

Characters in order of appearance

Jack—Twenty-something male, shirtless, haggard, resourceful and resilient, but losing hope, very sarcastic

Van—Also twentyish, literature student, his shirt is tied around his head to block out the sun, in better spirits than his companion, one might call him obnoxiously optimistic.

Sailor/Ghost Captain/Coast Guard—This is the only other specific speaking role. He appears as a shouting, dancing, singing sailor, then reappears as a ghost captain near the end of the play. He should be used as the off scene voice of the coast guard official as well.

Possible Sailor's Chorus—you can also just have Jack and Van sing with the Captain and then rush to their places when the lights drop. This is very open.

Scene: Middle

(A man (Jack) stands alone in a pink refrigerator the size of a bath tub and surveys the distance. We see him only from the waist up. Beyond his makeshift boat is nothing but ocean. His expression is dour and his eyes are tired. The refrigerator rocks violently for a moment drawing Jack out of his daze as he does his best to keep his footing. A voice from within the vessel rings out.)

Van

Found it!

(Van pops up with a book above his head like Excalibur.)

Jack

I knew you sounded too excited to be talking about more fish chunks.

Van

Oh, I found those too—and left them. But no, I found my Stephen Crane book—it does kind of smell like fish though.

(Waves it under Jack's nose)

Jack

(Is visibly repulsed. Gag reflex enabled.)

We're confined to twelve square feet. I'm kinda concerned that you managed to lose it in the first place. Which story are you going to read this time? Wait—let me guess.

Van

(Cheerfully)

Yeah, "The Open Boat," once again.

Jack

That stopped being cute weeks ago.

Van

(Van leafs through the book without looking at Jack)

No, you just stopped having a sense of humor on day three. I didn't. Unless I do, I'm gonna read this until I discover the secret to the crew's survival.

Jack

(As if he's said this a hundred times before)

It's not a story about survival, it's a story about brotherhood. The only competent member of the crew winds up dead and the idiots survive.

Van

That doesn't leave much hope for you.

Jack

Don't worry, no brotherhood here. I hate you way too much to die for you.

Van

(Still looking through the book)

You sound more like my sister, but we're getting closer than you think.

Jack

Well, I still haven't found what I'm looking for.

Van

(Still looking down, but with a smirk)

And other 1980s rock songs—

Jack

You're an idiot. No. I haven't found any land. If you'd bother to look around you'd see that.

Van

(Finally looks up at Jack)

That's why I don't look around.

Jack

(Pauses for a moment, mildly embarrassed)

Is that book really the only thing you could think to bring? Couldn't you have grabbed some food—or a first aid kit?

Van

Didn't think about it. I think I'm better off with the short stories. I did bring a Jerome Stern book on fiction though, so if you wanted to look for that—

Jack

Why the hell would I want that?

Van

You'd think it's funny. He says that you should never start a story in a bathtub. Says they don't go anywhere.

Jack

That's hardly true of us. We're floating all over the sea.

(Indicates in all directions)

Van

Yeah.

Jack

And this is a refrigerator.

Van

A pink one!

As Van says this, he taps the side enthusiastically. This causes the craft to wobble and throws Jack into the water with a splash. Van struggles to get Jack back into the boat where he stands dripping and tired. Neither speaks for a few moments. Van starts humming "I still haven't found what I'm looking for," by U2

Jack

(Sighs heavily and breaks the silence)

Give me the book.

Van

Which one?

Jack

The one that doesn't look like ocean.

Scene: Earliest

Captain and Sailor Chorus

Singing to the tune of the Gilligan's Island Theme Song while dancing

Just sit tight and play along with this
expository leap
explaining away characters
like we just don't give a BLEEP
We needed a boat of sailing men,
devoid of character
to sing like bawdy buccaneers *(Sailors flex muscles)*
but later seem demure, yes we all seem quite demure
Two kids set foot on the deck of this
unassuming fishing boat
With irony
and sailors who
were destined all to be drowned
Study abroad?
Their professor can, kiss their cans
when the boat goes down!

(Lights fade on the front of the stage where our sailors have been singing and dancing. The sailors become silent, but still active on the edges of the stage. A spot stays on the captain who points center stage and shouts.)

Captain

CONFUSING FLASHBACK SEQUENCE OFF THE PORT BOW!

(In the center of the stage the light comes up on Van. Van is hard at work painting a white refrigerator a bold pink color. Jack walks up eating an orange.)

Jack

What the hell are you doing?

Van

I'm working on my, "intentional irony," care package.

Jack

How's that working out?

Van

(Stops painting and starts counting on his fingers without putting his brush down)

Pretty well. I stashed a copy of Stephen Crane's, "the open boat," in a box of tilapia, and I wrote, "there's no way this boat will ever crash, P.S. mother nature is a great big pussy," in my dream diary.

Jack

(Pointing at the fridge)

And this?

Van

Oh, I read about a couple of guys surviving for weeks in a pink fridge, so I figured I'd go ahead and paint this thing while I had the chance.

Jack

Aren't you worried about tempting fate?

Van

It wouldn't be ironic if it wasn't causal. How could we have floated around in a pink fridge in scenes one and three if I hadn't painted it during this flashback? It wouldn't make sense with all this temporal disorder.

Jack

Why would we be floating around in a pink fridge? Wait—scene what? What are you talking about? What's out of order?

Van

I'm out of order, you're out of order—this whole PLAY is out of order.

(Chuckles)

But no, seriously, it is. Plus, I heard the sailors chorus say the ship was going to sink in their opening number.

Jack

You know what? I hate musicals, I hate tragic comedy and I hate paradoxes. Come to think of it, I don't much like you either. You had better not sink this fucking boat.

Van

While I commend you for bitching enough to foreshadow what a dick you become during the rest of the play, I have to remind you that this isn't a tragedy. There's a rescue at the end of scene three.

Jack

(Indicates sailors)

What about them? They can't all fit in the fridge.

(Van shrugs and goes back to painting. Jack stands looking around him and munching on his orange.)

Jack

Wait, so you're sure we're going to be marooned in that fridge?

Van

Yeah, unless there's a rewrite.

Jack

So where exactly are we supposed to...

Van

Take a crap!?

Jack

Ugh. Yeah.

Van

Not addressed in the story.

Jack

Just in case you're right, we'd better stash some TP anyway.

Van

Oh, I promise you I'm right. I'm always right.

(Lights fade on the boys and the sailor chorus is back in action)

Sailor Chorus

So that was the tale of the clever way
we cheated our first scene
Although when I say we I guess
you all know what we mean
That asshole with the paintbrush
and his sidekick asshole two
survive us to the second scene
while they're contemplating poo
We've not much time to wrap it up
the storm is blowing in
but rest assured we'll all be dead
it's very Brechtian

These guys get stranded on
this Frigidaire for quite a while
While we're in Davy Jones' locker they'll
be on Chilligan's Isle!

*(Sailors begin to argue among themselves as they sink into the sea. Any of the sailors
can argue)*

Captain:

Did you really have to end on a pun?

Sailor 1:

I'm the one who said, "Let's do the Beverly Hillbillies theme, but no.

Captain:

We all agreed: Gilligan makes the most sense, there's a shipwreck!

Sailor 2:

I said, "let's go with a Titanic themed opening." I said, "My heart will go on won an
Oscar and a golden globe!" You guys are pricks.

Captain:

(Gurgling)

MUTINY!!!

(More grumbling and gurgling as the lights fade to black)

Scene: Latest

*(It's nearing dusk. Van and Jack stand facing opposite directions in their pink
refrigerator. Van is holding a very empty toilet paper roll up to his eye as a telescope.
Jack comes to stand near Van.)*

Jack

Do you see anything?

Van

Nothing. You?

Jack

Oh, just the usual after forty days adrift. Water, endless despair, the occasional frightening sea creature.

Van

Yeah, I still feel a little silly about throwing my book at that dolphin.

Jack

You thought it was a kraken.

Van

Whoever heard of a pink dolphin? Besides, I'm not what you'd call "sea-ready."

Jack

(says in sing-song)

Ready or not, here it comes.

Van

You joke, but I don't think two men could find a better hiding spot in the entire world. At least we have home base. You're always safe if you're on base.

(Pats the fridge)

Jack

Yeah. Speaking of being off base. Thanks for pulling me back in.

Van

(Shrugs)

What else was I gonna do? Let you die? Let you struggle out there like some half-drowned man? I'd like to think you'd have dragged me back out of the water—no matter what you said.

Jack

That's the thing, I wouldn't have pulled you back in. I probably still wouldn't. You're the one that said we'd be rescued, you're the one that didn't bring any provisions. You seem to know everything that's going on, so you're always so damn cheerful. I have no idea what's about to happen.

(looks across the sea)

You know, at first I was just being a dick because I thought it would help. I thought, "I know it sucks out here, but if two shipwrecked people can't reach across to one another then I guess antagonizing one another is just as good." I thought if I just created conflict between the two of us, then we'd forget about the much bigger conflict—out THERE. But you didn't need that. You never needed that. You were always so fucking happy.

Van

So you'd rather I treated you like shit?

Jack

Yeah, two assholes on one wreck are at least better off than a single jackass on his own.

Van

(Noticing something, yelps a little and presses the toilet paper roll up to his eye frantically)

Jack, look!

Jack

(Takes the toilet paper roll from Van, crushes it, and bounces it off his dome, then grabs Van and starts shaking him violently. . Van seems terrified for the first time, but tries to gesture toward what he'd spotted moments before)

You can't stop acting like an adolescent prick for five minutes can you? I swear to god, if I'm gonna die out here, at the very least I'll make sure you die first.

(Jack reaches down into the boat and picks up a handful of something and starts shoving it into Van's mouth. Van reacts accordingly.)

How's that? Does that make you feel cheerful you smug little fuck? Did you see that one coming in scene one? How's that taste?

(A loud fog horn breaks Jack from his violent trance and he looks up to see what Van had been trying to tell him about all along)

Jack

Wait. Is that a ship? Van, am I going crazy or is that a ship?

Van

Recent outburst notwithstanding? How should I know if you're crazy? I've been out here just as long as you have. I'm just glad you haven't started looking like a 22 year old co-ed or a rack of lamb.

Jack

Dude! Just tell me that you see a ship!

As if to answer, there is another loud fog horn and shouting can be heard off stage. The boat seems to be getting close enough to notice the boys.

Van

I've been TRYING to tell you about the ship for a while now.

(In a billow of fog a group of sailors, [the sailors from the chorus in the previous scene] walk across the water to the fridge.)

Jack

I think I am crazy. Those sailors are walking on top of the water. I'm probably already dead.

Van

If you're dead, then I'm dead too.

Jack

I don't think I could stomach spending eternity with you.

(The ghosts arrive at the fridge and their captain speaks)

Ghost Captain

Believe it or not, I'm sorry we found you boys. We all hoped that you'd make it. You gave it a good run—better survivors than we were and we're old hands eh?

(Claps the boys on the back in an attempt at friendly spirits but the two just look at one another.)

Jack

So—we ARE dead?

Ghost Captain

Well, nearly enough. You will be soon I suspect. That's how it was written. Now then, it's not so bad. Better to float for eternity on a ship than in an old ice box.

Jack

(to Van)

I think he's more cheerful than you are. I don't think I could stand being with two optimists while I float for eternity.

Ghost Captain

We do less floating and more pure sailing—but the forever part is fairly accurate. I hope you brought a good book. Besides, there's no worry about that, only one of you is coming with us.

Jack

What? How does that work?

Ghost Pirate

Oh, you know how this all works boy. One of you dies so that the other can survive. That's how it was written. That's how it's always been written. We'll be waiting over on the ship.

(Ghosts walk back across the water and exit the stage.)

Jack

(watches the sailors until they're out of sight, then drops his head.)

How are we supposed to decide which of us survives?

(As he turns around to get Van's answer, Van plants his foot hard in Jack's chest, toppling him over the edge of the boat with a splash. Van watches him struggle for a moment, then the splashing stops. Van spits and the lights fall.)

Scene: After the Falling Action

(The lights come back up on Van sitting alone on the boat reading. A ghostly version of Jack walks above the water to the edge of the fridge.)

Jack

What happened to brotherhood?

Van

I took my cues from Cain and Abel.

Jack

I guess it really is the same old story.

(Jack walks back off stage, a fog horn can be heard in the distance, Van watches the ship float away. From the other side a fog light cuts through and lands on the fridge.)

Booming Voice From Offstage

Son, this is the U.S. Coast Guard. We think we found your friend floating a few miles back. We'd never have spotted you if not for that. Sad truth? He might just have saved your life.

Lights fade.