!

EDWARD
What are they saying, father?

BAILOR
The pirate's name.

And despite his father's pull away from it all, Edward turns back at the pirate, twisting in the breeze. Now <u>captivated</u>. The outlaw's notoriety has a clear resonance on the boy...

INT. BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD'S HOUSE - DAY

Back with Maynard and Hornigold.

MAYNARD
So why didn't he go straight?

HORNIGOLD
He might've, had the old man not died in an accident that same year. See, it was his step-father who really turned him onto the life. Hardened him...

ANOTHER HARD CUT:

INT. TEACH HOME - DAY (1693)

Edward's MOTHER tidies the house.
Step-father DRUMMOND sharpens a knife. The man's a brute. Mangy bearded. Powerfully built. Scary. Perhaps we notice a physical similarity between him and Blackbeard.

Edward sits at a makeshift desk, writing. Homework.

Drummond watches the kid. Studious, attentive to his work, a thinker. And Drummond despises this.
He rises, crosses to the boy's desk --

DRUMMOND
Did you gather the eggs from the coop like I said?

EDWARD
There weren't any--

Before he can pronounce that last word, Drummond CUFFS him on the head. Hard.
Edward topples to the floor. His papers fly everywhere.

His mother stops tidying. Looks up.
She and Drummond lock eyes until... she drops her gaze.

DRUMMOND
(to Edward)
Told you about talking back.

Hits him again for good measure.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
The man was a dimwit who resented that Edward could read and write. He didn't make life very pleasant.

Edward heads outside.
Drummond watches him. Picks the homework papers up off the floor. Glances at them. And throws them in the fireplace.

Edward's mother pretends not to see.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And so it went. The boy taking regular beatings.

EXT. BRISTOL COAST - DUSK (1693)

A different day.
Edward walks along, fresh bruises on his face.
Stares out at the ocean as the sun sets.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
But his step-father forgot something about little thirteen year-old boys.

MAYNARD (V.O.)
What's that?

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
They get bigger.

EXT. BRISTOL/DRUMMOND FARM - NIGHT (1698)

Drummond CRACKS a WHIP --
It LASHES an EIGHTEEN YEAR-OLD EDWARD.
Not as filled out as Drummond, but bigger than he once was.

Edward falls to the ground.
Drummond advances.

DRUMMOND
Still wanna show me how smart you are? Huh? Get up, boy.

Edward struggles to rise.
His hand lands on a ROCK --

He snatches it up as Drummond rears for another strike --
Edward THROWS the rock -- SMACKS his step-father in the face.

Drummond is dazed, shocked, hurt.
A rage flashes in his eyes, ready to strike that whip --

But he doesn't.

There's a look in Edward's eyes. A warning.
They hold like that, glaring at each other for a beat.

Edward's mother hurries over. Observes the tableau.
She considers her son. Drummond's bleeding face. Then --

EDWARD'S MOTHER
What did you do, Edward?

Edward's at a loss for words. The realization that his mother is accusatory is staggering. One final look at her --

And he bolts. Off into the night.

EXT. PRIVATEER BOAT - NIGHT (1698)

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
He found work as a cabin boy on a privateer vessel, making his way from Bristol for Jamaica. Thought he was escaping to a better life.

In VO, we hear Hornigold LAUGH.

QUICK CUTS --

Edward as the ship's cabin boy/bitch --
A SURLY SAILOR slaps a tray of bread out of Edward's hands --

SURLY SAILOR
I said <u>meat</u>!

ANOTHER DAY --

Edward mops down a BLOODIED DECK. Spots something.
Leans closer to see scattered BROKEN TEETH. Some are GOLD.

Edward looks -- he's alone. He pockets them.

NIGHT --

Densely packed rows of occupied hammocks.
Edward lies on the floor. Struggles to sleep. Eyes on --

RATS

Scuttling through puddles on the floor.
They disappear into the darkness of the hold.

Edward pulls his tattered blanket tighter around himself.

ANOTHER DAY --

Edward wipes a table. Some crewmen walk by.
One of them spits where Edward just cleaned.

NIGHT --

Edward helps hold an infirmed man down on an OPERATING TABLE.
The ship's DOCTOR lifts a carpenter's WOOD SAW --

Edward shuts his eyes as the doc goes to work.

ANOTHER DAY --

The ship caught in a HEAVY STORM.
The wind is a SCREAMING DEMON.

Men stagger and stumble for purchase.

Everything ROCKS from one side to another.
The crew -- including Edward -- are knocked off their feet.

A swell CRASHES ondeck. Sweeps three men off into the sea.
Edward whiteknuckles the gunwales.

An ajar door BANGS in its frame, tossed by the winds.
He clambers towards it. A wave pounds. Almost drags him into the ocean. He grabs hold. Hurls himself through --

INT. PRIVATEER BOAT/CABIN - NIGHT

Furniture is tossed about as the ship is buffeted.
The Surly Sailor crouches in the far corner, HOLLERING --

SURLY SAILOR
Shut the door, boy! Shut the--

The boat is ROCKED again. Surly Sailor pitches forward, CRACKS his head on the edge of a crate. Bleeds profusely.

Edward watches, horrified, as the sea washes away the blood.
It continues to flow. Surly Sailor doesn't move. He's dead.

EXT. PRIVATEER BOAT - DAY

The aftermath.
The vessel floats on quieter waters under a blue sky.

The ship has seen better days. Debris is everywhere.
Wounded men walk the deck. One crewman, DEAKINS, pipes up --

DEAKINS
We were led astray.

Another, WOLFE, responds --

WOLFE
Bullshit. He told us to turn about.
Away from the storm.

DEAKINS
I didn't hear that.

WOLFE
We all did.

Deakins steps close to Wolfe --

DEAKINS
No, we didn't. <u>None</u> of us did. Man has no business commanding a ship.

CAPTAIN JENNINGS rounds the corner, surveying the heavy damage. A commander after a lost battle.

Did he just hear that exchange?

Less concerned is he with the ship's impairment than the morale of his men. Spiritless, lifeless expressions abound.

Deakins and Wolfe cool it.
Move away from one another.

Edward watches the Captain. Jennings eyes him. Edward drops his gaze. Jennings spots the cabin Edward took refuge in. Opens the door and disappears inside.

EXT. PRIVATEER BOAT - DAY/LATER

Jennings presides on a platform above the crew on deck. One CREWMEMBER sits against a flagpole next to him.

Addresses his remaining crew (Edward among them) on deck --

JENNINGS
...My instructions were to turn hard to port when we rounded the cape. These orders went unheeded. Insubordination will not be tolerated.

Quick as a snake, he grabs the seated crewman and SLITS HIS THROAT. Tosses the body on the deck with the other crew. The crew is stunned, and more importantly, <u>terrified</u>.

JENNINGS (CONT'D)
When you've had your look at what happens to those who don't listen, throw him overboard.

Jennings disappears into his quarters.

The men on deck exchange looks, then lift the deceased crewman, carry him to the railing. As they pass by, Edward gets a look --

It's the Surly Sailor.
Long dead before his throat was slashed.

The body is cast overboard.
Off Edward, the <u>real</u> lesson learned --

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
It's not who you are, but how you're <u>seen</u>.

EXT. PRIVATEER BOAT - DAY (ANOTHER DAY)

The vessel coasts past a town.
SHARK FINS cut through the water's surface. Submerge.
Edward ties sails down. A routine.

Deakins and Wolfe are at the ship's rail, trying to read the storefront signs. Illiteracy affords them great difficulty.

With each sounding of words they make, Edward glances up and easily reads the sign to himself. Resumes tying.
Deakins catches Edward looking up.

DEAKINS
Can you read, boy?

Edward doesn't answer. Doesn't want to say the wrong thing.
Goes back to tying the rope.
Deakins and Wolfe, apparently on better terms, share a look.

WOLFE
Cabin boy, he asked you a question.

They advance on Edward. Deakins smirks, flashes missing teeth.

DEAKINS
(menacing)
Indeed I did.

He's right on Edward. And in an instant -- <u>something</u> changes in Edward's eyes. A DEFIANCE. It's the same look he had just before he clocked his stepfather with a rock.

He clutches Deakins by the lapels.
HURLS him over the side of the boat.

Deakins plummets -- SPLASHES into the water.
Surfaces. Utterly nonplussed.

The crew looks over the side as --
Deakin gets his bearings. His eyes widen in <u>terror</u> --

A number of BLACK DORSAL FINS cuts through the water.
Speed towards him from several directions.

The crew above can only watch as Deakins is attacked --
A FLURRY of movement -- fins, teeth, froth. Deakins SCREAMS.
Then he's pulled under. His blood surfaces. He doesn't.

BACK ON DECK

The crew turns to look at Edward.
They're stunned, silent. A beat.

WOLFE
Christ, kid, he only wanted to know if you could read.

Off Edward --

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
These men weren't savage pirates. They were servicemen. He scared them into promoting him.

INT. BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD'S HOUSE - DAY

Maynard and Hornigold.

HORNIGOLD
In 1713, the war ended. And under the Articles of Peace with France and Spain, privateering became illegal.

MAYNARD
But that didn't stop you from living outside the law as a pirate.

HORNIGOLD
At the time, no.
(off Maynard)
You have no idea what that is, do you? To truly be free.

MAYNARD
I'm too busy making a living.

-- Which makes Hornigold laugh.

HORNIGOLD
You really are a card, Lieutenant.
(Maynard is stone-faced; Hornigold gets serious)
I didn't know how to live any other way. And neither does he. That's why he sought me out.

EXT. DOCK - DAY (1716)

The classic Jolly Roger flaps in the breeze. Below it -- Hornigold's *Mary Anne* is docked.

Hornigold, dressed as a pirate (not the dapper man with Maynard) is readying to set sail. Listens to Edward, on the dock --

EDWARD
...I've served as mate and boatswain.
(MORE)

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Traveled a number of unmarked passages between the Caribbean Islands--

HORNIGOLD
(cutting in)
And that makes you fit to join my crew? We're far past compass readings and sailor's knots, boy. We don't work in the Queen's service. What we do isn't even legal.

EDWARD
I know who you are.

HORNIGOLD
Do you now?

EDWARD
Everyone knows who you are.

Hornigold hears it all in Edward's voice --

HORNIGOLD
So that's it. That's what you want.

EDWARD
I can prove useful. I'm very good with my hands and even better with my fists.

HORNIGOLD
Is that right?
(Edward nods)
Let me see them.
(off Edward's befuddlement)
Your hands. Hold them out for me.

Edward proffers them.
They're well-seasoned. Hornigold observes --

HORNIGOLD (CONT'D)
Hm. Well worn. Where'd you get this burn on your left?

EDWARD
There was a fire onboard--

And Hornigold SLAPS him across the face.

HORNIGOLD
Run along. You haven't the first clue what this life is.

He turns, boards his ship.
Edward stands there, watches him go.

EXT. MARY ANNE - DAY

Hornigold's ship at sea.
Hornigold strolls among his men on the deck.
Stops in his tracks when he sees --

Edward. Carrying a crate of ammunition.
Like he belongs there. Hornigold bars his way.

HORNIGOLD
Who let you on my ship?

EDWARD
I let myself on.

Hornigold reaches for his cutlass --

HORNIGOLD
You'll take a lip to me, too?

Edward just glares back at him. A standoff of sorts.
Then he drops the crate of munitions. Clearly heavy --
it CLANGS noisily to the deck. Rattles everyone in earshot.

EDWARD
Throw me overboard if you want me
off that bad.

Hornigold's clearly never been spoken to like this. Beat.

HORNIGOLD
(the crate)
Where's it going?

EDWARD
Lower deck.

HORNIGOLD
Get it there.

He strides off.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What can I say? The little fucker
had spark.

INT. MARY ANNE/BELOW DECKS - NIGHT

A card game in progress. Pirates passing the time.
We recognize Garret Gibbens and Black Caesar among them.

All look up at the sound of footsteps descending stairs.
It's Edward. He's regarded. Sized up. And ignored.

The pirates return to their game.
Edward watches them. Then turns, exits the way he came in.

INT. MARY ANNE/MESS HALL - DAY

Hornigold's pirates eat.
Moldy biscuits. Some riddled with WEEVILS.

It's a challenge among the men -- who can consume the most without vomiting.

Gibbens gives up. Caesar follows suit.
Two pirates -- RICHARDS and PAULSON -- remain in the game.

Paulson's about to take another bite. Can't do it.
Richards raises his arms in victory.
Then turns, promptly pukes his guts out.

Edward eats alone, separated from the group and revelry.

EXT. SEA - DAY

A merchant ship sails over blue waters. Serene. Peaceful.
Way too nice for anything <u>not</u> to happen to it in this movie.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
The *Spirit* was a merchant ship sailing from Cape Henry. If they knew what was to befall them, they never would've left port that day.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Cannonfire EXPLODES in the water on the ship's port side.
Heavy seapspray kicks up --

The *Mary Anne* coasts up to the *Spirit*.
On *Spirit*'s deck, the CAPTAIN waves a WHITE FLAG.

EXT. SPIRIT - DAY/MOMENTS LATER

Hornigold and his crew have boarded.
The passengers are gathered on deck.
Pirates move large CRATES off the ship.

HORNIGOLD
We've come for your vessel's cargo. Cooperate, and this will be painless.

Caesar and Gibbens torment passengers, search for valuables, shove them, grope them. Laugh about it.

A passenger -- MCADAMS -- subtly reaches for his boot.

Edward keeps watch over the passengers.
No rowdy hooting or hollering from him. He's silent.
But his eyes are focused. Cold. Shark's eyes.

One little BOY in the crew won't stop staring at him.
Edward meets his gaze. The little boy looks away.
It's enough time for McAdams to grasp what he wanted --

A PISTOL. He raises it at the pirates.

MCADAMS
Get off this vessel!

A few of the pirates -- including Hornigold -- freeze.
Caesar and Gibbens laugh. But don't advance on him.

MCADAMS (CONT'D)
You heard me. It'll be the pistol
that speaks next.

But still no one moves.
Only Edward strides towards the man --

MCADAMS (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Get back!

Edward won't stop coming. He's <u>completely unafraid</u>.
McAdams levels the pistol in shaking hands.
The other pirates watch, stunned, as --

MCADAMS PULLS THE TRIGGER.
Nothing happens. He tries again --

But Edward is on him. Grabs McAdam's gun hand. SMASHES it against the mast. Bones CRACK. The pistol drops.
McAdams crumples in agony.

Edward picks up the gun. Knows what the problem was --
Pulls back the flintlock. Blows the debris from it.

FIRES the pistol next to McAdams' ear.
McAdams HOWLS. Covers his ear.
Edward regards him. Kneels next to him --

EDWARD
What is it you're hiding from us?

MCADAMS
What are you talking about?

EDWARD
No man transporting solely crates of tar and candles would stand up to us as you did.

McAdams, cradling his injured hand, stares at the pirate. Edward keeps his gaze even. Beat. The other pirates and crew of the *Spirit* watch --

EDWARD (CONT'D)
Last chance.

MCADAMS
We're a merchant ship. We have no more than what you see.

Edward rises. Cuts a piece of excess ROPE from a sail. Plunges it in a container of TAR. Moves back to McAdams --

Grabs his face. Squeezes his cheeks. Pries his mouth open -- McAdams resists, but his one good hand and lesser size make him no challenge --

Edward stuffs the tar-soaked rope into his mouth. Produces a MATCH, ready to light it --

McAdams freaks. Struggles to speak through the rope. He's unintelligible. Edward withdraws the rope.

MCADAMS (CONT'D)
Gold dust! We have gold dust under our sleeping quarters! Please!

Edward turns to his fellow pirates, who have been watching this all unfurl. Agape. No one speaks. Then --

HORNIGOLD
You heard him! Get moving!

As the pirates snap to it --

TIME CUT:

EXT. SPIRIT/DAY - LATER

The pirates have hauled the gold dust off the *Spirit.* Hornigold and Edward are the last to go. Edward's still got the tar-soaked rope.

As he steps towards the *Mary Anne* -- he LIGHTS the rope. Casually TOSSES it over his shoulder without breaking stride.

It hits the *Spirit*'s sail. The canvas CATCHES FIRE. PANIC ensues as the crew rushes to put the flames out.

The *Mary Anne* drifts away from the *Spirit*.
McAdams watches it go, an indelible impression left on him...

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
He grew more daring on each raid. His reputation spread. The fierce demon pirate who plundered more ships than any before him...

A SERIES OF SHOTS

Edward and Hornigold's pirates PLUNDERING SHIPS --
Edward slips gaudy RINGS on his fingers --
Hauls a large crate off a vessel --
Throws a man overboard --

Edward takes on the classic image we know as Blackbeard --

Long, unkempt beard. Plaits tied with red ribbon.
A sea captain's coat crossed by two belts -- a sword belt and a bandolier -- three pistols hanging from improvised holsters hung over his chest. He's a walking armory.

EXT. SEA - NIGHT

The *Mary Anne* approaches another MERCHANT SHIP.

Blackbeard (formerly Edward) stands at the *Mary Anne*'s bow.
The attire and gleam in his eye make him look DEMONIC.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.)
Who lit fuses and stuck them -- flaming -- in his hat --

Small lengths of match poke from under his hat. Their tips ALIGHT. Glow RED. Frame his face fiendishly in black smoke.

The crew of the merchant ship is frozen in terror.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Whose presence alone was enough to yield a ship without his firing a single shot.

The merchant ship raises a white flag.
Blackbeard prepares to board. The pirates follow.

HORNIGOLD (V.O.; CONT'D) (CONT'D)
This is the man Henry Bostock referred to as "Blackbeard."

INT. BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD'S HOUSE - DAY

Maynard and Hornigold.

MAYNARD
Who’s Henry Bostock?

HORNIGOLD
(a shrug)
Just another poor bastard on the water at the wrong time.
(then)
Wasn’t long after that I granted him his own vessel, a two hundred ton French slave ship called *LaConcorde*.

MAYNARD
I thought *Queen Anne's Revenge* was his craft’s name.

HORNIGOLD
Not originally. He does love his theatrics.

Despite Hornigold’s reverence, Maynard is unimpressed --

MAYNARD
A mindless thug.

HORNIGOLD
Hardly mindless. Beneath all the ferocity and the chaos and the bloodshed, there is nothing he doesn’t calculate.

MAYNARD
You give him a lot of credit.

HORNIGOLD
Do you know who Stede Bonnet is?

MAYNARD
The “gentleman pirate,” right?
(Hornigold nods)
He was captured a few weeks ago.

HORNIGOLD
You want to learn how conniving Blackbeard can be, talk to Major Bonnet. Man’s on trial for piracy, so he probably won’t be around much longer. I’d hurry.
(then, more to himself)
“Gentleman pirate”.

-- That last bit makes Hornigold chuckle and shake his head.

MAYNARD
Something funny?

HORNIGOLD
You'll see.

EXT. DOCK (JAMAICA) - DAY

Maynard approaches the docked *Jane* and *Ranger*. Baker and several men mill about. They stiffen as Maynard walks up --

MAYNARD
Ready to go? We've got a lot water to travel--
(off their solemn expressions)
What?

BAKER
Blackbeard's been caught.

MAYNARD
Beg your pardon?

BAKER
He and several men were spotted in a tavern. They were chased out and killed in an adjacent field.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A large CROWD has gathered. Much commotion.
Three pirates corpses -- their faces indistinguishable masses of gunpowder, flesh and bone are prone.
The largest of the trio has a long, flowing black beard.

Two PIRATE HUNTERS stand proudly over the bodies.
Soaking in accolades. Giving interviews.

Maynard, Baker, Demelt and Jaret are there.
Maynard stares. Speechless. Disheartened.
His dream of catching the pirate himself dashed.

Baker sees the lieutenant's expression.
Doesn't have words. Just claps Maynard on the shoulder.

BAKER
We've still got a long ride ahead, lieutenant.

He signals for the others to fall back.
They do. Except for Maynard, who's fixated on the bodies.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Lieutenant?

Maynard looks at him. Turns, joins the men as they walk off.

BAKER (CONT'D)
This was out of your control. The price on his head is large. There's a lot of hunters searching for him.

MAYNARD
How do they know it's him?

The other men stop to hear this.

BAKER
What do you mean? The beard...

MAYNARD
So what. They can't confirm...

Maynard trails off, struck by something.
He runs back --

Breaks through the crowd.
To the pirate corpses. Grabs Blackbeard's --

PIRATE HUNTER
Hey!

Maynard ignores him. Checks Blackbeard's left hand.
A few cuts but no burn scar.

MAYNARD
This isn't Blackbeard.

PIRATE HUNTER
The hell it isn't.

Maynard sizes up the two not-very intimidating pirate hunters. Smiles with a realization--

MAYNARD
Neither of you would still be breathing if it was.

He crosses back to an uncomprehending Baker --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
I'll explain on the way.

Maynard and his men leave the site.
They pass pirates Richards and Paulson in the crowd.
We note they're both now MISSING TEETH.
They swap a glance. And follow the Navy men.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Choked with smoke. A sordid group mills about. Blackbeard is at a card table with several of his men. Scantily-clad WOMEN are perched on some laps.

Blackbeard has just gotten news from Richards and Paulson. And he couldn't be more pleased --

BLACKBEARD
The Royal Navy has been hired to find me. What'd you say this boy's name was? Mayonnaise?

PAULSON
Maynard.

BLACKBEARD
(getting giddy)
Am I wanted dead or alive?

PAULSON
From the way they spoke, it seemed like either.

BLACKBEARD
What's the bounty?

Paulson and Richards look at one another, shrug.

PAULSON
We don't--

BLACKBEARD
Is it triple figures?

Before Paulson can again claim not to know --

RICHARDS
At least that.

Blackbeard nods, satisfied. Then, basking in it --

BLACKBEARD
So a Mr. Maynard of Her Majesty's Royal Navy means to capture, and if necessary, kill me.

PAULSON
What would you like us to do about it, Captain?

Blackbeard pulls a pistol from his bandolier.

BLACKBEARD
The question isn't what I would like you to do, it's what I need you to do.

Opens the pistol. DUMPS the GUNPOWDER into his mug of rum.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
I need to make an example of him.

He LIGHTS the drink and downs it.

INT. JANE/MAYNARD'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Maynard and Baker study Spotswood's file.

BAKER
Did you read what Blackbeard did to this Bonnet fellow?

MAYNARD
(a nod, doesn't look up)
Not very nice at all.

BAKER
Bonnet's no saint, though. Killed his share.

MAYNARD
They're all lowlife.

BAKER
These two must really hate each other.

MAYNARD
We'll find out how much.

BAKER
Y'know, they won't let you see him.

Maynard looks up from reading, quizzical at that.

BAKER (CONT'D)
Our mission isn't sanctioned. Nor do they allow visitors.

Maynard regards his first-mate for a beat.

MAYNARD
I'm putting Jaret in charge of the men. You're coming with me tomorrow. In your colors.

EXT. CHARLESTON PRISON - DAY - TO ESTABLISH

TITLE: CHARLESTON PRISON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Gray, grim building.

INT. WARDEN'S OFFICE - DAY

WARDEN NEELY, portly, red-faced, 18th century hick. Chews tobacco. Spits it out. A lot. Maynard and Baker stand at his desk, looking sharp.

NEELY
We don't allow pirates no visitors.

MAYNARD
What about counsel?

NEELY
("I am not an idiot")
I met his counsel. You are not his counsel.

Maynard and Baker swap a look. To Neely --

MAYNARD
Not yet.

NEELY
He didn't make no request for that.

MAYNARD
No, he didn't. Governor Spotswood did.
(off Neely)
Of Virginia.

NEELY
I know who Spotswood is. I wasn't notified.

MAYNARD
That's why we're here.

Neely's getting flustered --

NEELY
I need some--

MAYNARD
Authorized evidence of request from the governor?

NEELY
Yeah, yeah.

Maynard turns to Baker, who pulls Spotswood's THICK FILE from a satchel. Maynard takes the file, drops it on Neely's desk with a THUD. A few pages stick out, all marked --

COMPILED BY GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

FOR PRIVILEGED EYES ONLY
PROPERTY OF GOVERNOR ALEXANDER SPOTSWOOD OF VIRGINIA

Maynard takes out his pocketwatch. Eyes the time, then --

MAYNARD
How fast can you read?

Neely regards the folder. Has never seen anything so hefty. *Who the hell wants to read this?*

NEELY
I'll take you to him.

INT. CELL - DAY

STEDE BONNET is 29, soft-bodied, elitist, prissy. Tries to maintain a dapper image despite his confines --

BONNET
Why does the governor of Virginia care who I'm represented by?

Maynard looks down the hall, makes sure Neely is far enough of out earshot with Baker.

MAYNARD
He doesn't. I'm not here as your counsel. I'm spearheading a mission to capture and if necessary, kill Blackbeard. I understand you knew him.

BONNET
You deceived to get in here.

MAYNARD
I did what was necessary.

BONNET
I could have you ejected and arrested. Locked up in a cell like me.

MAYNARD
You won't do that.

BONNET
No?

MAYNARD
You want him found even more than me. I read about what he did to you, but what's in those pages was vague and won't do the truth justice.

BONNET
(a smile)
You can play the portly warden, but you can't play me, Mr. Maynard.

MAYNARD
I'm not playing you. You do the talking.
(Bonnet says nothing)
Unless you feel you have nothing of value to help me find him.
(still Bonnet doesn't respond)
I can be on my way.

Maynard rises, heads for the bars to call out to Neely --

BONNET
What makes you think I won't just blurt out you lied to him?

MAYNARD
You think I can't outsmart him again? Whose word will he take, yours or mine?

They hold a look. Then Maynard turns back to the bars --

BONNET
Wait.
(Maynard does, but doesn't turn to Bonnet)
Did you say, "if necessary, <u>kill</u> Blackbeard"?

Maynard grins.

EXT. NASSAU BEACH - DAY

TITLE: NASSAU, BAHAMAS

A remote area of beach. Worn-out dock.

Gentleman Pirate Bonnet looks as his name suggests. Wiry. Proper. Almost elegant.
Some folks are just not cut out to be pirates.

BONNET (V.O.)
It was summer of last year. My gunner didn't properly follow orders. And as a result, we'd been bested by the *Protestant Caesar*.

Bonnet watches his crew perform repairs on his HEAVILY DAMAGED ship, the *Revenge*. The vessel is ORNATE.

A CABIN BOY approaches, hands Bonnet a cup of tea. The pirate takes a sip. Recoils.

BONNET (CONT'D)
No, no. Too hot.

Shoves the teacup and saucer back in the kid's hands. Blackbeard, Caesar and Gibbens cross towards Bonnet.

BONNET (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Blackbeard had come ashore to sample the local wares. He happened upon us on his way back to sea.

BLACKBEARD
(off the damaged ship)
Bit of trouble, eh?

BONNET
A merchant ship from Boston got the better of us.

CAESAR
They fought back?

Israel Hands, currently one of Bonnet's crew, passes by --

HANDS
Fought back and won.

He keeps walking.

BONNET
Thank you, Mr. Hands.

BLACKBEARD
She's a nice vessel. Sturdy. Ornate, too.

BONNET
My personal touch.

Blackbeard continues to admire the ship.

BONNET (CONT'D)
May I ask your business, sir?

BLACKBEARD
Call me Blackbeard.

BONNET
I know who you are. I asked your business.

BLACKBEARD
The smoke is visible for miles. You're lucky we're not looters.

BONNET
Not looters? That's a laugh.

BLACKBEARD
We don't rob other pirates.

BONNET
Then I suppose I'll ask again. What is your business with us?

BLACKBEARD
You have men. I have men. We've got boats. Why should the sea be mine or yours when it could be ours?

BONNET
I'm to believe you're looking for a partner?

BLACKBEARD
Mr. Bonnet, right? Or is it Stede? May I call you Stede? I'm looking to expand.
(Bonnet's taken aback that Blackbeard knows who he is)
And like I said, that's a very nice vessel.

BONNET (V.O.)
He brought me aboard his ship with the promise I would benefit from his tutelage.

EXT. MARY ANNE - DAY

The pirate ship closes on a merchant vessel. The *Mary Anne*'s crew is gathered on deck.

Blackbeard readies a boarding party. Bonnet is behind him. Tries to exude authority. Doesn't do a very good job.

BLACKBEARD
Garret, Ceasar, you will take the bow.

Blackbeard looks at Israel Hands and Bonnet's other men.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
The stern for you men. Fan out as soon as you board and let no one below decks. Mr. Hands, stay with me.

Bonnet wears an indignant face. Watches all the men move with efficiency under Blackbeard. Doesn't like it. He tries to get Blackbeard's attention --

BONNET
Excuse me--

Blackbeard is on the move. Doesn't hear him. Probably.

BONNET (CONT'D)
Excuse me--

Blackbeard whirls, his face right in Bonnet's.

BLACKBEARD
Yes, Stede?

The look in Blackbeard's eyes could scare off an army. So it comes as no surprise for Bonnet to reply --

BONNET
Nothing. Carry on.

Blackbeard smirks. Whirls back to the pirates --

BLACKBEARD
Follow my lead.

As the other pirates comply and blow past Bonnet, the Major feels eyes on him. He looks up --

BENJAMIN HORNIGOLD

Off by himself at the port side of the ship. Emasculated. Watching Bonnet with a distinct look in his glassy eyes --

"Welcome to my world".

He takes a pull of rum, then moves below-deck.

INT. MARY ANNE/BELOW DECKS - NIGHT

Bonnet strides down the hall. Stops at a door. Beat. Steels himself. Draws a breath. And knocks.

BLACKBEARD (O.S.)
Yes?

INT. MARY ANNE/BLACKBEARD'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Blackbeard reads Milton's "Paradise Lost".
Bonnet enters.

BONNET
Pardon the intrusion.
(the book)
Is that one of mine?

Blackbeard shows him the cover.

BONNET (CONT'D)
It's excellent.

BLACKBEARD
Satan as the hero. I like that bit.

Bonnet registers that, blinks.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Are you here for a literary discussion?

Bonnet's intimidated but won't leave until it's off his chest --

BONNET
I feel it essential that I be the one to command my men.

BLACKBEARD
Were you unsatisfied with today's raid?

BONNET
No.

BLACKBEARD
Could we have plundered more?

BONNET
That's not the p--

BLACKBEARD
You don't want to be seen as anything less than a captain.

Bonnet stops. Flustered. It's like he read his mind --

BONNET
Yes, yes. Exactly that.

BLACKBEARD
Stede, what were you before you became a pirate?

BONNET
I was a Major in the Barbados militia.

BLACKBEARD
Your rank was earned through combat?

BONNET
Land holdings. My namesake owned a sugarcane farm.

BLACKBEARD
(mocking him)
That you personally tended to?

Bonnet misses Blackbeard's sarcasm, goes haughty --

BONNET
I think not. My family was attended to by three servants and ninety-four slaves. Many of which I alone managed.

BLACKBEARD
Did you now?
(Bonnet nods, proud)
And you want to use those leadership skills among these pirates?

BONNET
Indeed. On my vessel.

Blackbeard sizes him up.
A long stare between them.

BLACKBEARD
Okay.

He goes back to his book.
Off Bonnet, not exactly sure what to do with himself now --

EXT. THE REVENGE - DAY

The pirates are ondeck --
Paulson and Richards play cards. Both cheat.
Caesar and Hands pass a bottle between them.
Gibbens sharpens his cutlass with a whetstone.

BONNET
Come about!

Some -- not all -- heads turn to see Bonnet with a spyglass.

BONNET (CONT'D)
Ship approaching! Prepare the cannon for warning fire! Hoist our colors!

But despite all his verve, no one really does anything.

BONNET (CONT'D)
Israel.

Israel Hands pretends not to hear, glances at Blackbeard -- Who subtly NODS.

The men spring into action.
Blackbeard crosses past Bonnet with a second glance.

BONNET (V.O.) (CONT'D)
In retrospect, I can't blame my men. He was charismatic, powerful, a true leader.

MAYNARD (V.O.)
I see.

INT. CELL - DAY

With Maynard and Bonnet.

BONNET
I don't appreciate your inference.

MAYNARD
I've inferred nothing.

BONNET
It's the manner you're looking at me. Like I possess none of those qualities.

MAYNARD
I'm only listening.

BONNET
He took everything from me. Right down to my first mate.

MAYNARD
Israel Hands.
(Bonnet nods)
That must've hurt.

BONNET
Bastard. It wasn't long before my role devolved from a partner to... something like...

MAYNARD
An adversary?

BONNET
A guest.
(then)
In defiance, I took to wearing my dressing gown, even during the day.

Maynard stifles an involuntary chuckle.

BONNET (CONT'D)
That wasn't meant to be funny.

Maynard raises an apologizing hand.

MAYNARD
My apologies. How did that work with the crew?

BONNET
How did what work with the crew?

MAYNARD
The dressing gown.

BONNET
No one noticed! That's the point! He made me a ghost among my own men.

MAYNARD
So why didn't you leave?

The question gives Bonnet pause.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Stede?

BONNET
He gave me my own room. A place for me and my books.
(remembering the thrill)
On the *Queen Anne's Revenge* herself. Are you familiar with the *Queen Anne's Revenge*?

MAYNARD
The ship Hornigold granted Blackbeard.

Bonnet bursts out LAUGHING.

BONNET
Granted? Hornigold granted Blackbeard a ship. Who told you that, Hornigold?
(off Maynard)
Of course he did.
(then)
(MORE)

BONNET (CONT'D)
Do you really believe Blackbeard has ever been granted anything? He takes before that opportunity arises.

EXT. CARIBBEAN SEA/LA CONCORDE - DAY

TITLE: SLAVESHIP LACONCORDE

The two hundred ton slaveship has seen better days -- The decks are filthy. The crew haggard and ill. 455 slaves are packed belowdeck.

CAPTAIN DOSSET'S got a spyglass to his eye. Looks exhausted. Looking equally wrung out is LIEUTENANT ERNAUD. He crosses to Dosset, who doesn't lower the spyglass when he speaks --

DOSSET
How are they?

ERNAUD
It seems those not affected by scurvy have contracted the bloody flux. It's a mess down there.

DOSSET
So we're fighting not just one epidemic but two.

ERNAUD
It would appear so.

DOSSET
(off spyglass)
We should add another adversary to that list.

ERNAUD
What do you see?

DOSSET
(growing despondency)
A pair of sloops.

ERNAUD
You seem certain they're foe.

DOSSET
How often do ships sail against the wind in these waters?

ERNAUD
They could be anyone.

Dosset hands the spyglass to Ernaud, who peers through it.

HIS POV

Two sloops. Jolly Rogers waving.
Gun ports open. Blunt cannon snouts protruding out.

Most notable is the terrifying black-bearded pirate on the quarterdeck of the bigger ship.
Smoke and fire swirl around his head.

ERNAUD (CONT'D)
And here I was thinking things couldn't be worse.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!
A VOLLEY OF CANNONBALLS SPLASH the water and FLY overhead.

ERNAUD (CONT'D)
Hands on deck!

A very ill-looking crew scrambles towards the ship's weapons.
A smattering of MUSKETBALLS are fired from the sloops.
Take out a few of the already-weakened men.

Dosset observes his men. The approaching sloops. Sighs.

ERNAUD (CONT'D)
Fire at will!

DOSSET
Francois.

Ernaud turns to his Captain. Sees the <u>defeat</u> in his eyes.

DOSSET (CONT'D)
Strike our colors.

Ernaud can't believe Dosset would give up so easily. Off this --

DOSSET (CONT'D)
Do I need to say it twice?

ERNAUD
Lay down your arms, gentlemen!
Lower the flag.

DOSSET
(to the HELMSMAN)
Drift us to a stop.
(to Ernaud)
He means to take our vessel.

ERNAUD
How do you know that?

DOSSET
He’s done no damage to it.

ERNAUD
And what of to us?

Off Dosset, wishing he had a better answer for that --

EXT. LA CONCORDE - DAY/MOMENTS LATER

Blackbeard and his crew have boarded *La Concorde*. Hands and Caesar emerge from below-deck. To Blackbeard --

HANDS
The conditions on this vessel are deplorable -- filth and mud are everywhere. There are rats. The slave-pen alone is a den of disease and illness so foul it's difficult to draw breath.

Blackbeard takes it all in. A vast, authoritative vessel.

BLACKBEARD
I think she's magnificent.
(to Bonnet)
Stede, why don't you go down to the slave-pen and offer us your assessment?

Bonnet stares, horrified. Blackbeard holds the look. Then breaks into a wide smile. The crew laughs. Bonnet relaxes.

BLACKBEARD (CONT’D)
(to Dosset)
What’s she called?

DOSSET
LaConcorde.

BLACKBEARD
Not anymore. This is a vessel that reflects the spirit of the Queen many of us fought for. We'll refit her in the islands south of St. Vincent and christen her accordingly. We've found our flagship. Wouldn't you agree, Captain Hornigold?

Hornigold’s off to the side, rum in hand. His power castrated. A very different scenario than the side-by-side image of partnership with Blackbeard he portrayed to Maynard.

HORNIGOLD
(whatever)
What? Yeah, sure.

He drains his booze. It's about all he can do.

EXT. BEQUIA ISLAND - DAY

Dense forest beyond the small stretch of beach at the water. *LaConcorde* -- now *QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE* -- has been cleaned, refitted with guns and Blackbeard's signature flag.

It pushes off from the island.

BONNET (V.O.)
He renamed the vessel and turned her into a warship. The cooperative Captain Dosset was allowed to keep his slaves. The sick ones, anyway.

Dosset, Ernaud, his crew and many SICKLY-LOOKING SLAVES watch the ship take to sea. The *Revenge* follows behind it.

Dosset and Ernaud swap looks. Stunned they survived.

BONNET (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It was here that Blackbeard and Mr. Hornigold parted ways.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/HOLD - NIGHT

Blackbeard holds court. Bonnet, Hands, Caesar, Gibbens, Paulson, Richards and some other crew surround him.

A CABIN BOY lights POTS OF SULFUR around the room. He looks to Blackbeard if he should light another. The pirate nods. Addresses his men --

BLACKBEARD
We acquired this ship without taking a single life.
(off Gibbens)
Mr. Gibbens looks displeased.

GIBBENS
Where's the fun in that?

Some pirates laugh. Swirls of THICK SMOKY FUMES waft from the pots. Fill the air.

HANDS
I think it's your greatest achievement yet.

Caesar makes ass-kissing noises.

HANDS (CONT'D)
(to Caesar)
The world now knows who we are.

BLACKBEARD
We?

Caesar rises, moves towards a hatch --

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Where are you going?

CAESAR
Open a hatch. Drift some air in here.

BLACKBEARD
Sit.
(a challenge)
Who'll be the last to leave?

Amidst the stifling smoke, the men exchange glances.
This just got a little scary. Blackbeard ignores them --

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Is it better to kill a man, or have him kill himself at the prospect of what may befall him at your hand?
Mr. Gibbens?

Gibbens coughs. Watches Paulson and Richards run out.
Blackbeard waits for an answer from Gibbens, who's purpling.
He gags. Bolts out of the hold.

Increasingly, more men are WHEEZING and COUGHING.
Everyone except Blackbeard and Bonnet.
It's gotten so it's difficult to see in here.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
What say you, Caesar?

Caesar responds with a stifled cough.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
(good-naturedly)
It seems everyone has the same answer to this question.

He cracks himself up with that one.
No one else laughs. They're too busy asphyxiating.
Bonnet watches. Like Blackbeard, doesn't react.

CAESAR
This is crazy.

He goes. More crewmen follow him out.
Only Hands, Bonnet and another CREWMAN remains.
The crewman coughs spasmodically. Falls to the floor.

HANDS
Captain, he's dying!

BLACKBEARD
Then you better get him out of here.

Hands uses this as his excuse to bail.
Throws his fallen crewman over his shoulder, hustles out.
Only Blackbeard and a sweaty Bonnet remain.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
I thought you would've been first,
Stede.

Bonnet's eyes are watery. Chokes back his coughs.
Holds onto his final shred of dignity.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
You can only hold your breath for
so long.

Bonnet breaks. Breathes. Rushes out, coughing violently.
Blackbeard sits in the thick smoke for an added beat.

And laughs.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BONNET'S ROOM - DAY

Another day at sea.
Bonnet is in his small room. Stacks of books everywhere.

His door opens and Blackbeard enters, holds a copy of
"Hamlet". Hands it to Bonnet. His body sways, clearly drunk.

BLACKBEARD
Thank you.

He turns to go. Takes a pull of rum.

BONNET
Would you like to borrow another?

BLACKBEARD
Why?

BONNET
...Maybe you'd enjoy it?

Blackbeard considers that. Hm.
Bonnet grabs a tome off a nearby stack.

BONNET (CONT'D)
Try this one.

Blackbeard takes it, then appraises Bonnet. Steadies himself.

BLACKBEARD
I think I like you, Stede.
Generosity is such a virtue.

Bonnet doesn't know how to respond to that one.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Would you consider me a friend?

BONNET
(cautious)
...Yes.

BLACKBEARD
(maudlin)
I would consider you a friend.

Bonnet watches him. A rare moment for the pirate. Then --

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Tell me the name of that merchant vessel from Boston that damaged your beloved *Revenge*.

EXT. CARIBBEAN SEA/HONDURAS COAST - DAY

THE *PROTESTANT CAESAR*, three-masted merchant ship. There's a MAD SCRAMBLE onboard as the entire crew climbs into rowboats. Abandons ship.

Panicked cries of "It's Blackbeard!", "Move, move, move!", "He'll kill us all!" resound from the men.

REVEAL the *Queen Anne's Revenge* and Bonnet's *Revenge* closing in on the *Protestant Caesar*.

Protestant Caesar's men, led by CAPTAIN WYER row ashore as the pirates board their ship.

EXT. PROTESTANT CAESAR - DAY

Blackbeard and Bonnet watch as the pirates plunder the ship.

HANDS
The ship appears abandoned, Captain.

BLACKBEARD
Indeed she is.

He points to the shoreline --

The *Protestant Caesar*'s crew can do nothing but watch as their ship is looted.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Wave to the nice men, Stede. See if they remember you.

Bonnet reluctantly waves.
The crew onshore does not return the gesture.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Let's see what they've got for us.

He slaps Bonnet on the back and makes for the hold.

ONSHORE -- *Protestant Caesar*'s men. A CREWMAN pipes up --

PROTESTANT CAESAR CREWMAN
What do we do, Captain?

WYER
You have any ideas?

The Crewman doesn't. Off Wyer's look, he drops his eyes.

EXT. PROTESTANT CAESAR - DAY/LATER

The ship has been PICKED CLEAN.
Blackbeard, Bonnet and a smattering of men remain onboard.

BONNET
Now what?

BLACKBEARD
We thank them for their generosity.

BONNET
(calling out)
Thank you, gentlemen!

The crew, now seated in the sand, can see Bonnet, but his words are lost in the wind.

BLACKBEARD
Stede, they can't actually hear you.

BONNET
Oh. You were... I get it. She'll make a fine addition to our fleet. I propose a rechristening--

BLACKBEARD
That's not exactly what I have in mind.
(MORE)

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
(then, calls to his crew)
Caesar.

Caesar moves to the front of the crew.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Burn her.

BONNET
Captain? I thought--

BLACKBEARD
This is a Massachusetts ship, Major. Six pirates who survived the Cape Cod shipwrecks were executed several months ago in Boston. I won't abide by that.

Blackbeard leads the men off the ship as Caesar sets FIRE to the deck. Bonnet is the last to leave.

It's difficult to tell who's more despondent -- Bonnet or the *Protestant Caesar*'s crew, watching their ship burn from afar.

INT. CELL - DAY

Maynard and Bonnet.

BONNET
What I thought was an act of kindness towards me was actually a further means to win over my crew. They would've followed him into hell after he evened us with the *Protestant Caesar*.

MAYNARD
Tell me about Charleston.

BONNET
(sighs)
Eh, Garret Gibbens' whore-pipe got us into that one.

MAYNARD
Excuse me?

BONNET
Gibbens, the pirate. His whore-pipe. His pecker.

MAYNARD
Yes, I know what a whore-pipe is.

BONNET
If he hadn't thrust it in so many filthy places, we never would've needed to blockade Charleston.

INT. NASSAU WHOREHOUSE - NIGHT

BONNET (V.O.)
In honor of scorching the *Protestant Caesar*, Blackbeard took the men to debauch in celebration.

Dim. Musty. Smoky. Lots of velvet.
Empty and full bottles of rum are strewn.
WOMEN and pirates tangled in various stages of undress.

Bonnet, off to the side, drinks brandy. Won't partake in the hedonism. Eyes a discolored smudge on his tumbler. Sets it down, disgusted.

BONNET (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We occupied that filthhole in Nassau for more than two weeks.

An anguished man's SCREAM from one of the rooms. So loud it startles everyone. Another SCREAM follows. Then another.

Blackbeard, towel on his waist, throws the room's curtain aside --

Gibbens -- face twisted in agony -- holds himself below-frame. His WHORE runs out of the room as Blackbeard, Caesar, Hands and some other pirates crowd in for a look.

GIBBENS
It won't stop oozing.

The pirates look disgusted. No clue what to do about it.

CAESAR
How'd it get so purple?!

Blackbeard gives him a look. Back to Gibbens.

GIBBENS
(near hysterics)
What do I do, Captain?

BLACKBEARD
Someone bring me his whore.

Hands moves off to get her.
A PIRATE in back pipes up --

PIRATE
Uh, Captain, I got the same thing.

PIRATE #2
...Me too.

BLACKBEARD
How many of you have this ailment?

Several hands reluctantly are raised.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Where is our surgeon? Mr. Robbins?!

ROBBINS
Here, Captain.

Pained ship surgeon ROBBINS already has his hand raised as well. Blackbeard closes his eyes. Exhales.

CUT TO:

INT. NASSAU WHOREHOUSE/ROOM - DAY

Blackbeard with Bonnet and Robbins in a red, smoky room.

ROBBINS
I don't have the necessary medicines with me.

BLACKBEARD
Where do we find them?

BONNET
(a snicker)
Nowhere down here.

Before Blackbeard can react to his attitude --

ROBBINS
He's right. We'd have to go to the colonies. And even there, blindly plundering a town is unwise--

Before he finishes, Blackbeard calls out the door --

BLACKBEARD
(cuts him off)
Mr. Hands, my maps.
(back to Robbins)
I knew we should've stuck to the whorehouse in Anguilla.

Hands and Caesar enter with rolled up MAPS.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
The colonies.

Hands finds the one he needs. Unfurls it --

THE COLONIAL EASTERN SEABOARD

ROBBINS
They won't be easy to find. You'll need a populated town--

Blackbeard raises a hand, silences him. Studies the map --

BLACKBEARD
That inlet at Maryland could suit us, don't you think?

Hands nods.

BONNET
It's too well defended. If you want a prosperous port you can plunder without incident, Charleston's your pick.
(off them)
The Royal Navy has no definitive presence in the Carolinas.

BLACKBEARD
You know this how?

BONNET
My men and I made a run at them a year ago.

HANDS
<u>You</u> led this run?

Bonnet nods.

BLACKBEARD
Was it successful?

BONNET
Town residents colluded and outgunned us.

CAESAR
Shocking.

BONNET
(ignores that)
But they'll be no match for our fleet.

That hangs there. Blackbeard scrutinizes the map. At length --

BLACKBEARD
Nonetheless. We should acquire at least one, if not two more sloops.

HANDS
You plan on raiding the town?

BLACKBEARD
There may be other means to get what we need.

He grins.
Pained GROANS and WAILS of the men continue off-screen.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

Queen Anne's Revenge and the smaller sloops *Revenge* and *Adventure* sail with purpose.

BONNET (V.O.)
He did as he said. Added two sloops to the fleet before heading into port.

Two sloops -- *Providence* and *Ann* DISSOLVE IN behind the pair.
The mighty Pirate Navy barrels north...

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR - DAY

Sun sparkles off the blue water.
BUSTLE of activity as merchant ships enter and exit.

A small GUARD BOAT patrols the harbor's outer border.
Suddenly the sloop *Ann* cuts close behind it. Too close.

INT. GUARD BOAT - DAY

A PATROL CAPTAIN and his PATROL LIEUTENANT.
No room for anyone else.

PATROL LIEUTENANT
Did you feel that?

PATROL CAPTAIN
How could I not?

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR/OUTER BORDER - DAY

The sloop *Providence* cuts quick and close in front of them.
The sloop *Ann* zips by behind. *Providence*. Then *Ann* again.
Trapping the small patrol boat between the careening sloops.

INT. GUARD BOAT - DAY

PATROL LIEUTENANT
Perhaps they're in distress.

SOMETHING catches the Captain's eye out the window.
His expression falls.

PATROL CAPTAIN
...I don't think so.

HIS POV

The *Revenge* appears on the horizon. Closing.
But even scarier -- right behind it -- *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR/DOCK - DAY

Establishing *The Crowley* -- a large merchant ship pushing away from the dock --

INT. THE CROWLEY/HOLD - DAY

WILLIAM WRAGG, 6, cute, dumb as a post, is alone among a roomfull of BARRELS. He pries the top off one --

A THICK, GOOEY SLUDGE inside.
William dips a finger in the mush.

Examines it -- sticky and black on his finger.
So naturally, he tastes it. Scowls, disgusted.

WRAGG (O.S.)
William!

The boy spins -- SAMUEL WRAGG, his stern, distinguished, authoritative father is in the doorway.

WRAGG (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

WILLIAM
Fudge. It's bitter.

WRAGG
No. Not fudge. Tar.

The boy looks befuddled. Tries to wipe the tar off.
Wragg sighs. This doesn't surprise him in the least.

WRAGG (CONT'D)
Do you want to take this trip to London like a man or remain here with your mother like a little boy?

WILLIAM
Like a man!

WRAGG
Then why have you not kept at my side as you were told?

Beat. William blinks. Then --

WILLIAM
There was fudge.

Wragg squeezes the bridge of his nose.

Suddenly, the ship stops.
Wragg's eyes snap open.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Did we stop, father?

Wragg spins on his heels, heads out. William follows --

WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Have we arrived in London?

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR - DAY

The harbor threshold. Just outside of the town's view.
The *Crowley* has stopped in front of a terrifying vista --

Blackbeard's five pirate vessels --
Queen Anne's Revenge, the *Revenge*, *Adventure*, *Ann* and *Providence* are spread out, menacingly BLOCKING entrance and exit.

Instantly, the *Ann* and *Providence* sail up behind the *Crowley* while the *Revenge* boxes it in from the front.

PIRATES storm the *Crowley*, Caesar at the helm. Wragg doesn't want to appear cowardly in front of his son, steps to Caesar --

WRAGG
We're transporting nothing of real value. Tar, pitch and rice. Take what you will and leave us.

CAESAR
I can only accommodate one of those requests.

Off Wragg, as he's manhandled into a line --

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/MAIN DECK - DAY

Crowley's terrified passengers try to hide their quivering under the gaze of Blackbeard's pirates.

Blackbeard speaks one-on-one with Wragg.

BLACKBEARD
Do you know who we are?

WRAGG
Of course I do.

BLACKBEARD
We're blockading this port.

WRAGG
That's insane.

BLACKBEARD
Such is your current reality.

WRAGG
To what end?

Wragg's confidence and manner of speech give Blackbeard pause.

BLACKBEARD
Who are you?

WRAGG
A merchantman.

BLACKBEARD
Wearing that coat?
(then)
You should identify yourself before we start interrogating your fellow passengers.

A few pirates laugh. The threat is very clear. Then --

WRAGG
I'm Samuel Wragg, of Charleston's governing counsel.

Blackbeard considers that. Smiles wide --

BLACKBEARD
And you told my men there was nothing of value on your vessel.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/HOLD - DAY

The pirates' CAPTIVES are kept here --
Merchants, sailors, gentlemen of rank.

Wragg, William and his *Crowley* crew are ushered inside.
The locking door ECHOES through the hold.
A distinguished Crowley passenger -- MARKS, trembles --

MARKS
What are they going to do to us?

Another *Crowley* passenger -- FANNING -- responds --

FANNING
You know what they're going to do to us.

MARKS
We're just supposed to sit here while they decide our fate?

WRAGG
Yes. Now quiet. Both of you.

Young William trembles. Wragg holds his son tight. Glances at the other captives in the hold. Expressions of fear, and worse -- hopelessness in their eyes.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BELOW DECKS - NIGHT

Robbins, Gibbens and a gaggle of other infirmed pirates suffer in VD agony.

Robbins scribbles a note, passes it to Hands. Hands reads it. Looks a bit disturbed --

HANDS
You sure this is what you need?

Flushed and sweaty, Robbins can only nod.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/CABIN - DAY

Blackbeard, Bonnet, and Caesar.

BONNET
What do you plan on doing with all these prisoners?

BLACKBEARD
For the moment, nothing. We send some men in and demand the medicines in exchange for our detainees.

CAESAR
(a snicker)
Detainees.

Hands enters, gives Blackbeard Robbins' note. Blackbeard reads it. Creases his brow. To Hands --

BLACKBEARD
Really?

Hands shrugs -- *beats me.*

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Stede, draw up a message.

Bonnet scrambles for something to write. Finds it. Pats himself down for a pencil. Hands coolly gives him one. Bonnet's spasticity never fails to amuse Blackbeard's crew.

BONNET
And if the demands aren't met?

BLACKBEARD
We kill every hostage here, sail into the harbor, burn whatever's in our path and then raid the town.

Blackbeard's total detachment gives Bonnet pause.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Write it down, Stede.

Bonnet gets to writing.

HANDS
How will they know we even have them? You might have to send Wragg in as well.

CAESAR
Yes, and threaten to kill the lad if our request isn't met.

Blackbeard considers that for a long beat.

BLACKBEARD
We'll send another besides Wragg. He stays with me.
(to Caesar)
His boy, too.

Caesar deflates.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/HOLD - DAY

Down here with the captives, spirits are not very high. The door opens. Caesar and Hands enter, survey the crowd for a very tense moment. Then, Caesar points to MARKS --

CAESAR
You.

He and Hands each grab an arm and hustle him out. Slam the door closed with a BANG.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/MAIN DECK - DAY

Caesar and Hands bring Marks to Blackbeard.
Blackbeard appraises Marks. He's scared, but stands firm.

BLACKBEARD
What's your name?

MARKS
Marks.

BLACKBEARD
Mr. Marks, You know we're not amateurs, correct?
(Marks nods)
Do I need to prove to you how not-amateurish we are?

MARKS
I think you already have.

BLACKBEARD
Very good.

He hands Marks his ransom note.
Looks around at his crew. Picks out a pair of pirates --

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Mr. Richards and Mr. Paulson will accompany you into town. The governor of Charleston has exactly two days before the words in that letter become more than just words. Is that clear?

Marks nods. Blackbeard then proceeds to take his coat off.
Marks is confused. The other pirates are equally nonplussed.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Take your coat off.

Marks tentatively does. Blackbeard tosses Marks' coat aside and hands his own to Marks.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
(off his coat)
So they know who that letter's from.

CUT TO:

EXT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE - DAY

Blackbeard, Bonnet, Hands and Caesar watch Marks, Richards and Paulson row off towards the harbor.

HANDS
Think they'll honor it?

CAESAR
I hope not.

BONNET
We should've requested more than just medicine.

BLACKBEARD
We don't need any more than that.

Blackbeard heads toward the hold.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/HOLD - DAY

Blackbeard opens the door, looks at Wragg --

BLACKBEARD
Your man has two days to return with our request.

Shuts the door.
William looks at his father, who tries to keep his composure.

TIME DISSOLVE:

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR - DUSK/DAWN/DAY/NIGHT

The sun rises and sets behind *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

BONNET (V.O.)
Time ticked on. We captured several more entering and exiting vessels, and Blackbeard stowed our plunder onboard my ship -- the *Revenge*. The hold on his flagship was too full with captives.

As Bonnet indicates, entering and exiting ships are stopped, plundered and taken hostage.

BONNET (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But by the second day's end, there was no word from the men we'd sent into Charleston.

EXT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/MAIN DECK - NIGHT

Blackbeard -- looking mighty pissed off -- stares at the harbor. No signs of an incoming rowboat.
Bonnet, Caesar and Hands look on behind him.

BLACKBEARD
Bring me Wragg.

CAESAR
Finally.

He hurries off to get the politician.
Bonnet looks at Blackbeard.

BONNET
Kill him and you lose your best bargaining chip.

BLACKBEARD
I'm a man of my word.

Caesar appears from the hold with Wragg and William.
This registers with Blackbeard. Not exactly what he wanted.
Wragg stands in front of Blackbeard, holds his son's hand.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
The deadline's about up.

WRAGG
Get on with it then.

BLACKBEARD
You're not afraid?

Wragg considers that. Glances at his son.

WRAGG
I am. Get on with it anyway.

BLACKBEARD
You think your son's presence will stop me?

WRAGG
Not in the slightest. There will always be people like you, just as there will always be people like me. It's his choice to be who he wants. To see right versus wrong.

Blackbeard doesn't reply.
Just stares at Wragg, who won't lower his eyes.
And then, a FISHERMAN from the water breaks the moment --

FISHERMAN
Captain! Captain!

He's out of breath. Panting. Frantic.

FISHERMAN (CONT'D)
Please, sir! I come with a message from a Mr. Marks of Charleston.

-- Catches his breath.

BLACKBEARD
You better speak it, boy. Speak it fast.

FISHERMAN
Mr. Marks' boat capsized on his way in. He knows he's behind, but beseeches two additional days to get what you need.

BONNET
What business of yours is any of this?

FISHERMAN
Mr. Marks paid me.

CAESAR
How much?

BLACKBEARD
(calm down)
Caesar.

Blackbeard looks at the panicked man in the boat. Then Wragg, his stoic expression. And his petrified son.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Congratulations on your reprieve, Mr. Wragg.

Nods to Caesar, who escorts Wragg back towards the hold. Blackbeard watches them, and behind him, Bonnet notices something about his captain's palms --

BONNET (V.O.)
It wasn't until that moment I realized, even without his coat, Blackbeard was sweating as much as his captive and son.

They're slick with sweat.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR/QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE - DUSK

Queen Anne's Revenge is surrounded by stationary ships.

BONNET (V.O.)
Two more days passed. And still no demands had been met.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/CABIN - DUSK

Blackbeard, Bonnet, Caesar and Hands.

BLACKBEARD
When we leave here, I want to consolidate the fleet. Fewer ships.

HANDS
Captain, you're avoiding.
(off Blackbeard)
I think something's happened onshore.

Caesar sharpens his cutlass --

CAESAR
We need to keep our word.

BONNET
(dryly)
You want to firebomb the entire hold or kill them one at a time?

Blackbeard glares at him -- realizes Bonnet knows he has no intention of killing the captives.

Wordlessly, Blackbeard rises, heads out. The others follow.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BELOW DECKS - NIGHT

Gibbens, Robbins and the others still GROANING on the floor. Everyone looks that much worse.

Blackbeard appraises them.
Bonnet, Caesar and Hands are behind him.

BLACKBEARD
I think Israel is right.

CAESAR
Captain!

BLACKBEARD
Those were able pirates we sent ashore. I'll not abandon them. Take us into port.

Caesar knows better than to argue. He heads off.

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR/SHORELINE - NIGHT

Queen Anne's Revenge cuts through the fog.
And instantly causes mass hysteria among the residents.
CITIZENS panic, run for cover.

INT. CHARLESTON CLUB - NIGHT

A tarty DANCING GIRL of ample proportions entertains the crowd. Richards and Paulson among them. Drunk. Having a blast. Richards reacts to the ruckus outside --

RICHARDS
What is that?

Paulson is passed out. Richards shakes him awake --

RICHARDS (CONT'D)
Paulson, you hear that?

PAULSON
What?

Richards looks at him, like *how do you not hear that?*
SCREAMS and SHOUTS. Glass and wood BREAKING. HYSTERIA.

RICHARDS
What day is it?

Paulson looks around, but Richards is already on his feet --

RICHARDS (CONT'D)
They came for us!

The pirates bolt out --

EXT. CHARLESTON HARBOR - NIGHT

Queen Anne's Revenge docks.
Bonnet, Hands and Caesar make it to land as --

RICHARDS/PAULSON
Wait! Stopstopstop!

They look like they've partied for four days straight and then ran a marathon. In other words, they look like shit.

BONNET
What the hell happened to you?

Richards and Paulson don't respond.

HANDS
You will answer him!

RICHARDS
We detoured when Mr. Marks went to see the governor.

BONNET
Detoured?

PAULSON
To indulge in the town's offerings.

Bonnet notes their condition. LIPSTICK stains on clothes.

BONNET
I see.

Blackbeard appears on deck.
Peers down at Richards and Paulson.

BONNET (CONT'D)
(to Hands)
This should be entertaining.

Blackbeard climbs down. Towers over his two subordinates.

MARKS
I HAVE IT! I HAVE THE MEDICINES!
Please don't--

Marks frantically runs towards them with a locked CHEST.
Stumbles up to Blackbeard. Hands the chest to Bonnet, who buckles under its weight. Caesar takes it from him.

MARKS (CONT'D)
All you asked for is there.
Governor Johnson has also offered you a pardon--

He hands Blackbeard an official DOCUMENT, which the pirate crumples and throws into the water without a glance.

BLACKBEARD
(off the medicine chest)
Well done.

Blackbeard watches the town, still chaotic at his approaching ship. He admires his Jolly Roger, then turns to Bonnet.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Release the captives. We're done here.
(to Marks)
I'll need my coat back.

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - NIGHT

The fleet of now just four ships -- *Adventure*, *Revenge*, a small Spanish sloop and the flagship -- sails from Charleston.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/CORRIDOR - NIGHT

We are MOVING towards a closed door.
Loud THUMPS and THUDS echo from behind it.

The door opens as we arrive at it and Blackbeard exits.
Sheaths his cutlass. Its handle is COVERED WITH BLOOD.

INSIDE THE ROOM

Paulson and Richards are on the floor. Their mouths BLOODY.
Surrounding them -- a scattering of broken TEETH.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BELOW DECKS - NIGHT

The VD-stricken pirates still lay here in anguish.
Bonnet, Caesar and Hands follow Blackbeard down.

BLACKBEARD
Mr. Robbins.

Mr. Robbins rolls over, sees Blackbeard with the chest.
Shaky, he rises. Limps over as Blackbeard opens the chest --

An assortment of MULTI-COLORED LIQUIDS.
Robbins eyes the labels.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Which do you need?

ROBBINS
These may help relieve symptoms,
but they won't cure... is there
anything more than these medicines?

A sickly Robbins lifts the tray of medicine bottles in the chest, reveals a compartment underneath --

ROBBINS (CONT'D)
Ah-ha. Now we can all get better.

The others GASP. Even Blackbeard.

ROBBINS (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, I present a miracle of
modern science... The urethral
syringe.

The METAL URETHRAL SYRINGE is rusty. Crude. Quite possibly the most unsettling surgical device you'll ever see.

ROBBINS (CONT'D)
Who's first?

Off the diseased -- now truly horrified -- pirates --

INT. CELL - DAY

Maynard and Bonnet. Bonnet's grin is wide and malicious.

BONNET
(off Maynard)
It's a shame Blackbeard didn't contract the disease as well.

MAYNARD
It sounds like he treated you quite fairly.

BONNET
Treated. Past tense. When the time was right for him, he snatched the floor from under me.

INT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/BONNET'S ROOM - NIGHT

Bonnet reads a book. Looks forlorn. Detached. Sets the book down. Washes his face with his hands. Depressed.

BLACKBEARD (O.S.)
Why don't you leave it behind, Stede?

Bonnet looks up. Blackbeard's in the doorway.

BONNET
And go where?

BLACKBEARD
You're a resourceful man. You can do anything you want. Piracy doesn't seem to suit you.

BONNET
I've been branded an outlaw.

BLACKBEARD
Clearly they're offering pardons. Look at my proposition in Charleston.

BONNET
It would be nice not to be hunted. Not to live like this any longer. Oh, no offense...

Blackbeard shakes his head -- none taken. Lets Bonnet work through it on his own --

BONNET (CONT'D)
I can live off my share of the plunder we have onboard the *Revenge*. There is much, no?

BLACKBEARD
More than enough for the both of us.

We see in Bonnet's eyes, he's gonna go for it --

EXT. TOPSAIL INLET - DAY

TITLE: TOPSAIL INLET, NORTH CAROLINA

Swampy coast. The *Revenge*, *Adventure* and the Spanish sloop weave into the inlet. *Queen Anne's Revenge* takes up the rear. The river is twisty. A difficult negotiation.

The sloops pass without incident.
As the *Queen Anne's Revenge* begins the turns --

KRUUUNCH!! It GRINDS to a jarring HALT on a sandbar.
Many of *Queen Anne's Revenge*'s crew are knocked off their feet.

UNDERWATER

The hull BUCKLES, SPLINTERS and TEARS from the collision.
Channel water pours into the ship's wounds. It lists to port.

EXT. QUEEN ANNE'S REVENGE/MAIN DECK- DAY

Bonnet runs frantically across the deck --

BONNET
We've run aground!

BLACKBEARD
Thank you. I never would've known.
(to the crew)
Pull her in, boys!

EXT. TOPSAIL INLET - DAY/LATER

Queen Anne's Revenge is ashore, her hull badly damaged.
The three sloops are docked nearby.

Blackbeard's (and Bonnet's) pirates crowd the shore.
Blackbeard has Bonnet off to the side --

BLACKBEARD
The town of Bath is a day's sail north. We'll watch your swag and ship while you see the governor.

BONNET
My ship?

Bonnet looks at the *Revenge*. A longing in his eyes.

BLACKBEARD
It always has been.

Puts a friendly, reassuring hand on Bonnet's shoulder. Bonnet nods, happy, approaches some of his men.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOPSAIL INLET - DAY

TITLE: THREE DAYS LATER

Bonnet rows back into the area.
And his face falls.

Queen Anne's Revenge is still broken and beached.
A scattering of PIRATES -- Bonnet's men -- are marooned.
The *Revenge* is <u>completely empty</u> of goods.

The *Adventure* and Spanish sloop are gone.
As are Blackbeard and his crew.

BONNET
Bastard!

INT. CELL - DAY

Maynard and Bonnet.

BONNET
He left me my sloop. Stripped of any plunder or cargo.

MAYNARD
That was the last you saw of him?
(Bonnet nods)
If you were pardoned, why were you put under arrest?

BONNET
I returned to piracy because that would bring me closer to Blackbeard. One day, I will wrap these hands around his throat and choke the life out of him.

Maynard can't even respond to the absurdity of that statement. Just looks at Bonnet. Blinks.

BONNET (CONT'D)
I sound crazy, I know. But I could do it. Kill him and that wife of his.

MAYNARD
How would you-- His wife?

BONNET
He apparently took one after his pardon.

MAYNARD
A wife?

BONNET
Do you have a hearing difficulty?

Maynard is still processing. Then --

MAYNARD
Thank you for your time.

EXT. SOUTH CAROLINA DOCKS - NIGHT

Maynard and Baker head back towards their vessel.

MAYNARD
He took a wife. Can you believe that?

BAKER
I didn't think pirates even knew that word.

MAYNARD
(notices something up ahead)
What is that?

A WILD SCUFFLE at the docked *Jane* --

Pirates and Navy men POUND away at each other.
Maynard and Baker race to the scene.

Maynard FIRES his pistol in the air.
The pirates scatter. All but one --

Paulson bangs Demelt's face against the ground.
Maynard kicks the pirate in the head. Topples him off.
Lunges at him. Paulson claws savagely. Maynard socks him.

Paulson staggers back. Draws a knife --
Baker FIRES. Blows a hole in Paulson's stomach --
The pirate drops, bleeding profusely.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
What the hell is going on?! What happened here?

Wilder's bruised, catches his breath --

WILDER
It was Blackbeard's men. They ambushed us.

MAYNARD
Blackbeard?

Wilder nods. That lands on Maynard.
He regards the dying Paulson. Straddles him.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Where is he? Where's Blackbeard?

Paulson says nothing.
Just gives a dopey smile. Oddly victorious.

WILDER
They got Jaret, sir.

MAYNARD
What?

WILDER
They wanted the commanding officer.

MAYNARD
(a realization)
They wanted me.

He looks down at Paulson. Dead. Still grinning.

EXT. JANE - NIGHT

Establishing the sloop back out on the water.

INT. JANE/MAYNARD'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Maynard and Baker are pouring over Blackbeard's file.
Pages are scattered everywhere.

BAKER
Here it is. Mary Ormand is her name.

He holds up his page -- with the "Mary Ormand" sentence and Spotswood's personalized stamp at the bottom.

MAYNARD
Maybe you should come with me on this one.
(MORE)

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
(Baker looks up)
What if he’s there?

Baker considers that.

BAKER
I’ll be with you. And have the rest of the crew standing close by.

MAYNARD
Good.

BAKER
We're supposed to send word to Spotswood when we reach land again. Update him on our progress.

Maynard doesn’t respond. Consumed by his own thoughts.

BAKER (CONT’D)
Lieutenant?

MAYNARD
Do we live by too many rules, Eric?

BAKER
How do you mean?

MAYNARD
There are so many restrictions on us. To do one thing or not another. It feels like I'm forever answering to someone.

BAKER
Everyone answers to someone.

Maynard stares at one of the pages -- a SKETCH of Blackbeard.

MAYNARD
Not him.

EXT. MARY ORMAND’S HOUSE - DAY

TITLE: BATH, NORTH CAROLINA

Ridiculously opulent house on a plantation.
Maynard and Baker approach the front door.
A gaudy GOLD CHIME hangs in front.

Maynard rings it.
The tone is LOUD and BOISTEROUS.

CELIA, a black servant, opens the door.
Pets -- small DOGS and CATS scamper about inside.

MAYNARD
Good afternoon. I'm Lieutenant Maynard, this is Officer Baker of the Royal Navy--

MARY (O.S.)
The Royal Navy?! Celia, stand aside. Let the gentlemen in!

The door opens and Maynard and Baker enter --

INT. MARY ORMAND'S HOUSE - DAY

The interior is as flamboyant as the outside. Servants. Tacky, loud colors. Religious crosses. Little dogs YAP about.

MARY ORMAND is pretty, 17, ebullient.
A teenager given too many riches to play with.

MAYNARD
You are Mary Ormand?

MARY
As I live and breathe! Celia, fetch our guests some lime punch!

MAYNARD
Married to the former pirate Blackbeard.

MARY
What's all this about?

Baker notes defensiveness in her tone. Deflects --

BAKER
You have a lovely home.

MARY
Thank you. Eddie let me handle the décor. He took care of the expense.

BAKER
(sotto, to Maynard)
Eddie?

Celia brings the men some lime punch.

MAYNARD
We'd like a word with him.

MARY
...He's not here.

MAYNARD
When will he be back?

MARY
I don't know when he'll be home. He's on his own schedule.

Maynard studies her face. Tries to determine if she's lying.

MARY (CONT'D)
Maybe there's something I can help you gentlemen with.

MAYNARD
You could tell us where he is.

MARY
Oh, he's about-- What's this concerning? I mean, I can't understand what the Royal Navy would want with him.

MAYNARD
You mean now that he's no longer a pirate?

MARY
Yes.

MAYNARD
Do you believe that, ma'am? That he's not a pirate anymore?

MARY
What do you mean? Of course. He was pardoned and lives a legitimate life.

Maynard lets that hang there.
Looks around at the gaudy decor.

MARY (CONT'D)
After what he did in Charleston, he knew he'd be found eventually. So he was cleared of all wrongdoing and gave it up.

Her response is pat. She's clearly uncomfortable.

MAYNARD
That's not what I heard. Eddie's not the kind of man to sit still. Even the governor knows that.

She won't meet his eyes.

MARY
I really don't think I can help you gentlemen. I'm sorry.

BAKER
Miss, we're under orders from Virginia Governor Alexan--

Maynard raises a hand, silences him. He watches Mary. Senses a vulnerability and plays on it --

MAYNARD
Mrs. Ormand--

MARY
(defiantly)
Teach.

MAYNARD
Mrs. Teach, do you know the conditions of his pardon?

MARY
Why would I know that?

MAYNARD
I think he bragged about them to his beautiful bride.
(then)
I would've.

-- A statement which even takes Baker aback.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
Told you how much he loved you.
What you meant to him.
(the house)
That's what all this is for, right?
You.

Maynard holds his look. She meets his eyes, glances away.

MARY
(quietly)
I thought it was a secret.
(hurt)
He told me it was a secret.
(Maynard shakes his head no)
And Governor Eden's not in trouble?

MAYNARD
Eden? It was Governor Johnson.

MARY
No, he made a deal with Governor Eden.

MAYNARD
Are you sure about that?
(she nods)
How can you be sure?

MARY
Because his pardon was local. And this is Governor Eden's district. You can even look it up.

SMASH TO:

INT. GOVERNOR CHARLES EDEN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Money and elegance. Blackbeard's at a table with GOVERNOR CHARLES EDEN and CHIEF JUSTICE TOBIAS KNIGHT. Drinking brandy.

EDEN
Yes, it is true we're granting pardons.

BLACKBEARD
You just issued one to... Major Bonnet, was it, Governor?

KNIGHT
Rather prissy for a pirate.

BLACKBEARD
Was he? I didn't notice.

KNIGHT
Major Bonnet said you sent him to us.

BLACKBEARD
I may have suggested it. I talk to a lot of different people. I know he wasn't happy as a pirate.

KNIGHT
I got the sense he was being used.

BLACKBEARD
How so?

KNIGHT
To see if we'd arrest him when he requested a pardon. Like a guinea pig.

Knight's stare is even.
Eden doesn't want to rile up the pirate --

EDEN
You'll have to forgive Chief Justice Knight.
(MORE)

EDEN (CONT'D)
He has a tendency to speak his suspicions before they're widely accepted as fact.

BLACKBEARD
I wouldn't know about any guinea pig. I'm just a man looking to right his wrongs.

KNIGHT
Just a man.

BLACKBEARD
Indeed.

KNIGHT
We're issuing pardons, but not this easily. We know who you are.

Before Eden can calm this, Blackbeard leans towards Knight --

BLACKBEARD
Do you now?

Knight leans forward, unafraid --

KNIGHT
Indeed.

BLACKBEARD
Then you know how profitable I've been.

KNIGHT
(unimpressed)
I think we have an idea.

BLACKBEARD
I don't think you do.

Eden watches this stare-down between the two. Finally, Blackbeard refills his brandy. Leans back. Relaxes. Knight grins at Eden, like he's just won a victory.

And then Eden notices something on the table. A SMALL SACK. It looks very full. Somehow left there between the time Blackbeard leaned forward in his chair and then back.

EDEN
What's that?

Blackbeard drinks his brandy, pretends not to hear. Then --

BLACKBEARD
(how would I know?)
It's on your table.

Eden motions for Knight to open the sack.
Eden and Knight's eyes go wide at the GOLD COINS inside.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Now, about what you heard of how profitable I can be...

Off Eden and Knight, practically salivating --

INT. MARY ORMAND'S HOUSE - DAY

Maynard, Mary and Baker.

MARY
As long as he gives them a share, he can continue what he does.

MAYNARD
And how do you feel about that?

MARY
Excuse me?

-- The question makes Baker stiffen.

MAYNARD
(off the cross on the wall)
As an Anglican -- you're Anglican, right?
(she nods)
Me too. How do you feel about living on stolen money? Blood money.

MARY
Mr. Maynard!

MAYNARD
<u>Lieutenant</u> Maynard. You'll contain your tone, young lady. All of these nice things, these pretty things, they weren't earned. They were <u>taken</u>. Under duress by a man who knows how to do little else.

MARY
You have no right--

MAYNARD
Tell me I'm wrong. Tell me about the lives he hasn't ruined.

MARY
My husband is not a killer. Not now. Nor was he <u>ever</u>.

MAYNARD
You trust him?

MARY
With all I am.

MAYNARD
So you know where he is.

That stops her in her tracks. She gets quiet.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
I can't begin to apprise you of the lives and livelihoods he's destroyed. Good people. People who love their families and their pets.
(eyes a scampering dog)
People like you.

She looks away. Tries not to get emotional. But he's clearly reaching her.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
He's not coming home tonight, is he?
(she sags, shakes her head)
When was the last time you saw your husband, Mrs. Teach?

A nerve's been struck. Mary explodes --

MARY
Please leave, <u>now</u>!

MAYNARD
<u>Where is he</u>?
(no response)
<u>Where</u>?!

MARY
I don't know! I swear it!
(breaking down)
You have no business asking these--
You don't know! <u>You don't know</u>!!

She crumples in a heap. Face in her hands. Sobbing. Maynard and Baker swap a look.

BAKER
(mouthing)
Don't know what?

Maynard looks around.
His eyes land across the room and he sees it --

A SMALL PAIR OF MEN'S SHOES

Maynard sits down next to Mary. His tone softens.

MAYNARD
Mary, who's the man in the bedroom?

She looks up. Shocked. Baker wears the same face.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
You just told us as long as he gives them a share, he can continue what he's doing. And those shoes are way too small for a man of Edward's size.
(then)
Are <u>you</u> part of the spoils he shares?

Beat. She pulls her face from her hands, looks at Maynard through tear-filled eyes. A silent admission.

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
(softly)
Where is he?

MARY
Ocracoke Island.

Baker's frozen. In awe of Maynard.

MAYNARD
We appreciate all of this, Mary. You're a good person.
(the bedroom)
Would you like us to get rid of him?

MARY
No. I will.

MAYNARD
Thank you for your time.

He and Baker head out.
Mary sits silently for a beat. Then --

<u>Tobias Knight</u> emerges from a bedroom.
Dressed in his underwear.

KNIGHT
...Mary?

MARY
I'd like you to leave, Tobias.

KNIGHT
Mary, listen. I don't think you were thinking clearly--

MARY
Now. Out!

KNIGHT
Can I just gather my--

She doesn't answer. Her gaze sharp. He scoops up clothes. She hustles him towards the door --

KNIGHT (CONT'D)
Did you really need to tell them where he is?

She pushes him out. Slams the door shut.

EXT. MARY ORMAND'S HOUSE - DAY

Knight is still dressing as he staggers outside. Composes himself, approaches his HORSE.

Pulls a pencil and paper from a saddlebag. Scribbles a NOTE.

EXT. JANE - DAY

Maynard and his men are about to set sail.

MESSENGER (O.S.)
Lieutenant Maynard!

Maynard turns to the voice --
ON THE DOCK, a young MESSENGER hands a SMALL WRAPPED BOX to one of Maynard's men.

MESSENGER (CONT'D)
Delivery for Lieutenant Maynard!

No writing on it other than the word "Maynard".
The Navy man hands the package to Maynard, who opens it... And has to catch his breath from what's inside.

On a crumpled piece of blood-stained paper --
Jaret's gaudy RING. Still on his bloody finger.

Scrawled underneath the dismembered digit --
"Find the rest of him in Davy Jones locker"

Some of Maynard's men react. <u>Fear</u> on their faces.

Off Maynard, the death of his man, the effect on his crew --
He's furious beyond words --

EXT. ATLANTIC OCEAN - DAY

Establishing the *Jane* and *Ranger* sailing with purpose.

INT. JANE - DAY

Maynard, Baker, Demelt, Wilder and the rest of the crew are gathered around a map of Ocracoke Inlet.

MAYNARD
Blackbeard is most likely held here. We can trap them to the shoreline.
(to Wilder)
You'll share this with your men on the *Ranger*?

Wilder nods.

DEMELT
Would it be wiser to call in reinforcements?

-- A question which seems to sit well with the majority of the crew. Except Maynard.

MAYNARD
Are you scared?

DEMELT
It has nothing to do with fear, Lieutenant.

MAYNARD
Then what does it have to do with, Mr. Demelt?
(Demelt doesn't answer)
Is it competence? Do you feel unfit for the task?

DEMELT
No, sir.

Demelt shrinks back. Maynard continues glaring at him. Crewman Wilder steps in --

WILDER
Lieutenant, we're not half the size of the *Scarborough* and look what he did to her. All these things you've learned about him, do they not concern you?

MAYNARD
They do more than concern me. They trouble me. That a man could carry on the way he does, with such wanton disregard for life, the law, and personal well-being of anyone he encounters. That troubles me very deeply.

Maynard steps back. His tone hardens --

MAYNARD (CONT'D)
But not as much as a crew of men disinclined to rid the world of such vermin. If any of you feels unable to accomplish the task we've been assigned -- by all means, get off my sloop. Now.

No one moves. Beat.
Maynard holds his glare. And exits.

EXT. OCRACOKE INLET/MERCHANT SHIP PILGRIM - DAY

Fully loaded with cargo.
Barrels and crates labelled ivory, sugar, tobacco, cocoa, etc.

ONBOARD, a young merchantman, BITTAR watches out the bow.
His expression falls at what he sees. Frozen in fear --

BITTAR
Captain! Captain!

Captain SAMUEL ODELL, seasoned, grizzled, emerges from the hold. Annoyed at the kid's hysteria.

ODELL
What?

Odell looks where Bittar is looking.
Odell seems more resigned than scared. Simply --

ODELL (CONT'D)
Shit.

Up ahead -- Ceasar and several pirates await at the shore.

TIME CUT:

EXT. OCRACOKE INLET - MOMENTS LATER

The *Pilgrim* is docked.
Odell faces Blackbeard, Caesar, Hands and several more pirates. The merchantman isn't remotely intimidated.

BLACKBEARD
Perhaps we can barter for some of your goods.

ODELL
Think you can pull that on me? You're goddamn pirates. I know how this works.

BLACKBEARD
You misunderstand, sir. We've been pardoned.

ODELL
My ass. Get on with what you're gonna do, sonny. Just let my crew off first.

Blackbeard appraises Odell. Never seen anyone like this.

BLACKBEARD
What's your name?

ODELL
What's it matter?

CAESAR
The Captain asked you a question.

Odell holds Caesar's stare. Not scared of him, either.

BLACKBEARD
Relax, Caesar.
(to Odell)
By now, people are usually begging and cowering.

Odell keeps his stare on Caesar a beat longer before shifting it back to Blackbeard. He glares at the infamous pirate.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
But not you.

ODELL
I don't beg or cower.

Something changes in Blackbeard's eyes -- he's <u>impressed</u>.

BLACKBEARD
Your name, sir?

ODELL
Samuel Odell.

BLACKBEARD
(trying the name out)
Samuel Odell... Mr. Odell...
Fearless merchant of the Atlantic.
(that's the one)
Welcome to Ocracoke Inlet. Share rum with us.

Smiles warmly. Claps a hand on Odell's back, ushers him towards the bonfire.

Blackbeard's men are perplexed. As is Odell.

EXT. OCRACOKE ISLAND - NIGHT - TO ESTABLISH

The *Jane* and *Ranger* docked at the Inlet's entrance.

INT. JANE/MAYNARD'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Maynard and Baker.
Maynard's got the satchel his wife gave him on his lap. Blanket she made him still folded inside. Clearly untouched. He seems lost in thought as Baker provides an update --

BAKER
Derekson spotted remains of a campground at the inlet, but it seems to be deserted. The docked sloop *Adventure*, with its eight cannon aboard, appears raucous though.

It's unclear if Maynard was even listening.
An odd desperation to his demeanor. And then --

MAYNARD
He's there.

BAKER
(off the blanket)
What've you got there, Lieutenant?

Maynard sets the satchel down. Ignores the question.

MAYNARD
We'll strike before they can ready their cannons. Are the men prepared for a daybreak attack?

BAKER
They better be, right?

-- Clearly a jab at Maynard's earlier diatribe.

MAYNARD
I need them scared, Eric. They're sharper that way.

BAKER
I think the scared part's well taken care of. Word of your tirade carried over to the *Ranger* and resulted in a few deserters.

MAYNARD
Wilder probably played it up.

BAKER
I don't think he needed to.

Maynard lets that slide.
Absently glances at the blanket in the satchel.

MAYNARD
Next you'll tell me you're scared.

Baker considers that.

BAKER
Only of what you'll do with yourself after this is all over.

Baker exits.

INT. ADVENTURE - DAY

Wild party in progress. Copious smoke, drink, and women.
Samuel Odell pounds drinks with a PROSTITUTE.
His crewman Bittar downs rum and giggles with another.

Blackbeard plays cards with Hands and Caesar.
Gibbens enters with some sheets of paper. Cuts through the crowd. Hands the sheets to Blackbeard, who reads them.

HANDS
News on the Navy boy?

GIBBENS
Mmhmm.

Gibbens pulls up a chair. Deals himself into the game.

BLACKBEARD
Little Robbie Maynard's had a tough struggle working past lieutenant. I think he wants us to help him surpass the rank.

The pirates laugh.
Blackbeard peruses further. Affected by what he reads. Tries to hide it. Tosses the papers down. Resumes playing cards.
Hands glances through the sheets.

HANDS
He has two sloops of trained Navy men.
(no one reacts)
He's ambitious. And hungry.

BLACKBEARD
(enough)
I read the pages, Israel.

HANDS
You don't seem worried.

BLACKBEARD
Should I be?

HANDS
Perhaps.

BLAM! A GUNSHOT under the table.
Everyone stops what they're doing.

Hands SHRIEKS. Topples back. Bleeding.
Blackbeard has blown Hands' kneecap off.

He drops the smoking gun on the table.
Stalks out of the hold.

Hands staggers out the other side of the room.
Everyone else is still frozen. Terrified.

CAESAR
Best watch yourselves. The Captain liked him.

EXT. OCRACOKE INLET - NIGHT

Hands, bloodied, in agony, stumbles to the shore.
Looks at his destroyed knee. Then at the *Adventure*.

Anger, confusion, but most of all hurt -- deeper than physical -- play across his face.

EXT. OCRACOKE ISLAND/SLOOPS JANE AND RANGER - DAWN

The sun rises on Maynard's two sloops.

EXT. JANE - DAWN

Maynard watches the sunrise.
Slides Jaret's flashy ring on his finger. Regards it.
Baker approaches --

BAKER
On your orders, Lieutenant.

MAYNARD
Have the decks been watered down?

BAKER
(nods)
And covered in sand.

Maynard takes a pause. *Here we go* --

MAYNARD
Forward.

Baker signals for the sloop to move.
The *Ranger* follows --

EXT. OCRACOKE INLET - DAY

A narrow, twisting channel that runs between dunes.
The *Jane* and *Ranger* creep around the bend.

The *Adventure* slowly comes into view.
It floats like a sleeping goliath. Quiet and dark.

Onboard the *Jane*, Maynard smiles.
The element of surprise sweetly in his corner.

The *Jane* pushes forward.
The *Ranger* right behind.
The distance to the pirates closes.

And then --

The *Ranger* JOLTS to a STAGGERING HALT.
The men onboard are jerked. Some off their feet.

EXT. JANE - DAY

Maynard and Baker eye the *Ranger.*

BAKER
Looks like a sandbar.

Maynard shakes his head. Sighs.
And then, they too, LURCH TO A STOP.

Both ships are stalled on sandbars.

EXT. ADVENTURE - DAY

Eight pirates stir. Notice the two sloops, stuck on sandbars. Their crews hurriedly throwing ballast and barrels over the side, attempting to break free.

The pirates laugh.
Until a voice from behind galvanizes them --

BLACKBEARD
What are you standing around for?!
They're here for us! Open fire!

The *Ranger* is in the *Adventure*'s sights.
Odell and his men groggily awaken --

ODELL
What's happening? What's going on?

EXT. JANE - DAY

Maynard sees the pirates spring into action --
The sails unfurl. Anchors raise. Cannons load.
No cover, he sees what's about to happen to the *Ranger*.

MAYNARD
Get them off the deck! Order them off--

But it's too late.
The *Adventure* OPENS FIRE --

Cannonballs BOMBARD *Ranger*'s deck. The sloop seems to disappear in a cloud of SMOKE and BLOOD RED MIST.

Cannonballs kill men in TWOS AND THREES.
The sails are knocked down.

The deck is a mass of broken equipment, dismembered body parts and blood. SCREAMS echo across the Inlet.

Wilder rises through the smoke.
Bloodied. Enraged. BLASTS a pistol at the pirates --

The *Adventure* speeds towards the *Ranger*.
Fires another volley of deadly cannon.

Wilder is hit full on.
Blown back into a thick cloud of smoke.

EXT. JANE - DAY

Maynard and his men scramble to load muskets.
The *Adventure* draws nearer --

Maynard's men stuff balls into muskets.
A few nervous fingers fumble, drop them --

The *Adventure* coasts up alongside the *Jane*.
Several of Maynard's men GASP. Work faster.

And there's Blackbeard on the deck.
A goddamn mug of rum in his hands.
Raises the cup, toasting Maynard and his men. Takes a swig.

BLACKBEARD
Mr. Morton! Let fly!

A blast of the four cannon on the *Adventure*'s starboard side hammers the *Jane*. Grenades also hit and EXPLODE on deck.

Maynard tackles as many men as he can. Rushes them to cover.
SCREAMS and SHRIEKS abound. Several return FIRE --

A few pirates on the *Adventure* are hit.
One takes a shot in the neck. Drops, gurgling blood.
Blackbeard is struck in the leg. Laughs.

Maynard rolls behind a mast.
Men around him are CUT DOWN by the barrage.

MAYNARD
Get below!

CREWMAN
What?

MAYNARD
Get bel--

He's cut off as another round of fire rocks the boat.

ACROSS THE DECK

A young Navy man crouches behind a barrel. A devastating torrent of GRAPESHOT -- glass and scrapmetal -- pummels him.
His face and hands are SHREDDED as he's obscured by smoke.

The deck is a vision of hell --
Fiery, smoky, scream-riddled.

EXT. ADVENTURE - DAY

Blackbeard smiles huge at the wreckage he's caused.
A sound on his ship draws his attention to --
Odell and Bittar. Trying to climb off.

BLACKBEARD
Caesar.

Caesar and some pirates restrain Odell and his crewman.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Keep them below. Hostages can always prove useful.

ODELL
Bear-faced prick--

He's shoved below-deck.
Blackbeard looks at the clearing smoke on the *Jane* --

The deck is littered with bodies.
Only Maynard and Baker remain. Defiant.
Blackbeard and Maynard lock eyes from separate ships.

MORTON (O.S.)
Another round, Captain?

BLACKBEARD
(eyes still on Maynard)
No.
(to Maynard)
Lieutenant Maynard, I presume.
(off Jaret's ring, a nasty smirk)
Nice ring. Have I seen that somewhere before?
(Maynard just glares)
We will give or take no quarter.

In other words -- *fuck you*.

MAYNARD
None is expected. Nor to be returned.

In other words -- *fuck yourself*.

BLACKBEARD
(eyes locked on Maynard)
<u>Prepare to board</u>.

The eight pirates scramble for weapons.
Maynard and Baker watch from the *Jane*. Their last stand.
Caesar checks his cutlass. Blackbeard pulls him aside.

BLACKBEARD (CONT'D)
Stay here.

CAESAR
What?

BLACKBEARD
If it goes bad, there's enough gunpowder belowdecks to take down all three vessels. Do it.

CAESAR
Aye, Captain.

Baker and Maynard share an uneasy look.
Baker grips his cutlass in a sweaty palm.

Adventure's grappling irons are thrown.
The sloops draw closer.

Blackbeard and his pirates (minus Caesar) glare.
Eyes ablaze like tigers waiting for the cage door to lift.

The sloops THUD together.
Blackbeard leaps the rail. His men in tow --

Maynard and Baker hold steady.
We may notice -- Baker's got SOMETHING around his neck.
Looks like it could be a WHISTLE.

The pirates thunder across the *Jane*'s deck.
Close in on Maynard and Baker. Closer... closer...

MAYNARD
<u>Now</u>!

Baker blows the whistle.

A dozen of Maynard's crew -- the ones he ordered down below during Blackbeard's onslaught -- burst from the hold.
Right between Maynard and the charging pirates.

<u>What follows is one of the bloodiest battles in Navy history</u>

Pirates and Maynard's men smash into one another --
Bodies collide --
Cutlasses slash --
Bones crunch --
Eyes are gouged --
Teeth gnash --

Maynard and Blackbeard see only each other.
The pirate lets out a BATTLE CRY. Charges --

A Navy man blocks his way.
Blackbeard drives right over the poor guy.

Barrels to Maynard --
Maynard THRUSTS his sword. It jams against Blackbeard's coat. Hits something metallic there. BENDS.

Blackbeard wraps a hand around the blade. Yanks it sideways. Breaks Maynard's fingers. The swords clatters away.

Blackbeard smashes a fist into Maynard's face. Again. Swings another haymaker --

Maynard headbutts the pirate. Hurls himself on him. They topple to the deck, which is now slick with blood.

THE PIRATE RICHARDS

HOWLS bloody murder. Like a dervish, flails madly. Slashes at anything in reach. No one can get near him.

RICHARDS
C'mon, y'bastards.

A GRAPPLING HOOK

Sails into frame. Catches his shoulder. Pierces skin. Richards SQUEALS as he's YANKED --

Swept off the ship. Bounces sickeningly off the hull before splashing hard into the water.

Baker releases the end of cable he was holding. Nods to the others -- *carry on.*

MAYNARD AND BLACKBEARD

Grapple viciously, without grace or technique. Rolling over dead and injured men.

Blackbeard grunts. Pins Maynard to the deck. Maynard's eyes land on -- a fallen cutlass.

He snatches the weapon. SLASHES Blackbeard. The Pirate staggers off him, bleeding.

INT. ADVENTURE/HOLD - DAY

Caesar watches the battle on the *Jane* through a large crack. Bloodlust in his wild eyes. He's excited. Aroused.

Samuel Odell and Bittar are tied with rope behind him. Barrels of GUNPOWDER in evidence.

ODELL
(off Caesar's excitement)
Jesus Christ.

BITTAR
(sotto)
Hey.

Bittar's gotten a finger loose. He doesn't have the leverage to undo his own bindings, but he can reach Odell's...

EXT. JANE - DAY

Chaos. Carnage. Full blown bloodbath.
The deck is awash with blood. The sea appears dyed RED.
It's clear the pirates are being OVERPOWERED.

The *Ranger* has freed itself from the sandbar.
Approaches the *Jane*.
Its remaining crew leaps off to help their comrades.

Baker aims a pistol -- blows two pirates off the boat.
Sees Maynard and Blackbeard struggle. Levels the gun --

Fires.

The shot takes Blackbeard in the arm.
But doesn't slow the pirate down at all.
He and Maynard crash into the mast.

ACROSS THE DECK

Gibbens takes on several Navy men at once.
He's a vicious, brutal animal.
Smashes one man in the face. Another in the groin.
Pounds a downed man with his bare hands.

That's when Demelt leaps on his back.
Gibbens bucks and writhes like a bull.

Hurls Demelt into a door. SPLINTERS it.
Demelt goes sprawling. Gibbens advances. Draws his cutlass.

Demelt scrabbles back like a crab among debris.
Slips in blood. He's weaponless. Backed against the rail.

Gibbens smiles -- a snarl of misshapen yellow teeth.
LUNGES with the blade --

Demelt dodges in the last second.
The blade slams into the rail behind him with deadly force.
His face an inch from Demelt's. But most noticeable --

Gibbens has stopped smiling.
He looks down --

Demelt has IMPALED him on a jagged piece of wooden door.
Blood pours from the wound.
Demelt uses the makeshift shank to push Gibbens off --

The pirate falls flat on his back.
Dies in agony.

Demelt grabs Gibbens' cutlass. Scrambles to his feet.

The remaining pirates are dead. All but --

BLACKBEARD

Still trading brutal blows with Maynard.
Blackbeard knocks Maynard back. Draws a pistol --

Baker charges up, SLASHING.
Catches Blackbeard's gun hand. The pistol falls.

Then Demelt swipes at his face.
Another Navy man slices his leg.
And yet another fires a shot into his back.

Blackbeard tumbles to the deck. Lands hard on his back.
Maynard, eyes wild, breathing heavy, stands over him.

Blackbeard spits blood.
Looks at Maynard and his men. Chuckles.

BLACKBEARD
You think you've won.

MAYNARD
It's over for you.

BLACKBEARD
Never. Word of me will spread like fire.

MAYNARD
No one will remember you, Teach.

Blackbeard's stare is like a diamond drill.

BLACKBEARD
That's Blackbeard, Lieutenant...
Beg pardon, I've already forgotten your name.

Maynard SNAPS.
Overcome by a fury so great it eclipses all thought --
He grabs Demelt's cutlass from his hand and SWINGS --

Brings it down hard on Blackbeard's neck. Again and again.
Finally, he relents. Out of breath. Spent.

Maynard's men don't know if they should applaud or run.
He looks at them. Kicks Blackbeard's body --

MAYNARD
Get rid of this.

INT. ADVENTURE/HOLD - DAY

Caesar's expression drops as he sees Blackbeard's headless body hurled off the *Jane*.
It SPLASHES into the water. Bobs there eerily.

Behind him, Bittar works quietly and fervidly to free Odell.
Caesar's eyes fall on the barrels of gunpowder.

He kicks one over.
It breaks. Black GUNPOWDER floods the floor --

Odell's eyes widen --
He motions for Bittar to <u>hurry the fuck up</u>.

Caesar pulls out a match --
Bittar's fingers worm into Odell's knot --

Caesar strikes his match. Nothing happens.
He moves to strike it again --

Bittar undoes Odell's knot.
Odell dives onto the Caesar. Tackles him.

Caesar thrashes wildly. Struggles to break free.
Odell grabs his collar. SLUGS him in the face.
Knocks the pirate out with one shot.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NAVAL YARD/VIRGINIA - DAY

The *Jane* sails into the dock.
BLACKBEARD'S HEAD is tied to the bowspirit.
Swaying eerily in the breeze.

Maynard's at the helm. A distant, haunted look in his eyes.
All that this experience has cost him.

INT. GOVERNOR SPOTSWOOD'S OFFICE - DAY

Maynard enters. He's barely cleaned himself up --
Dishevelled. Badly bruised. Blood streaks his torn clothes.
Spotswood's at his desk. He smiles and rises.

SPOTSWOOD
I saw your vessel approach. Nicely done, lieutenant.

He hands him a small box.
Maynard pops the top. Inside -- his reward money.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
(off Maynard's appearance)
Clearly a reward richly earned.

Spotswood moves to the doorway.
Calls out to his teenage secretary --

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
Prepare a release -- "Governor Spotswood's campaign against Blackbeard has come to a close. The fiend is dead."

He heads back to his desk.

MAYNARD
I thought this was done in secrecy.

SPOTSWOOD
For you, yes. To keep you out of legal bothers.

MAYNARD
So you'll use Blackbeard's death to increase your own public standing.

SPOTSWOOD
I engineered this operation, did I not?

Maynard looks gut-punched.

SPOTSWOOD (CONT'D)
Oh, Robert, please don't tell me you thought this was all really about morality. You didn't actually <u>believe</u> we could rid the world of evil, did you?

MAYNARD
I thought...

He trails off.

SPOTSWOOD
What?

MAYNARD
I thought this pirate's elimination would be a large battle won. In the grander sense.

Spotswood stares at him. Then --

SPOTSWOOD
Grow up, son.

EXT. BATH TOWN TAVERN - DUSK

One helluva dingy joint.

Israel Hands limps to the front door.
The bandage on his knee is completely soaked in blood.

INT. BATH TOWN TAVERN - DUSK

Hands enters, staggers painfully to a stool at the bar.
The BARKEEP approaches, knows him --

BARKEEP
Israel!

HANDS
Pour me something.

The barkeep does.

BARKEEP
Glad to see you alive.

HANDS
'Hell's that supposed to mean?

BARKEEP
Your fleet's run-in with the Royal Navy this morning. I heard it was a bloodbath.
(off Hands)
Weren't you there?

HANDS
No, I... What happened?

BARKEEP
Blackbeard's dead. Along with most of his crew.

Hands reacts to that. Glances at his knee.
The Barkeep notices the injury --

BARKEEP (CONT'D)
When'd you get that?

HANDS
Last night.

BARKEEP
Guess they wouldn't've been able to use you anyway.

That resonates with Hands. Gives him pause.

BARKEEP (CONT'D)
Lucky for you, huh? Is that the right word, luck? Or is it fate?

Hands' wheel are turning. A thought DAWNS on him...

HANDS
I don't think it was either.

Off Hands, as the realization that Blackbeard may have intentionally saved his life sinks in --

EXT. MAYNARD HOUSE - DUSK

PRUNING SHEARS

Snip at sowed vegetables.

WIDER - THE GARDEN IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE

Dora tends to plants.
Pauses when she feels eyes on her. Looks up --

Maynard stands, watches her from several feet away.
Satchel with the blanket in one hand.
Reward BOX in the other.

She rises.
He approaches, eyes fixed on her.
An overwhelmed look in his expression.

He reaches her.
Drops the box carelessly.
It BANGS on the ground, breaks open --

His reward MONEY spills out.
The bills drift in the wind. He doesn't care.

Grabs his wife. Holds her in a tight embrace.
Dora, befuddled, returns it.

Maynard's eyes are squeezed shut.
When he opens them, they're moist.

He clings to his wife like life itself.

TITLE: ROBERT MAYNARD WAS PROMOTED TO COMMANDER TWENTY-ONE YEARS LATER. HE DIED IN 1750.

FADE TO BLACK.