

T O S H I E

A play in two acts

(with music)

by

STEWART BROWN

TOSHIE

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A fee will be charged for this licence which must be paid prior to the first performance otherwise the licence is automatically cancelled and the performance becomes illegal.

TOSHIE

ABOUT THE PLAY:

Toshie is based on the life of James McIntosh, a Dundee whaler. It was first performed by Dundee Repertory Theatre in 1994 and ran from May 6th to 28th. Directed by Hamish Glen, the cast was as follows:

OLD TOSHIE	Peter Spence
YOUNG TOSHIE	Jack E Soutar
HELEN McINTOSH	Joss Carlin
ROBERT FALCON SCOTT	Stewart Preston
REV DAVID MACRAE	Richard Low
ALEX BAIN and GUNNAR	Billy Riddoch
WILL (MACK) McGREGOR	Derek Anders
BILL CRISTIE	Paul Nivison
ANDY CAIRNS and CHAY ROBERTSON.....	Graham Baird
JESSIE BRODIE.....	Gillian McNeill
MRS CAIRNS.....	Anna Hepburn
CATHSOUTAR.....	Maria Miller
McGONAGALL voice only.....	Paul Nivison
ICELANDIC FISHERMEN.....	Derek Anders,
.....	Paul Nivison,
.....	Graham Baird

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After a career in magazine journalism, Stewart Brown began writing for theatre in the early 90s. His first play, "Audience," was toured by 7:84 and was followed by "Looking After Norman," a musical play for children that has had four productions in Scotland. "Toshie," his first full-length play, was commissioned and produced by Dundee Rep in 1994 and was followed by two further Scottish Arts Council commissions.

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID...

"A tremendously moving piece of theatre" SCOTLAND ON SUNDAY.

"Quite exceptional ... a monument to the people who made Dundee" THE DUNDEE COURIER.

"The audience shouted approval" THE HERALD

"Traditional songs, beautifully sung" THE SCOTSMAN

"An intriguing tale ... a splendid cast that stilled the audience on opening night"
THE STAGE and TELEVISION TODAY

TOSHIE

CHARACTERS

OLD TOSIHE a whaler in his fifties
YOUNG TOSHIE Toshie in his mid twenties
CAPTAIN SCOT famous Antarctic explorer
HELEN McINTOSH Toshie's wife
REV DAVID MACRAE
ALEX BAIN a whaler
WILL (MACK) MCGREGOR a whaler
BILL CHRISTIE a whaler
ANDY CAIRNS a 'green hand' whaler
JESSIE BRODIE a jute spinner
CATH SOUTAR a jute spinner
MRS CAIRNS mother of Andy Cairns
BELLE LONIE public baths attendant
MCGONAGALL notoriously bad poet

In the original production McGonagall was played in sound only by Bill Christie's voice

IN ICELAND

GUNNAR a fisherman played by the actor playing Alex Bain
FIRST FISHERMAN played by the actor playing Will McGregor
SECOND FISHERMAN played by the actor playing Bill Christie
THIRD FISHERMAN played by the actor playing Andy Cairns

Having the Icelandic fishermen played by the same actors as Toshie's longboat crew lends to the mythic quality of the play but is optional except in the case of Gunnar who should be played by the actor who plays Alex Bain.

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THE SET

Centre stage are simple seats that serve both as a whaling longboat and the pews of a church.

*Stage right (from the actors' viewpoint) is an area representing **Old Toshie's** house. It comprises two chairs, a small table, a small sideboard containing two 'best china' cups and saucers, a teapot and a lap rug. On the sideboard are a piece of scrimshaw and a framed photograph of a longboat crew.*

The area stage left represents in turn a dockside pub, the spinning shed of a jute mill, various tenement dwellings, and an Icelandic dwelling. The entire set suggests a dockside in the late 1800's.

Filling the back of the stage up to the flies is a large scrim backcloth. As well as suggesting a sail, it serves as a screen for projecting various images and shadows, such as a calm or a stormy sky and a weaving frame. At its centre, when required, it rises and falls to allow access behind.

When lit from the front the scrim is opaque, creating ghostly silhouetted images. Anything lit behind the cloth is clearly seen.

SETTING

The year is 1910, two years before Captain Scott met his fate in Antarctica.

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ACT ONE

*The curtain rises on **Old Toshie** sitting at the table in a single beam of light. He is wearing the dark waistcoat and trousers of a Victorian Sunday-best suit. The jacket is hanging on his chair. He is holding a pencil and on the table is a sheet of paper. Hooked over the arm of his chair are two very stout walking sticks. He puts down the pencil and takes an envelope from his waistcoat pocket. He looks up lost in thought. He takes a letter from the envelope and begins to read. Thoughtfulness turns to anxiety. A whispered chant is heard, though the words are not yet clearly heard.*

His anxiety increases. Anxiety is now growing into fear. He shows this with gestures, possibly a groan. Whispering is now discernible:

*Give us this day our daily bread
And forgive us our trespasses...
Forgive us our trespasses...Forgive us...
Forgive...forgive...forgive...*

*He looks out over the audience then lowers his head in anguish. His wife, **Helen**, enters and looks at him aware of his state. She chooses her moment to walk forward. When she speaks, lighting abruptly changes to a more normal state. **Old Toshie** hurriedly puts the letter in his pocket.*

Helen: Is it done?

Old Toshie: Eh?

Helen: *(Indicating paper)* Your prayer.

Old Toshie *looks at sheet of paper and nods.*

Old Toshie: Aye, it's done. *(Hands it to her).*

Helen *scans it quickly and nods. She folds the prayer, takes the jacket from the back of his chair and puts the prayer in the inside pocket.*

Helen: Communion today. Time we were away.

Old Toshie: *(Startled)* Communion! You never said—

Helen *attempts to put his arm in jacket sleeve.*

Helen: We don't want to be late—

Old Toshie: You didn't... Nobody told me it was communion—

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Helen: Come on. (*Reaches under his arm to pull him to his feet*) The minister's dependin' on you.

Old Toshie: (*Shrugs her off*) Dependin'! On me? He can manage fine without me.

Helen: (*Firmly*) You promised him. (*Tries again to put on jacket*) Come on, you've done it often enough before.

Old Toshie: Not at communion. (*Pause*) The church'll be full—

Helen: And the letter. You said you'd show Reverend Macrae the letter.

Old Toshie: (*Hesitates thoughtfully*) Oh! The letter. (*Pushes thought aside*) No! Not today.

Helen: (*Pulling forcefully at his arm*) You're coming! The letter...your prayer — they're both important. Now, come on!

With great reluctance Old Toshie stands and puts on jacket. Organ music. Projected stained-glass window shape strikes back-cloth. A congregation enters centre stage and takes their seats. A lectern is set downstage left. Helen leads Old Toshie to the front left pew. Rev Macrae enters and takes up position at the lectern.

Rev Macrae: (*Mid sentence*) ...time and again I have come back to the theme of today's lesson. Those words from Genesis spoken unto God by Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Pause*) And if we — each one of us — look into our hearts, we are driven inexorably to the conclusion that, living as we do in a community where earning one's daily bread can be extremely hazardous, we as a community must care for our own. (*Pause*) And now, our friend, James McIntosh — Toshie — will lead us in prayer.

Nods to Old Toshie and walks upstage. Old Toshie rises and makes his way to the lectern. Hangs sticks on lectern and takes the prayer from his pocket.

Old Toshie: (*Nervously*) Let us pray. Paternal One that dwells on high... Holiness be given unto Your name...

Dark, sinister, echoing laughter is heard. Old Toshie looks up in fear as Macgregor, a whaler, enters. He exists only in Old Toshie's imagination.

Macgregor: (*Mockingly*) So it's *Our Father* again, eh, Toshie?

Old Toshie: Let...let Your dom-dominion over us begin...

Macgregor walks slowly, relentlessly onwards his eyes fixed on **Old Toshie**.

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- Macgregor:** The Lord's Prayer!
- Old Toshie:** Let Your...let Your wishes hold sw...Hold sway—
- Macgregor:** Do you think...do you really think because you've fancied it up a bit, that nobody'll notice?
- Old Toshie:** ...h-hold sway here on earth as they—
- Macgregor:** Do you hell! You know fine what they're thinkin'. Listen. You can *hear* what they're thinkin'—
- Old Toshie:** ...they do in the life hereafter...
- The entire congregation looks up in unison, puzzled. They can hear the fear in Old Toshie's voice.*
- Macgregor:** Listen to their thoughts. Go on, listen...
- The congregation looks down again and speaks softly in unison.*
- Congregation:** Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven
- Macgregor:** Hear it? Eh?
- Old Toshie:** (*Deep breath*) Grant us the strength to feed ourselves and our families.
- Congregation:** Give us this day our daily bread—
- Macgregor:** (*Mocking laughter*) Food. Oh, don't forget food! We know how important *that* is, eh, Tosh?
- Old Toshie:** Grant us, too,
absolution from our sins.
As we who are sinned against
find forgiveness in our hearts .
- Congregation:** And forgive us
our trespasses.
As we forgive them that
trespass against us.
- The words lift Old Toshie, giving him new strength. Macgregor begins to exit slowly, calling to Old Toshie as he goes.*
- Macgregor:** (*Louder*) The Lord's Prayer, eh? (*Laughs*) Big Alec's favourite, that. Your pal, eh? You remember big Alec...
- His laughter rings out. Old Toshie continues determinedly.*
- Old Toshie:** And keep us from
the lure of wrongdoing.
Save us from the Devil's
works.
- Congregation:** And lead us not
Into temptation.
But deliver us from
evil.
- Macgregor:** Big Alec's *special request*, eh?

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Old Toshie: For You reign
supreme in strength...
...and omnipotence
Always...
...and always.
Amen.

Congregation: For Thine is the
kingdom...the power...
...and the glory.
Forever...
...and ever.
Amen.

Macgregor exits, laughter echoing as **Rev Macrae** picks up a tray of communion bread. Holds it aloft.

Rev Macrae: And the Lord said, "Take, eat. This is my body, which is broken for you. This do in remembrance of me. (*Breaks off a piece and puts it in his mouth. Hands tray to first in line. Picks up a communion-cup*). This cup is the new testament in my blood. This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me". (*Passes wine-cup same as bread tray. Walks to other end and waits while both are passed from hand to hand along the pew. Takes them and walks towards Old Toshie. As he reaches him and offers the bread Old Toshie recoils and his sticks clatter to the floor. Rev Macrae looks at Helen. Old Toshie does not take the bread or wine. Rev Macrae walks downstage centre and puts down the wine-cup and tray. They may remain there throughout the rest of the play. Rev Macrae raises his head heavenwards, his eyes closed....* May the Grace of God, the love and fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forever more. Amen.

Congregation files out with parting pleasantries. Rev Macrae goes to Old Toshie and Helen.

Rev Macrae: (*To Old Toshie*) Another fine contribution to the service. I'm most grateful.

Old Toshie: Oh, fairly straight-forward stuff, minister.

Rev Macrae: Maybe so, but the conviction. (*Earnestly*) Great conviction. (*Pause. Old Toshie looks away*) I look forward to your next visit. (*Pause*) It's always a privilege.

Old Toshie: Aye. (*Picks up sticks. Helen looks anxiously at Rev Macrae*) Well, we'll be getting away—

Rev Macrae: (*Interrupting*) Letter. You mentioned a letter.

Old Toshie: Oh!

Reaches into his pocket. Takes out the letter and hands it to Rev Macrae who begins to read and almost immediately looks up, impressed.

Rev Macrae: Well, well! (*Goes back to the letter muttering and reading snatches aloud*) ...heard so much about you... opportunity while I'm in the district... I'd be most grateful if you could spare the time to see me. Yours respectfully... (*looks at Old Toshie*)

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Yours respectfully, Robert Falcon Scott! *(Folds the letter and hands it back to Old Toshie)* Well, well!

Old Toshie: What he wants to see me for I've no idea.

Helen: He'll have read about you in that Pall Mall paper.

Old Toshie: A naval captain interested in that? Nah!

Rev Macrae: Why not? He's planning another expedition to the Antarctic. *(Pause)* Why shouldn't he want to see you?

Old Toshie: What about?

Rev Macrae: Survival.

Old Toshie's mood changes abruptly.

Old Toshie: Advice? From me?

Rev Macrae: ...a man who survived in the Arctic ice for—

Old Toshie: Listen, minister, when Captain Scott went to the Antarctic last time, Discovery was stuck in ice for nigh on two years.

Rev Macrae: How long were you in that boat?

Old Toshie: ...so he doesn't need advice from the likes of me.

Rev Macrae *(To Helen):* How long—?

Old Toshie *(Over 'long'):* I'll say good day to you. I'm night-watching at the new lifeboat shed tonight.

Gestures to Helen to move but she turns back to Rev Macrae.

Helen: Seventeen days, minister. *(Pause)* He survived in an open boat for seventeen days.

Rev Macrae: Remarkable—

Old Toshie: *(Interrupting)* Most o' me survived. Not all, though. *(Whacks wooden legs with a stick)* Not all. *(To Helen)* Come on, Nell. Good day, minister.

Helen exits upstage. Old Toshie walks down and right. Lighting changes. Rev Macrae watches Old Toshie for a moment then exits. Old Toshie walks slowly upstage. As he does lighting comes up on five whalers behind the backcloth. They are in the positions of a formal boat crew photograph—two in front sitting and three behind standing. Old Toshie stops and stares at them transfixed. As lighting goes down on the whalers, lighting comes up on Old Toshie's house. Helen is dusting the sideboard looking upstage. Old Toshie takes off jacket, sits down and

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begins carving on a piece of whalebone with a knife. He is preoccupied, ill-at-ease. The sound of rain is heard.

Helen: *(Looking out of window)* Just look at that! Comin' down in buckets!

Old Toshie: *(Thoughtful)* Nell...*(pause)* Nell, I've been thinkin'. Maybe he'll not come—

Helen: He'll need a cup of tea.

Pause. Begins taking tea things from sideboard and setting them out on table.

Old Toshie: I mean it's a long way from Glenprosen in weather like this. D'you think he'll come?

Helen: *(Same)* I'll keep out of the way and let you two talk.

Distracted Old Toshie's hand slips and he drops the scrimshaw.

Old Toshie: Damn! *(He thumps the knife down onto the table)* Do you?

Helen: What?

Old Toshie: Think he'll come?

Helen: Of course he'll come. He won't have much chance with the South Pole if he can't manage Broughty Ferry in a heavy shower.

Old Toshie: Nell...*(Pause)* Nell, maybe we should put him off. *(Pause)*

Helen: Put him off?

Old Toshie: I - I haven't been feelin' myself—

Helen: The man'll be half-way here by now.

Old Toshie: Nell...*(There's a note of panic in his voice that catches her attention. She looks at him)* I'm not feelin' right.

Helen: Are your legs hurtin' you? Maybe you've had them on too long—

Old Toshie: It's not my legs! *(pause)* It's not... It's... well, it's *me*. I had a funny turn this mornin'...*(She comes to stand over him)*...the room gave a whirl... an' I... well, I'm sure I'm sickenin' for something. I think I'll just have a lie down, an' you—

Helen: *(Sharply)* James!

Old Toshie: ...an' you can explain to the captain that—

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- Helen:** *James!* The man just wants to know what happened. He's takin' men into cold and danger—
- Old Toshie:** You're not listenin' to me, woman! I'm sayin' I'm not well—!
- Helen:** (*Over 'well'*) He's comin' to see you *specialy!*
- Old Toshie:** (*Angrily*) Will you listen! (*Pause*) I could give him the smit!(**infect him!*)
- Helen:** (*Shakes her head*) James, there's nothing wrong... you're fine.
- Old Toshie:** (*To self*) A sailor... the man's a sailor. A naval officer. An explorer...
- Helen:** (*Insistent*) Tell him what you went through.
- Old Toshie:** He's *been there* himself. (*Pause*) He *knows*...
- Helen** *reaches down and turns his face to look at her.*
- Helen:** (*Angrily*) Don't you *dare* ask me to turn that man away.
- Old Toshie:** Survival. (*Pause*) It's not somethin' you talk about. I mean, you just do what you have to at the time... and...
- Helen:** You'll see him. And you'll talk to him. You'll tell him what happened.
- Old Toshie:** You don't know what you're askin'...
- Helen:** I'm not askin', James. For once – I'm *tellin'*! You have to talk to this man.
- Loud ominous knocks are heard. Helen gets up and exits. Old Toshie sighs deeply and stares across to stage left. Captain Scott enters stage left and walks slowly towards Old Toshie. He is wearing naval uniform with greatcoat and cap. Old Toshie stands to greet him, suddenly welcoming.*
- Old Toshie:** This is an honour, Captain Scott.
- Scott:** My honour, Mr McIntosh.
- Old Toshie:** Mr McIn... Please. Call me Toshie. At sea... with shipmates... it was always Toshie.
- During the following scene Old Toshie begins by talking more politely than usual. As he becomes lost in his thoughts/memories his speech will become more colloquial.*
- Scott:** Right-o. Toshie it is. (*Looks about*) I must say it was good of you to see me. I had read a bit about you... you, and your ship,

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The Chieftain. It's a quite a story. Quite a story. (*Sees scrimshaw on the sideboard and picks it up*) Eskimo?

Old Toshie: No, that's my own work. I did learn from the Eskimos, though.

Scott: Nice workmanship. (*Puts down scrimshaw and picks up the framed photograph. Looks at it. Nods approvingly, then smiles.*) A fine body of men. (*Looks at **Old Toshie***).

Old Toshie: The crew of my longboat.

Scott: Five men to a boat. That was standard, wasn't it?

*As he speaks he walks over with the photograph and holds it in front of **Old Toshie**. Lighting comes up on the 'Photograph' behind the backcloth. The front seat (left) is now empty.*

Old Toshie: Yes, always five (*Points*). That's me there - that cocky-lookin' striplin' sitting in the front. I was what they called the Line Manager. I made sure all the whale-lines were in good order.

Scott: These men... they were the ones who... who were with you... when it happened.

Old Toshie: That's right.

Scott gazes at them then points.

Scott: Just a boy, that one. A child.

Old Toshie: Andy... Andy Cairns. Green hand.

Scott: His first trip?

Old Toshie: It was. (*Pause*) Andy was just seventeen...

*As he speaks the backcloth rises and **Andy Cairns** leaves the photograph and comes to stand centre stage facing the audience. He is carrying an oar and a 'foreganger' — a short coil of rope. He moves smartly through the seats and puts the rope under one. He then sits, back to audience and puts the oar into its housing in the 'boat'.*

Scott: (*Pointing*) This chap?

Old Toshie: Bill Christie... (**Christie** enters in the same manner as **Cairns**, sits opposite **Cairns** and fixes his oar) The joker. (*Remembering*) His party piece was imitating the mad poet McGonagall. Always the joker, was Bill...

Scott: Unlike the fellow at the back.

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- Old Toshie:** Will MacGregor. (**MacGregor** enters in same manner as the others but he is carrying a steering oar. He sits upstage at the rear of boat) Aye... Mack never found much to smile about. Especially not Bill Christie's daft capers.
- Scott:** And who is this? What a powerful-looking man!
- Old Toshie:** That... (*For a moment he can't speak. He quickly collects himself*) Alec Bain. (**Bain** enters as per others but carrying a glass compass and a harpoon gun. Fixes gun at prow of boat, stows compass then sits downstage of **Christie**)...Big Bainie. Broad as a barn door. Nobody answered back to big Bainie. "A wee loon fae Peterheed," he used to say. Harpooner - and the strongest whaler that ever planted an iron in a fish. (*Pause*) Alec was my best pal. He commanded our boat.
- Scott:** And the boat was out after whales when it happened?
- Old Toshie:** Boats, sir. Four. When we cut into a bank of fish that day, four boats were let fall. The Skipper was in one of them. (*Pauses, remembering, then*) May 26th, 1884.
- Scott walks over and replaces the photograph then turns back to*
Old Toshie.
- Scott:** Where exactly were you at the time?
- Old Toshie:** South-west of Jan Mayen island. (**Scott** nods) Aye, Greenland and the edge of the ice were west of us, and Iceland was to the south. *Far* to the south.
- Scott looks up. Beat. Young Toshie enters upstage centre. He is carrying two oars and a bucket on a rope. He walks down, places bucket under his seat and sets oars.*
- Scott:** You don't mind talking about it...?
- Young Toshie:** (*Without looking up*) Mind? Not at all...
- Old Toshie:** ...If you think my story can help you — in any way...
- Scott:** I'm sure it will. On foot to the South Pole. Me and my four men will be... well... fully committed. Exposed. Anything you can tell me —
- Old Toshie:** (*Anxiously*) *Four!* The same! (*To self*) You — and four others. (*Pause*) Aye, committed...
- Scott:** Anything we can learn from your experience...
- Old Toshie:** ...and exposed...
- Scott:** ...could mean life and...

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Old Toshie: Committed is right... *(pause)* you're never more committed than when you're out after whales. Boats lowered. Temperature, thirty below.

The whalers stand and face audience. They begin a rowing motion with the oars. As the whaling action develops Old Toshie forgets his deference to Scott and his accent becomes more pronounced. When he is fully lost in his memory, sea and wind sounds will increase.

Scott: Quite.

Old Toshie: A 15-foot swell's runnin'. For days we've prayed for a strike an' at last we're fast to a 9-ton fish. The lines pay out burnin' the gun'ales... Now they're stiff as steel an' we're bein' pulled to kingdom come. *Committed. (Looks up. Beat)* You'll have to be careful where you're goin', sir. Careful. *(Pause)* Things can go wrong...

On the word 'wrong' the whalers all simultaneously react as if to a violent motion of the boat.

Scott: And what exactly did go wrong?

Bain: *(Calling)* Steady, Mack! Andy! Give Mack a hand!

Old Toshie: *(Anxiously)* Andy Cairns... *(shivers)*.

Scott: You had a whale on the line. It dragged you off course. Was that how you lost touch with the ship...?

Christie: This one's a battler, Alex!

Scott: ...with The Chieftain.

Old Toshie: *(Distant – listening, shivers)* Exposed. *(Looks up)* Eh?

Scott: Not just the whale... something else...?

Old Toshie: *(Agreeing)* Aye, somethin' else. *(Pause)* The thickest Greenland fog you ever saw. Thick as porridge. Cold enough to freeze the lungs off you!

Christie *(Peering):* Damn this whore of a fog! Canna see a bloody...!

Old Toshie: And as if that wasn't enough, the fish decided to fight back...

Bain: The lines! They've gone slack!

Christie: Have we lost him?

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Bain (Shouts): Lost him? Naw! Three irons. Three in him an' he's... (urgently) Mack. Steady! Steady! He's under us. I can feel him. He's breaching!

The steering oar whips and Cairns is thrown into the sea. There's general shouting and confusion.

Cairns (Screams): T-o-s-h-i-e! **Old Toshie** reacts in alarm.

Old Toshie: (Shouts) Andy! **Scott** is alarmed. Goes to comfort **Old Toshie**.

Bain: Mack! Port! To port!

Young Toshie: I see him! (To **Christie**) Quick, the foreganger! (Pointing) The foreganger!

Christie – with difficulty – takes the short rope from the bow and passes it to **Young Toshie** who throws the other end into the sea. Urgently he keeps casting until **Cairns** catches it. **Christie** and **Young Toshie** pull **Cairns** alongside and reach for him.

Old Toshie: (Leans forward towards the action and shouts) Arm! Get his arm. (**Scott** gently eases him back in his chair).

The whalers pull Cairns back on board and dry him off as best they can and cover his shoulders with a piece of sail canvas. Bain goes up the boat to see Cairns' condition. There's an unspoken feeling that Cairns is doomed.

Bain: Right lads - back to your stations!

The men stand at their stations looking out and listening anxiously as lighting slowly goes to dark. Thunder is heard, then lightning. Wind sound gradually rises as a storm blows up. Waves sound. Arms waving as the men fight the sea Young Toshie and Christie on the oar.

Bain: (shouting) Toshie! Bill! Put your backs into it. Andy, bail, son! Bail! (More struggling against the storm) Mack, keep her head into the wind!

MacGregor: It's all I can do to hang on, Alec!

Bain fights his way to back of the boat and grabs the steering oar with **MacGregor**. The men show difficulty as the sea buffets oars and steering oar. **Cairns** struggles to bail. Time passes. Gradually storm subsides.

Young Toshie: It's easin', Alec!

Bain: Aye. Not before time! Not before bloody time. See to the laddie, Tosh.

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Bain returns to the bow as **Young Toshie** gets **Cairns** back into his seat.

Bain: (Calls) Mack! Look for the ship! Circle!

MacGregor: The gun! Fire off the harpoon gun! Maybe they'll hear that!

(**Bain** pulls cord on harpoon gun. Explosion) Again! Try it again! (Explosion).

The men peer into the fog with great concern. They are realising they are in serious difficulty. A passage-of-time convention then lighting up on Scott.

Scott: (To **Old Toshie**) How long did the storm last?

Old Toshie: Two days.

Scott: What had happened to the ship?

Old Toshie: We'd lost contact with the ship.

Scott: Yes, the fog, but—

Old Toshie: No. Not just the fog. Next day the fog cleared. For an hour it lifted. The Chieftain was gone!

Scott: And the whale?

Old Toshie: The whale had given up the ghost. He was hangin' on us like a sea anchor.

Scott: And the other boats. What of them?

Old Toshie: One. We could see one. The captain's... to west of us. Fightin' the heavy seas... (*The whalers stand and look fixedly stage left*) ...Apart from that, we could see nothing! Nothing but grey sea an' icebergs! (*Pause*) The Chieftain was gone. (*Pause*) The captain's crew battled to within hailin' distance. We could see he was shoutin' to us, but... the wind just snatched it away. (*Thoughtfully*) Then... then like reek from hell, the fog came up off the water thicker than ever. (*Pause*) Just when it had nearly blotted out the world again, the skipper's voice came to us...

MacGregor: What? What's he sayin'? The skipper...? Alec, what did he say?

Bain: (*Shakes head*): Couldn't hear.

MacGregor: What? (*Panicky*) We-we might not see him again—

Young Toshie: (*Over MacGregor's words*) I heard...

MacGregor: We might never see him again—

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- Young Toshie:** (*Louder*) I heard! (*Pause*).
- Christie:** What did he say, Tosh?
- Young Toshie:** He said... (*Pause*) He said, Run for Iceland. (*Beat*).
- MacGregor:** (*Aghast*) Iceland? *Iceland!* That's three hundred bloody miles away!
- Young Toshie:** That's what he said.
- MacGregor:** Naw!
- Bain:** Take a bearin' due South—
- MacGregor:** Bainie! Hold on! Bainie! (*Then to Young Toshie*) Tosh! Christ, Iceland! What about some sanity here...!
- Bain:** Sanity? Toshie, cut the lines!
- Young Toshie** raises an axe but **MacGregor** catches his arm.
- MacGregor:** Naw! Naw, just wait a minute. The Chieftain'll be lookin' for us *here*. An' she's no chance of findin' us if we shift.
- Young Toshie** (*Glaring*): Let go!
- MacGregor:** ...An' if you *are* hellbent on shiftin', there's places a lot nearer than Iceland.
- Christie:** Like where?
- MacGregor:** Like Greenland—
- Young Toshie** rips **MacGregor's** hand from his own.
- Bain:** (*Generally*) Well? What's it to be? Iceland... Greenland... stay here? Toshie?
- Young Toshie:** Iceland.
- Bain:** Bill? Iceland?
- Christie:** Naw. (*Sarcastically*) Now that... (*Imitates MacGregor's panic*) ...*we might never see the captain again...* (*Normal voice*) I'm for throwin' our lot in with Mack, here. With a record like his he's a born leader of men. Just think of it — thrown off *The Aurora* for boozin' ... banished from *The Morning* for fartin' ...
- MacGregor:** (*Realising at last that Christie's mocking him*) Bastard—!
- Christie:** (*Continuing*) In fact, I say Mack for skipper.

TOSHIE

- Young Toshie:** Don't start, Bill!
- Christie:** Naw, really. Why not? Tight-fist... dosshouse drunkard... Casanova... Why not skipper as well, eh? Greenland's a great idea!
- MacGregor:** Mind your mouth, you—!
- Christie:** Oh, but hold on. (Pause) One wee problem. Why did I not think of it? (*Suddenly shouts angrily at MacGregor*). There's absolutely bugger-all there! Bugger-all food! An especially bugger-all anybody to help us—
- MacGregor goes for Christie.**
- Bain:** Enough!! (*All silenced*) Toshie, what's it to be?
- Young Toshie:** You're in command, Alec.
- Bain:** You're the 'tried hand', though, Tosh.
- Young Toshie:** (*Thoughtful pause*) Then I say Iceland.
- Bain:** (*Pause, then decisively*) Iceland it is. Cut the lines. Toshie take over the steerin'. Due south. Bill. On the oars. Andy, oars...
- Young Toshie reaches over and shakes the shivering boy.**
- Young Toshie:** Andy, on the oars. That'll warm you up.
- Bain:** Mack, you bail, or we're goin' no place but under. Tosh, give me the axe here.
- Young Toshie hands Bain the axe. Bain cracks down on the lines as Young Toshie changes places with MacGregor. Bain takes his place at the oars.**
- Young Toshie:** Pull!
- They all bend to their tasks. All effects employed as the epic journey begins... the men row in unison and lighting slowly turns from day to night. Gradually they begin to show signs of fatigue. Cairns is the first to show – his oar slows and eventually ceases.*
- Scott:** Three hundred miles! A long way in Polar seas!
- Old Toshie:** Aye. An' we were already showin' signs of stupor. Dizziness... numbness in our arms and legs. Talkin' like we were drunk.
- Scott:** What was the greatest concern?

TOSHIE

- Old Toshie:** Home.
- Scott:** Home?
- Old Toshie:** Aye. Thinkin' about it... pinin' for it... picturin' it. They were all at it.
- Scott:** And Bain saw danger in this?
- Old Toshie:** No. Me. I saw the danger.
- Scott:** Had Bain given over command to you?
- Old Toshie:** By the time this *harkin' back* reared up, well, I was the one shoutin' out against it... (*thoughtfully*) After about six days, big Alec just got quieter, and quieter...
- Scott:** But wasn't it a natural thing, to think of home?
- Old Toshie:** Natural... unnatural - all I knew was that it was a killer. As Alec said, I was the tried hand. I'd been shipwrecked when The Ravenscraig was nipped... (*sees Scott's puzzlement*) in the ice. Crushed to firewood. I'd seen it then... sittin' on the ice waitin'... waitin'. Everybody wantin' to escape into... into sentimentality. If that kind of thing gets a grip (*shrugs*) well, the will to fight... to survive leaves you. I could see that happenin' again.
- Scott:** And you?
- Old Toshie:** I was fightin' it... worrying about the troubles we had right there in the boat. Cold. Hunger. Thirst. Bill an' Mack at each other's throats... big Alec starin' into the fog... young Andy frozen to the marrow. But no — they would keep harkin' back. (*Pause*).
- Sea and wind sounds. Lighting goes down and comes up fully on the men in the boat.*
- MacGregor:** (*Harshly*) Drink. Gaspin' for a drink, I am. How much water have we got?
- Young Toshie:** Three lumps o' rainwater ice, an' that's the lot.
- MacGregor:** Give's a bit.
- Young Toshie:** You had your bit not long ago—
- MacGregor:** Not long...? Yesterday it was! *Yesterday!* Christ! My tongue's like a smithy's glove. (*Pause. Thoughtful. Stands.*) I could just go a pint! (*Walks down to beside Bain*) What about you, Alec? Eh? A big... dirty... pint!

TOSHIE

*Faint fiddle and accordion heard playing a lively tune. Babble of voices. **MacGregor** and **Bain** walk stage left. As they do lighting comes up stage left on a pub.*

Christie: (To **MacGregor**) Aye, an' you'll be gettin them, I suppose? (Chuckles painfully) Eh, Tosh? What are you havin'? It's Mack's round.

Young Toshie: Don't start again, Bill.

Christie: No, it's right enough. Andy. Hey, Andy, son, what're you havin? Mack's gettin up the drink. Eh?

Cairns: (Shivering violently) Ca... (Sobs) Cath...

Young Toshie: (To **Christie**) What? What's he sayin'?

Christie: Cath. His lass.

Cairns: Cath.

Young Toshie: Forget that. Get him back on the oars - or he'll freeze.

Cairns: Cath. I-I want C-Cath!

Young Toshie: Shut up! (Rubs **Cairns'** arms vigorously and glares at **Christie** and to where **MacGregor** and **Bain** had been). That goes for the lot of you! All this rubbish about pubs an' lasses — forget it! Iceland! Iceland! That's all you should be thinkin' about! (To **Cairns**) Now get on these oars!

Christie: (With mock wistfulness) Mack's round! I knew it was too good to be true.

Lighting comes up behind backcloth to reveal a young girl. She's dancing.

Cairns: (Cries out joyously) Cath!

*Backcloth rises and **Cath Soutar** dances towards **Cairns**. She grabs his arm and pulls him stage left into the pub.*

Christie: Look at him, Tosh. (They turn to where **Cairns** had been) You're wastin' your time. Look at that smile. Eh? (Stands) We're all off to the pub whether you like it or not...

*Walks into the pub. **Young Toshie** shrugs resignedly and follows. They all take their seats. **Christie** is joined by his lass, **Jessie Brodie**, a brash but very good-looking girl. The whalers have had a lot to drink. **Cath** beckons to **Cairns**.*

Cath: Come on, Andy. Dance.

TOSHIE

- Cairns:** (*Embarrassed*) Away!
- Cath:** Come on (*Takes his hand and pulls him to her*).
- Whalers cheer as Cairns and Cath polka around. At last they sit down and go into a moon-eyed huddle. Christie has his arm round Jessie Brodie. MacGregor is on her other side.*
- Bain:** My round, Tosh. What're you for?
- Young Toshie:** A pint.
- Jessie:** An' I'll have a nip.
- MacGregor:** (*Drunkenly*) Right you are, darlin'. (*Nips her from behind*).
- Jessie:** (*Squeals in pain*) You bugger! That was sore!
- MacGregor:** Affection, Jessie. Scots affection!
- Jessie:** (*Angrily*) I'll give you affection. Bill, did you see that—?
- MacGregor:** Z'at a promise, eh? Give me affection, will you?
- Jessie:** Bill, are you goin' to sit there an' let him do what he likes—?
- MacGregor:** M'on, Jessie. You an' me... round the back. Standy-hard-bangy—
- Jessie:** Bill!
- Christie:** (*Laughs*) Standy-hard... my arse! His trousers are like his purse. Nothin' in there but moths!
- Macgregor sways to his feet glaring. Action and sound subdues in pub as lighting focuses on Bain and Young Toshie sitting together.*
- Bain:** (*Slurring*) Seventh trip together, you an' me...
- Young Toshie:** (*Thinking*) Mmm, five, six... Aye, you're right.
- Bain:** Aye. My oldest was born the first year. She's seven now and the little one's two.
- Young Toshie:** Away!
- Bain:** I'll tell you somethin'. It wasn't easy leavin' them this time, Tosh.
- Young Toshie:** It's never easy, Alec—
- Bain:** No. This was different. I nearly didn't come.

TOSHIE

- Young Toshie:** (*Incredulously*): Come on, Alec!
- Bain:** S'fact.
- Young Toshie:** Not come! But what else could you do? You know nothin' but the whalin'—
- Bain:** Farmin'
- Young Toshie:** Farmin'?
- Bain:** Aye. Meg's brother's got a farm over by Turriff. He says he could do with a help. He could show me the ropes, like.
- Young Toshie:** (*Realising he's serious*) But you wouldn't, surely—
- Bain:** Aye, would I not! Just watch me. (*Beat*) This is my last trip, Tosh.
- Young Toshie:** But, Alec—
- Bain:** I want to be with the family. It's like... I just have this feelin' I can make one trip too many.
- Barmaid comes in with drinks. Christie stands up and calls to Young Toshie.*
- Christie:** Tosh. Nell comin' to see you off?
- Young Toshie:** (*Urgently to Bain who has turned away*) Alec...
- Christie:** I'm saying...
- Young Toshie:** (*Distractedly to Christie*) If she can get somebody to look after the wee lad. We said our farewells just in case. (*To Bain, urgently*) Alec!
- Christie:** (*Thumbing over his shoulder at Jessie*) Jessie and me said our farewells last night. (*Rolls his eyes*) Fair knackered, I am. Hasn't slowed *her* down any, though...
- MacGregor whispers something to Jessie. She pushes him away roughly. Young Toshie turns to Bain.*
- Young Toshie:** (*Still concerned*) Alec—
- Bain:** (*Stands*) Come on, then. Who's for a song? Mack?
- MacGregor:** Not me!
- Bain:** (*To Christie*) What about you, Bill?

TOSHIE

- Christie:** Me? Sing?
- Bain:** A verse, then. One of your recitations.
- Jessie:** Aye, go on, Bill. Give's "The Steam Navvy".
- Christie:** Naw... who's this? (*Strikes theatrical pose*).
Thou demon Drink, thou fell destroyer;
Thou curse of society, and its greatest annoyer...
- Everyone laughs. Only MacGregor waves him away in disgust.*
- What hast thou done to society, let me think?
I answer, thou hast caused the most of ills, thou demon Drink.
- MacGregor:** (*Aggressively*) Rubbish!
- Young Toshie:** Come on, Mack. Give him a chance—
- MacGregor:** (*Louder*) Absolute rubbish!
- Bain:** On you go, Bill.
- Christie:** ...Thou hast caused the most of ills, thou demon Drink,
Thou causeth the mother to neglect her child,
Also the father to act as he were wild...
- Cheers.*
- MacGregor:** (*Seriously angry*) No! (*Background music stops*) Anything but that! I can't abide anything to do with that idiot.
- Bain:** Bill. Hear what your pal's sayin' about you? (*Laughter*).
- MacGregor:** Naw! Not him! McGonagall! (*There's uneasy laughter at MacGregor's seriousness*) Daft as a tuppenny watch. Should be locked up. An' I've told him that to his face.
- Jessie:** On you go, Bill—
- MacGregor:** (*Thoughtful*) Overgate, it was. Up near The Burn. An al fresco performance *he* called it. I called it a public disgrace! Everybody eggin' him on. Cheerin', like. Not me, though. Not this boy! (*Beat*) Shut it, you bampot! I shouted. (*Everyone has fallen silent, listening*) They all kept on cheerin' an'... an' he... believed them. He thought they were really cheerin' - really thinkin' poetry was good. (*Pause*) I've never been so... so *affrontit* in all my life. (*Pause*) Get off! I yelled at him. You stink! An' I meant it. I just wanted him to - get_off. (*Pause*) He turned then an'... he turned... You'll not believe it. He turned an' looked at me. Right at *me*. His eyes... (*looks round the company*) Have you ever seen his eyes? Really looked at them? They're funny. Not like anybody else's. Starey. Like they were... well,

TOSHIE

sort of lookin' *into* you... *(Pause)* Knowin' what you were...
readin' your... *(Pause)* I - I...

Jessie: What?

MacGregor: What?

Jessie: What did you do?

MacGregor: Threw shite at him. Dung. Horse's. It was lyin' on the road. I
just... *(Remembering)* I just up with it an' threw it in his face.

Jessie: You rotten sod!

MacGregor *(Same):* It hit his cheek like... like a golden snowball *(pause)*
D'you know what he did? You'll never guess. He didn't hurry to
wipe it off. No. He stood there. Then you'll never believe it... he
ups wi' the sleeve of his coat an' he wipes his face... *(Pause)*
An' all the time he keeps starin' right at me... an'... *(Pause, then*
furiously) I hate the bastard...

Jessie: But what happened?

MacGregor: He just stared at me an' went right on wi' his lousy poem.

Christie: *(Resuming a performing posture)* Something like myself.
(Quotes) The man that gets drunk is little else than a fool...

MacGregor *stands up and reaches for a glass of beer*

Therefore, brothers and sisters, pause and think...

MacGregor *throws the beer over Christie* who doesn't flinch.
Young Toshie *moves towards the trouble but Bain* *roars a*
warning to MacGregor.

And try to abolish the foul fiend Drink.

MacGregor: *(to Bain)* He knows I hate that... Hate it...!

Young Cairns *feels the tension and calls out.*

Cairns: I'll sing! *(Looks round nervously)* Aye. No bother. I'll give you
a song.

Young Toshie: Fine, son. Sing up.

Bain: *(Tearing his glare from MacGregor):* Aye. Right, hold your
tongues, everybody. Erchie's gonna give's a song!

Christie: *(Calls)* His name's Andy, he just thinks he's Erchie!

Laughter.

TOSHIE

- Bain:** I see. Right, *Andy*, what're you going to sing?
- Cairns:** A whalin' song...
- Bain:** Lads, did you hear that? Erchie's gonna sing a whalin' song. (*Cheers. Then to Cairns*) What kind of whalin' song?
- Cairns:** Well... it-it's about chasin' after the whale an' catchin' it, an' that...
- Bain:** Chasin' the whale an' catchin' it, an' that. Great!
- Christie:** Aye, we always sing when we're after the fish, eh lads?
- Laughter.*
- Bain:** Like linties! (**linnets*) (*To Cairns*) What's this song called?
- Cairns:** Blow Ye Winds In The Mornin.
- Christie:** (*Laughing*) Hey, Toshie. You'll know all about that! You've shared a bunk with Mack!
- Laughter.*
- Young Toshie:** (*Smiling*) Come on, give the laddie a chance.
- Bain:** Right enough! (*To Cairns*) It's all yours, Erchie... er, Andy.
- Cairns** *sings slowly and nervously.*
It's advertised in Aberdeen,
Stonehaven and Montrose,
A hundred Scottish sailors, a-whalin' for to go;
- Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
And blow, boys, blow.
- Cheers and whistles of encouragement then Cairns, more confidently.*
- They send ye off tae Dundee toon,
That famous whalin' port...
- Bain:** God, there's more!
- Laughter. Cairns is huffed and tries to sit down.*
- Cairns:** (*Speaking*) Just forget it, then!
- Jessie:** No, come on, son. Sing up!

TOSHIE

They all push him back up and roar encouragement. He relents.

Cairns: *(Singing more confidently and in rhythm. The others beat and stamp out the time).*

They send ye aff tae Dundee toon,
That famous whalin' port,
An' give ye tae some land sharks,
Tae board an' fit ye out;

Chorus: Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow...

The whalers join in the singing of the verses. The whole pub joins in the choruses. As the song progresses everyone gets more animated and enthusiastic.

It's when we're out tae sea, me boys...
An' the wind comes on tae blow,
Half the watch is sick on deck,
The other half below;

Chorus: Blow ye winds in the mornin',
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

The skipper's on the quarterdeck
Squintin' at the sails,
When up aloft the lookout spies
A school of fine big whales;

Chorus: Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

Now clear away the boats, me boys
An' after him we'll go,
But if ye get too near his tail
He'll kick ye down below;

Chorus: Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear,
An' blow, boys, blow.

Helen enters. No one sees her.

An' when that he is ours, me boys
We'll pull him alongside,

TOSHIE

Then it's over wi' our blubberhooks
An' rob him o' his hide;

Chorus: Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

As the song ends the whalers all raise their glasses and drink a silent toast. They are in the same positions as the photograph. Old Toshie and Scott raise their teacups. Young Toshie starts polka-ing with Cath. Cairns breaks it up and drags Cath away to sit on his knee. The others pour out of the pub. Helen calls to Young Toshie as she approaches him.

Helen: I see you're missin' me already.

Young Toshie: Nell! You came! (*Embraces her*) Who's lookin' after the bairn?

Helen: Oh, he's fine. He's with his Auntie Lizzie. She let me away for a wee while.

Young Toshie: (*Kisses her*) I'm really glad to see you!

Jessie enters urgently.

Jessie: (*Calling*) Andy! Your ma's here. She's lookin' for you.

Cath jumps to her feet and looks around in panic for an escape. Cairns pulls her back down.

Cairns: You're no' runnin'. Anyway, she'll not come into a pub.

Jessie: (*Looking stage right*) No?

Mrs Cairns stalks in. She's formally dressed and wearing a large hat. She is pale-faced, tight lipped.

Helen: (*Formally*) Mrs Cairns.

Mrs Cairns nods unsmiling then turns to Cairns.

Mrs Cairns: (*Coldly*) Andrew. Outside. I want a word with you.

Cairns: (*Without moving*) Ma, this is Catherine Soutar—

Mrs Cairns: (*Over 'Soutar'*) I know who she is. (*Pause*) And I know *what* she is.

TOSHIE

Cairns: Aye. My lass.

Mrs Cairns *laughs scoffingly.*

Cath: Mrs Cairns, I—

Mrs Cairns: (*Over 'T'*) Andrew. Outside!

Cath: Andy. Go on.

Cairns: Ma. I'll be away for six months. Don't spoil it...

The sound of whalers off increases.

Mrs Cairns: Spoil! You get yourself tangled up with a common wee jute whore, and—

Jessie: *Hey! (Walks threateningly towards Mrs Cairns).* Watch your mouth, you! Just listen to yourself — a lavvy on the stairs and you're Lady Muck!

Christie *enters.*

Christie: Andy, Cath. Come on. (*Takes Jessie's hand and pulls her outside*).

Cairns *stares at his mother then turns and runs out. Mrs Cairns stands alone still glaring at Cath. Helen signals to Young Toshie to go then goes to Cath's side.*

Helen: (*To Mrs Cairns*) He's all you've got. (*Mrs Cairns just stares at her*) You shouldn't have let him leave like that.

Mrs Cairns *turns on her heel and exits. Sound of crowds cheering. Whalers enter stage left and line up as if at the dockside. Rest of cast enter stage left and begin throwing streamers, etc. Whalers mime boarding ship.*

Cairns: (*Scanning the crowd*) I can't see my ma...

Young Toshie: She'll be there, son...

Cairns: I don't want to leave not speakin'.

Cath: (*Calling*) Andy!

Cairns *sees Cath in the crowd. She throws him an orange. As he catches it there's an abrupt change of lighting, cheering stops. Cairns starts to sing again slowly and sadly.*

Cairns: (*Fighting back tears*) All along the Earl Gray quay the lassies stand around

TOSHIE

Wi' their shawls a' pulled aboot them,
An' salt tears runnin' doon;

Company: Blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

Oh, blow ye winds in the mornin'
Blow ye winds high-o,
Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

Clear away the runnin' gear
An' blow, boys, blow.

Lighting slowly down **Young Toshie** *calls to Cairns.*

Young Toshie: Andy! (*Points*) There she is. Your mother!

Lighting picks out Mrs Cairns lower stage right. She turns and begins to walk away. Cairns calls to her.

Cairns: Ma! Ma!

Mrs Cairns *exits. Blackout as Cairns' voice is heard calling. Longboat is re-established. Cairns is slumped in his seat. MacGregor is on the steering oar. Young Toshie behind Cairns. Christie is sitting in the bow staring ahead. There're all showing signs of extreme exposure. Cairns is particularly bad.*

Cairns: (*Weakly*) Ma...! Ma...! (*Lowers head to rest on his arms*).

Young Toshie: (*shaking Cairns*) Oars, son. Get on the oars. (*When Cairns can't move, begins rubbing Cairns' arms*).

MacGregor: Oars? He's hardly able to draw *breath*—

Christie: Shut it. He hears you.

Young Toshie: (*To Cairns*) Come on, son. You've got to keep movin'.

MacGregor: (*To Christie*) What for? It's not just him. We're all done for—

Young Toshie: Mack!

Bain: (*Distantly*) Right enough.

Young Toshie: (*To Bain forgetting Cairns in his surprise*)
Right enough... What?

TOSHIE

*When **Bain** talks throughout scene it's in an eerily resigned way — without fear. **Young Toshie** finds this particularly alarming.*

Bain: Mack. He's right. We're not gettin' out of this one—

Young Toshie: (*Over 'one'*) For God's sake, Alec...

MacGregor: (*To **Young Toshie***) We're as good as dead now!

Young Toshie: (*To **Bain** over **MacGregor's** works*) Alec! Not you!

MacGregor: Good as dead.