

The Benbow Mutiny

by

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Based on the Biography of Admiral John Benbow,  
Brave Benbow,  
by William A. Benbow

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## 1. EXT. HAMPTON COURT PALACE - DAY

A boat lands from the river.

TITLE OVER: " 1701 - The Catholic James II has fled to France leaving the Protestant William III and Mary II to rule England"

## 2. INT. CORRIDOR OF HAMPTON COURT - DAY

The 50-year old ADMIRAL BENBOW, resplendent in scarlet and gold, decorated with sash, ruffs and full-bottomed brown wig strides down the stone corridor in company of the BAILIFF. Benbow stops at a doorway and hands the bailiff his sword and buckle.

## 3. INT. A ROOM IN THE PALACE. - DAY

KING WILLIAM III(50)lays a fond arm on Benbow's shoulder then gestures for him to sit. Benbow remains standing since the King himself doesn't sit. Instead, he wanders to an ornate desk covered with maps where he idly turns a globe of the world. He speaks with a Dutch accent.

KING WILLIAM

You have done Us good service in Our time in England.

BENBOW

I've been rewarded for doing no more than my duty, your Majesty.

KING WILLIAM

And I have promised Martha she shall see more of you!

(He ruefully wanders  
to the casement)

It's a time of *gebeurtenis*, John, *voorval*, great moment. There will be war. With France. But the French War Chest, it is empty.

(he wanders back)

I need a man who sees honour before riches, a man who terrifies the enemy - a man to keep Spanish treasure from French hands.

(he turns the globe  
to the Caribbean)

You have every right to refuse. Others have.

BENBOW

I am your man, sir.

KING WILLIAM

(sadly)

Well then, I find we must spare our beaus and send honest Benbow...Martha will be cross with me.

BENBOW

And with me.

(William nods)

Your Majesty...such an enterprise requires certain special considerations...supplies...officers..

KING William

You shall have all you need: Secretary Burchett shall see to it.

#### 4. INT. THE ADMIRALTY - DAY

Benbow sits impatiently watching as Burchett officiously shuffles papers.

SECRETARY BURCHETT

As to Captains: You have specified that they should have experience in the Indies...we are spread thin...and few there be that willingly return there. Still, here is a list of those I have persuaded.

BENBOW

Benbow quickly reads list.

You have selected Richard Kirkby as Second in Command. I would have my flag captain, Henry Martin.

BURCHETT

I have already offered the post to Colonel Kirkby: a good man, plenty of experience.

BENBOW

Henry Martin is 2IC.

BURCHETT

Kirkby's family is quite influential.

BENBOW

I care not what deals you have made.

And I am bringing my own Master,  
Robert Thompson, and a goodly number  
of men from my current squadron.

BURCHETT

Very well. I must insist on selecting  
a replacement for your flag captain.  
We do have to keep the Lords happy.

BENBOW (nods absently)

Here is my list: I want a hospital  
ship, a decent physician; extra  
supplies of food and water -  
especially water - I'll not have my  
men dying from lack of decent water.

Time is critical so get on with it.  
I'll be in Chatham to see the ships  
are properly fitted out.

Benbow hands his list to a somewhat stunned  
Burchett, and leaves.

5. INT. THE HALLWAY OF A HOUSE - DAY.

Expensive furniture and fittings abound. Two  
seamen heft a large sea chest. Benbow's thirteen  
year old daughter KATE stands tearfully by as  
Benbow, in full dress and wig, takes his leave of  
his solemn -faced wife, MARTHA.

BENBOW

I must go, my dear. The King asked me  
himself.

MARTHA

He asked others first.

BENBOW

Aye, and they refused; gentlemen all!

MARTHA

Are you're better than them? Your pride  
will be the death of you!

BENBOW

Refusal is not an option: Mitchell's  
lost his commission because he pled  
ill health, and Rooke is in disfavour.  
I'll not be left to rot on shore.  
Besides: the king has promised me my  
Vice-Admiral's flag immediately and a  
knighthood upon my return.

MARTHA

We have every honour we need, John.  
You have done your duty more times  
than any man. When will you be done?  
When will it be enough?

He kisses his wife, then opens his arms to his  
daughter. She runs, sobbing into his arms. Benbow  
strokes her hair, kisses her then turns and leaves  
the hallway. Mother and daughter hold each other  
in the silent room. We hear the sound of a HORSE  
AND CARRIAGE start up.

6. INT. A PUBLIC HOUSE - DAY

Vincent enters a crowded tavern. Urbane and  
distant in manner, he places a coin on the counter  
for an ale. A burst of laughter is heard over the  
hubbub.

7. A CAPTAINS' TABLE IN THE TAVERN.

The dashing Captain RICHARD KIRKBY, forty-five, a  
veteran of His Majesty's Navy, holds court to a  
group of tipsy naval officers. Among them,  
listening avidly is the foppish Captain WADE.

KIRKBY

(a toast)

To the Spanish Main - where a man may  
make his fortune!

WADE

(gaily)

I thought you'd made your fortune  
there already, Kirkby.

KIRKBY

And lost it faster - three years on  
half-pay don't pay the bills, you  
know!

The others laugh.

KIRKBY (CONT.)

God helps those who keep the world  
moving - and the Devil take travellers  
who stay at home! West Indies' rich  
in trade, there's prize enough to fill  
our holds thrice over!

WADE (looks at Kirkby)

And promotion to the survivors.

A CAPTAIN

(dryly)

We're fighting the French again, are  
we?

The officers laugh again as Vincent joins the  
table.

WADE

(gleefully)

Plucking their trade, more like.

VINCENT

Not if Benbow has his way.

A sudden silence. Vincent affects surprise.

VINCENT (CONT.)

I thought you'd heard. Benbow's made  
Commander in Chief of the Caribbean.

KIRKBY

The Devil you say!

VINCENT

The Devil I do.

WADE

I say, bloody hell.

The others shift uneasily, all bonhomie gone. The  
entire room has fallen silent as the news spreads.  
All tables watch them. Vincent drinks  
nonchalantly.

VINCENT

Never mind, perhaps there'll be no war.

(significantly-)

And no prizes either.

KIRKBY

You're a miserable sod, Samuel.

VINCENT

When the Navy thinks more of the carpentry than the butcher's bill, there's misery enough.

KIRKBY

Bah man! You're not still on about the Prince of Orange, are you? Wasn't your fault. Career's unsullied, that's all that matters.

GUNS BOOM in steady succession. The room falls silent.

KIRKBY (CONT.)

Drink up men, we're summoned, I'll wager, by the Devil himself!

8. EXT. A CHATHAM QUAYSIDE - DUSK.

Ships are being provisioned, men roll barrels and livestock is swung inboard. Admiral Benbow strides through this throng with his secretary COLLINSON. In his wake retainers roll a cart. The FIFTEEN-GUN SALUTE brings work to a halt. Men touch their hats as the Admiral walks by; he acknowledges all with flamboyant gloved hand, enjoying the ceremony. Sailors crowd the gunwales of ships to watch him pass.

9. EXT. A 70-GUN WARSHIP LIES AT THE QUAY

TITLE OVER: "Flagship HMS Bredah"

Sideboys with white gloves run to the gangway, marines form a guard of honour and BOSUN-MATE PIPES sound. The last of the salute ROLLS over the town.

Benbow mounts the gangway and pauses theatrically at the gunwale where Flag-Captain FOGG waits. For all to hear-

BENBOW

Captain Fogg. We sail on the morning tide!

Crewmen cheer and throw their hats into the air. Benbow steps to the deck, acknowledging the cheers with a wave.

BENBOW (CONTD)

All captains to Flag.

10. INT. GREAT CABIN OF THE BREDAH - EVENING

Ten captains, including Vincent, Kirkby and Wade, Constable, Fogg, Martin, rise as one when Admiral Benbow enters, resplendently dressed. He sits, as does the company. He has a no-nonsense manner.

BENBOW

A fleet's no better than its officers. Many in the last war were content to harry the enemy's trade and avoid his battleships -

His secretary distributes pages.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Those who served with me in the channel will know we don't play at long bowls, we hit the enemy hard, often, and to his vexation, at close quarters. Thus do we inflict the greater damage.

He examines a table of distinctly vexed men.

KIRKBY

Admiral, can I presume that if we should happen to cross the path of the incoming Spanish Flota, we might, ah, take them in hand, show them the way, so to speak.

This causes a ripple of laughter and considerable interest.

BENBOW

Gentlemen, our orders are at this point quite secret, however, tis a

reasonable surmise you make - you no doubt have heard that the French have an eye on the Flota for themselves. I dare say that the King would not be disappointed if we offered the Spanish Galleons our protection. But I do not affirm these as our orders, and you would be wise to keep such speculation to yourself."

CONSTABLE

Admiral, can you tell us what are our orders be if the Spanish resist.

WADE

Now I doubt very much if they'll be resisting 100 English ships of the line."

BENBOW

We may be somewhat less in number as we proceed on our mission. However, we sail as though at war, always at the ready. You will beat to quarters every dawn, and I expect the guns, great and small to be well exercised...And the men, you will make sailors of them all, I want your ships battle ready. Gentlemen we have much work to do, I want no laggards."

BENBOW (CONT.)

Play your part and there'll be no quarrel between us.

(He lifts a paper)

This is the first of a series of Daily Orders on keeping station, engaging at close-range, and rates of fire. Five guns a day will be exercised-

The foppish Wade leans forward with a glance at his companions. Something flickers behind Benbow's eyes.

WADE

Begging your pardon, Admiral Benbow...rates of fire and that are all very well, you know...but some of

our gun crews are much under strength.  
What recourse have we-

BENBOW

Captain Wade. You are captain of the  
Greenwich -

WADE

Ah, the Windsor, Sir.

BENBOW

No sir, the Windsor is an ill-  
disciplined, disorderly and drunk  
ship, her officers barely competent.  
The Greenwich on the other hand is an  
example of what every fighting ship  
should be.

WADE

(stunned)

I say! I must take exception-

BENBOW

Captain Constable here will assume  
your command. You will transfer to the  
Greenwich. Where no doubt you'll find  
your gun-crews at full strength.

Several beats. Then Wade rises, white and shaken.  
Seizing his hat and gloves, he leaves, spoiling a  
self-righteous exit with a wavering hesitation at  
the door. The other captains are in shock at this  
attack.

BENBOW

(to the table)

Any journey to the Indies attracts the  
worst of men, and we're short of even  
these. Your responsibility is to bring  
your ships to the fighting trim  
demanded of the best Navy in the  
world.

(To Constable)

Captain Constable, you run a tight  
ship. And will be rewarded, if not on  
earth, then in heaven.

Benbow rises. There is a moment before the  
captains gather their Daily Orders from the table  
before them.

BENBOW (CONT)

We sail with the tide, five bells in the morning watch.

A red-haired captain commiserates as they file out.

RED HAIRED CAPTAIN

Bloody bad luck, Constable, getting Wadey's old bucket.

BENBOW

Captain Vincent...

VINCENT

(remains behind)

Yes, Admiral?

BENBOW

We need not fence: last month you fired on the brig L'Oreal.

VINCENT

She failed to identify herself.

BENBOW

Before that it was the trader Juno. We're not at war, sir. The Admiralty find your antics costly.

VINCENT

(scowls)

Thank you, sir.

BENBOW

I can do no less than convey their Lordships' message.

Vincent leaves fuming. Benbow thoughtfully watches him go.

11. EXT. STORM AT SEA - DAY

A large warship emerges through a squall of rain, flying before the wind with most sails set. The sea is flogged white by the wind.

TITLE OVER: "Admiral's Flagship HMS Bredah"

12. THE QUARTERDECK OF BREDAH

BENBOW

More sail, Captain Fogg.

Fogg raises a surprised eyebrow.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Make for the Kereon lighthouse, if you please.

Fogg nods to a worried First Lieutenant Thomas Hudson:

HUDSON

'Hands to the halyards!'

Move in on Benbow as spray whips his face. He is clearly exhilarated by this rushing world of wind and water. He winks at the Master, Robert Thompson, who smiles in agreement.

13. A SHIP IN DISTRESS

The Ruby, with her chequered gunports, lies perilously on her beam-ends, as close to the west wind as she will lie. She is clearly in difficulty. The fore top mast crashes to leeward, pulling the main top gallant mast, and it in turn is followed by the main top mast. The main top sail disintegrates in the wind, torn from its rope bolts.

14. THE QUARTERDECK OF THE RUBY

Kirkby and 1st Officer Francis Knighton on the slanting deck take a dousing from spray over the weather rail. The dumpy Knighton, huddled in his canvas, screams into the wind-

KNIGHTON

Cut that wreckage loose. Get that sail in! Smartly! Smartly!

(shouts to Kirkby-)

We'll not weather Ushant!

MIDSHIPMAN SCOTT

Signal from Flag, sir! 'Make more sail'

Knighton's jaw drops in disbelief.

KNIGHTON

You must be mad, man!

CAPTAIN KIRKBY  
Where is the Flagship, Mr Scott? I  
don't see her.

MIDSHIPMAN SCOTT  
In our lee, sir!

KNIGHTON  
Now I know you're mad!

They brace themselves as white water cascades over  
the weather rail, then skirt the mizzen mast to  
stare off the port beam.

15. INSERT: THE FLAGSHIP WITH MOST SAILS SET  
IS SEEN IN-SHORE INSANELY RUNNING BEFORE THE  
WIND FOR THE COAST OF FRANCE.

Midshipman Scott diverts their attention ahead.

MID SCOTT  
(in unholy fright)  
Gloucester aground, sir!

16. INSERT: A SHIP FLOUNDERS IN BREAKERS OFF  
THE WEST COAST OF USHANT. HER SAILS RIP AND  
STREAM TOWARDS THE ISLAND IN HER LEE.

KNIGHTON  
We must come about!

CAPTAIN KIRKBY  
Follow the Flagship in, Mr Knighton!

KNIGHTON  
(shocked)  
Oh, aye, sir - and run down France?

But Kirkby watches the receding  
Flagship. Knighton looks to the  
heavens, then bawls down the deck.

KNIGHTON (CONT.)  
Hands to the braces! Wear ship, Mr  
Starkey!

17. THE SHIP'S WAIST.  
Men cling to the ropes as green water comes over  
the gunwale

SEAMAN KELLY

Bloody fools got no sense! We're pell-mell for France!

BOSUN MATE WEBB

Heave there! Heave!

They haul in unison on the mainbrace, squaring the yard as the ship's head falls away from the wind.

18. AERIAL SHOT OF THE RUBY

The ship heads for the string of close-set islands in the lee of Ushant. In this quieter water prominent shoals ahead show foam-flecked streaks of a rapid tidal rip. Ahead the Flagship, aided by wind and the fifteen-knot current streaming southwards from the channel, has already passed through the mile-wide channel between Ushant and the reefs of Kereon.

19. THE QUARTERDECK OF THE RUBY

In the island's lee the howling wind has dropped to a stiff breeze. Conversation is now possible. Off the taffrail can be seen several sail, following furiously.

KIRKBY

(murmurs)

"Now would I give a thousand furlongs of sea for an acre of barren ground."

KNIGHTON

How's that, sir?

KIRKBY

Never mind, Mr Knighton. A point to starb'd, Quartermaster. Where the Flagship passed through. More! We'll drift across the channel!

Lt Knighon views the approaching shoals off the port bow.

KNIGHTON

Holy Mary -

The officers tense as a giant hand lifts the ship.

## 20. THE SHIP'S QUARTER DECK

The officers and crew watch in trepidation as the shoals to port sweep past at an astonishing 30 miles an hour. Ahead, beyond the shadow of Ushant lies wind-whipped water. Seamen give vent to their relief with a cheer.

KNIGHTON

I've never ever seen such a run!  
Thank God we'll weather Point Race on  
the hour.

KIRKBY

Sure Benbow knows these tides, but  
look what fools he makes of the rest  
of us!

(he points astern)

Must we all follow blindly through the  
Gates o' Hell?

KNIGHTON

(looking thru his telescope)

Not all: the Boyne and the Canterbury  
have turned back.

KIRKBY

We'll not get far ourselves without we  
jury rig some top masts. Make for the  
lee of that Island.

## 21. EXT. A SQUADRON OF TWELVE SHIPS AT SEA - DAY

Aerial view of the squadron. The weather has moderated. The seventy-gun HMS Bredah sails in the centre of the line abreast flying the Union flag from her fore topmast head, signaling she is the ship of the Commander in Chief. The 48-gun Falmouth guards the right flank. Inboard of her the repaired Ruby, a ship of similar size, holds her position in the line.

Move in on the Ruby with her distinctive  
chequerboard pattern across the line of gun ports.

## 22. EXT. THE SQUADRON AT SEA - DAY

TITLE OVER: "Flagship - HMS Bredah"

The flagship sweeps past in a turn. The ship fires  
four synchronised bursts of GUNFIRE along her beam

as she passes, the epitome of a well-oiled fighting machine. As she loses way against the wind, her head falls away allowing the forward guns on the other side a SALVO.

23. QUARTERDECK OF THE BREDAH

Benbow and Fogg watch smoke drift across the deck.

BENBOW

Ably done, Captain Fogg.

Fogg doesn't reply. Benbow glances at him.

BENBOW (CONT.)

It takes good seamanship, close-to, so the enemy gets the worst of it.

FOGG

Yes, I know, sir.

BENBOW

Yes. Well. Ably done.

Fogg nods. A beat.

BENBOW (CONT.)

You must also know that I didn't want you for this expedition.

FOGG

I'm aware of that.

BENBOW

There was nothing personal in it. I need men familiar with the Indies.

FOGG

Then we are fortunate to have Master Thompson.

BENBOW

Quite right: he has already served with me in the Indies: he knows those parts extremely well. And he knows my ways.

FOGG

(a hint of antipathy)

Board and burn, sir?

Benbow examines him keenly. Then to Fogg's surprise Benbow touches his hat in concession.

BENBOW

I expect I have been mistaken in you. Fear not Captain Fogg, We will pick our battles carefully. I will not risk this ship and its men foolishly. You need to know: we are to take only our immediate squadron of 12 ships to the Indies, the rest are to turn back.

FOGG

Surely the French will follow in strength if they hope to take the Flota.

BENBOW

Yes, I agree, but it seems the Lords will only spare our 12 for the Indies till they know what the French are up to. The Channel must be protected. We must persevere till reinforcements can reach us.

The Admiral is clearly troubled. *Fogg watches him move away down the Quarterdeck,, stopping to examine a veteran seaman's splice.* Despite some mild disagreement over the method used, the respectful old man is having none of it. The Admiral grants it and moves on.

24. AERIAL SHOT - THE SQUADRON LED BY THE FLAGSHIP

25. EXT. THE 70-GUN FLAGSHIP BREDAH - DAY

The ship sails majestically before a gentle wind at the centre of the line abreast. The union flag is at the foremast. The crew look bored. Hudson and Fogg are eyeing the Ruby as she edges dangerously close. Kirkby in the Ruby yells thru a speaking trumpet:

KIRKBY

Ahoy, Fogg - what say to a race to the turn of the glass - I'll wager a case of my best Madeira against your's of Sherry.

FOGG (to Hudson)

See to it. Sharply now.

HUDSON

Clap on the top gallants!

The ships set all the sail they can. The men cheer and jeer as first the Breda edges ahead and then the Ruby. His curiosity aroused, the Admiral comes to the Quarter Deck, as does the Master, Robert Thompson.

BENBOW

Report Mr. Fogg

FOGG

Kirkby's wagered the Ruby can best the Bredah in a turn of the glass."

BENBOW

Well, he seems to be doing it. He does run a fast ship. Come now don't be so sullen, he's working her well.

THOMPSON

Aye she's fast but a Kirkby sail is a high price.

Benbow looks at Thompson questioningly. Thompson hands him his 'bring em near' glass and points at the Ruby's forecastle.

Thompson

A Kirkby sail, sir.

Close up of a seaman, spread-eagled in the ropes of the forward mast's leeward shrouds.

FOGG

Kirkby has found it greatly encourages the men to race to the tops if the last into the rigging is so punished. He leaves him exposed like that for a whole watch. It does result in a well disciplined crew.

BENBOW

I'd best have some words with the Colonel. I'll not have seamen abused in my squadron.

FOGG

It's no use sir. He was court-martialled in 98 for this very thing. Both Wade and I were members of the court. He convinced the court that as captain he must be allowed to discipline as he sees fit, and as you can see he does get results.

BENBOW

So it seems, but will they fight for him; Give our men a round of spirits and tell them I'm proud of the Bredah's showing.

LOOKOUT

Deck there..the Ruby's changed direction....bearing north west.

FOGG

What flag? Jennings, get up there with a glass and let's see what she's flying.

BENBOW

Mr. Fogg, I think we'd best go with an easy sail till we see what's up.

FOGG

Aye Aye Sir. Lieutenant Hudson, take in the top gallants, and reef the topsails please.

LOOKOUT

Sir, Ruby's flying a white flag: she's got a Frenchie in sight.

BENBOW

Order her to chase. Mr. Fogg, set a course West-North-West and hoist a white flag, we'd best let the rest know.

Kirkby comes on board followed by two seamen bearing two cases of wine.

KIRKBY

Well, Fogg--she's the Hermoine de Nantes, the first of many successes--here--I hope your taste runs to good French Wine, complements of her Master.

Fogg directs him towards the Admiral's quarters.

KIRKBY

Ah, Admiral, what a good day for the hunt. Shall we have a toast...

BENBOW

Captain Kirkby, I'll thank you to restore that wine to its rightful owner: now, let's have your report.

Kirkby's only response is an arched eyebrow. Then he carefully seats himself, crosses his legs, and proceeds.

KIRKBY

I have intercepted the merchantman The Hermoine de Nantes, direct from France, and enroute to Martinique. She is an English built pink yet all aboard are French. The master was reluctant to communicate with me and had no papers to show how he came to possess her, so I have brought him to you...my Admiral.

BENBOW

I heard gunfire.

KIRKBY

Well, she was not inclined to stop, and was actually adding more sail. I merely gave a few warning shots. She soon saw the imprudence of resisting. And given the Master's lack of cooperation, I have impounded the ship and its contents as contraband.

BENBOW

Mr. Kirkby I think you may be a bit hasty. My orders are that you intercept such ships so that our presence in these waters is not broadcast to all and sundry.

In the mean time she is under our protection: her crew and her cargo are not to be molested. Is that clear?

KIRKBY

With all due respect Admiral, it has always been our practice to intercept foreign merchantmen: to remove any of our own seamen. If any ship resists, its cargo and crew are forfeited. There is no better way to establish our preeminence in times like this. I believe both the King and Parliament will applaud my action.

BENBOW

Sir, I dislike your presumption. We are a long way from England. Here I command, and in future you will remember that. For now I will interview the Hermoine Master and you will accompany her to Bridgetown. We'll let the governor decide what to do with her, though I'll wage he'll not want to provoke his French neighbours. That's all.

With the wind out of his sails Kirkby takes his wine and leaves. Fogg accompanies him to his boat. He says in passing.

KIRKBY

Fogg, I'm beginning to dislike that man: he has the manners of a boson.

27. EXT. GOVERNOR'S RESIDENCE - BARBADOS - DAY  
Establishing shot. Government House is relatively modest compared to the Spanish territories.

28. INT. THE DINING ROOM.

Admiral Benbow, Captains Fogg, Martin, Constable, Wade Kirkby and Vincent dine with the GOVERNOR and his WIFE. The Governor examines the bottle of port brought by a servant.

GOVERNOR

We are pleased to see His Majesty's Navy in such force. However, the taking of the Hermione will sour relations with Martinique. I must return her expeditiously.

BENBOW

I'd prefer you delay as long as possible. We seized her to hide our presence in these waters.

GOVERNOR

And what do we get out of it? An angry foreign neighbour - and you for the Spanish Main?

Benbow doesn't look up from his meal.

GOVERNOR (CONT.)

(with some annoyance)

The King has been wont to send us commanders who were - shall we say? - less than enthusiastic about confronting the French.

GOVERNOR'S WIFE

My word, that hardly applies to the Admiral here.

(to Benbow)

We've heard of your channel exploits, sir, haven't we just!

GOVERNOR

But you do sail to-morrow? The Ludlow is the only warship in Bridgetown. She leaves for refit within the week. You have stirred a hornet's nest-

GOVERNOR'S WIFE

We are so fearful of coming war.

BENBOW

(with a smile towards the Gov's wife)  
I can spare you the Ruby- Captain Kirkby is quite keen: tis he who intercepted the Hermoine...

Captain Kirkby looks up from his meal in surprise.

BENBOW (CONT.)

-She will remain on station until such time as relief arrives. She has more guns than the Ludlow.

GOVERNOR

Capital, sir! Capital!

The Governor's wife smiles gratefully. Kirkby returns thoughtfully to his food.

GOVERNOR (CONT.)

Sir, please convey my regards to Governor Beeston when you reach Port Royal.

29. RANGING SHOT OF PORT ROYAL, JAMAICA, WITH SHIPS AT HARBOUR

30. INT. ADMIRALS GREAT CABIN, BREDAH, IN PORT ROYAL A.M.

Several Captains are seated at a long table, with Benbow at the head. His clerk George Collinson hands him some papers.

BENBOW

Gentlemen, a few matters are before us. The three ships here upon our arrival are in deplorable condition: worm and rot though-out; and the men thinned by sickness and desertion. And worst still, the Scarborough's captain has died, and the Margaret's captain faces a very serious complaint from Governor Beeston.

First, the Scarborough: I appoint my first lieutenant, Thomas Hudson to command. Mr. Hudson knows these waters: He has served with several of you already: here with Mr. Wade in Wheelers expedition of 92, and in the Channel with Mr. Walton. We are fortunate to have such men with experience in these parts.

Now, to Captain Philip Dawes of the Margaret. Mr. Dawes you will stand

and place your sword on the table.  
Collinson: read the charge.

Dawes looks somewhat surprised, rises and places his sword upon the table.

COLLINSON

Governor Beeston charges Captain Dawes with disobedience: Mr. Dawes refused the Governor's order to escort a convoy of traders through the Windward passage.

BENBOW

I want this matter disposed of quickly: we need the Governor's good will. Mr. Dawes, what do you have to say for yourself.

DAWES

Sir, you know the Governor: he refused my request to press the colonials: I could not in all conscience risk my ship with so few men fit to sail.

BENBOW

Enough, this will not do. You know full well that in the absence of an appointed Admiral, the Governor serves as Commander in chief of all ships on station. As such he is to be obeyed.

Looks of surprise around the table at the sharpness of the Admiral's rebuke, murmuring.

CONSTABLE

Begging your pardon Sir, but I think Beeston was in the wrong of it: is not the Captain the best judge of the fitness of his ship. I served with Dawes and know him to be an excellent officer. Wade - you served with him in these waters under Wheeler.

WADE

Yes, yes I can vouch for Captain Dawes. He is a good man. Knows what it takes to survive here in the Indies.

BENBOW

All of you: Know this - I hold obedience and loyalty to your commander to be paramount. I will not tolerate any show of disrespect or hesitancy in following such orders.

Now, Mr. Dawes you are guilty of disobeying a direct order and as such you are dismissed the service. Mr. Collinson, draw up the papers: all Captains present will affix their signatures.

Dawes snatches his sword, sheaths it, looks somewhat dumbfounded at his colleagues, and walks out.

COLLINSON

Sir, there is also the matter of Mr. Wade's steward.

BENBOW

Captain Wade, I thought you were going to deal with this.

COLLINSON

(interrupts)

I'm sorry Sir, a formal complaint has been laid: there are several affidavits against Amarin. the Articles of War require a Court Martial.

BENBOW

They also allow but one punishment. Well, Mr. Wade, a pity you could not have kept this a Ship's matter.

WADE

Sir, The boy involved will withdraw his complaint. Mr. Amarin has been with me many years and is the finest of stewards. Upon my word as a gentleman there is no truth to this charge. I implore you to dismiss this as pure mischief.

BENBOW

Would that I could. But you have let it go to far. Now there is nothing for it. Mr. Collinson, please read the article.

COLLINSON

Article XXXII: If any person shall commit the sin of buggery or sodomy with man or beast, he shall be punished with death without mercy.

BENBOW

Draw up the papers: We will break for refreshment. Mr. Wade you will bring Mr. Amarin here for his sentencing. And Mr. Wade, you must carry out that sentence forthwith.

MARTIN

Sir, if I might have a word. Five of my seamen wish to bring a complaint against my Second Lieutenant, Partinton. They swear he has on different occasions struck them about the head 40 or 50 times for no reason.

BENBOW

Henry, you must believe there is some merit to raise it with me.

MARTIN

Tis this place: the oppressive heat...the ship has been sickly since Barbadoes, we are short handed in both officers and men: even I have not had my health these past few weeks. This is a vexing matter as much has fallen to Partinton. I have spoken to him several times: his methods are crude - I believe he does abuse the men. But he is a senior officer and a gentleman of some standing..

BENBOW

And we have few enough officers as it is. Still I will hear the charge. Have Partinton here after our refreshment.

31. INT. LT PARTINTON STANDS BEFORE A TABLE OF CAPTAINS, ADMIRAL BENBOW IN THE CENTRE.

PARTINTON'S SWORD RESTS ON THE TABLE BEFORE  
BENBOW.

BENBOW

We tread a fine line between  
maintaining discipline and abuse of  
power. Mr. Partinton, you are found to  
have been too busy with your cane for  
which you are adjudged to be severely  
reprimanded by this Court. You will  
change your ways.

And to help you make a fresh start, I  
appoint you to the Greenwich as First  
Lieutenant - you will assist Captain  
Wade to make his ship fit to meet the  
enemy: however, mark this - you serve  
at my pleasure and I will have none of  
your excesses with the men.

Benbow hands a stiff Partinton his sword.  
Partinton leaves the room.

32. SHIPS BOAT: TAKING PARTINTON, WADE AND  
CONSTABLE BACK TO THEIR SHIPS.

WADE

Ye gods man, if we cannot discipline  
the men as we see fit, they might as  
well run the ship themselves.

CONSTABLE

I cannot believe he censured you, sir,  
for doing your job, and on a charge  
brought by common seamen.

Are we to be laughed at by our own  
men?

PARTINTON

The Admiral did move me to a higher  
place, so I suppose I am not so  
abused.

WADE

Yes, so the men who brought the charge  
are rid of you. Mark this - none of  
us are safe in our posts. He acts the  
part of a tyrant and minds us not.

CONSTABLE

Indeed, he will move us if he likes  
not what we do. Yet here tis not so  
easy to know what we must do.

33. EXT. PORT ROYAL - DAY

Captain Kirkby's vessel HMS Ruby glides to its  
anchorage and drops anchor in the lagoon. A boat  
swings on a yard.

TITLE OVER: "HMS Ruby, arrived from Barbados"

34. THE RUBY'S GREAT CABIN

Kirkby dresses in his best uniform. Wade watching.

KIRKBY

A tedious journey, Wadey!

WADE

You've no idea what we've endured  
while you've been away, Kirkby - the  
men desert, Benbow favours the tars  
over his officers, the Governor  
refuses stores, how much of this sorry  
state would you hear?

KIRKBY

It's true, that Admiral Martin's dead  
of the fever?

(Wade nods morosely)

Then, by God, I command the Defiance,  
Wadey!

(He waves letters)

A French squadron has sailed from  
Guadeloupe. I'm to the Admiral, we'll  
talk later.

He takes his hat and strides out of  
the cabin. Wade makes haste to follow  
him.

35. INT. GREAT CABIN OF THE FLAGSHIP BREDAH

Benbow peruses a map with Captains Fogg and  
Kirkby.

KIRKBY

(with easy confidence)

I'm sorry for the death of Admiral Martin, good man, heaven knows. I'd take up the post of rear-admiral.

BENBOW

No Colonel. Captain William Whetstone has seniority.

KIRKBY

(shocked)

Whetstone's not here. I have seniority on the Captains' List.

BENBOW

(reading map)

I will wait for Whetstone.

KIRKBY

The Devil you will! With war in the channel Whetstone won't even arrive! I'll not be passed over again.

(no response)

I've served my King and Country more years than you. Both have done well by me.

BENBOW

Not so well as they should have done at Pantelleria.

Veins stand out in Kirkby's forehead.

KIRKBY

(hisses)

You go too far! I was denied my due but by God I'll not have it again! I'm senior captain on this station and you've no grounds to deny me.

BENBOW

Return when you're in a more equable mood, Colonel.

KIRKBY

Secretary Burchett shall hear of this!

Kirkby turns on his heel and slams out. Benbow eyes Fogg with raised brows.

FOGG

The man's ambitious.

BENBOW

His ambition exceeds his worth. It's a matter of record he failed to engage the enemy at Pantelleria.

(Offhand- )

I've no sympathy with half-hearted warriors, but any man may redeem himself. He can have the Defiance by all means. But not as my second in command.

FOGG

He has friends in high places.

BENBOW

I don't pay attention to politicians, and won't start now.

36. EXT. A SPIT OF LAND AT PORT ROYAL - DAY

Kirkby and Wade walk the pebbly peninsula that connects the club-head of Port Royal to the mainland. Kirkby angrily kicks at loose stones

KIRKBY

He shows more regard for the scum from the taverns than he does us officers. Twenty years an officer, yet I'm denied a pennant.

WADE

I'm sorry, Kirkby, I really am.

KIRKBY

I see no hope of prizes under this man.

Kirkby stops and looks out over the sea he loves. Wade follows suit.

KIRKBY (CONT.)

You're a faithful friend Wadey; I don't always say so.

Wade is pleased. Waves lap quietly at their feet.

KIRKBY (CONT.)

(introspectively)

'Tis not death I fear, but dying. To lose an arm...perhaps be blinded...

this man expects us to fight for him  
but shows us no regard.

WADE

I know what you mean, Kirkby.

KIRKBY

I've a mind to properly christen my  
new ship, Time to raise a glass with  
old friends, welcome Walton to the  
Ruby and Hudson to the Pendennis.

They continue their walk.

37. INT. GREAT CABIN OF THE DEFIANCE - DAY.

Kirkby hosts captains Walton, Constable, Hudson,  
and Wade to dinner.

KIRKBY

A toast to our two new Ship of the  
Line Captains: Thomas Hudson and  
George Walton - welcome to our  
fellowship. George, the Ruby is a fine  
ship. Indeed, I have made her the  
jewel in the crown. I trust you will  
keep her so.

WALTON

Thank you Richard. I appreciate being  
included with you gentlemen. I may be  
of humble origins, but I know my duty;  
and I know ships. The Ruby is a sound  
ship and you've left me a good crew.  
Not an easy feat in these parts.

WADE

Pray that you can keep her so.

WALTON

Sir, if you refer to my loss of the  
Seaford, I was cleared of any wrong  
doing. Symonds, the squadron  
commander, was cashiered for deserting  
me.

WADE

No, no, forgive me, you do mistake my  
meaning: I refer to our colleague

Captain Dawes, and his treatment by our commander.

WALTON

Well, I agree, Dawes' expulsion did surprise me.  
(accepts more wine)

WADE

(to Walton)

I'm astonished, sir, but not surprised.

Benbow blames Dawes for driving his son from the King's service. Young Benbow quit Dawes ship and joined a Merchantman.

WALTON

Why did you sign the sentence then? You cashiered Dawes as much as the rest of us.

WADE

What could I do? the Admiral insisted we condemn the man.

WALTON

(mumbles) You might have followed your conscience.

WADE

The Admiral does not take our advice.

KIRKBY

(scornfully)

For God's sake stand forward, Wade! I'd have spoke my mind, make no mistake! Dawes was short-handed. The Governor refused him to press men from the island. Plain and simple as that.

(Accusing them all)

Next time in a court martial, you'll not be so eager to kowtow to the Admiral.

Wade thumps the table. He is clearly getting drunk.

WADE

This is what I have been trying to say: What protection do any of us have

here in the Indies if an Admiral can so easily remove us from our rightful place?

HUDSON

And it was over the treatment of a relation...

WADE

Dawes should take this to Parliament: and we should all support him. This man has but a few months over us as a Post Captain-

WALTON

(cuts in)

What man here has half the battle experience of Benbow?

VINCENT

He's been lucky. But this blasting away at close range will be the death of him some day.

WALTON

It worked in the channel.

KIRKBY

This isn't the channel. George, you are not familiar with these waters, we are: here we're far from home, and from materials to repair our ships. And remember, our authority to run our ships comes from the King -

Wade beats the table in appreciation.

CONSTABLE

As to the Channel: I was with him at Brest in 94, under Berkeley. Benbow was in charge of getting us into and out of that bay. He got us into the fight alright, but he made a mess of getting us out.

(takes a drink with shaking hands)

We were trapped for hours like sitting ducks. No wind and the tide against us. Didn't know what to do.

I lost a score of men from my ship and we left 500 soldiers on the beaches.

HUDSON

My god!

CONSTABLE

So, excuse me if I too have some concern for what's in store for us under this man.

KIRKBY (cont.)

We all share that concern: What he did to Dawes was completely uncalled for, and I like not his treatment of Partinton. We can't let Benbow erode our authority.

VINCENT

Have a care gentlemen, what you say can be taken as sedition under the Articles of War.

KIRKBY

You're not serious, man!

VINCENT

'Taken as', Colonel Kirkby, if not 'intended'.

KIRKBY

(eyes aglitter)

You'll find by God that I understand the Articles of War as well as you.

WADE

(uneasily)

Gentlemen, gentlemen, we're just talking... there's no need for talk of Articles of War.

38. INT. GOVERNMENT HOUSE, SPANISH TOWN JAMAICA - DAY

Government House is an elegant reminder of Spanish rule of the island. Captains Fogg and Vincent stand in an anteroom before double doors along with Benbow's secretary, Collinson and the shore party. The officers exchange glances at the sound of raised voices beyond the door. The doors to the inner sanctum slam open and Admiral Benbow storms out, his face like thunder. The Governor shouts after him-

GOVERNOR

You may rule your Navy at sea, sir,  
but you do not rule mine!

BENBOW

(without a backward  
glance)

You can fight the French with your  
traders then. I am for Barbados!

He descends the steps through the colonnade  
between sentries, and disappears. The Governor  
likewise retreats into his inner sanctum and slams  
the door.

FOGG

There goes dinner.

39. EXT. THE PARK BEFORE GOVERNMENT HOUSE.

Collinson almost runs to keep up with Benbow  
striding through the park.

BENBOW

Make a conciliatory letter to the  
Governor-

Benbow stops under a tree. The shore party halts a  
respectful distance away. Benbow looks to the  
hills behind the town.

BENBOW (CONT.)

I shall want five men from every  
merchant ship in the harbour to make  
up our numbers, and I expect him to  
honour our credit for rations. If  
not, I shall blockade the port.

COLLINSON

This is a conciliatory letter?

BENBOW

Add "Your humble servant."

The officers catch up. Benbow points-

BENBOW (CONT.)

A river runs through these trees, just  
there, from that valley in the hills.

BENBOW (V.O.)

...boat up river to-morrow, and draw water there, he can't complain of that.

Benbow walks towards Government House purposefully. The others follow him.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Inform the Governor that we await transportation to our boats, Captain Fogg.

FOGG

See to it, Captain Vincent.

Vincent is taken aback. At this point the Governor appears on the steps, spreads his hands placating.

GOVERNOR

My dear fellow, let us consider our common interests rather than our differences. Come, come, we have guests anxious to meet you, dinner awaits, we will talk of business thereafter.

He turns and passes back up through the columns.

BENBOW

Belay that conciliatory letter, Mr Collinson.

Benbow mounts the steps.

40. EXT. A BOAT PULLS ALONG SIDE THE DEFIANCE, ITS YARDS AND LEEWARD SIDE CROWDED WITH MEN.

A seaman is tied to the single mast. A bosun pulls a cat of nine tails from its bag, and begins to administer punishment.

KIRKBY

(to the boat) Put your back into it man.

(aside to Knighton)  
He'll not deter the deserting scum with those gentle tickles.

KNIGHTON

The men believe they will be beyond our reach in Port Royal. And that damn Governor's interference makes it so.

KIRKBY

We need to stop them before they get to Port Royal. A few stripes on their backs won't do it.

41. INT. THE BREDAH. GREAT CABIN

WADE

Gentlemen, Butling here has made three attempts to desert my ship. And he's but one of many. It is his misfortune to swim like a piece of lead. I ask that we make an example of him. I can't afford to lose any more. With the fever and the flux, my ship is barely manageable.

CONSTABLE

I too have tried everything to show the people that they will suffer severely if they fail me, but all to no avail. I've worn out a score of cat o nine tails and still they jump ship at every chance. I know not what more to do .

VINCENT

The men must know what will happen if they desert - the full force of the Articles of War.

KIRKBY

I agree. I've said all along that we've been too soft with these scum.

(He looks directly at the Admiral)  
Your attempt to mollycoddle the men has not stemmed the flood of desertions. I insist that this time we show them what it is to disobey on an English warship. And let's be quick about it. Hang the scoundrel to-day, and leave him up a week.

Several of the other captains nod and murmur their agreement.

BENBOW

Very well. Mr. Butling is so sentenced. Punishment will be according to the Articles. But Mr. Butling claims he was attempting to escape the abuse and beatings he received from the Boatswain's mate. I want a boat from each ship to attend upon the Bredah. I will address the men.

42. FLOTILLA OF SHIPS BOATS FILLED WITH SEAMEN GATHERED ON THE LEEWARD SIDE OF THE FLAGSHIP

BENBOW

You see here Benjamin Butling, convicted of desertion from his majesty's service, and sentenced to be hung from his neck till he breathes no more.

(murmurs amongst the men)

I do not wish to lose the services of Mr. Butling...he is a skilled seaman and I cannot easily replace him. But I cannot tolerate any of you leaving the King's service...you are all needed if we are to stop the French in these waters.

Therefore, I shall put his punishment in your hands. If the desertions cease Mr. Butling will be spared. I will personally write to the King and ask that he be pardoned. But only if you all do your duty, and keep to your stations. If not, Butling will not be the only one to dance from the yardarm.

43. EXT. SHORE NEAR KINGSTON; SITE OF NEW HOSPITAL

Crew from the Bredah is stacking timber on high ground and moving it to the building site. Boats arrives from the Defiance with more timber, which is dumped haphazardly close to the shore.

MIDSHIPMAN JOHN MOORE

Have a care there Defiance, you lazy  
scum: stack those boards over here.

MIDSHIPMAN ALEXANDER  
SUTHERLAND

Go to the devil: you've no authority  
here. Carry on men.

JOHN MOORE

Avast there: I'll thank you to show  
some respect to your betters: I serve  
under the Flag's direct orders: now  
move your arses.

MIDSHIPMAN ALEXANDER  
SUTHERLAND

And I serve under Colonel Kirkby - who  
just happens to be the most senior  
military authority on this land. So I  
say where we deliver the bloody  
timber, not some fart from a turd what  
build's a hospital in a swamp.

JOHN MOORE

Mr. Sutherland, I think you'll find  
it's you whose up to his eyeballs in  
shit.

44. EXT. THE BREDAH QUARTER DECK. THE WAIST  
FULL OF SEAMEN.

BENBOW

Mr. Sutherland, you are charged with  
uttering seditious and scandalous  
words when ordered on service. You are  
hereby reprimanded and your record  
will show this; and I shall so inform  
the admiralty.

And you are furthermore ordered to  
declare your fault in the hearing of  
this Ship's company and ask pardon for  
the same.

Now, I will have all captains here  
gathered know this and inform their  
own ships companies: when you  
disrespect the officers and men of my  
flagship, you disrespect me. This must  
stop. I will not have it.

## 45. THE BREDAH: GREAT CABIN

Captains move to the Admiral's cabin. Benbow convenes another court martial

BENBOW

Gentlemen, this squabbling must cease. Officers must set an example. You all know your stations: I will not condone these disputes between my officers. Now let's hear the latest. Mr. Collinson:

COLLINSON

Thomas Langridge, First Lieutenant of the Windsor under Captain Constable brings a complaint against the Master, Jacob Tilley, for contradicting his orders: namely, the Master contradicted the First Lieutenant's order to use a good sail for a smoke diverter.

BENBOW

Gentlemen, I know Jacob Tilley, he is a good Master...knows what he's about...and he knows the value of a good sail...and how hard tis to keep our ships in serviceable canvas. Clearly, Langridge has a lot to learn.

JOHN CONSTABLE

Sir, I value a good Master as much as anyone, but Tilley is not in charge is he? He is but a warrant officer; not a King's officer. How can I govern my ship if my officers know not who they must obey?

BENBOW

I'll not have a ship not fit to sail just to please an ignorant officer...

KIRKBY

Admiral, we all want our ships in their best condition, but it will avail us little if our men hesitate to follow our orders: the Master is there to advise us...he must be under our authority...Tilley must be punished so

that he may know his place... else  
there will be no respect for us.

WADE

Aye, it will not do to let it  
pass...we must show them our  
authority. It comes from the Crown.

BENBOW

Alright, I see you will have your way  
with the Master of the Windsor: he  
shall be reprimanded for disputing his  
superior officer's command. But the  
court will also find that First  
Lieutenant Langridge is at fault for  
his seamanship.

So I will remove Langridge from the  
Windsor. He can take up the place of  
Second Lieutenant on board the Bredah.

(Constable seriously taken aback)

CONSTABLE

Sir, how will I manage without my  
first lieutenant?

BENBOW (ignores Constable)

And since the fever has taken yet  
another of my offices, I am also in  
need of a First Lieutenant. The Master  
of the Bredah, Robert Thompson, will  
fill that need admirably. Mr.  
Thompson, your first duty is to teach  
Mr. Langridge the best use of our  
sails.

Benbow strides out, leaving a stunned group of  
captains.

46. EXT. BREDAH QUARTER DECK. A SMALL GROUP  
OF CAPTAINS ARE GATHERING

KIRKBY

Fogg, what has he called us for this  
time. There's only half of us here  
with all the patrols he's sending out.

FOGG

I believe something's afoot from the  
Governor. He's offered us some

soldiers and some limited pressing of seamen in the harbour.

KIRKBY

Damn this harbour. I should be out leading the patrols. Fogg, he wrongs me: he does this on purpose, passing over me for the likes of Vincent and Walton. Walton's a pup, barely come from a Bomb vessel. Benbow is a fool to waste the 64 guns of the Defiance.

WADE

We should all be set loose: let us strike first before the hares have all gone to ground. Soon the Frenchies won't venture out of port without a squadron of war ships. Why doesn't he listen to us?

KIRKBY

You've got to talk to him Fogg: no one knows these waters better than Wade and myself. We've both served here many years...we know the ways of the enemy...their hidey holes...we'll fill Port Royal harbour if he but lets us...

FOGG

Have a word with him now before we begin.

47. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN

BENBOW

Well, what is it Captain Kirkby?

KIRKBY

Sir, the Defiance must have 400 men if she is to be fit to fight in these waters: to-day I can muster but 229. And I must also report that we are dangerously short of food rations and other supplies.

BENBOW

We are all suffering Mr. Kirkby: I have not a ship that is not down one third of her complement.

KIRKBY

Yes, I know. But you have been sending some ships out on patrol: those so chosen have been able to take prizes from the enemy, and press their crews into service. I respectfully request that you send the Defiance on independent patrol to likewise replenish our crew and supplies.

BENBOW

I think not. You have already told me that the Defiance is far from fit for sea. Besides, I have need of you here.

(to all of the Captains)

The Governor has finally consented to let us press from the ships in the harbour: 1 out of every 5 seamen is to be ours. At dawn we will each send our long boat to receive our recruits. Your men need not be armed, though I suppose some little persuading may be necessary.

48. EXT. THE BREDAH LONGBOAT WITH 20 SEAMEN ARMED WITH AXE HANDLES

Lt. THOMPSON

Quietly now men.

MERCHANTMAN

What Ship?

Lt. THOMPSON

The Bredah, on the King's business. We are coming aboard.

Not bloody likely, mate.

Shots ring out. Splinters fly. Several men are hit. The long boats retreat. The harbour is alive with shouts and musket fire. The merchantmen break out with catcalls, foul oaths and laughter.

49. EXT. THE BREDAH

50. THE RED FLAG OF BATTLE BREAKS OUT ON THE BREDAH'S FORE TOPMAST AND THE UNION FLAG FLEW AT THE MIZZEN SHROUD, SUMMONING THE SQUADRON'S CAPTAINS TO THE ADMIRAL.

VINCENT

They'll pay for this, by God. Five of my best men hit and my longboat holed.

BENBOW

Your orders gentlemen are to form a line of battle immediately, the Bredah to lead, each ship follow as quickly as you can. Half a cable between, no more. We blockade the harbour. No ship moves in or out but we board. Take three quarters of each crew.

KIRKBY

Sir, with due respect, Port Royal is our base in these parts. We dare not destroy what little good will we have left here. Would it not be preferable to negotiate with the Governor.

BENBOW

Negotiate. What do you think I've been doing these past weeks. The man is not to be trusted. He warned the merchantmen and the town. He never intended to give us any men.

CONSTABLE

He did offer us a hundred soldiers. Perhaps that's better than nothing.

BENBOW

Now what would I be wanting with a hundred landmen--bloody piss poor ballast--fouling our decks and eating our food.

WALTON

Gentlemen, we cannot continue on short rations and not enough men. Port Royal will not help us.

WADE

Why not make a show of force but leave the shipping for the time being: give the governor a chance to reconsider.

BENBOW

Have I not made myself clear. Every incoming and outgoing ship is to be stopped, boarded, and thinned. I don't care what flag she flies or what

letters of marque her captain waves at you. And help yourself to all the provisions you can.

Now, while you're all here, let's deal with the matter of Captain Francis Gregory, who but recently I moved to Walton's place as Captain of the Carcass Bomb ketch. Collinson - read the charge.

COLLINSON

Captain Gregory: your Boatswain John Winch has brought a complaint against you for beating him with a cane. Indeed, Mr. Winch has lost the sight of one eye as a result of this caning.

WALTON

Winch is the best Boatswain I ever sailed with. I cannot fathom what fault Gregory could find in him. In all the many months I captained the Carcass, Winch was my right hand...I should have begged leave to bring him with me to the Ruby. And what right does Gregory have to beat a man so valuable...he must needs be insane.."

KIRKBY

Tis not insane to teach a man manners: We've all had to put our tars in place from time to time...whether they be masters, or bosuns or their mates...too many think they know better than their captain and his lieutenants.

VINCENT

Tis true: I myself have had to deal with just such a Master. A blow or two brought him to his senses.

BENBOW

And you Sir were reprimanded for striking him. I have been quite clear: I will not tolerate such treatment of warrant officers. We depend on these men for the safety of our ships.

WADE

As may be so: but they are to answer to us. The Boatswain was obviously too quick with his tongue: Indeed, he said he would not serve under him. Walton here, a tar himself, must have spoiled him rotten...Winch is guilty, not Gregory. So say we all.

(a majority of captains nod agreement)

51. BREDAH, THE CHAIN LOCKER - NIGHT.

The locker is crowded with men drinking and playing dice. A single lantern throws extended shadows that dance and play. Seaman WILLIS holds forth to an avidly listening audience.

WILLIS

The admiral turned round and gave them a rollicking like you never heard. "Pity you don't know your Articles of War," he says, "Cap'n Gregory's got no right to hit his bosun."

SEAMAN1

(disbelievingly)

I don' believe it! They actually found his cap'n guilty?

WILLIS

Did they bollocks! They find him innocent.

SEAMAN2

Innocent? The man lost an eye!

Mutters of discontent from the surrounding men.

WILLIS

Well! you ain't heard the best of it. The Admiral stands up and says, "Bugger you all if you make him innocent," he says to the captains, "I'll not have him in my squadron."

SEAMAN2

He said that?

WILLIS

Or like words. "Let him find work in Port Royal like the rogue he is," he says. And sacks Cap'n Gregory on the spot.

Murmurs of excitement.

WILLIS (CONT.)

Mad as snakes they were, but never a word said till they was in the boat. "Unheard of", "seaman's friend", "hates officers and gennelmen"-

The men laugh. There's a sharp warning whistle

**ACT TWO**

52. EXT. FOUR WARSHIPS ENTER PORT ROYAL HARBOUR. CANONS SALUTE.

53. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN

BENBOW

Rear Admiral Whetstone: Welcome. We have long been expecting you. I have much need of you, and of your squadron. I trust you are able to resupply us as well. We have been on short rations for months.

WHETSTONE

Thank you Admiral. I only wish I could have come sooner.

BENBOW

You are here now. What news?

WHETSTONE

The King. The king has died. Anne now rules.

BENBOW

My God. How can this be.

WHETSTONE

An accident. His horse miss-stepped: a gopher hole. But there is more.

We are now fully at war. Anne has been persuaded. The waiting is over.

BENBOW

I shall miss William.

WHETSTONE

Yes, But this will put to rest those who questioned his legitimacy. Anne is of the House of Stewart, so she rules without question. And she has declared the French our enemy.

BENBOW

What word do you have of their strength. I have not been able to move against the Spanish treasure ships

because of the French fleets already here at Vera Cruz and Havana.

WHETSTONE

We have intercepted word that a smaller French squadron under Admiral Du Casse is heading for Hispaniola, to drop off a governor for Santa Domingo and then deliver troops to Cartagena on the Spanish Main.

BENBOW

Then they shall be our prey. I want you to patrol the East end of Hispaniola and I will cover the west end. We will meet back here in Port Royal in six weeks time. But first, I'm sure my captains are anxious for news.

54. INT. BREDAH, GREAT CABIN

Captains once again convened.

WHETSTONE

William's death has occasioned little sorrow in England. No King can be less lamented than this has been...even the very day he died, there were several expressions of joy publicly spoke in the streets - the people danced and sang to have one of their own nation to reign over them.

BENBOW

William was a good King. He rid us of a despot, pacified Ireland, and kept the French in check. It's thanks to William that we have a strong army and the best navy afloat.

KIRKBY

That may be, but, if I may be blunt, his wars have cost us dearly - he near bankrupted the realm with new taxes and great borrowing.

BENBOW

I dare say you've not done poorly by his wars: but that is past, let us toast the new Queen. We owe her our loyalty and service. The Queen! Now,

all here gathered shall swear  
allegiance to Her Majesty - let me  
hear it - all of you.

CAPTAINS

The Queen!

55. EXT. "WEST COAST OF HISPANIOLA"

56. THE FLAGSHIP BREDAH AT SEA - DAY

An angry sky. The wind whips white water. The Ruby and Bredah grapple a French warship: the Bredah unloading a close-range broadside into her. Men rush aboard the Frenchman, which immediately lowers her colours.

Benbow watches from the Quarterdeck with Fogg.

BENBOW

Make to Ruby. Take prize in tow. Where is the other? Chase her, Captain Fogg.

FOGG

Wear away, Mr Thompson.

(The two ships drift apart and Bredah's sails fill)

Admiral, I fear it's up to the Bredah to cut her off, we seem to have outsailed our companions.

BENBOW

What the devil. They are taking their sweet time. Well, Robert, let's show them how to fight. I know the cross tides here. Steer nor' west by north.

FOGG

More to larboard will cut her off from the bay, and keep us save from the shallows.

BENBOW

Then she'll run for it west-wards. No, I want her to round the headland, to think she can make the town before us.

FOGG

(puzzled)

That puts her safe under the batteries on the headland.

BENBOW

No battery in the world will save her if she rounds that headland.

Benbow looks through his telescope.

57. INSERT: TELESCOPE MASK - A SHIP ROUNDS A BLUFF:

High on the bluff a puff of smoke signals the first warning shot from the battery. A plume of water obscures the telescope view.

BENBOW

Now cut her off! Steer due west if you please.

FOGG

In range of the batteries?

BENBOW

Not for long. When she sees we now block her from the town, she'll go about to beat out to sea.

(He smiles grimly.)

She doesn't know it yet, but when she loses way in the tack, the current will carry her onto the point.

A cannon-ball smashes into the foc'sle, ricochets away, taking some foremast rigging with it. Splinters fly down the deck. The officers instinctively duck, but Benbow lifts his telescope.

58. INSERT - TELESCOPE MASK: THE CHASE RUNS FOR HOME.

Benbow V.O. urges "Come about, damn you!" Then her masts narrow as she comes about to beat out of the bay.

Plumes of water rise about Bredah, spray sweeps the Quarterdeck.

BENBOW

Take us clear, Captain Fogg.

FOGG

Helm's a'lee, Quartermaster! Smartly!  
Smartly!

Another plume drenches the Quarterdeck  
and a hole appears in the mizzen  
topsail.

59. THE CHASE, CLIFFS BEHIND HER

The battery on the cliffs above puffs  
white smoke whipped away in the wind.  
The sound of guns is lost in the  
thunder of the angry sea. The chase is  
swept backward, and finds herself in  
surf. With a jarring crash she loses  
her mainmast and swings beam-on to the  
sea. A huge roller drives her onto  
the reef, while the rest of her  
rigging collapses around her.

60. INT. BREDAH - GREAT CABIN EVENING

A gathering of captains at supper with  
Admiral Benbow

BENBOW

Now, that is how it is done. Swift,  
sure and deadly. Allow your enemy no  
escape: box him in. He'll either yield  
or be driven ashore.

And I expect you all to follow my  
example: gentlemen, we could have used  
your support.

KIRKBY

Yes, of course. But clearly the  
squadron must be marshalled into its  
proper order. You cannot expect to be  
seconded if you do not wait for us.

BENBOW

Colonel, I do not believe you are as  
thick as you make out: the Defiance  
was abreast the Bredah when the prey  
were first sighted: the Ruby had no  
difficulty. My orders for the chase  
were clear.

KIRKBY

With respect Admiral, A little more patience and the rabbit would have sailed into our net; you sir by driving her ashore have lost her Majesty the addition of an excellent prize.

BENBOW

And you Colonel forget who commands here. You would do well to learn to follow orders. I expect you to follow where I lead.

61. EXT. A SMALL HARBOUR, FIVE MERCHANTMEN AT ANCHOR.

"Petit Guave, French Hispaniola"

The Bredah leads the squadron into the bay, the squadron smartly surrounds and takes the three closest ships, sinks the fourth and drives the fifth ashore, where ships boats burn it, tho they themselves come under heavy fire.

62. EXT. BREDAH QUARTERDECK

BENBOW

The butcher's bill?

FOGG

Four dead and fourteen wounded on the Bredah: perhaps it is not worth burning those ships that we run aground.

BENBOW

Ah, Fogg, tis worth it to put fear in their hearts. They'll not venture much with fire and broadsides to face. We'll strangle them, cut off their supplies and kill their trade.

But first, we must pull their teeth. While Du Casse is about our own ships are in danger and we must patrol in force. If we can catch him, we'll have the Caribbean to ourselves.

63. EXT. THE PENDENNIS AT SEA - DAY  
 (SEVERAL PRIZES LIE NEARBY: LIEUT. THOMPSON  
 BOARDS AND IS MET BY CAPTAIN HUDSON.

HUDSON

I say Thompson, tis great fun to snag these floating treasures. I dare say my father will be pleased when I send home enough coin to pay off our debts. Perhaps he'll even admit I've made something of myself.

THOMPSON

Thomas you have done well, you're the envy of the others. Kirkby is quite chagrinned at missing out.

HUDSON

Aye, He does bristle at being kept in Benbow's shadow. But he won't catch many fish dragging his heels in a sulk. Tis no wonder the Admiral doesn't unleash him.

THOMPSON

Well, you're ordered to get all of our hoard back to the Prize Court at Port Royal, and catch up with us post haste. We'll be hunting along this coast for a while and will have need of you if we snare that fox Du Casse and his brood.

64. EXT. HMS BREDAH:  
 65. "A WEEK LATER, SOUTH COAST OF  
 HISPANIOLA"

BENBOW

Well, Robert, where's the damn fox? My hounds are aching to be unleashed now they've tasted blood. Not even a farting fisherman for days.

THOMPSON

We do seem to have scarred everyone off, Sir.

BENBOW

Damn my eyes Robert, you're right.  
It's too bloody quiet. Every French  
man for a hundred leagues must know  
we're here!

THOMPSON

Aye, I'll warrant Du Casse will  
not be looking for a fight with a new  
Governor and a few hundred soldiers to  
get safely to Carthagena."

BENBOW

Well maybe this time, with his mouth  
full of chickens, the fox won't out  
run us. It's time to let the hounds  
run. Plot a course due South for the  
Main.

66. EXT. HMS BREDAH - EVENING.

"August 18: Santa Marta, the Spanish  
Main.

A ship lies-to in the swell off a coast with poop  
lanterns lit. The name 'BREDAH' is visible on her  
counter in the fading light. Pass into the Great  
Cabin.

Benbow's captains stand around the Admiral at the  
large map on the table.

BENBOW

They carry troops to Cartagena,  
gentlemen, to strengthen the Spanish  
base. If the wind holds we will  
intercept them here at Santa Marta on  
the Main. At dawn we assume the  
following battle line: 'Defiance'.

Kirkby is disagreeably surprised.  
Bluntly-

KIRKBY

The 2IC musters the ships in the rear.

BENBOW

I rely on you to lead the van.

Benbow sweeps the chart away, and  
Secretary Collinson places on the  
table a shaped wooden block

representing Defiance. Kirkby falls resentfully silent.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Pendennis, Windsor.

A smaller block is followed by a larger one, both astern of Defiance. Then the largest block.

BENBOW (CONT.)

The Flagship, Captain Fogg. Then Wade in Greenwich, Ruby, and Vincent has the rear in Falmouth, each half a cable of the next.

Three small blocks follow. Benbow places four mugs parallel to, and ahead, of the line of blocks. He moves the Defiance block forward until it is abreast the leading enemy.

BENBOW (CONT.)

We'll run up to their van and engage at point-blank range.

KIRKBY

God save us, we outnumber 'em! They won't fight if we tackle the transports.

BENBOW

You've fought du Casse?

KIRKBY

I have fought in these waters.

(To the others)

We'll not easily repair damage to our ships. Stop the troops landing, and we'll have done our duty enough -

Benbow points to the leading mug.

BENBOW

What do you see?

(No answer)

Captain Fogg?

FOGG

I don't know, sir...a warship?

BENBOW  
That is a floating fortress -

67. THE MUG TRANSPOSES INTO A MAJESTIC  
WARSHIP WITH HIGH GILDED STERN SAILING FROM US.  
A GIGANTIC WHITE BOURBON FLAG STREAMS FLIES AT  
HER STERN.

BENBOW (V.O.)  
-a castle in any English port. We have  
a God-given chance to crush this  
floating French bastion while we  
outnumber them. Brush them aside and  
our way to the Treasure Ships is  
open. Let them escape and they stand  
between England and victory.

68. THE GREAT CABIN

Benbow rises and gathers his charts.

BENBOW  
Make all sail, light all lanterns and  
follow me as you can. Form line of  
battle at dawn. Good hunting,  
gentlemen.

Benbow leaves with his secretary. The  
others sit in solemn silence. Fogg  
stirs.

FOGG  
If we succeed in this we'll be feted  
by the Queen.

(a beat)  
With one deadly blow we can shorten  
this war.

KIRKBY  
D'ye really want to end the war and  
lose your ship? I was three years on  
half-pay and so were you.

Fogg stares at him for a long moment.  
Then he rises.

FOGG  
I suggest you make haste to follow the  
Flagship. We are soon under weigh. And  
your place is in the van at Dawn.

69. EXT. A SHIP AFIRE - NIGHT  
 Two ships flying English colours approach each other. Vincent waves. French colours break out on the other ship.  
 Guns ROAR. Captain Vincent covers his head as the burning mainmast falls towards him.
70. INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTER-CABIN - NIGHT.  
 Vincent sits up in his cot in a cold sweat. Moonlight streams through the quarter-cabin windows.
71. **"BATTLE OF SANTA MARTA: DAY ONE"**  
 EXT. THE FALMOUTH ON A DARK, STILL SEA - DAWN  
 There is little wind. Fingers of light streak the sky; Marine drums start the 'beat to quarters'.
72. THE FOC'SLE.  
 Drums have ceased, all men are at their gun stations with only lookouts aloft. The ship sails slowly, only the wash and creak of rigging is heard. Bosun Starkey stands by a bow-chaser, staring ahead as darkness lifts from the sea.  
 1ST SEAMAN  
 I see no Frenchies, Sir.  
 We rise above the Falmouth and the Flagship beyond her, bringing into view eight foreign sail on the horizon: four of which are large warships, one smaller warship, and three troop transports.  
 Move in on the Flagship, which hoists the Union Flag on the Mizzen mast.
73. EXT. QUARTERDECK OF FLAGSHIP BREDAH -  
 DAWN  
 Admiral Benbow turns to Captain Fogg.  
 BENBOW  
 Reduce sail to allow the line to form.

He looks back over the taffrail at the sail scattered behind him. Only the Falmouth and Ruby are nearby.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Where is Defiance?

(A telescope)

The bloody fool hasn't even topgallants set. And Pendennis is aft of him. Send a boat to all ships. Deliver the following message. "Whilst we dither the enemy escapes." And tell Colonel Kirkby to make more sail. He's supposed to be in the van, not a full league astern.

THOMPSON

Aye, aye, sir. Boat crew aft!

Thompson leaves the Quarterdeck.

Benbow looks to the horizon. To Fogg:

BENBOW

The only comfort is the French lag as much as we.

FOGG

They do have the wind of us, Sir. T'will not be easy to close on them.

74. THE QUARTERDECK OF FALMOUTH - MID-DAY

Captain Vincent strides to the Quarterdeck rail.

VINCENT

Lie to, Mr Starkey, or we'll run down the Flagship! Assume battle stations when the Admiral gets under weigh. In the meantime pipe all hands to dinner. I'll be below.

Bosun-mate PIPES SHRILL as he goes below.

75. THE GREAT CABIN IN DEFIANCE - MID DAY

KIRKBY

Well, Thompson, how are you enjoying your new status, first lieutenant to the flag?

THOMPSON

Sir, the Admiral bids you make more sail.

KIRKBY

Yes, well you can tell the Admiral I have only two-thirds my required complement of men: perhaps the Admiral would care to lend me 100 of his, if he would have me work my sails more to his liking.

THOMPSON

With respect, Colonel, we are all undermanned: the Defiance is to take her place without further delay.

KIRKBY

Lieutenant, have a care: tis not your place to instruct me: I'll thank you to leave my ship and get on about your business.

THOMPSON

Colonel, I have delivered the Admiral's order, and it will be so noted.

But you are quite right: what you do on this ship is on your head.

Good day.

KIRKBY (to Lieut. Luck)

Set the topgallants, Luck. It seems the Admiral is wont to have his way, stubborn man.

76.

INT. THE GREAT CABIN IN FALMOUTH - DAY.

Vincent naps at the stern windows. Beyond the 64-gun Defiance looms in majestic silence, followed by the 48-gun Ruby. Pipes shrill and distant voices shout "All hands ahoy!" Vincent comes awake. He retrieves his hat and rises. Beyond the windows are the distant sails of Greenwich and Pendennis, still two miles away.

77. EXT. AERIAL SHOT OF THE FLEETS - DAY.
- MARTIAL MUSIC. The extended French line is to the right, five of the British line, more cramped behind Defiance, to the left. Defiance is not yet abreast the foremost French ship, but the last British ship, the 48-gun Falmouth, is level with the smaller 30-gun French frigate Prince of Frise which guards three transports at the rear. Much further aft are the Greenwich and Pendennis. Move in on Falmouth which tows her three boats to avoid them splintering on deck under fire.
- TITLE OVER: "LATE AFTERNOON, 3 hours later"
78. QUARTERDECK OF FALMOUTH.
- Vincent and his officers stand on the Quarterdeck watching the enemy. The ship's bell sounds once (16:30).
79. THE WAIST.
- Gun Crew Three stare tensely across the 1000 yards of water between Prince of Frise and themselves.
80. QUARTERDECK OF THE FLAGSHIP.
- Benbow looks through a telescope off the starboard bow. Beyond him the Windsor is seen overtaking the Bredah to windward. Benbow looks astern in surprise as GUNFIRE sounds over the water.
- LT THOMPSON  
Captain Vincent has opened fire.
- Benbow looks ahead.
- FOGG  
Defiance not yet in position.
81. THE FRENCH FLAGSHIP AHEAD - BENBOW'S  
P.O.V.
- A majestic warship with high gilded poop and white Bourbon flag trailing

from her stern, slows and starts to come about into the wind, towards the British line.

BENBOW (V.O.)

We have a response, gentlemen. If Kirkby won't come to their van, their van will come to Kirkby.

A second Frenchman also turns towards the British line.

FOGG (V.O.)

Two of them, making for Defiance.

The leading French ship, Du Casse's Flagship Heureux, OPENS FIRE on Defiance, unseen ahead.

The fourth French battleship, the 50-gun blue-sterned Apollon, fires a BROADSIDE at Bredah from her position half a mile abreast.

82. THE BREDAH QUARTERDECK

BENBOW

Meet her. Disable her guns.

FOGG

Hard a'starb'd, Quartermaster,

Shot WHISTLES through the rigging. A spar SHATTERS, swings free. Gunfire CRASHES ahead.

FOGG

Windsor's in action, Admiral.

Benbow nods approval. All plans are starting to come together.

FOGG

Helmsman, bring our guns to bear.

As she turns, Bredah's for'ad guns begin to FIRE.

83. EXT. DEFIANCE QUARTERDECK - LATE AFTERNOON

Two French ships: the Agreeable and the Flagship Heureux bombard the Defiance. The rail of the

Quarterdeck explodes as a chainshot whips thru:  
Lieutenant Luck standing beside Kirkby is knocked  
to the deck.

KIRKBY (screams as he backs  
behind the Mizzen mast)  
Starboard your helm, luft to windward.  
Get us to windward.

(to Knighton)  
Avast firing, avast firing: pass the  
word.

84. INT. DEFIANCE. THE ORLOP DECK. THE  
COXSWAIN IS CARRIED DOWN, HIS RIGHT ARM IN  
TATTERS

COXSWAIN  
That bastard: God's bloody punishment  
for sailing with a coward.

LIEUTENANT LUCK (holding in  
his guts, on the surgeon's table)  
Be quiet man, tis not the time to rail  
against your officers.

COXSWAIN  
Damn my eyes, we are bloody destroyed  
at our guns and not allowed to fire a  
shot.

(surgeon shakes his head, and motions  
for Luck to be removed)

85. EXT. BREDAH QUARTERDECK

BENBOW (to Thompson)  
Robert, what the devil are they up to?  
Kirkby's luft to windward, and the  
Windsor's following. The bloody French  
van is slipping out of range.

THOMPSON  
They are well matched, neither has  
stomach for the fight.

BENBOW  
Bloody hell, it's not stomach but  
balls their lacking. Let's show them  
how Englishmen do battle. Close on the  
buggars.

86. EXT. FALMOUTH QUARTERDECK - DUSK

Vincent and Herriot watch the Prince of Frise fall away.

VINCENT

Continue at long range. Keep the line. Another broadside, Mr Herriot, before she's out of range. Bring down her rigging.

He turns at Midshipman Scott's scream.

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT

Enemy on larboard bow! We're surrounded!

(Then in surprise-)

That's Windsor!

They watch in astonishment as they pass Windsor, head to the wind and out of the battle.

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT

(squeaks)

Defiance, sir!

Beyond Windsor the Defiance, too, has luffed out of the battle line. The bemused Vincent looks towards the sound of furious gunfire in the battle vanguard.

VINCENT

Who fights for the Flagship now?

FADE to black. The sounds of battle rumble to silence.

FADE IN.

87. INSERT: TELESCOPE MASK: THE GREENWICH STILL FAR TO THE REAR FIRES AGAIN. THE PENDENNIS IS FURTHER TO THE REAR, COMPLETELY UNENGAGED.

White water thrashes the surface of the sea beyond the Greenwich. Far beyond this salvo, in the dim-lit distance, hangs a pall of smoke, lit by furious flashes of light.

VINCENT

Send a boat to Greenwich. Find out what's happening. Are there enemy to the rear of us?

He descends to the waist below. Beyond, Greenwich's masts narrow as she resumes her course.

88. INT. THE BREDAH. NIGHT

BENBOW

Well Fogg, the butcher's bill.

FOGG

Fifteen dead, more than a score wounded: most from the upper deck, those in the rigging and of course, the Quarter deck.

(Benbow nods at the gunner)

GUNNER

Sir, we are nearly out of powder.

BENBOW

Thompson: Send round for half a dozen barrels from each of our ships. I'm sure they can all spare it. What do you have to report from your most recent round of visits.

THOMPSON

Sir, Colonel Kirkby complains the most: he insists that he was unassisted when attacked by three ships of the French Van, and under such heavy fire that his First Lieutenant, John Luck, was felled by chain shot at his very side. For this reason he felt he could not bear down as the French drifted out of range to leeward.

BENBOW

Damn my eyes, I'll not leave that laggard in the van. Fogg, you will assist me to draw up a new line of battle.

(the others leave)

BENBOW( cont)

Fogg, I thought I'd cure that damn laggard by making him our van -but he means to keep us back and when the bloody battle does start - he leads the line right out of gunshot! What am I to do?

FOGG

We do sail more heavily than the French...the Pendennis and the Greenwich were barely in range when darkness fell.

BENBOW

Poppycock, Fogg. The Bredah is the worse sailer of the bunch and you kept her up with the enemy.

FOGG

Well, Sir, We were disadvantaged by small airs.

BENBOW

Bloody Hell. It's the French, laden down with all those troops, who are at a disadvantage in these calm airs.

I fear it's not wind but spirit your fellow captain's lack. It's that or they're damn Jacobites in league with the French.

FOGG

Surely not sir.

BENBOW

We must show them. The Bredah will take the lead. Tis the only way we'll catch Du Casse. But I want Kirkby next astern. I'll not let him fall behind or veer out of the line again.

He's to have written orders to keep within half a chain: no more than 300

feet must separate us. Make that clear to him...to all of them.

89. "BATTLE: DAY TWO"

EXT. DAY BREAK, AERIAL VIEW: FRENCH SHIPS IN TIGHT FORMATION CLOSE TO AND TO WINDWARD OF TWO ENGLISH SHIPS, THE BREDAH AND RUBY: THE REST OF ENGLISH ARE 3-5 MILES ASTERN AND TO LEEWARD.

90. EXT. BREDAH QUARTERDECK

THOMPSON

The wind has shifted: the enemy has the wind.

BENBOW

Damn Kirkby and the rest: they are of no use to us now.

FOGG

Why don't they fire.

THOMPSON

Tis sometimes the way in these parts: live and let live.

BENBOW

Tis not my way.

FOGG

Still, Admiral, permission to ease away: there are four of them and just the Ruby and us.

(Benbow hesitates)

THOMPSON

We are quite vulnerable: they can rake us fore and aft if they have a mind to.

BENBOW

Granted. They are being mighty civil.

Shorten sail. Let them pull ahead for now.

But hoist the signal for the line to form, And send a boat to those bloody laggards: tell them to add more sail.

MIDSHIPMAN

Admiral, hail from the Ruby: Captain Walton asks if he should return to his position in the line behind the Greenwich.

BENBOW

No, by God, he's shown his mettle: let him keep the van... form the line on Ruby.

(to Fogg) Continue the chase as soon as we regroup.

91. AERIAL VIEW: THE BRITISH SHIPS ARE SPREAD OUT IN DISARRAY: THE DEFIANCE SAILS HEAVILY, THE WINDSOR VEARS TO WINDWARD AND REDUCES ITS SAILS TO AVOID COLLISION. A CANNON SHOT ECHOS ACROSS THE SEA FROM THE BREDAH.

92. EXT. WINDSOR QUARTERDECK

LT. EDWARD HOLLAND

Sir, the Admiral is firing to windward of us: I believe he intends us to proceed to pass the Defiance and close the line next to him.

A second cannon shot echos with shot splashing at the Windsor's forefoot.

CONSTABLE

Yes, get on with it: set the foresail and hoist the topsails: luft more to windward: I've no wish to ram the dawdler.

MASTER JACOB TILLEY

Sir, hail from the Defiance: Colonel Kirkby asks why we are not keeping the line as ordered.

CONSTABLE

Is he deaf as well as blind: tell him the Admiral has called us forward by his two cannon shots.

Hails and vigorous waving from the Defiance directing the Windsor to back off.

MASTER TILLEY

Sir, Colonel Kirkby holds that we mistake the signal: we are to keep the line as ordered, upon our peril.

CONSTABLE

God's blood: I'm damned if I do and damned if I don't. What's to be done? What's to be done?

Very well: haul up the foresail, reef the topsails, drop us back astern the Defiance: we're to keep the bloody line wherever the Defiance leads.

LIEUT. HOLLAND

Shall we at least try our guns upon the enemy as we come to bear.

CONSTABLE

What use? Our shot will not reach: not if Kirkby has his way. I'll not throw away the powder and shot.

Lieutenant: see that the men have their drams of rum, and have my steward bring me more of my own.

**"BATTLE: DAY THREE"**

93. THE GREENWICH AT SEA: SOME MILES ASTERN THE BREDAH, RUBY, DEFIANCE AND WINDSOR.

94. THE GREENWICH QUARTERDECK.

LT. PARTINGTON

Sir, I cannot direct the guns with any effect since our shot continues to fall short.

WADE

Well, what would you have me do? We must needs fire or the Admiral will not believe we are in the fight.

LT. PARTINGTON

We must continue to bear down till we are within range, Sir. If we constantly lift up to try our broadsides we will never come within shot of the enemy.

WADE

Lieutenant, as you can bear witness, the ship does not answer the helm as she should. And our sails will not bear any more strain.

LT. PARTINGTON

We could set more of our better sails, Sir: the foretopsail is old and not fit to be cast. The Admiral has sent and ordered us to make more sail these several times now.

WADE

Tis not for you to teach me my business: besides, I do not understand those damn orders from the Admiral's incompetent new lieutenant. Orders must be written. I cannot and will not obey orders that are not delivered proper.

LT. PARTINGTON

Sir, our shot does not reach the enemy by a third of the way. Am I still to continue firing?

WADE

We must keep the enemy at a decent distance, else they will bear down on us. The enemy ships are of great force. My God, Partington, if the enemy comes close enough to board us we shall be immediately taken. You will continue firing as ordered.

95. THE FALMOUTH AT SEA: FURTHER ASTERN OF  
THE GREENWICH AND PENDENNIS -LATE AFTERNOON

The NOISE of battle rolls across the sea. A hulk of a ship drifts out of the smoke, shattered and mast-less.

The Union Flag hangs limp from a jury-rigged boom.

96. THE FALMOUTH WAIST.

Captain Vincent climbs the gunwale, and looks to the shrouds above.

VINCENT

That signal, Mr Scott?

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT

Can't see, sir, the smoke.

(he scampers higher)

No 6, take Ruby in tow. There's another! No 2, engage the enemy.

HERRIOT

Boat crew! Take a line to Ruby!

to Vincent) God she's been thru Hell.

VOICE(O.S)

Boat comes from Greenwich!

VINCENT

What's happening, Mr Scott?

97. THE BATTLEFIELD AHEAD

Several sail in drifting smoke. Distant flashes of GUNFIRE.

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT (V.O.)

Greenwich still fires in the sea, sir. Pendennis still out of it. To windward I see Defiance...Windsor... both braced to. None's in the fight. Only the Flagship fights, sir.

A flag runs up a distantly visible masthead.

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT (V.O.)

(CONT.)

Signal from Flag! Number 2 engage the enemy.

98. THE FALMOUTH WAIST.

VINCENT

I heard you the first time-

MIDSHIPMAN SCOTT  
Twice signalled, sir!

VINCENT (CONT)  
No 2's Defiance. What in heaven's name  
happens up front?

MIDSHIPMAN SCOTT  
Defiance doesn't fire sir,

VINCENT  
(to himself)  
My God, Kirkby, you've done us now.

HERRIOT  
What's that sir?

VINCENT  
(calls to the midshipman)  
Is Defiance yet in battle?

MIDSHIPMAN SCOTT (O.S)  
No sir.

Vincent turns to Herriot, unable to  
hide his concern.

VINCENT  
Kirkby has defied the Admiral. It's  
mutiny now, and we're part of it!  
(in realisation-)  
We'll all be damned if the Admiral  
lives.

**ACT THREE**

99. AERIAL SHOT: THE BRITISH LINE.

Wind sweeps across the sea, driving smoke from the battlefield. The Flagship Bredah, her sails in tatters, fires bow-chasers at the rearmost enemy ship as the enemy ships recede. Other British ships drift aimlessly behind.

100. EXT. LATE DAY, BREDAH QUARTER DECK

BENBOW

Damn it all FOGG, they can't all be like that devil Kirkby.

FOGG

Walton stood with us, and I'm sure the others have but kept their stations.

BENBOW

Balls, the Defiance and Windsor were within easy range and fired not a shot: Don't know why the enemy didn't double us.

THOMPSON

The Ruby has taken a terrible beating. All of her masts are much wounded. And no doubt many of her crew are done for.

BENBOW

Bloody hell, Robert, are they a pack of jackals--that hang back till the kill is made?

THOMPSON

Admiral, I fear you are right, our ships have not their heart in this battle.

BENBOW

Indeed, but tis not the ships, all sturdy built of English oak, nor the seamen, good Englishmen all; but the scum that command them; well I will not suffer such timid fools.

FOGG

Perhaps they fear a mauling like the Ruby's. Such close fighting...

BENBOW

They will obey my orders or lose their commands, and their heads as well.

Lieutenant Thompson, go round again: tell each of them to keep within one half a cable's length of one another, upon their peril. Tell them that: upon their peril. This is their last chance.

101. TRACK TO THE FALMOUTH IN THE REAR,  
ROWING A TOW TO THE NEARLY MASTLESS AND  
TATTERED RUBY.

102. THE FALMOUTH GUN DECK

Men secure the guns below. All gunports are closed, but a wash of water streams back and forth across the deck as the ship rolls. Bosun-mate Webb descends the ladder.

WEBB

All idlers aloft!

The men run for the ladders.

103. THE MAIN DECK, FALMOUTH

An explosion of spray shows forward where the ship's bow ploughs into a wave before she heaves and shrugs off the sea. Water washing over the foc'sle sweeps men from their feet, before streaming out the scuppers. A voice shouts 'Cut the tow!' Others struggle to batten hatches as water streams below, while four men work the midships pump. Wind screams about the ship like a banshee, whipping whirling streams of spray.

104. DEFIANCE, AERIAL SHOT

The Defiance loses her foresail: torn from its yard in the storm.

KNIGHTON (to Kirkby)

Sir, there's nothing for it: we'll have to use our good canvas now.

105. INT. WARDROOM OF THE FALMOUTH - DAY

Lt Herriot, Surgeon Kelly, Lt Gold and the Master Brett are at supper.

HERRIOT

(gloomily)

There'll be the Devil to pay.

BRETT

(plaintive)

We're seven to four, we should have had the best of it. To see Ruby dismasted-

HERRIOT

(interrupts)

We sail behind Kirkby, Mr Brett. If he don't fight then nor do we.

LT GOLD

We're tainted by the same brush!

The ship lurches and the officers lose their drinks, but not Surgeon Kelly.

SURGEON KELLY

The Navy reaps what she sows. For too long now she's encouraged privateering, and this is the kind of man she's bred, pirates, more inclined to taking trophies, you see, than fightin' wars.

BRETT

Men of honour fight, sir.

SURGEON KELLY

Ah, sure, it doubtless depends on the man; but, you see, half our captains are scoundrels, cowards, or both at once.

He drinks again. Lt Gold turns to Herriot in outrage.

HERRIOT

(chuckles)

Now, William, you oughtn't to talk like that.

SURGEON KELLY

Captain Vincent excepted, of course.

I've been dosing him with laudanum,  
you know-

BRETT

Come sir, I don't think-

SURGEON KELLY

But today he turned me down. Yet he  
appears much troubled. Pass the  
bottle, Mr Brett.

106. "BATTLE: DAY FOUR"

EXT. AERIAL SHOT CARIBBEAN - DAWN

Dawn reveals light winds and French a mile ahead  
of HMS Bredah. Windsor, Defiance and Falmouth  
follow in close station. Other ships are scattered  
towards the horizon, the Greenwich the furthest  
astern - nine miles to the rear.

107. THE FALMOUTH QUARTERDECK - DAWN

The officers watch as they close with the Defiance  
ahead. Vincent storms onto the Quarterdeck in a  
rage.

HERRIOT

Defiance shortening sail.

VINCENT

Why, for God's sake?

(a beat)

Pass her, Mr Herriot.

HERRIOT

What of the line?

VINCENT

Bugger the line!

HERRIOT

(perking up)

Oh, aye, sir, bugger the line it is,  
then. Helmsman. Pass to windward.

Men heave on the tiller.

108. THE FLAGSHIP BREDAH PLOUGHS THROUGH THE  
SEA - DAY

The 70-gun Flagship shows signs of wear and damaged rigging. She makes some four knots in the breeze. The smaller Falmouth, with all sails up, draws level at thirty yards distance. A boat swings out on a yard.

109. THE QUARTERDECK OF BREDAH, DAY

The Admiral and Fogg watch from the quarterdeck as the Falmouth's boat is hooked. beyond, the Falmouth holds station abreast. Lieutenant Gold comes up from the deck, touches his hat, glances at seamen washing blood from the quarterdeck planking.

BENBOW

You're out of position, Lieutenant.

LT GOLD

Captain Vincent's compliments, sir. He asks leave to assist the Flagship seeing no-one else will.

Benbow stares at him thoughtfully.

BENBOW

Thank Captain Vincent for his offer. Fall in line immediately astern the Flagship.

110. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN, DAY

THOMPSON

Sir, boat approaching from the Pendennis. I believe Hudson is coming aboard.

BENBOW

Will wonders never cease? Perhaps Hudson will be a man yet.

Knock at door. Marine opens door and Hudson enters.

BENBOW

Captain Hudson: You have kept your distance these past three days.

HUDSON

With respect Sir, I have kept the line as ordered. We are all undermanned and having difficulty with the light airs.

BENBOW

You had no difficulty collecting a dozen prizes before the battle. Well, speak up man: what are you here about?

HUDSON

Your orders, Admiral: I would know how you desire the line - now that you've sent the Ruby back to Port Royal, and the Falmouth has moved to the van.

BENBOW

Your place in the line, Sir, as you should well know, is to close up with the ship next ahead. Make that the Windsor now that the Defiance lags further astern.

HUDSON

Aye Sir.

BENBOW

And call to Kirkby to make more sail. He sails like a lubber. Only the Greenwich fares worse.

HUDSON

Yes. Admiral.

Hudson leaves.

THOMPSON

So much for being a man.

## "DAY FIVE"

111. INSERT: THROUGH THE SMOKE A LARGE SHIP  
EMERGES

flying a gigantic white Bourbon flag. She is enveloped in the smoke of her own BROADSIDE, fired

at the Bredah which has sailed out of view to port.

HERRIOT

Enemy Flagship on the starb'd bow!

112. INSERT: THE APPROACHING SHIP FIRES IT'S BOW CHASERS AT FALMOUTH.

Shot whistles through the rigging. Marines run to the gunwale. Herriot instinctively ducks, Vincent is unmoved.

VINCENT

"He that dies repays all debts."

HERRIOT

What's that you say, sir?

VINCENT

No more nightmares Mr Herriot.

Herriot looks baffled. Guns BOOM again. Packed hammocks are ripped from the gunwale netting and sails billow loose. A man falls to the deck.

VINCENT

Aim for her gundecks, Mr Gold! As per Standing Orders!

113. THE MAIN DECK.

Gun Crew Three are stripped to the waist, with handkerchiefs tied like headbands about their ears. Simpson holds a smouldering linstock; They watch the approaching ship. Young Martin gawks.

YOUNG MARTIN

She's much bigger'n the last one, Mr Simpson!

A chaser ball STRIKES the ship, overturns a gun carriage and buries itself half in the foremast. All dive for cover as the unseated cannon cuts down two men.

The gun jars back against it's breech-rope as Cooper and Seaman Kelly struggle to hold it alone.

SEAMAN KELLY

Look to the Quarterdeck! They ain't  
scared, nor be we! We'll give 'em  
such a taste o' our mettle, they'll  
wish that we was smaller!

The crews cheer. Cooper cackles. Lt  
Gold comes down the deck in haste.

LT GOLD

Depress all guns! Aim for the  
gundecks!

There is a panicked flurry of activity with  
handspikes to lift the breeches and HAMMER wedges  
between them and the gun-trucks.

114. VIEW OVER STARBOARD BOW.

Falmouth's bow-chasers GO OFF as the giant French  
Flagship looms malevolently out of the smoke - her  
bow-chasers now silent as if mustering her forces  
for destruction. KETTLE DRUM synchronises our  
heartbeats, quickening as the huge ship  
approaches.

115. FULL SHOT.

The two ships pass, the Frenchman towering over  
Falmouth. Both fire rippling BROADSIDES into each  
other. Several of Falmouth's sails and yards come  
down about her. Block and tackle RAIN on the  
Quarterdeck as her mizzen mast is cut in two. The  
spanker at the rear folds gracefully as it's boom  
CRASHES to the deck. The sea about her SPITS  
WHITE with splintered debris.

116. FALMOUTH MAIN DECK

Bodies, debris and spars litter the deck. Several  
guns are unseated. Lt Gold lies dead on the deck,  
as does Simpson in a spreading pool of blood.

BOSUN STARKEY

Hold her in the blocks!  
(shouts down the  
line.)

Sponge your guns!

the Bosun bends and strips the leather  
thumb pad from Simpson's lifeless  
hand, shoves it over the touchhole as

Kelly withdraws the sponge on Gun Three.

BOSUN STARKEY (CONT.)  
Cooper! Gun captain Three!

The Bosun strides down the littered deck, stepping over spars, rigging and bodies, shouting "Load cartridge!"

117. THE QUARTERDECK

Several marines lie dead or wounded on the deck, others are re-loading their muskets. Vincent watches the French Flagship turning behind her.

HERRIOT.  
She must've felt that, sir!  
(he points excitedly)  
Flag's at her, by God!

118. THE BATTLE-SCENE ASTERN OF FALMOUTH

Bredah and Heureux ENGAGE each other. Two other Frenchmen loom up on Bredah as Heureux loses a mast and a tangle of sails. Smoke hangs over the battlefield.

The two ships grapple, Benbow leads a charge of boarders on to the decks of the French flagship to support the retreat of a number of trapped Englishmen from an aborted attempt to take the Flagship by hand to hand battle. They withdraw to the waist of the Bredah as the Agreeable and Phoenix add their broadsides against the outnumbered Bredah.

119. EXT. WAIST OF THE BREDAH (BENBOW IS ASSISTED BY TWO SAILORS AS HE MAKES HIS WAY TOWARDS THE QUARTER DECK.

LT. THOMPSON  
Sir, your arm, you are wounded.

BENBOW  
Tis nothing, not my sword arm anyway. Went clean thru. Need a bit of a binding.

THOMPSON  
You've blood on your face as well.

BENBOW

Oh? Not as spry as I once was. Still,  
gave them a bit of a scare I dare say.

THOMPSON

Sir, things are getting a bit hot: the  
French are rallying to their flagship.

120. EXT. QUARTERDECK OF DEFIANCE

KNIGHTON (looking thru  
telescope)  
Sir, the flag is taking quite a  
beating.

KIRKBY

Pity we're having such light airs:  
can't seem to make much speed at all.  
Best tack and see if we can do better  
on a Port run. Mind I'll not have you  
strain the sails tho, can't afford to  
lose anymore.

KNIGHTON

Aye sir, tho in truth, it looks like  
we may get caught in stays and lose  
more ground if we try to tack with so  
little wind.

KIRKBY

Now, ain't that a pity. Carry on.

121. THE FALMOUTH QUARTERDECK

VINCENT

Come about, Mr Herriot, the Flagship  
needs our help.

HERRIOT

Wind's gone and died on us, sir.

VINCENT

Then haul in the boats and tow us in.  
The rest to the starb'd guns.

122. The battlefield is enveloped in smoke as the  
two flagships fight it out. Falmouth, towed by  
boats, adds her furious two-pence. then all is  
hidden behind a curtain of gunsmoke. Gunfire  
becomes sporadic.

The Bredah drifts out of hanging smoke, her sails in tatters. The French are not to be seen in the curtain of smoke.

123. THE FALMOUTH QUARTERDECK

The ship is a wreck of fallen spars and masts. Guns are overturned, gunwale and hatches shattered, ropes lie everywhere. Several bodies are being dumped overboard.

MIDHIPMAN SCOTT

Signal from the Admiral, sir. "Follow in line astern."

HERRIOT.

Lord, he never stops, do he?

VINCENT

"See that the design is just; and pursue it resolutely"

HERRIOT.

Truth be told, neither do you, sir, sometimes.

124. P.O.V. FROM FALMOUTH.

The smoke has largely cleared. Bredah, 1000 yards away, has boats out, towing her in the direction of the French, now seen drifting some distance away. The ships exchange occasional bow- and stern-chasers at each other

The rest of the English ships are miles to the rear.

125. THE FALMOUTH UNDER TOW, DAY

Two boats tow the ship which is becalmed.

126. EXT. THE MAINDECK OF FALMOUTH - EVENING

Weary boat-crews climb the chains

WEBB

All hands to supper. Hammocks at two bells.

They listlessly traipse below to join their mates.

## 127. THE BERTHING DECK

The men tiredly lower the tables from the deck-head.

## 128. DARKNESS.

We hear the whoosh of water and the creaking of timbers. All is silent save for a few whispers. "Stand clear." "Ave Maria, gratia plena..." Wisps of light float through the darkness like fireflies; lock in on one of these.

FADE IN to a dimly lit gun deck; the light is the end of a burning linstock. The gunports are closed and yellow light flickers from battle-lanterns and in moon-lit squares from the grating above. Boys scatter sand on the deck. Buckets of water hang from the foot of the mast. A marine guards each ladder to stop anyone escaping below the waterline.

Faint moonlight streams diagonally into the deck as the port gun-ports rise. There is a CACOPHONY of gun trucks as 16 two-ton monsters roll out. A minute of silence follows, only the RUSH of the sea and creak of timbers is heard. Sweat glistens on tense faces.

Then splintering holes RIP through the ship's side. Above the din is heard the screams of the wounded. The dead slide against the bulwark in a slick of blood and water as the ship rolls. Then four guns for'ad ROAR in near-unison, followed by the next four. The deck is filled with acrid smoke as the guns slam back against their breech ropes.

129. EXT. A SHIP OF THE LINE, HER RIGGING  
TATTERED - NIGHT

Under a full moon HMS Bredah flies the Union flag at her Mizzen mast-head. Enveloped in smoke, she discharges a rippling BROADSIDE from two decks at point-blank range. The enemy REPLIES in kind, before the ships grind together with SPLINTERING planks, then rebound apart.

There is pandemonium on the Quarterdeck. A voice shouts. "Admiral is down! Bear away! Bear away!". Men crowd the Quarterdeck, jostling for view, as do we. A fleeting glimpse by lantern light shows blood and bodies on the shattered deck. Above the

jostle of men and wind-swept smoke, the THUNDER of guns rolls across the sea.

130. MIDSHIPMEN'S WARDROOM ON FLAGSHIP BREDAH  
- NIGHT

Four crewmen carry Admiral Benbow below in a blood-soaked canvas sling, the SURGEON running alongside holding a tourniquet tight around the Admiral's thigh. They lay him on a pallet on chests pulled together. Sweat runs into the grey-faced Admiral's eyes. The surgeon hands him a bottle, and cuts the trouser leg. Other wounded groan as Surgeon-mates work on them. GUNFIRE crashes overhead.

SURGEON

Badly mauled: mostly below the knee. Be a bugger to save. Best to take it off.

There is a CRASH above. Water sluices down a hatchway. Another sling arrives with a wounded man. Benbow takes a drink. The surgeon tightens the tourniquet. Benbow's mouth sets in a grim line.

BENBOW

I want it patched, not butchered.

SURGEON

Johnson! Water here! I'll have to cauterize and clean what I can and sew up this mess.

Lt Thompson descends the ladder.

THOMPSON

We hold our own, sir.

BENBOW

(grips his arm)

D'ye hear? if another shot should take me off, behave like brave men for God's sake and fight it out.

SURGEON

Brace yourself, sir!

Benbow's grip tightens on the lieutenant.

BENBOW

Call the carpenter to fashion me a cradle. Then get me topsides.

Thompson stares at him as if he's mad.

THOMPSON

Sir, there are able men to -

BENBOW

(snarls)

None so able as I! I'll be topsides or die in the attempt!

The surgeon raises the hot iron. Benbow takes a swig from the bottle, then stuffs a cloth between his teeth. Sweat beads spring to his forehead.

131. EXT. THE BREDAH IN BATTLE - NIGHT

Flashes of intermittent light reveal the Bredah giving the mastless blue Apollon a pounding.

132. EXT. THE FALMOUTH QUARTER DECK, DAWN

The ship is in tatters, sails hang in shreds, masts and rigging are strewn on deck.

LIEUTENANT HERRIOT

Sir, the ship can't bear anymore of this.

VINCENT

Aye, Wind's easterly now and picking up. It'll bring Kirkby and the rest this way whether they like it or not.

Let us drift to leeward and knot our rigging - put her back to rights.

133. THE QUARTERDECK OF BREDAH - DAWN.

A grey light creeps over the sea. Benbow is lifted to the Quarterdeck in a supporting cradle, white pain etched into his face. He sits on a plank, leaning on a crossbar, a foot on the deck. GUNFIRE flashes in the lifting darkness. Fogg is staggered to see him.

LT THOMPSON  
Squadron coming up, Admiral -

BENBOW  
(grunts)  
Where is the rest of the enemy?

FOGG  
To windward. They dare not cross the  
path of the squadron.

BENBOW  
At last our laggards join the battle!  
Lay me alongside the Apollon, Captain,  
she'll strike her colours or I'll be  
damned!

134. THE BATTLE SCENE - DAWN

The Bredah and Apollon are grappled together. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting takes place. They pump intermittent shot into each other, like exhausted boxers. The crippled Falmouth drifts away, putting shot into the Apollon where she can, and receiving the occasional ball in return. Three French ships lie to windward, watching the destruction of the Apollon, like hyenas watching lions feed.

The Defiance approaches majestically, leading three British ships. She puts the Flagship between her and the enemy ships, and fires a broadside into the Apollon. The Apollon replies with a ragged broadside: a cannon ball crashes into the foot of the mizzen mast, quite close to where Kirkby stands.

135. QUARTERDECK OF DEFIANCE (KIRKBY KEEPING  
MIZEN MAST BETWEEN HIMSELF AND CANNON FIRE AND  
RETREATING AFT)

MASTER John Martin  
By God she still bares her teeth.

KIRKBY (ducking and retreating  
aft: yells to the Master)

Jesus! Run us to leeward. Smartly now.  
Set the sprit sails and whatever else  
will get us moving.

(to the Bosun) What the hell are you  
doing: move your arse.

BOATSWAIN Thomas Mollamb  
 Sir, the Admiral still flies the  
 signal to engage the enemy.

KIRKBY  
 Tis none of your business: hold your  
 tongue or I'll run you through.

Now get the sails set you bloody dog.

136. QUARTERDECK OF THE FLAGSHIP.

Benbow in his cradle watches Defiance recede. A  
 seaman fumbles with the hourglass.

BENBOW  
 Damn the glass, man! Reload my pistol  
 and free my sword.

Seaman takes the pistol and pouch from the  
 Admiral.

137. THE BATTLE SCENE

The Windsor fires her guns as she runs past the  
 Apollon hulk, before she follows the fast receding  
 sails of the Defiance. The other two ships follow  
 her.

138. QUARTERDECK OF THE FLAGSHIP.

FOGG  
 The French are closing, Admiral.

BENBOW  
 You see the others flee. They hope to  
 have me taken by the enemy.

FOGG  
 We've done our best, sir.

BENBOW  
 And we'll continue to. And then I  
 shall hunt down those cowards as I do  
 the enemy.

139. SHIPS IN BATTLE - VARIOUS.

The Bredah is besieged by three French vessels. The ships pour furious shot into each other. the French relentlessly pound the Bredah. She replies savagely. The carnage, noise and confusion stun the senses.

A lull in battle. Both sides seem exhausted, but the wounded lion, Bredah, still guards her prize. But then, slowly, she wears away, giving up the Apollon. Cheers and shouted insults rise on the French ship as the waiting French turn to reclaim her.

140. INT. ORLOP, THE SICK BERTH ON BREDAH - DAY

Kirkby and Fogg step past the wounded in the cockpit where the Admiral's wound is being dressed. Wade brings up the rear.

BENBOW

(barks)

Well, sir? What have you to say for yourself?

KIRKBY

I'm sorry to see your honour in such a state but, by God, we've all been badly mauled -

BENBOW

Do you take me for a fool, damn your eyes!

KIRKBY

(taken aback)

Well, sir, I do wonder at your signal to continue the chase. The enemy has suffered little, but hurt us much.

BENBOW

You, sir, hurt him not at all.

Kirkby stiffens with anger.

BENBOW (CONT.)

Captain Fogg, send for all captains. We'll see who stands forward in this matter.

BENBOW (CONT.)

There are men here pressed into serving their Queen, yet they have done their duty. You sully their courage. Now get out.

Wade leaves in frightened haste. Kirkby doffs his hat, offers his hand which Benbow refuses, then bows curtly, and leaves, with an aside to Fogg.

KIRKBY

He'll be dead by sundown by the look of him. And that'll be an end to it!

141. THE BREDAH: GUN ROOM:

The room is shot to pieces, boarding shores up windows. Several captains sit around the table.

KIRKBY

'Tis a sad day, Samuel, that sees us in this state.

(Vincent just stares at him.)

KIRKBY (CONT.)

To the point, then. I'll not risk my ship further. If you keep with this doomed action you'll be on your own, by God. We'll be heading for Port Royal

This document advises the Admiral to call off the chase. It'll have the greater weight if all captains sign it.

VINCENT

This is one conspiracy too many.

WADE

Think, man! We could be charged with mutiny unless we stand together!

VINCENT

You can thank Kirkby for that-

KIRKBY

Christopher: you must be exhausted. We all are. Tis nonsense to continue so.

FOGG

What loses have you suffered? And you  
Constable: what of the Windsor?

CONSTABLE

Why, I've had one man killed and  
suffered nine wounded. I've lost my  
stream anchor, and am much disabled in  
my foremast, foreyard, and main  
topmast, and my sails and rigging are  
much shattered. I need time to mend  
and make repairs.

VINCENT

Balls. You haven't suffered a tenth of  
what we've born.

KIRKBY

And how long do you think the Falmouth  
and the Bredah can keep this up? It's  
time to recoup: gather our strength.  
Save what we can of this mess.

And we have nothing to fear: if we all  
stick together.

WADE

He's right, by God. I say we refer  
Benbow's conduct to Parliament...if he  
lives that long. Thomas agrees, don't  
you.

HUDSON

Yes, there's none of us hasn't  
suffered loses: this very morning I  
lost a man in the main mast, and much  
of my rigging and yards have been  
damaged...

Lieutenant Robert Thompson steps forward.

THOMPSON

I can't believe this: what kind of men  
are you? Are you not Englishmen? How  
can you let the French insult you so?  
Wade, is this not a damn shame?

WADE

Well, quite so, the Frenchman is not  
usually so forcefull in these parts.

KIRKBY

Gentlemen, this is a Captain's parley,  
no one is fit to be here who gives  
heed to the likes of mere lieutenants.

THOMPSON

Gentlemen my ass: you're like the  
bloody Flemmings that wait for seven  
years for a fair wind, then are afraid  
to take it. (leaves)

KIRKBY (laughs dismissively  
and turns to Vincent)  
Listen to me, we are not breaking off  
the chase: all we are saying is that  
in our professional judgement we need  
a pause: a time to repair our damages,  
to rest and to gather our  
strength...just as you have been  
doing.

Kirkby pushes the document towards Vincent...

142. THE ORLOP DECK.

Benbow sits propped up, the surgeon changing his  
dressing, when Kirkby and Fogg approach. Kirkby  
hands him a document abruptly.

KIRKBY

All captains have signed this paper  
advising you to call a pause in the  
chase.

BENBOW

(as he reads)

Where lies the enemy, Captain Fogg?

FOGG

A league to leeward.

BENBOW

Then we hold the weather gage.

FOGG

We do.

BENBOW

Our ships are up with us?

FOGG

All, sir.

Benbow whitens and waits for a wave of pain to pass before he offers the document back.

BENBOW

Then we'll never have a better chance. Even Defiance can't fall three miles behind in the space of three miles.

KIRKBY

(coldly)

You miss our point. We ask to repair our ships and tend our wounded.

Benbow turns to Fogg.

FOGG

We ourselves are desperately short of powder, Admiral.

(a beat. Sadly-)

When Captain Vincent signed, I had no choice...

BENBOW

A pen, Mr Collinson!

(While waiting he counts off the list)

For lack of men, I'm told there's not twenty men killed in all ships besides the Bredah. The shortage of ammunition is a pretence, you have expended little. Your rigging is not disabled, we are in better condition than the enemy. No variable winds prevented the Bredah from engaging the enemy. Lastly, there were not six enemy men of war, but four, and one of them completely disabled.

Collinson dips a pen for Benbow, who writes on the document.

BENBOW (CONT.)

These reasons given for not engaging the French are all a vision, false and cowardice, which I do aver. Signed, John Benbow.

Benbow offers the document. When Kirkby doesn't take it, Benbow hands it to Collinson.

BENBOW

Gentlemen, you have signed your death warrants. We sail for Port Royal at eight bells.

KIRKBY

Port Royal? What's this? We clearly state we're prepared to continue the pursuit after repairs-

BENBOW

Convey me to my cabin, Surgeon, and out of this company.

143. EXT. THE SQUADRON HOVE TO IN PORT ROYAL  
HARBOUR- DAY

Busy repairs take place on the Flagship and Falmouth.

144. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN

BENBOW

Rear Amiral: the captains of my squadron are all suspended: you will make arrangements for their courts martial.

WHETSTONE

What, all of them?

BENBOW

All save Walton.

All our misfortunes came thru their bloody cowardice.

WHETSTONE

Perhaps it would be wise to suspend them, but leave the actual trials till we are all back home...

BENBOW

I thought they but needed a good example...

WHETSTONE

Aye, but rushing the trials under your own authority may be seen as unwarranted...

BENBOW

No, no, if this be allowed there is no going to sea for a Flag: who would obey you... unless they be your own father, brothers... sons.

WHETSTONE

But still, for you to preside over the courts martial may appear unreasonable...

BENBOW

Then you shall preside. We must make an example - I will see them hang.

145. EXT. THE DEFIANCE: LIEUTENANT THOMPSON BOARDS, SUPPORTED BY A BOAT LOAD OF MARINES; AND DELIVERS AN ORDER TO LIEUTENANT KNIGHTON, WHO LEADS THOMPSON TO THE CAPTAIN'S CABIN.

KNIGHTON

Sir, an order from the Admiral. You are confined to this cabin. I have command of the ship.

(Kirkby takes and reads the order)

KIRKBY

I expected as much. How fares the Admiral?

THOMPSON

The Admiral is arranging for your court martial.

Good day Colonel.

(back on deck)

THOMPSON (cont)

The Admiral's secretary will be taking affidavits from the officers, and will want fair copies of all your journals.

KNIGHTON

Surely he doesn't expect to get convictions: all of the captains signed that paper.

THOMPSON

See to the repair of the ship. Do your duty while you can.

146. INT. BREDAH: ADMIRAL'S CABIN. TWO  
DOCTORS: EXAMINE THE ADMIRAL'S LEG.

OGLE

This is far gone, admiral. you would  
have done better to have had it off a  
week ago.

BENBOW

I feared as much

OGLE

Tis a bad fracture in these several  
places--with the flesh opened here and  
here. The flesh is swollen with evil  
gas. A wound e quick, your breath as  
well.

You must let Byard here have a go at  
it--he's the best Surgeon in the  
ships.

Byard moves in closer while his assistants turn  
the perspiring Admiral on his stomach and take  
firm hold of him, while another poured a mixture  
of rum and boiled water over the saw blade and  
knife. Ogle tighten a belt around Benbow's thigh.

BYARD

Steady, now.

Benbow

Dam your blood, dam your blood!

A leather wad is placed in the Admiral's mouth and  
Byard makes a quick slicing incision...

OGLE (to Thompson)

The key of course is to cut off all of  
the putrefied flesh, and to be quick  
about it. Byard here is one of the  
fastest in the navy."

BYARD

I once was a might too fast, and cut  
off two of my assistants fingers.

147. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN.

GOVERNOR

I am indeed sorry to see you in such a state, Admiral. I have brought some fresh victuals for you: fruit, hams, eggs, and some of my best Port.

BENBOW

Very kind Governor, I had them you know, caught that buggar Du Casse on a lee shore with no where to run but into my guns; one ship barely afloat and but three left to my six and those bastards forced me to let him pass.

My report is on the desk, There's a copy for you.

GOVERNOR

Yes, that parcel of scum deserves to be flogged. I wouldn't wait too long either. Kirkby's chaplain is telling some devilish tales--puts you in the wrong of it...wants me to write so to the Government

BENBOW

What, that popish fop is a Jacobite through and through. God's blood, he'd have cheered Kirkby and the rest of 'em if I'd fought on alone and fallen to the French.

GOVERNOR

Your quite right, had you engaged again, I am afraid they would have left you a sacrifice to the enemy.

BENBOW

Fogg, I'll not have that priest spreading dissention. Confine him to his ship. And I'll have no other rumourmongers.

Made clear to every officer and man under my command that I'll suffer no disloyalty.

And let's not forget our brave men--I want fresh provisions for every ship's company, I'm sure the governor will prevail on the colony to show its gratitude.

GOVERNOR

Yes of course, the colony is most grateful.

One other matter: that of the colony's jail...I can not account for how your Captain Hudson acquired his pistol and put a period to his life. We have doubled the guard on the remaining three Captains.

BENBOW

Do not trouble yourself over Hudson...he but admits his guilt: His Master did the same.

The others will follow soon enough.

148. EXT. THE LAGOON AT PORT ROYAL - DAY

Several ships lie at anchor in the port.

149. INT. THE GREAT CABIN IN BREDAH - DAY

The bulkheads to the gundeck have been taken down. Nine captains sit at tables forming a U. They include REAR ADMIRAL WHETSTONE as President. Kirkby, Wade and Constable sit on one leg, Fogg and Vincent on the other. Benbow in his customary splendour sits off to the side, his damaged stump of a leg propped up. The Master at Arms and marines stand behind the rows of public seats. ARNOLD BROWN, Solicitor General of Jamaica is Judge-advocate or Prosecutor.

(MIX TO)

150. LATER IN THE COURTROOM.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

(fade-in)

Dawn on the fourth day found you at point-blank range to the enemy.

KIRKBY

Not so.

(to the court)

I was not at point blank range.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

(shuffles papers)

These are depositions from your own ship -

KIRKBY

D'ye call me a liar, sir?

The Judge advocate tosses the depositions heavily on the desk with emphatic exasperation.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

You were clearly in some sort of range. Why did you not fire when twice ordered to do so.

KIRKBY

(snaps)

Because they didn't fire at me! They had a respect for me. At that range both ships would have been destroyed, and none the better for it!

BENBOW

(interrupts  
sarcastically)

You did not fire because they had a "respect" for you. You and Du Casse have shared these waters too long. The French are the enemy, Colonel. The Queen has declared it so.

KIRKBY

You don't know what respect is.

BENBOW

Does it equate with 'honour'?

KIRKBY

I speak of the respect of one gentleman for another! This war will pass, and we'll still have to live with the French. As we did in the past!

Cries of "Treason", "Jacobite!", "Hang them all!" The Judge Advocate waves a paper aloft.

KIRKBY (to the Judge Advocate)  
Sir, I would have the court here my witnesses. You will see that I have done my duty.

JUDGE Advocate  
Very well. We have heard from a score of officers who have all described the extremely limited involvement of the Defiance in the battle.

Colonel Kirkby has provided a list, a very short list I may add, of his witnesses.

Call Lieutenant Knighton, third and only surviving lieutenant of the Defiance.

JUDGE Advocate (cont)  
Lieutenant Knighton, in your deposition you swore that on the 19th of August last you were not aware of your ship, the Defiance, being out of the line of battle. And further that you are not aware of any order being given to luft out of it. Your position, I gather, was on the Gun Deck. Surely, Lieutenant, as officer in charge you would be aware of your ship's position in relation to the enemy. Was not your shot falling short?

KNIGHTON  
Yes sir. And the order was given to stand down from the guns.

JUDGE Advocate  
Well, Lieutenant, you appear able to hear satisfactorily; you must have been able to hear the uninterrupted fire of ships astern. Could you not surmise that they were close enough to carry on the battle; and if so your ship must have been out of the line? Do you have any idea why Colonel

Kirkby kept the Defiance distant from the enemy?

KNIGHTON

Yes, I suppose. You see it was Colonel Kirkby's opinion that it was unsafe to bear down upon the enemy, since our ships were not near enough to assist us.

(Several hisses and groans from the audience.)

JUDGE Advocate

I see. So then you do testify that Colonel Kirkby did not keep his line.

KNIGHTON

Yes. But we were facing two enemy ships and the Windsor astern of us had fallen back.

JUDGE Advocate

Nevertheless the rest of the line was engaged: so is it not the case that Colonel Kirkby by disengaging placed the ships astern under greater danger. So that in fact he was not only out of the line but further than he ought to have been, if he intended to be of any assistance to the rest of our ships. Is that not so?

KNIGHTON

I suppose so.

JUDGE Advocate

Now Mr. Knighton, that is better. I wonder if you are still having difficulty remembering the actions of August 20th. You swore in your deposition on September 6 that you could not remember how far the Defiance was astern of the Ruby and Bredah. How is your memory to day Lieutenant? Can you say if your ship was one mile astern, two, three?

KNIGHTON

I am sorry, I am confused, the days run together.

JUDGE Advocate

Yes. Well, what of the 21st. That was the third day of battle, a Friday to be exact. At dawn the Bredah and Ruby engaged hotly with the centre of the enemy line, and were then doubled upon by his van. Do you have anything to add to your comments regarding the inaction of the Defiance while you were abreast the sternmost of the enemy ships?

KNIGHTON

Just that it was Colonel Kirkby's opinion that we were not within point blank range of the enemy: t'would have wasted our shot and powder.

JUDGE Advocate

Well your ship seems to have made a habit of staying out of gunshot of the enemy. And as to wasting shot I see you have sworn in your deposition that to your knowledge there was never any want of ammunition of any sort.

Thank you Mr. Knighton. You have been most loyal to your captain. We shant have any further need of you.

BENBOW

Nor I warrant will the Navy.

Gentlemen, I suggest we adjourn these matters till after our noon meal. I've no wish to hear from the Master of the Defiance on an empty stomach.

Captains troop out for their lunch

151. INT. BREDAH GREAT CABIN

Master John Martin of the Defiance reads his deposition.

MARTIN

...in the space of the Greenwich and Windsor, we gave the maimed ship the starboard broadside, and then lay within point blank with our head to the northward till the Admiral passed his last broadside and bore up...

Thompson  
Liar, you swore the contrary! You have changed your deposition.

JUDGE Advocate (to Martin)  
Sir, remember you are under oath.

THOMPSON (to Whetstone)  
The man lies. It is a trick.

WHETSTONE (to Martin)  
Sir, we'll have none of this. I'll clap you and your mates by the heels if you treat with us so. I'll not let this evidence stand. You are a scoundrel. Do you have nothing to say? Well, we'll see about that. We are not so easily fooled nor are we entirely surprised. Bring in Mr. Gull: let's give you a dose of the truth Master Martin.

JUDGE Advocate  
Mr. Richard Gull, you are Boatswain of the Lewis Hulk Hospital Ship. Yes? Would you please examine this Journal of Master John Martin, and tell the court what you know of it.

RICHARD Gull  
Yes Your Honour. I was over a visiting Boson Thomas Mollamb; we was having a look at what the Defiance would be needin, you see. Well, we was in Tom's cabin, with the Carpenter also, and the Master, he was there too, and very uncomfortable he was. Most agitated like. Well, he was near crying, he was, and he says 'I'm undone, I am. I'm ruined,' he says. Well, of course we wanted to know what he was going on about. So he said 'they made me alter several things in my journal, they did.' And he said they were going to leave it all upon him, and so he would be undone you see.

WHETSTONE (to Martin)  
This is a trick and knavery!

KIRKBY

But it is the truth. What matter when it was written? Ask him if the writing you find fault with is not the truth.

MARTIN

Aye, I swear your Honour, tis the truth, I have but filled in the details for the court to better understand what we were about.

WHETSTONE

We know what you are about: I'll have that deposition destroyed. And mark his journal so we know the parts that are added.

I have heard enough. The evidence speaks for itself. The court does not wish to hear any more of this treason.

JUDGE Advocate (through the hubbub)

There is one matter further, Mr. President. That of the paper which Kirkby wrote and signed.

WHETSTONE

Quite right. (to Kirkby) You wrote this document -

KIRKBY

God help us! the Admiral asked our opinion, and when we gave it he charged us all.

BENBOW

Colonel Kirkby clearly hoped I would be killed or taken by the enemy; when that didn't happen, he persuaded the other captains to vindicate his cowardly behaviour by signing his paper-

KIRKBY

(derisively)  
He now seeks to blame us for losing the battle-

BENBOW

His failure to retract it after I had in writing refuted it constitutes mutiny. No more, no less!

KIRKBY

Admiral Benbow was in direct contravention of the Fighting Instructions - by himself attacking the French rear he prevented those astern from getting in the fight.

WADE

(querulously)

I've a mind to refer the Admiral's conduct of the battle to Parliament, where I have considerable influence. Admiral Torrington-

BENBOW

We'll not be diverted-!

WADE

(screams)

Admiral Torrington was court-martialled at Beachy Head for the same offence! You must engage with your whole line: not just a small parcel of it!

Vincent stands and shouts through the ensuing banging of the table by the Judge President.

VINCENT

The Instructions don't apply here! The squadron refused to come to battle.

KIRKBY

If you'll send for the surveys taken of the damage to Defiance -

VINCENT

Do you take us all for fools, sir?  
(to the court)

Had the Admiral pushed to the van he would have been surrounded.

VINCENT (CONT.)

I would further add I was not present when the document was refuted.

KIRKBY

(accusingly)

And if you were?

Vincent shows no inclination to answer, and sits.

JUDGE PRESIDENT

Captain Vincent?

VINCENT

(hesitates, then rises)

I would not have withdrawn it.

Kirkby slams the table in satisfaction. There is an ugly murmur in the court.

BENBOW

(mildly)

But you fought, Captain Vincent.

VINCENT

Circumstances then demanded it.

BENBOW

Then why did you sign?

VINCENT

Because the rest deserted us. And because there comes a time when the bloodshed must stop, and sanity prevail.

JUDGE ADVOCATE

(outraged)

You, sir, were charged by your Queen to do your duty-!

VINCENT

Do we finally kill everyone to do our duty?

There is dead silence as this is absorbed. Benbow rises.

BENBOW

(coldly)

But for the gallantry of those who do,  
there'd be no England for you to go  
home to, and no ships to bring you  
there.

(to the court)

The Treasure fleet in French hands  
will prolong this war for years -  
there's blood and insanity enough for  
us all. My orders to stop the  
Frenchman from reaching Cartagena were  
obstructed at every turn by Colonel  
Kirkby and his co-conspirators. These  
actions have done such damage as to  
defy measure!

(He pauses for  
effect)

Mark me, members of the court, even as  
we sit, the Treasure Fleet is bound  
for France!

There is a shocked silence as the  
import sinks home. Then a hubbub  
arises. Cries of "hang them all!"  
The President bangs the table.

PRESIDENT

This court martial is adjourned for  
sentencing at four o'clock or before.

147: Final Scene: Execution of Kirkby and Wade on  
board the Bristol warship in Plymouth Harbour,  
April, 1703.

TITLE:

"Come, all you brave fellows, wherever you've  
been,  
Let us drink to the health of our King and our  
Queen;  
And another good health to the girls that we  
know,  
And a third in remembrance of brave Admiral  
Benbow."

TITLE WITH PICTURE: "Colonel Kirkby  
was executed on the Bristol in April  
1703, for his part in the mutiny."

TITLE WITH PICTURE: "Captain Wade suffered the same fate. Kirkby died with dignity, Wade without."

TITLE WITH PICTURE: "Captain Constable was cashiered from the service and sent to the Marshalsea prison. He was subsequently pardoned."

TITLE WITH PICTURES: "At Admiral Benbow's request, Captains Fogg and Vincent were not suspended but continued to serve honourably in the navy. Vincent was given command of the Defiance, Fogg moved to the Falmouth."

TITLE WITH PICTURES: "Robert Thompson replaced Fogg as captain of the Bredah."

TITLE WITH PICTURE: "Captain George Walton was knighted in 1718, and rose to be Admiral of the Blue."

TITLE WITH PICTURE: "Admiral Benbow died of his wounds three weeks after the trials of his captains."

TITLE WITH PICTURE "Admiral Benbow was promoted to Vice Admiral of the White and honoured posthumously by the Queen: a slate flag stone marks his grave in the parish church of Kingston, Jamaica"

CREDITS