

JOSEPHINE

It is useless - Sir Joseph's attentions nauseate me. I know that he is truly a great and good man, for he told me so himself, but to me he seems tedious, fretful, and dictatorial. Yet his must be a mind of no common order, or he would not dare to teach my dear father to dance a hornpipe on the cabin table.

*(sees Ralph and is overcome by emotions)*

Ralph Rackstraw!

RALPH

Aye, lady - no other than poor Rackstraw!

JOSEPHINE

*(aside)*

How my heart beats!

*(aloud)*

And why, poor Ralph?

RALPH

I am poor in the essence of happiness, lady - rich only in never-ending unrest. In me there meet a combination of antithetical elements which are at eternal war with one another. Driven hither by objective influences - thither by subjective emotions - wafted one moment into blazing day, by mocking hope - plunged the next into the Cimmerian darkness of tangible despair. I am but a living ganglion of irreconcilable antagonisms. I hope I make myself clear, lady?

JOSEPHINE

Perfectly!

*(aside)*

His simple eloquence goes to my heart. Oh, if I dared - but no, the thought is madness!

*(aloud)*

Dismiss these foolish fancies, they torture you but needlessly. Come, make one effort.

RALPH

*(aside)*

I will - one.

*(aloud)*

Josephine!

JOSEPHINE

Sir!

RALPH

Aye, even though Jove's armoury were launched at the head of the audacious mortal whose lips, unhallowed by relationships, dared to breathe that precious word, yet would I breathe it once, and then perchance be silent evermore. Josephine, in one brief breath I will concentrate the hopes, the doubts, the anxious fears of six weary months, Josephine, I am a British sailor, and I love you!

JOSEPHINE

Sir, this audacity!

*(aside)*

Oh, my heart, my beating heart!

*(aloud)*

This unwarrantable presumption on the part of a common sailor!

*(aside)*

Common! Oh, the irony of the word!

*(aloud)*

Oh, sir, you forget the disparity in our ranks.

RALPH

I forget nothing, haughty lady. I love you desperately, my life it in your hand: I lay it at your feet! Give me hope, and what I lack in education and polite accomplishments, that I will endeavor to acquire. Drive me to despair, and to death alone I shall look for consolations. I am proud and cannot stoop to implore. I have spoken, and I waft your word.

JOSEPHINE

You shall not wait long. Your proffered love I haughtily reject. Go, sir, and learn to cast your eyes on some village maiden in your own poor rank - they should be lowered before your captain's daughter.