

Tenders in the Fog  
(excerpt)

by  
Trevor Allen

Black Box Theatre Company  
(c) 2005 Trevor Allen  
trevorallen@comcast.net

FUGUE: 2.1 LARGO "TABULA RASA TRIPTYCH"

THE THREE MEN STAND ON THE DECK OF THE SHIP. PAPA IS LOOKING AT SOMETHING IN THE DISTANCE. DA IS WATCHING HIM. JIMMY IS SPEAKING INTO THE SHIP'S RADIO.

PAPA

There! You heard something didn't you?

DA

No, of course not. You think I'm crazy, like you?

JIMMY

(INTO RADIO)

May-day! May-day!

PAPA

You're right, we're nothing alike-

DA

Ha! You hated your father for coming here. For bringing you to this country-

PAPA

Aye, I couldn't stand the S.O.B.- What of that?

DA

Well, we've got that in common.

JIMMY

Great, you both hate your fathers! And right now I hate both of you and I want to get off this boat alive, so just shut up!

PAPA

He's got your temper.

DA

And your stubbornness.

JIMMY

(INTO RADIO)

May-day! May-day!

THE LIGHTS SHIFT AND THE MEN ARE EACH ISOLATED IN THEIR OWN SPOTS AS BEFORE. THEY STAND AND SPEAK TO THE AIR AS IF FROM THE DECK OF A DISTANT SHIP EACH ONE ONLY PARTLY AWARE OF THE OTHERS. TIME HAS STOPPED.

PAPA  
(STANDING AT THE BOW OF THE  
BOAT LOOKING FORWARD)  
The Sea... A way of life.

DA  
A fisherman's son.

JIMMY  
I'm five years old in bed at night.

PAPA  
My life.

DA  
No life for me.

JIMMY  
In a new costal town,

PAPA  
Our life.

DA  
A life at sea.

JIMMY  
Just another nomadic navy brat.

PAPA  
Four generations of fishermen in the old country.

DA  
Seasick and sick of fish and the stink of it.

JIMMY  
I pick up the walky-talky from my night stand.

PAPA  
Then the old man packs us all up and here we are.

DA  
I hated the wide openness of it all.

JIMMY  
By my night light.

PAPA  
A fresh start.

DA  
The first time I saw the sea...

JIMMY

I speak in whispers to the night.

PAPA

No village this.

DA

I thought there was no end to it.

JIMMY

I only have the one walky-talky, you see.

PAPA

A city.

DA

And I knew it had a memory because time has found a home there.

JIMMY

I'm hoping that someday somebody will answer me from out there on the wide sea.

PAPA

A new world.

DA

Moving back and forth restlessly for what seemed like an eternity.

JIMMY

I slip into dreams still speaking softly with the red "send" button held down.

PAPA

A new coast.

DA

That day when I was about five or six and you took me down to Ocean Beach.

JIMMY

A huge mast rises out of the center of my bed and takes the sheets with it on up into the sky.

PAPA

The ocean is even on the wrong side.

DA

I was sitting on the sand in the sun where you'd left me.

JIMMY

And the bed-ship rolls into the darkness of the night.

PAPA

A wharf.

DA

Building a line of castles along the shore.

JIMMY

The ocean is calm all around me.

PAPA

A fishing fleet.

DA

Watching the waves creep slowly up the beach.

JIMMY

With the occasional white cap or-

PAPA

Jobs to be had.

DA

With long tentative fingers of foam.

JIMMY

St. Elmo's frozen fire in rippling slow motion.

PAPA

A booming business.

DA

Feeling their way up the strand.

JIMMY

The surface of the sea a blank slate all around me.

PAPA

The old man sank everything into his first tub.

DA

And into the moat I had dug in front of my fortress.

JIMMY

I am alone on the deck of this new ship..

PAPA

Some say he was lost at sea.

DA

For just this reason.

JIMMY

Just a mattress on promotion sailing across an open ocean.

PAPA

The uncles whispered about running off with the cash and getting caught and killed.

DA

And an old man walking along the beach said "You're just prolonging the inevitable kid."

JIMMY

My pajamas are blown in the breeze.

PAPA

Some even said he owed that old Chinese "gentleman" a lot of money.

DA

I looked up at him and his halo of white hair like those paintings of the saints.

JIMMY

The sea salt sprays over me.

PAPA

And the tong threw him overboard and sank his boat.

DA

He says "The waves will win in the end."

JIMMY

The stars roll overhead into a cloudless night.

PAPA

All I know is that we were a family of fishermen and I was the oldest boy... when the sea calls you answer it.

DA

I said "I know... But then... I'll just build another one. It's only a game."

JIMMY

I watch the waves crest beneath the foot of my four poster bed.

PAPA

So I went to sea... even though I didn't want to.

DA

"Ain't that the truth!" The old man says and then he laughed out long and hard.

JIMMY

And where the wind blows my sheet/sails...

PAPA

I don't like fish.

DA

"Keep digging kid... you've got your work cut out for you."

JIMMY

I will follow.

PAPA

I don't even like crabs.

DA

And then he sighed and smiled and walked off down the beach.

FOG ROLLS IN OVER THE BOAT OBSCURING IT  
AS THE SET SHIFTS AROUND.