

THE FORSAKEN SEAS

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EXT. MARY CELESTE - TOP DECK - NIGHT

SUPER: 1872

The ship is a brigantine, 100 feet long. The clouds are black, but the sea's calm.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

CAPTAIN BRIGGS (37) sits at the head of the table, holding his daughter, SOPHIA (2). SARAH (30), his wife, sits to his left. He smokes a pipe.

Sophia squeals as Briggs throws her a few inches in the air and catches her.

SARAH

Be careful, Benji.

BRIGGS

I'm not going to drop her.

SARAH

I know, but she's bigger now.

BRIGGS

She's my daughter, too, Sarah.

BRIGGS

Richardson!

First mate RICHARDSON (28) runs in.

RICHARDSON

Yes, Captain?

BRIGGS

How much longer until dinner?

RICHARDSON

Soon, sir.

BRIGGS

Very good.

Richardson leaves.

INT. GALLEY - NIGHT

HEAD (23) mans the stove. He stirs a pot of beans.
Richardson pops his head in.

RICHARDSON

How much longer, Head?

HEAD

Just a few more minutes.

RICHARDSON

Cap'n wants it quick!

HEAD

He always wants it quick. I'll
send it right up once these
beans are cooked.

RICHARDSON

Right.

He leaves.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Briggs refills his pipe. Sarah holds Sophia on her waist.

Richardson knocks.

BRIGGS

Come in.

RICHARDSON

Head said that dinner will be
finished shortly, sir.

BRIGGS

Thank you.

Richardson walks away.

EXT. TOP DECK - NIGHT

Suddenly, waves begin to pick up. Higher and stronger, the
water spills over the railing onto the deck.

INT. GALLEY - NIGHT

Head balances himself on the counter as the ship rocks back and forth. As it tilts, the stove slides down and Head jumps to avoid it.

EXT. TOP DECK - NIGHT

Wind and rain thrash across the wooden planks. A single light is seen through the windows.

INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

The floor shifts and rocks.

Briggs steadies himself on the large table. Sarah holds Sophia close to her chest.

SARAH

What's going on, Benji? What's happening?

Richardson rushes in, followed by Head, GRILLINGS (25), BOZ (23) and three SEAMEN.

RICHARDSON

What are we gonna do, Sir?

BRIGGS

Do you know what it is?

GRILLINGS

Looks like a storm, sir, but I'm not sure. Waters already going over. The deck's soaked.

BRIGGS

Prepare the lifeboat.

RICHARDSON

Ay, ay, sir.

They leave. Briggs rummages through his desk. He pulls out his chronometer and sextant and puts them in a satchel.

SARAH

Isn't it safer to be here?

BRIGGS

What if the ship sinks?

SARAH

And a lifeboat won't?

BRIGGS

Don't argue. Just - just get
some blankets for Sophia.

She struggles to get to the chest. She pulls out two large, folded quilts. She unfolds one, wraps it around herself and her child, and carries the other.

Richardson comes in, soaked.

RICHARDSON

We're ready, sir.

BRIGGS

Right. Let's go, Sarah.

He helps his wife through the door and down the hall.

EXT. TOP DECK - NIGHT

Harsh wind blows the sails. Water falls onto the deck as if dumped out by a large bucket. The sky is clear, though.

The four seamen stand by a 20 foot lifeboat on the side of the ship. It's connected to the ship by a davit.

They help Sarah inside first, then the captain. Richardson, Grillings and Head climb in next.

BOZ

Who's staying?

GRILLINGS

Just get in!

Boz and the seamen follow.

Once they're settled, Grillings quickly cuts the rope with his knife.

INT. LIFEBOAT - NIGHT

BRIGGS

What are you doing?!

He reaches out and drops the satchel into the roaring waves.

The boat falls fast into the water, hitting the hull on its way down. It splashes, sending more water into the boat.

The fighting water carries the lifeboat away from the ship.

BRIGGS

Have I taught you nothing?

GRILLINGS

I thought -

BRIGGS

You thought wrong! Now we'll never get her back. Grab the oars and row! We can't lose her! We've already lost the watch and sextant. All because of you!

GRILLINGS

I'm sorry, sir.

The seamen and Boz, quickly attach the oars. They fight the waves to catch up.

RICHARDSON

Wouldn't it be better to row back to Santa Maria Island?

BRIGGS

We can't go back.

SARAH

Why not?

BRIGGS

They'll think we're crazy for abandoning her.

SARAH

What about us?

BOZ

It's only ten miles! Can't we do it?

BRIGGS

I'm still the Captain. You'll do as I say. Follow the ship.

BOZ

Ay, ay.

RICHARDSON

May I say something?

BRIGGS

Go on.

RICHARDSON

Maybe the wind will bring her back? There's no way of knowing its course.

The storm's pushed them further apart. The men row hard and fast, but they harder they row, the further they become.

A FEW HOURS LATER

The water's calmed down, and the ship is a dot on the horizon. Sarah's wrapped in the blankets. Briggs stares out. The seamen keep the oars in their laps. Richardson, Head and Grillings shiver, their heads in their hands.

SARAH

What are we going to do?

(to Briggs)

You said we'd be safe, but now we're stuck. We're going to die and it's your fault. We have no food. We have no water. We have nothing, Benjamin.

BRIGGS

I know, Sarah.

SARAH

What are we going to do?

BRIGGS

I don't know.

SARAH

It's not too late for Santa
Maria.

BRIGGS

We'd look like fools.

SARAH

It's better to be a fool
than dead.

SARAH

What about Sophia? What about
our little girl, Benji? Would
you rather her die out here?

BRIGGS

You know that's not true.

SARAH

I thought I knew you, Benjamin.
Don't be a coward.

BRIGGS

I don't even know where we are.

He looks into the sky. There isn't a star to be seen.

BRIGGS

There's no way to know.
(pointing)
Row that way.

They row that way.

BRIGGS

(after a minute)
How is Sophia?

Sophia's wrapped in blankets.

SARAH

She's still sleeping.

She moves the blanket, revealing Sophia. She sits on Sarah's lap, her head pressed against Sarah's breasts. Her hair is matted to her head.

SARAH

Wake up, Sophia. Wake up.

Sophia's small head falls to the side.

SARAH

Benji! She's not waking up.

BRIGGS

Let me have her.

He takes his daughter's limp body. The other men watch.

SARAH

Look at what you've done!
You've killed our baby!

She erupts in a deep sob.

BRIGGS

I'm sorry, Sarah. I'm so sorry.

SARAH

What are we going to do now?

BRIGGS

We'll have to bury her. Here.

SARAH

You can't just leave her in the
water. You can't!

BRIGGS

It's the right thing to do.

SARAH

But she's our baby. She's our
little girl. You can't just
throw her overboard. I won't
let you!

BRIGGS

(to the men)

Did you bring any rope?

SARAH

What?

BRIGGS

Rope. Anything we can use to tie -

SARAH

We're not tying anything.

BRIGGS

We'll have to secure the blanket
around her.

RICHARDSON

I have my belt.

GRILLINGS

And mine.

They take them off and hand them to Briggs. He then wraps the wet quilt around Sophia. Using the belts, he ties it around her.

SARAH

You can't! No! Stop, Benji!
Please, stop it!

BRIGGS

We have to, Sarah. Please, let
her go.

She sobs, but lets her fingers slide off. Briggs dips Sophia in the water. The men take off their hats and bow their heads.

BRIGGS

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall
not want. He maketh me to lie down
in green pastures: he leadeth me
beside the still waters.

(MORE)

BRIGGS (CONT'D)

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

He lets her go. She floats in the water. Sarah sobs again and reaches out for her but Briggs grabs her arms and shakes his head.

BRIGGS

Head for the island.

They replace their hats and grab the oars. They row, heads down, but hard. Sarah keeps her eyes on her floating child. Briggs stares out, his face blank.

FADE OUT.