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Dramatic Publishing



Jack London's
THE SEA WOLF

A RADIO PLAY

In Two Acts

by
ANDREW J. FENADY
and
DUKE FENADY



Dramatic Publishing
Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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For
F. SHANNON FENADY
Son – Brother
his voyage continues

THE SEA WOLF

The proper function of man is to live, not exist. I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them. I shall use my time.

— JACK LONDON
1876-1916

Authors' Notes

Rather than “SPENCER DRUE,” any other name—including the actual name of the actor playing the part—may be used in the radio play.

Also, instead of Argonaut Adventure Theater of the Air—the name of the producing entity—e.g., The Palmdale Playhouse of the Air—may be employed for the production.

Curtain may rise at opening and close at end of “broadcast”—or: “broadcast” set already may be on stage when doors open for audience entrance into theater—with 1930’s-1940’s music emanating from speaker on stage.

As in the good old radio days, an actor or actress may play several parts—more so than if it were a stage play.

A.J. Fenady

Duke Fenady

THE SEA WOLF

A Radio Play in Two Acts

CHARACTERS

SPENCER DRUE/WOLF LARSEN – principal male
BOOTH ANNOUNCER (voice only) – male
JOE – Engineer (voice only) – male
JENNY – Sound Effects Person #1 – female
SOUND EFFECTS PERSON #2 – no speeches – male or female
SAM/LEACH – principle male
HUMPHREY VAN WEYDEN – principal male
FLAXEN BREWSTER – principal female
JAMESON DAMISK
ANN TREDWELL – female
CHARLIE FURUSETH
REGINALD BREWSTER
1ST MAN (Police)
2ND MAN (Police)
DONAVAN (First Mate)
DR. PICARD – principal male
COOKIE – principal male
DOGBREATH
SMOKE
OFTY-OFTY
CHANDLER
JOHNSON – principal male
FRENCH FRANK
LATIMER

ACT ONE

AT RISE: *The stage is a replica of radio station of the 1930s-'40s-'50s. The three walls (actually no walls are necessary) covered by drapes—except for one padded door—stage center—MUSIC from speaker.*

A MAN, SPENCER DRUE/WOLF LARSEN, enters with a script and moves to center table. There are a couple of other tables—one loaded with sound effects equipment. There are mikes on all of these tables. More equipment on floor nearby.

There is a line of three or four standing microphones downstage.

A sign above control booth—ON THE AIR—not now lit.

Over the above—and as Drue/Larsen makes notes on his script at the table, MUSIC—FADES—then a VOICE (BOOTH ANNOUNCER) is heard via the speaker from the framed control booth on stage left.

NOTE. This will be a long speech—use as much as necessary to accompany the action as MUSIC fades:

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. Good evening, America. Before we present the Argonaut Adventure Theater's broadcast of Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*, we bring you a two-minute up-to-the-minute recap of today's news on this Sunday evening, October, 31st, 1948. There is, of course only one topic of discussion on the lips of most citizens of the United States, and I might add, across the world. That is the election to be held in the next 48 hours. Will Harry S. Truman remain President of the United States, or will he be defeated by Thomas E. Dewey, the odds on favorite from the state of New York? As of October 30th Thomas E. Dewey leads Harry S. Truman by 5 percentage points—49.5 percent to 44.5 percent according to the Gallup poll. In other polls Dewey's lead is considerably higher. Even Mrs. Roosevelt, who is currently in Paris, gives Truman little chance against the Republican, Thomas E. Dewey.

(ANYWHERE OVER THE ABOVE.)

DRUE/LARSEN. (to Booth) Joe, turn that damn thing down. I'm trying to concentrate.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Yes, master.

An effects person, Jenny, unseen by Drue/Larsen, enters quietly and walks to the effects table.

(THE NEWS VOICE GOES ON—BARELY PERCEPTIBLE.)

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. (DIM) The New York Times declared "Thomas E. Dewey's election as president is a foregone conclusion." Top pollsters are predicting a Dewey win. Elmo Roper a preeminent pollster quit taking samples on September 9th, with the comment that only a political convulsion could prevent Dewey from winning the presidency.

(FADE ANNOUNCER'S VOICE altogether by now—as...)

(SOUND...LOUD FOGHORN.)

DRUE/LARSEN. (reacts—turns) What the hell?

Jenny smiles.

DRUE/LARSEN. Jenny what're you trying to do?

JENNY. Get your attention.

DRUE/LARSEN. You got it.

JENNY. You seemed displeased with the rehearsal foghorn effects. Here's a couple new ones—which do you prefer, Mr. Producer?

(SOUND...HONK.)

JENNY. A? or...

(SOUND...HONK.)

JENNY. B?

DRUE/LARSEN. B. Now please, *be* silent.

Drue/Larsen goes back to work on the script—Jenny tends to the effects on the table.

DRUE/LARSEN. Where is everybody?

JENNY. Digesting that magnificent buffet you provided...but look toward the door right about...NOW.

Actors and others begin to enter, carrying scripts—low walla walla—some sit on the chairs lined up—some move toward the microphones strewn across the stage.

DRUE/LARSEN. (looks up) Where Sam?

SAM. Here. (burps) Excuse me.

DRUE/LARSEN. You *are* still playing the character of Leach, aren't you, Sam?

SAM. Among other characters—yes.

DRUE/LARSEN. You know that speech on the bottom of page 29?

SAM. It's my favorite speech.

DRUE/LARSEN. Cut it.

SAM. What?!

DRUE/LARSEN. I said cut it. It's repetitious. We don't need it—and we're running a little long.

SAM. Do you mind if I *react*?

DRUE/LARSEN. So long as you do it silently. All right, everybody. Good rehearsal, let's give 'em a better broadcast.

Drue/Larsen gives the booth a signal to turn up the SOUND from the speaker.

BOOTH ANNOUNCER'S VOICE. And that, America, concludes our Sunday night recap of the news. Stay tuned for a brief musical interlude before our broadcast of Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*.

(MUSIC.)

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Let's check the mikes.

Actors approach stage microphones.

VAN WEYDEN ACTOR. It was another time. Another world.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). O.K. Good.

FLAXEN ACTRESS. It must be here. I felt the chain break.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Very good.

SAM/LEACH. I don't want no part of them small boats, sir.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Fine. Just fine.

DRUE/LARSEN. He's drunk and so are you. But he tried to drink up all the rum in San Francisco.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). That'll do it. Twenty seconds.

Jenny tries out an EFFECT.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Twelve seconds.

By now all the actors with the first lines are at their mikes.

JOE (BOOTH VOICE). Niner... Six! Fiver! Three! Two! One!

(The ON THE AIR SIGN LIGHTS UP.)

(THEME MUSIC.)

DRUE/LARSEN. Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, this is your host Spencer Drue. Welcome to the Argonaut Adventure Theater of the Air and tonight's broadcast of one of the great epics of all time. A story of adventure. A story of the sea. A story of love. Jack London's *The Sea Wolf*.

(THEME MUSIC UP—then segue to PARTY WALTZ MUSIC & SOUND EFFECTS...a gala extravagant party...low walla.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) It was another time. Another world. And I was another man. Humphrey Van Weyden. Part-time writer and critic. And full-time dilettante. My friend, Charlie Furuseth, was giving another of his parties at his place in Sausalito. I'd been there less than an hour and was already bored. In those days, I was easily bored.

DAMISK. Van Weyden.

VAN WEYDEN. *Mr.* Van Weyden, and you have the advantage, Mr....?

DAMISK. I'm Jameson Damisk. My fiancée, Miss Ann Treadwell.

VAN WEYDEN. Ah, yes. The "actress."

MISS TREADWELL. Not according to your review.

VAN WEYDEN. *Most* of the reviews.

DAMISK. But yours was particularly scathing.

VAN WEYDEN. Incisive.

DAMISK. Invective.

MISS TREADWELL. And, *Mr.* Van Weyden, how would you like to have that smirk slapped off your face.

VAN WEYDEN. It's been tried before.

DAMISK. Only by women?

CHARLIE. Humphrey! Are you enjoying my party?

VAN WEYDEN. No.

CHARLIE. (mischievous) I see you've met Jameson and Ann.

VAN WEYDEN. Yes. I think he was about to challenge me to a duel.

CHARLIE. Will you accept?

VAN WEYDEN. No.

DAMISK. Why not? A duel between you and I might be...interesting.

VAN WEYDEN. May I choose the weapon?

DAMISK. Of course.

VAN WEYDEN. Then, I choose grammar...and between you and me, Mr. Damisk, you've already lost. Good night, Charlie.

DAMISK. Just a minute, Van Weyden...

MISS TREDWELL. Never mind, Jamison, don't stoop to his level.

(MUSIC UP—segues from PARTY to DRAMATIC—SOUND...a boat FOGHORN...SHIP'S BELL ...waves break against the hull of a ferry-steamer.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) Half an hour later I was on the deck of the ferry steamer *Martinez* on my way home through fog thick as paste.

(SOUND...footsteps.)

FLAXEN. It must be here...I felt the chain break and...

BREWSTER. For heaven's sake, Flaxen, I'll buy you another. I don't propose to hunker here all night.

FLAXEN. I don't want another. I want my LOUIE...he's been good luck and...

VAN WEYDEN. Louie?

FLAXEN. (startled) Oh, hello.

VAN WEYDEN. Good evening.

FLAXEN. We have lost Louie, he's an elephant, not a real elephant, of course—an ivory charm, with a diamond for an eye... You see, the chain broke and Louie's lost. He's always been such good luck.

VAN WEYDEN. Shouldn't be that difficult to find an elephant.

BREWSTER. Find him, my friend, and name your reward.

VAN WEYDEN. One million dollars! And *here* is your Louie.

BREWSTER. The banking business is good, but not that good.

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) He was a distinguished, grey-haired gentleman, and she, a beautiful young lady.

VAN WEYDEN. Then, I'll settle for an introduction. I'm Humphrey Van Weyden.

BREWSTER. Reginald Brewster. My daughter, Flaxen.

VAN WEYDEN. Well, now that we've all been properly introduced...

1ST MAN. Not quite all.

2ND MAN. San Francisco Police.

VAN WEYDEN. My congratulations. What can we do for you?

1ST MAN. Nothing. But we're going to do something for you.

VAN WEYDEN (puzzled) What?

(SOUND...short, very short, scuffle.)

1ST MAN. Hold still, old man!

2ND MAN. Get your wallet back.

VAN WEYDEN. (amazed) Mr. Brewster...

1ST MAN. *Booster* is more like it. And they're about the best team in the business. But if you'll testify, this time they'll both go to jail.

(SOUND...the boat WHISTLE—FOGHORN grow louder.)

FLAXEN. Please...please, Mr. Van Weyden. You won't testify against us. You have your wallet back. It'll mean prison. My father and I will...

VAN WEYDEN. (sardonically) Your father and you will get exactly what you deserve.

FLAXEN. And so will you.

(SOUND...Flaxen slaps Van Weyden. The CRACK of the slap becomes the WHISTLE blowing furiously—then THE IMPACT—two steamships collide—SOUNDS of whistles, sirens, and ships' bells—MEN and WOMEN screaming.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) The collision was apocalyptic. The steamship *Leviathan*, 90 tons of pointed steel, piled into the *Martinez* tearing her in two. Men and

women were thrown from the ship's bowels onto the deck and swamped into the sea, Flaxen and I among them.

(MUSIC...bridge—SOUND FX...all quiet except the sea lapping against debris.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) In the water, with one hand I held onto what was the rail of the ship—with the other, the unconscious Flaxen. After what seemed a freezing eternity I was close to unconscious myself.

(MUSIC.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES cont'd.) The last thing I remember out of the dawn—the outline of a schooner—and with my penultimate strength and breath—my voice crying out...help...help!

(MUSIC—SOUNDS of SEA LAPPING against a hull—CHANGE OF MUSIC.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES cont'd.) How much later I do not know...from wherever I had been, slowly I came back to life on the deck of a ship—with Flaxen lying next to me...and then, a harsh, coarse voice cursing.

LARSEN. Scum. Stupid, worthless scum!

(SOUND under narration...crewmen splashing water on a stricken man, gasping for air.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES cont'd.) At first I thought the curses were meant for me. But no. Close by on the deck, crewmen poured buckets of water on a sailor, wrenching and writhing in a desperate effort to get air. Another man leaned over him. And then came that voice again.

LARSEN. Well?! Doctor?!

DOC. (stammering) Heart—heart attack. Your first mate's had a heart attack. I'm afraid he won't survive.

LARSEN. He's drunk—and so are you. But *he* tried to drink up all the rum in San Francisco.

(SOUND...Larsen slaps the dying man viciously, back and forth across the face.)

LARSEN. Damn you! Donovan! You drunken swine.

(A MOAN from Flaxen.)

VAN WEYDEN. (NARRATES) Flaxen was still alive. I heard a faint moan and struggled to my feet.

VAN WEYDEN. Captain. This woman is bleeding to death. Can't the doctor—

LARSEN. No! Let her bleed. The doctor stays with Donovan.

VAN WEYDEN. (fast) But surely—

LARSEN. (faster) Surely my first mate's more important than some piece of lace.

VAN WEYDEN. Captain—

LARSEN. Move aside!

(SOUND...Larsen shoves Van Weyden, slamming him against the scuppers. Then a last coarse gasp from Donovan.)

DOC. He's dead, Captain.

LARSEN. He died too soon and too easy.

VAN WEYDEN. Captain. There's nothing more the doctor can do for the man, may I—

LARSEN. What are you, a preacher?

VAN WEYDEN. I am a gentleman—and that is a lady who needs medical attention, and I demand...

LARSEN. I make the demands aboard the *Ghost*. Chandler, you and Leach do something with that corpse. And, *Dr. Picard*...see if you have better luck with the lady.

DOC. Let's move her below.

COOKIE. (cockney) 'ere, 'ere, ol' Cookie'll give ya a hand with the lady. Soft as silk she is.

(MUSIC...a bridge...then FX—shuffle of boots—door closing—placing Flaxen on a table.)

DOC. Place her there on the table. Though, there's not much I can do.

LARSEN. You could sober up.

DOC. (stammering) I'm afraid she's not going to survive.

LARSEN. You say that about all your patients.

DOC. She's lost a great deal of blood... There's a splinter lodged near the pulmonary artery...one slip and she'll die.

LARSEN. She'll die anyway. She's a lady, delicate...not one of the hardy breed.

VAN WEYDEN. Doctor, if there's any chance at all—

LARSEN. Just pretend she's one of those cadavers you used to practice on at Harvard. Cookie, quit gawking and get back on deck. We've business to tend to.

COOKIE. Sir.

VAN WEYDEN. Doctor, you've got to try... Please.