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Carrie Richardson of Big Cranberry

*An Original Historic Play
by Wini Smart and Bruce Komusin*

Presented 8 August 2001,
at the Annual Meeting of the
Great Cranberry Island Historical Society.

Cast of Characters

- **Mary Caroline Stanley** (b. 1848, d. 1920), also called "Carrie" or "Cass"
Older Carrie, 71 years old
Younger Carrie, appears in 3 scenes as 26, 35, and 53 years old
- **Meltiah Jordan Richardson** (b. 1828, d. 1901), Carrie's husband
- **Leah Stanley** (b. 1874, d. 1944), wife of Carrie's brother Lew Stanley
- **Nellie Richardson** (b. 1884, d. 1957), wife of Carrie's son Peter
- **Rebecca**, a young girl who addresses Carrie as 'Aunt' (not necessarily her niece)
- **Man 1** - an island man, someone who can play the piano
- **Man 2** - an island man, someone who can honk loudly while blowing his nose
- **Woman 1** - an island woman
- **Woman 2** - an island woman

- **Announcer**

Synopsis

- Act 1
 - Scene 1 (Year: 1919, one year before Carrie's death. Location: home on GCI stage left)
Older Carrie at home, having tea with Leah Stanley, Nellie Richardson, and Rebecca. Carrie tells how she went to college in Boston, and how she met and married Captain Meltiah Richardson.
 - Scene 2 (Year: 1874, four years after their marriage. Location: home on GCI stage right)
Flashback. **Younger** Carrie and Meltiah discuss their almost-completed vessel, the *Carrie M. Richardson*, as well as Capt. Meltiah's method of navigation. Emery, their 2-year old son, will travel with them.
- Act 2
 - Scene 1 (Year: 1919. Location: home on GCI stage left)
Return to **Older** Carrie still having tea with Leah, Nellie, and Rebecca. Carrie tells about her first voyage on the *Carrie M. Richardson* to Boston, New York, and Florida, and about her celestial navigation. Also how she and Emery enjoyed the trip and about the sailors' superstitions.
 - Scene 2 (Year: late 1870s. Location: home on GCI stage right)
Flashback. Meltiah and two other men move a piano; Meltiah explains the story of the piano.
 - Scene 3 (Year: 1883. Location: Hotel in Boston stage right)
Flashback. Meltiah bursts in with news of possible business ventures. **Younger** Carrie does not listen; she is in shock, having just received news of Emery's death at age 10 on GCI.
- Act 3
 - Scene 1 (Year: 1919. Location: home on GCI stage left)
Return to **Older** Carrie still having tea with Leah, Nellie, and Rebecca. Carrie tells about Meltiah's depression and his sudden decision to abandon the sea; about their having another son, Peter; about their unhappiness working in Boston, and their return to GCI.
 - Scene 2 (Year: 1901. Location: home on GCI stage center & right)
Flashback. **Younger** Carrie in mourning. Townspeople offer condolences and discuss Meltiah's suicide.
 - Scene 3 (Year: 1919. Location home on GCI stage left)
Older Carrie is alone. She talks to her late husband, telling him what has happened, about their son Peter's wedding, about her beloved letters from Meltiah, and finally she says good-bye to him.

Carrie Richardson of Big Cranberry

Act 1, Scene 1

The stage is dark. The announcer stands at the lectern.

Announcer: "Mary Caroline Stanley, called 'Carrie' or 'Cass' by her friends, was the daughter of Enoch and Caroline Stanley.

Carrie was born on Great Cranberry Island in the year 1848. As a girl, and even after her marriage, she lived with her parents in their house on The Pool, now owned by Bob LaHotan. Carrie was a bright student so her parents sent her to college in Boston—unusual for a woman at that time. She eventually became part-owner of the Stanley house, along with her brother Lew Stanley. Lew and his wife Leah shared it with Carrie and her husband, Captain Meltiah Jordan Richardson. Lew ran the large boatyard that was formerly on the shore by the house.

Our play concerns Carrie's life—her joys and tragedies. She had an active life, sailing with her husband on commercial voyages as far as South America. She knew the refinements of Boston and New York, as well as the teeming life along the wharves of Rio and Buenos Aires.

The play opens in 1919—one year before Carrie died at age 72. The elderly Carrie is at home, reminiscing with Leah, the wife of her brother Lew, and Nellie, the wife of her son Peter Richardson. Rebecca, a young girl, joins in."

The year is 1919, one year before Carrie's death. Spotlight builds. The scene opens to a table set with a tea service, stage left. The older Carrie is at home having tea with her sister-in-law Leah Stanley (wife of Carrie's brother Lew Stanley), her daughter-in-law Nellie Richardson (wife of Carrie's son Charles "Peter" Richardson), and Rebecca, a young island girl. They are reminiscing about the old days.

Carrie: "I was twenty-two when I married Meltiah. It was 1870, the same year I graduated from college. We had a fine wedding in the Old North Church in Boston, then a wonderful reception at Aunt Celia's house. Papa Enoch, and Mumma Caroline, brother Lew, and lots of other Stanleys came from the island for the ceremony."

Leah: "Carrie! The Old North Church of Paul Revere fame?"

Carrie: "Yes, Leah, the very one where they hung the two signal lanterns that started his ride.

Rebecca: "Oh, I know! *reciting...*

Listen my children and you shall hear
Of the midnight ride of Paul Revere,
On the eighteenth of April, in Seventy-five;
Hardly a man is now alive
Who remembers that famous day and year."

Carrie: "You certainly remember your Longfellow well, Rebecca! *pause* We had the wedding there because Aunt Celia was a member."

Rebecca: "Tell us about her, Aunt Carrie."

Carrie: "While I was away at university in Boston she was like a second mother to me. She was all alone in her big house there, so she often invited me over on weekends. She helped me with my wedding, and gave the reception, too."

Leah: "Come on now, tell us how you met Meltiah."

Carrie: "I guess you could say that Aunt Celia in Boston was responsible. One day, while I was still a freshman, she invited me to a **Downeast** Party for Maine captains and mates. What a surprise when Papa walked in! Aunt Celia must have read in the Shipping Notices that Papa's schooner *Waterwitch* was in port.

At the party, there were men from all the Cranberry Isles, but I kept noticing one handsome man, a bit older than me. He had blond hair and the bluest eyes you can imagine. Little crow's feet set off his eyes when he smiled . . . and he smiled a lot that night. I guess he noticed me too, because he soon came over and introduced himself. He was master of the schooner *Montezuma*. I thought it a strange name for a Maine vessel, and I told him so! He said he **had** lived on Sutton's, but I didn't know him, because for 15 years he had been in Falmouth, with his wife Sarah, who was a Spurling."

Nellie: "Sounds like you really liked him . . . that wife must have taken the wind out of your sails."

Carrie: "Yes, she was a disappointment. But even so, after the party I kept thinking of him all that night. I couldn't sleep a wink! Why did he have to be married?"

Nellie: "So how did you ever manage to get together?"

Carrie: "I must have made a good impression because three months later on his way back to Maine, he stopped in Boston and visited Aunt Celia—**on a weekend**—when he thought I'd be there. As it happened, I was. You see, I calculated when he **might** reach Boston on his return voyage, and around that time I kept my eye on the ship arrivals."

Leah: "You were a schemer, Carrie!"

Carrie: "Maybe so. What wonderful tales he told of life at sea! He had been master of the *Montezuma*, and then the *Quickstep*. We saw each other several times that week, and he said his marriage was in ruins. His wife Sarah absolutely **hated** the sea and had no interest in boats. She resented his long absences and constantly complained about being left alone to raise **his** children. Meltiah suspected she hated him, too. He sighed and said, 'Perhaps she has found another—a landlubber.'"

Nellie: "So you still had hope!"

Carrie: "I wrote to him. Then he began to write me wonderful letters from ports all along the Atlantic and Caribbean . . ."

Carrie removes a pack of letters tied with a faded blue ribbon from a small case on the table.

"I still have them here. They're dear to me and I go through them often. He sounded so lonely. After I'm gone I want Peter to have his father's letters because they're so full of his adventures and tales of life at sea."

Nellie: "We'd like to read them. Peter doesn't remember much of his Papa."

Carrie: "You **shall** have them. I think these letters inspired me to study my courses even harder. You see, both Papa and Mumma had insisted I go to college in Boston because I was such a good student. Mumma was a teacher on here, and Papa was a great believer in education. He'd say, 'You'll make me proud one day, my little Cassie.' He always called me that. He even made up a ditty, 'My little Cassie, sweet little lassie.' He was always sure I'd been born with salt in my veins. He was bursting with pride when I took courses in celestial navigation . . ."

Carrie leans forward as if confiding a secret.

". . . but I was **really** taking them because of Meltiah. *pause* Dear old Papa! I **did** study diligently, as I knew it would please him—and it cost the family a lot of money, hard to come by."

Leah: "Your father was a great man . . . *pause* When did you see Meltiah again?"

Carrie: "By some good fortune Meltiah was in Boston again at my graduation. He gave me a tiny gold locket—after telling me that he and his wife had been divorced!"

Leah: "There's your chance!"

Carrie: "Yes, that was welcome news! Not too long after that, we decided to marry. When we announced our wedding plans, Papa was all for it. He said, 'I like the cut of his jib.' But Mumma had reservations. I guess she expected I'd fall in love with some promising young Boston medical student. Now I was to marry a man from as far away as Sutton's Island! She didn't look with favor on his age, and the fact that he was divorced! Meltiah was 20 years older than I, but so youthful and strong. And he was established—the captain of his own schooner."

Nellie: "Here you were with all that fancy book learning, and marrying a sailor!"

Leah: "It did take the islanders a spell to get used to the idea. For a while, Carrie, you were all the talk!"

Carrie: "When we married, Meltiah put down the anchor for a while. We settled here, and three years later Emery was born—but the next year he became restless and wanted a new vessel. I knew then I was to be a sea wife . . ."

Spotlight dims. The women remain seated & still in their places during the next scene. Carrie changes from old to young costume and crosses to stage right as announcer speaks.

Act 1, Scene 2

Announcer: "The island had a large population in the 1870s. There were stores, boarding houses, and bakeries, a teahouse, a ship chandlery, and even a small dairy. Two schools were needed to accommodate all the children.

Marine activities were important to the island economy. Our shores were full of bait sheds, fish and ice houses, fish drying racks, net tarring pots . . . and boatyards. There were several on Great Cranberry, as well as on neighboring Sutton's, all building or repairing large schooners for the active shipping trade. Many men had smaller boatyards, building dories, sailboats, and punts.

In 1873, three years after Meltiah and Carrie married, their son Emery was born. Next year Captain Meltiah contracted with shipbuilder Henry Newman of Manset—then called Tremont—for a three-masted schooner, large and comfortable enough to carry both his cargo and his wife and new son."

The year is 1874. Spotlight builds, and turns to stage right, where the younger Carrie is packing her new trunk. Her husband of four years, Meltiah, comes bursting in carrying ship's plans. He is all smiles.

Meltiah: "She's almost finished, my love! The *Carrie M. Richardson* . . . you'll be proud to have your name ride the waves on such a beauty! They set the three masts today—straight as arrows, they are. Black is the white of my eye if she won't be the fastest one around. She'll be 283 tons, they reckoned, and built of the finest pine. The frames are all hard oak, sent down from Bangor, and maple from Augusta way. Henry Newman is indeed a master builder! Wait 'til you see her!"

Carrie: "Will we have a celebration when she's finished?"

Meltiah: "Of course, of course! You're to invite your whole family to the launching next month. We'll have a grand time, with plenty of food and music and dancing!"

Carrie jumps up, grabs Meltiah and dances around.

Carrie: "Oh how wonderful, Mell!"

Meltiah is not a good dancer, breaks loose, and laughs.

Meltiah: "Cass, you know these old sea legs don't take to dancing!"

"Now look what I've got for my little cork fender . . . here's a ditty box I made for you, to keep your woman's things, rings and such, out o' harm's way."

Carrie: "How thoughtful you are, Mell. See, I'm starting to pack even now. There's a lot to take, with little Emery going too. I carefully packed my new sextant that Papa gave me last Christmas. Now you **will** let me try my hand at navigating won't you?"

Meltiah: "We'll see how you do. It should be better than my '**By Golly, By God**' navigation, but I've made many a trip by dead reckoning and the good Lord's help. You know, I'm called a 'dog barking navigator'."

Carrie: "What's that?"

Meltiah: "Oh, they say I hug the coast and know what town I'm near by the barks of the local dogs. Of course, off the coast of Florida you have to listen for the 'gator grunts!"

Carrie: "Oh, you silly!"

Meltiah: "Here, take another look at these plans, Cass. These will be our quarters. We added a low bunk with extra rails for Emery. He'll be as snug as a bug. You'll be busy doing the sightings, keeping up the ship's log, and watching out for Emery. With him not quite two, he'll be a handful. But it won't be all work. You'll get to visit other wives when we stop at port. They're always friendly, and you'll get plenty of invitations. Don't forget to pack summer clothes—it

gets **some** hot in those southern waters. And you'll need **dress** clothes, in case we get a special invitation."

Carrie: "Oh, I'm so looking forward to it, Mell. To be sailing with you, to see Boston again, and **New York** for the first time, and the chance to visit the Caribbean . . . even South America—how exciting!"

Meltiah: "It may not seem romantic when we hit the first storm with 12-foot seas, or get becalmed in the Doldrums. But, **yup**, the moonlit nights, the sunsets, the first sight of that bright Caribbean water and foreign ports will be romantic. I'll be so happy to have you along, Cass. I want to show you everything."

He goes to her and holds her hands. After a moment he points to the plans again.

"Now look here, how we arranged the galley . . ."

Spotlight dims. Carrie changes from young to old costume and crosses to stage left as announcer speaks.

Act 2, Scene 1

Announcer: "Captain Meltiah financed the *Carrie M. Richardson* by selling part ownership in her to investors. Naturally, he kept a portion for himself, as captain, but he also sold a 1/16th. share to Carrie's father, Captain Enoch Stanley, who was a prosperous businessman on Great Cranberry, and had part ownership in other vessels, as well.

The *Carrie* cost \$15,130—at a time when an ordinary seaman's wage was \$1.50 per day."

Same as Act 1, Scene 1: Having tea & reminiscing, 1919. Spotlight builds. Older Carrie takes up a photo.

Carrie: "Here's a photograph of the *Carrie M. Richardson*. Isn't she handsome?"

The women pass the photo around, examine it, and nod in agreement as Carrie continues.

"I can still remember that first trip. We loaded paving stones for Boston from over at Mr. Hall's new quarry in Otter Creek. We sailed in fine weather, and after I got settled in, I put Emery down for a nap at noontime. Then I practiced using the sextant and plotting the course. At first I wasn't sure I could do it. But there was Matinicus, just as I figured. Then Monhegan appeared to starboard, right where it belonged! What a proud feeling to know my calculations were true! Now we'll see what he thinks of his old 'By Golly, By God' method!"

Rebecca: "Was it fun to go back to Boston?"

Carrie (*nodding*): "Yes . . . but different coming back in our own vessel. Boston Harbor—what activity! The new section of the waterfront was a muddy mess, with wagons and pushcarts all in slop. They sure could use our load of cobblestones. We exchanged one cargo for another, this time porcelain and silver tea sets packed in barrels, fine furniture, and carpets for the Carriage Trade of New York. But when we were all loaded, Meltiah said '**Friday sail, Friday fail**' and refused to depart."

Rebecca: "Why couldn't you sail on Friday?"

Carrie: "Meltiah was superstitious, as most sailors are. Setting sail on Friday is considered bad luck, so we stayed an extra day in port. While Meltiah was getting more insurance on that expensive cargo, I visited Aunt Celia. She longed to see Emery, so I left him with her while I went to buy a folding bed. I couldn't get used to those closed-in bunks—there was just no room to maneuver!"

Leah & Nellie raise their eyebrows, with broad grins and sly looks at Carrie.

Leah: "Oh, Carrie, what you **do** say!"

Carrie: "Well, it's **true!** I still have that bed right in this house!"

Nellie (*aside to the audience*): Did you know that Bob LaHotan sleeps in that very bed today?!"

Carrie: "On Saturday we set sail for New York. The bay was white with countless sails—two- and three-masted Schooners, Brigs, Pinkies, and Square Riggers. Oh, what a sight! Further out we saw the Gloucester fishing fleet—a hundred or more sleek, lovely sloops."

Rebecca: "What a grand picture you paint, Aunt Carrie!"

Carrie: "Next we passed some lime coasters from Rockport. I'm glad **we** never had to carry lime. If it gets wet, it swells and gets hot. The swelling can split the ribs of a stout ship, and the heat can even start a fire."

Leah: "I heard of one coaster that **did** catch fire . . . they covered the hatches to smother it, and then kept feeling the deck to see if the fire was gaining. What else could they do, far out to sea? If fire spreads, the ship is doomed and it's every man for himself."

All the women exclaim over that "Mercy!" etc. & shake their heads. After a pause, Rebecca speaks.

Rebecca: "What did you do when you got to New York, Aunt Carrie?"

Carrie: "I went ashore on the pilot's steam launch to gain time, and strolled in the markets. You could see anything on the waterfront—hanging slabs of meat; baby pigs with apples in their mouths; every kind of fowl, still alive in crates, waiting for the hatchet; and all kinds of fruit in barrels and baskets."

Leah: "**We** went there once. I remember the fish market—things you'd **never** eat—huge ugly fish with big heads and teeth; lobsters with no claws; and giant shrimp. And did you go to Washington Square? What styles! And hats, so modern, with jaunty white feathers!"

Carrie: "Yes, but lucky for Meltiah, I couldn't buy too much, or even try them on, with Emery to carry. But I made up for that on later trips!"

Nellie: "I **heard** you like to shop."

Leah: "Yes, Carrie, they say you filled your house with furniture and china from New York and Boston. Did you find your oriental furniture there? And your fine lace curtains are the envy of all the ladies!"

Carrie: "Actually the lace came from Ponce, on the south shore of Puerto Rico. But on this first voyage we went only as far south as Florida."

Nellie: "Were you navigator for the rest of the trip?"

Carrie: "Yes. After Boston, Meltiah let me do all the navigating. He had faith in me then. My navigation was really useful. Meltiah would put his whole hand on the chart to show our position, which could be anywhere within 200 miles. He soon learned that my cross sights and calculations using the Bowditch tables gave a more accurate position and saved us days of sailing time to Jacksonville."

Nellie: "You're so clever, Mother Carrie!"

Leah: "Could you sail into port there?"

Carrie: "No, we needed a tow. When we reached the St. John's River, the pilot boat came out to tow us in, but they wanted \$50, and Meltiah said it was too much. He said he'd sail closer first, then give them \$30. So they settled on \$40 from where we were. They knew he was a **Yankee!**"

Rebecca: "Florida! Such a long way to go! What was it like?"

Nellie: "Tell us about Florida. I sailed from Scotland, but I've never been south of Portland!"

Carrie: "I saw alligators, pelicans, and huge flocks of Egrets and Ibis, like white clouds against the blue sky."

Rebecca: "Too bad they're killing those Egrets for ladies' hats!"

Carrie: "I saw my first orange grove. Some of the trees were blooming—the sweetest scent you can imagine."

Rebecca: "Oh, I wish I'd been along!"

Carrie: "There were steamboats on the river, some carrying passengers and others for farm produce and workers. There was talk of building a railroad there. Before you know it, those railroads will go from top to bottom, coast to coast. They'll take away our shipping business!"

When we stopped at Jacksonville to unload shoes from New York, there were letters from home. It was as good as a visit! Then we picked up lumber for our return—yellow pine for all the construction in Baltimore . . . and some Cuban molasses. *slight pause* And the crew smuggled on some kegs of rum."

Leah: "How'd you know **that**, Carrie?"

Carrie: "When we heard the whole crew singing that evening!"

They all laugh at that. After a pause...

"One night I let Emery stay up late, and we hung stern lights to attract schools of mackerel. What excitement when I caught a huge one! Next day it made a meal for all of us. That was **some** good, with fresh lemon juice.

pause On our way back north, dolphins raced with us, and flying fish landed at our feet!"

Rebecca: "I wish I could see a flying fish! Emery must have really enjoyed that!"

Carrie: "Oh, my, yes! He loved to toss back the flying fish, and he'd spend hours watching the dolphins. They talk to each other with squeals, you know. Emery would call to them and clap when they jumped. It was like a circus."

Rebecca: "Did he have a pet on board?"

Carrie: "Just a kitten. But we did have a crate of chickens for fresh eggs. Emery liked to feed the chickens, but the rooster terrorized him—until about a week out, when Meltiah decided he wanted drumsticks for dinner."

Leah: "How did the crew take to the boy?"

Carrie: "They thought Emery bothersome at first, but later they favored him—even made toys for him—and taught him to walk with a sea swagger . . . and to swear!"

Nellie: "**No!** At his age?"

Carrie: "Yes! Along with old sea lore—superstitions and such. Once when we were becalmed—not a breath of air for three days—I saw the mate whistle, while throwing an old shoe into the sea. He said, 'That'll bring us wind.' I asked him if it was to appease King Neptune. 'Don't know about no king, but it works. A man just shouldn't do it too often.'

Nellie: "I see what you mean about all sailors being superstitious."

Carrie: "They believe whistling in a calm brings fair winds, but whistling in a wind brings hurricanes. But this shoe offering was a new one on me! However, soon the sails filled and we were moving again, much to my amazement!"

Nellie: "Is there really something to it?"

Carrie: "Who knows? But I sure was glad Emery didn't **copy that!** He was forever taking off his little shoes to go around barefoot, and I wouldn't want him to throw in his only pair!"

Leah: "They're all the same!"

Rebecca: "But, Aunt Carrie, didn't you miss your family, and your home?"

Carrie: "My thoughts **did** turn to Mumma, and I missed her music lessons. But when I could smell the pine trees again, even before we saw land, I knew we were off Maine—and close to home!"

Lights out. Women remain at the tea table & sit quietly. Carrie changes from old to young costume, but remains hidden as the next scene plays out.

Act 2, Scene 2

Announcer: "The 1870s was a time of growth for Mt. Desert and the Cranberry Isles. The Civil War was over, the men all home, and the seas—free of pirates and privateers—were the most economical means of transport. Cranberry Island was on the main trade route between Nova Scotia and the great American cities to the south. As these cities grew, there was an increasing need for Maine's lumber, granite, and fish. The returning vessels brought back practical necessities—flour, soap, and coal, as well as big-city luxuries such as raisins, tobacco, popular oriental style furniture—and sometimes rum, even though Maine had been 'dry' since 1851.

During the late 1870s, Carrie, Meltiah, and young Emery made many trips together to Florida, the Caribbean, and South America. On one trip, Carrie brought home a king-size bargain."

It is the late 1870s. As Spotlight builds, Meltiah and two other men, stage right, grunt and straighten out their backs, as if having just pushed the piano through the door and inside the house, where it now is.

Meltiah: "Wait . . . Set her down . . . Let's rest a minute, boys!"

Man 1: "Why **in thunder** did you bring this **whale** of a piano back from Boston, Meltiah?"

Meltiah: "I tell you, that wife of mine, once her mind is made up, there's no changing it! You know how she likes to shop. If it's not fancy chairs it's fancy teacups. We were just about done loading in Boston when suddenly I heard Cass shouting, 'Stop! Stop!' I saw her waving atop a heavily-loaded delivery wagon. It pulled up alongside, and two men slid this huge piano down some planks, tipped their hats to the lady, and were off. I was dumbfounded! Well, I couldn't have it crushing the other goods, so we had to repack. And this **monster** had to go in first! There was nothing to do but break bulk, and undo that morning's hard work. You should have heard the crew muttering as we unloaded all those barrels and sacks to put the piano in the center of the hold. We couldn't let the load walk, it would've been like a huge cannonball destroying the ship."

Man 1: "Like it just destroyed your doorjamb!" *He points at imaginary door that piano has just broken.*

Meltiah starts to turn, to look at the doorjamb they just passed.<

Man 2: "Not to mention my toe!"

All look down at the toe, shake their heads in commiseration.

Meltiah: "Women! More trouble than they're worth, sometimes. If she wasn't such a good navigator, I'd leave her home to her mending."

Man 2: "Admit it, Meltiah—she shortens your trips by weeks."

Man 1: "And she can play a lively tune. But let's see how it sounds . . ."

Man 1 plays a few bars of an old melody (for example, Stephen Foster)—but not too well.

Meltiah: "That's enough! We'd better let Cass do the playing! But she wants it in the parlor. Let's get on with it, boys!"

Man 2: "Yes, and **by jeebers**, this time let's berth her against the wall without using my toe as a fender!"

Lights dim.

Act 2, Scene 3

Announcer: "The year is 1883—the place, a hotel room in Boston. Carrie and Meltiah are away from home again, chartering cargo aboard the *Carrie M. Richardson*. Emery is ten, staying with his grandfather on Great Cranberry, to attend school. Carrie has just received a telegram from home."

The year is 1883, the location is a hotel room. Spotlight builds stage right, young Carrie sitting alone dejected, holding a telegram in her hand, near the floor. Meltiah walks briskly in, happy, smiling.

Meltiah: "Cass my love, you're here. **What a morning!** That wealthy Irishman gave me an offer too good to refuse for the *Carrie M. Richardson*. I guess he wants to bring over some more of his countrymen. But could I sell the *Carrie*, that beautiful vessel? You know, it's our **real home**. And there's a chance we'll get that charter back to Cuba. You've always loved that Latin music. We'll all go, Emery will learn to speak Spanish, and learn more about geography. He's crazy, that Irishman—more money than sense!"

Carrie sits without moving, speaking, or looking at him. Meltiah paces up and down, all excited. He continues...

"That fellow we met two days ago really does want me as a partner in his grocery business. He thinks I can work better with the shippers. I told him I'd have to think long and hard on that one.

Cass, you're not listening to a word I've said! Cass, what's wrong with you? Are you ill?"

He goes over to her, shakes her shoulder.

"Cass, **what's wrong?**"

She slowly looks up, tears in her eyes, voice very solemn, her voice increases with every sentence.

Carrie: "He's gone, our Emery. Our beloved son. He's dead. **Our son is dead!**"

Light go out completely for a time. There is no narration. Carrie changes from young to old costume, and crosses to stage left.

Act 3, Scene 1

Same as Act 1, Scene 1: Having tea & reminiscing, 1919. Spotlight builds. Older Carrie speaks.

Carrie: "When we first came back, Meltiah was very bitter about Papa. Emery was 10, and attending school, so we left him with Papa—Mumma was away then, too. Melthia kept saying, 'What does your father know about fevers?' No one suspected the danger; it came on so fast. He had a terrible sore throat and a high fever. I think now that it was diphtheria, because he didn't have the kind of rash you get with scarlet fever. Papa blamed himself—he suffered badly. I can't help thinking I should never have left Emery."

Leah: "You shouldn't blame yourself. You couldn't have known."

Nellie: "You couldn't have prevented it, even if you had stayed home."

Carrie: "At first I couldn't believe it was true. When I'd see a lad his age, it would give me a start. I'd think it was Emery, and then I'd remember the truth and my heart would twist inside and the pain would return. Meltiah was overcome with grief, too. No doubt it's why he acted so rashly. He rushed right into selling the *Carrie* to that Irishman, and taking up the grocery business in Boston. At 55, he claimed his sea life was over. But he wasn't thinking clearly.

Well, maybe it **was** good for him to start a new career and for us to leave the island, where we had so many painful memories. At least for a **while**."

Rebecca: "Aunt Carrie, I'm so sad that Emery died!"

Carrie: "Yes, Rebecca, we were all very very sad."

Nellie: "Oh, Mother Carrie, didn't it ever get any easier for you?"

Carrie: "Well, yes—two years later I did have a little distraction. I found I was to have another baby—and me nearly forty!"

Leah: "Not to mention Meltiah, sixty! You were almost too old to have a child! What a shock **that** must have been."

Carrie: "I should say it was! Twelve years after I had Emery! Although I missed our old life on the sea, having Peter certainly kept me occupied!"

Leah: "Did a new son cheer Meltiah?"

Carrie: "At first. But soon he got broody again, when he remembered what he'd lost by giving up the sea. After all, he couldn't tell the child tales of the **grocery** business! He sold his interest in the partnership. I don't think he ever really enjoyed it. He was like a fish out of water. He'd sit for hours staring—staring out at nothing! I knew he was dreaming of sailing again.

When we came back here to the island, everyone was so kind. The ladies made a special quilt for us—it's thrown over that chair—unfold it, won't you, Leah?"

Leah: "Be glad to."

Leah spreads the quilt out on the trunk, then continues speaking.

"I've always admired it . . . See, Rebecca, how simple bits and pieces of cloth, sewn with love, can become a beautiful and useful gift?"

Rebecca: "It's lovely!"

Nellie: "But go on with the story, Carrie . . . what about Meltiah?"

Carrie: "Things just got worse and worse. He began to feel his age. When Peter turned seven, I really became worried. Meltiah stared having dizzy spells, and even fell down. I couldn't get him to smile at all. He kept saying he felt useless, and took no interest in anything!"

Leah & Nellie say their choice of "Oh, dear!" "How sad!" "Mercy me!" "What a shame." "Poor Meltiah." or other remarks, as spotlight dims.

All come forward and step off stage after spotlight dims. Rebecca exits completely. Carrie changes from young to old costume and crosses stage as announcer speaks. Leah, Nellie, and Man 2 walk to far stage right, to participate in next scene. Man 1, Woman 1, and Woman 2 stand in a group, center stage, as at a funeral.

Act 3, Scene 2

Announcer: "**1901**, and the new century brings many changes. On May 4th. William McKinley was sworn in for his second term as 25th. President of the United States. However, Vice President Theodore Roosevelt unexpectedly becomes President on September 14th., after McKinley is assassinated.

On Mount Desert, George Dorr establishes an organization to acquire land which later became the nucleus of what is now Acadia National Park.

In Somes Sound, the boom of high explosives is often heard as men work massive granite blocks at Hall's Quarry. The Western Way is full of vessels plying between the quarry and the great and growing cities along the eastern seaboard.

On Great Cranberry Island, the Stanley boathouse was a beehive of activity that spring, as boats in winter storage were readied for both local fishermen and summer visitors. But, on May 23rd., tragedy struck Great Cranberry . . ."

Spotlight builds on both center stage and stage right. Stage left remains in shadows. The year is 1901. Young Carrie is sitting stage right, crying, dressed in black. Leah, Nellie, and Man 2 are far stage right. One by one, they step up to Carrie, comfort her with brief words such as "So sorry" "Our hearts are with you" etc., pass her, touch her, offering condolences. Each one then steps down and joins the funeral group standing center stage. After all three pass, lights stage right go out and Carrie drops back out of sight and changes from young to old costume as the rest of the scene plays out. The funeral group begins to talk.

Leah: "Meltiah's finally at peace now."

Man 2: "He looked just like himself!"

Woman 1 *after quick glance at Man 2, for his remark*: "We all knew Meltiah was down, but to come to this!"

Woman 2: "He slipped out at midnight. It was high tide, and a new moon, dark as the inside of a cow!"

Woman 1: "How did they find him?"

Man 1: "Arno found him, Arno Stanley."

Woman 2: "With a rope twisted 'round his neck, one with lead weights, like they use for cod fishing."

Woman 1: "He jumped in The Pool right off Lew Stanley's dock."

Man 2: "Poor Lew, to think his brother-in-law would do such a thing! It's a real shocker."

Woman 2: "Poor Lew, indeed! Poor **Carrie**, I should say. What will she do now? She still has Peter to raise."

Leah: "Oh, I think she'll be all right, once the shock is over. She's strong and brave—she's proved that. With all her education she'll get by."

Man 1 addresses Man 2 as he speaks.

Man 1: "But Peter—now he'll need a word or two of fatherly advice as he comes of age."

Man 1 and Man 2 nod to each other, as if to say, 'Yes, we'll see to that.'

Leah: "Did you hear? When they pulled him out, they found a key in his pocket—to his trunk. And when they opened it, there were two notes and a bank book on top. So he had it all planned out. He left it all to Carrie."

Man 1: "Oh, it's a sad day for Cranberry Island—a sad, sad day."

Lights slowly dim as Leah snuffles & wipes eyes and Man 2 blows nose with a loud honk. Lights go all out again. All actors leave. Older Carrie resumes her place stage left.

Act 3, Scene 3

Same as Act 1, Scene 1, except the women have left. Older Carrie, alone, sits stage left next to table with tea service. She talks to herself. She looks at an old photo of Meltiah.

Carrie: "Oh, Mell I do miss you! I'll never understand why you did it. I know you never wanted to be a burden. You'll never know what pain I've carried in my heart. The preacher says it's a terrible sin to take your own life. But I believe you'll be forgiven. I forgive you—I know you were terribly sick. Oh, Mell!"

"Papa said all this would make me stronger—losing Emery, then **you**. But I'm sick of being strong!"

"Life is so hard. I had to stop crying and steer the course again. Sharing the house with Lew and Leah helped with the bills. The garden fed us summer and winter. I learned to can, and to fill the root cellar. Not bad for a sea wife! I helped Lew with his record keeping, did a little tutoring, and Peter went fishing. It was tight, but with your savings, we got by."

Carrie pauses, with a long sigh.

"Mell, I don't think I did right by Peter—he was grieving too. He never showed his feelings. He'd go off with his friends, come in late, and I'd hardly see him. We never talked about it, but I think he was angry with you. Perhaps that's why he started drinking."

"I'm sorry you never knew Peter's wife, Nellie. With her Scottish-Irish upbringing, she's a hard worker, a steady churchgoer—I'm hoping she'll be a compass, to keep Peter on the straight and narrow . . ."

"Oh, Mell, if you could see the island now! The great schooners are gone—now small Friendship sloops, like the one Peter has, anchor in the coves. The islands are filling up with summer people, and, needless to say, they eat the fish and lobsters as fast as Peter can catch them."

"If only you could see Peter sail! Even if he's three sheets to the wind, he can just kiss the dock, under full sail!"

She pours a cup of tea and stirs it slowly.

"And Mell, every time I drink tea from these old cups, they help me remember the good times we had, and the trips we took. Oh Mell, how I miss you!"

She picks up and opens a log book, glances at a page or two, sentimentally closes it, closes her eyes.

"If I close my eyes I can hear the wind in the sails, the rush of water under the bow, the creaking rigging. I can see you at the helm, shouting orders to the men."

"Didn't we love the islands, the trips to beautiful Rio and Argentina, our first sight of an iceberg, translucent and glowing on the sea?"

"If I get out my old sextant, I can figure what course you're sailing tonight. I can see your tall ship racing the moon, its white sails all billowing with grace, catching stars like a net."

She raises her cup as if to toast him.

"For now, Mell, you must sail alone. I'm sure it's good enough to navigate '**By Golly, By God**' up there! So goodnight, my love—smooth sailing!"

THE END

Props

Stage Left

Table, set with tablecloth, tea pot, creamer, four tea cups, preferably gold-rimmed

Four chairs for Carrie, Leah, Rebecca, and Nellie

Pack of old letters tied with faded blue ribbon

Small Case, like a jewel case, in which Carrie keeps her precious old letters

Old Log Book

Old Photo of the *Carrie M. Richardson*

Old Photo of Meltiah

Beautiful Quilt

Gray wig for older Carrie

Locket for older Carrie to wear

Black Tunic to make older Carrie appear old (she wears young bright clothes underneath)

Stage Right

Large rolled-up Ship's Plans (for Meltiah to carry on stage)

Small Ditty box (for Meltiah to carry on stage)

Chair for younger Carrie

High round table with kerosene lamp

Trunk

Telegram (for Carrie to hold)

Sextant (if possible to get one -- not absolutely necessary)

Cloth Pocket Handkerchiefs for Carrie, Leah, & Man 2 to use at funeral

Piano

Known Facts

DATES

1828- Meltiah Richardson born in Goose Cove, MDI, 22 June

1848- Mary Caroline "Carrie" Stanley born on GCI November 4

Brothers- Edward, Albion, James, Lewis, & Charles (who drowned at an early age)

1853- Meltiah Richardson marries Sarah Spurling (b. 1835); he is 25, she 18. Carrie is 5.

1853-1861 Meltiah lived on Sutton Island 8 years

1856-1865 Meltiah is master of schooner *Quickstep*

1862- Meltiah moves to Falmouth, ME. They have 4 children, then he and Sarah divorce.

1866- (Presumably) Carrie graduates high school at 18, moves to Boston for college

1869- Lewis Stanley born, 16 May (brother of Carrie; she is 21)

1870- (Presumably) Carrie graduates college

1870- Meltiah and Carrie marry; she is 22, he 42

1870- Meltiah moves back to GCI

1873- Their son, Emery Willard Richardson born, 22 July

1874- Leah Sawyer born, 15 April (wife of Lew Stanley) She is 26 years younger than Carrie.

1874- *Carrie M. Richardson* built, Meltiah is owner & master

1883- Emery dies from unknown illness on GCI, 8 October, age 10y 2m 26d

see <http://www.mnopltd.com/jean/her183-1283.html>

1883- Capt. Meltiah retires from the sea; he is 55.

1884- Nellie Curley born (wife of Peter Richardson)

1885- Charles Emery "Peter" Richardson born, 14 January; Carrie is 37, Meltiah 57.

1901- Suicide by drowning of Meltiah, 23 May; he was 73, Carrie is 53, Peter is 16.

1903- Enoch Stanley dies (father of Carrie)

1907- Caroline Stanley dies (mother of Carrie)

1916- Peter Richardson marries Nellie Curley (Scotch-Irish), who worked for Nelsons in NEH as a cook.

1920- Carrie dies, 12 October; She was 72.

1944- Leah Stanley dies, 10 September

1956- Lewis Stanley dies; brother of Carrie, they shared the Stanley homestead. Lew ran the boatyard

????- Peter Richardson owns a model T Ford in NEH, Peter goes lobstering and fishing

1957- Nellie Richardson dies, 19 November

1971- Peter Richardson dies, 14 July

Carrie used a folding bed on board ship; Bob LaHotan still has that bed, and sleeps in it.

There was a large boathouse near Carrie's house; the boathouse blew down in the storm of 1978.

Carrie brought home a large "box" piano that broke the doorjamb.

The piano is probably on Islesford.

Meltiah did fall down, became chronically ill, killed himself as described.

Carrie (and others) called Meltiah "Mell." He called her "Cass."

Steve Haynes says:

Halls Quarry- started in 1881. Prior to that, (i.e. perhaps 1874) Mr. Hall quarried from Otter Creek, but he found it uneconomical due to difficulty of getting his stones to ships for delivery.

Chuck Liebow says:

Schooner *Quickstep*, 166 tons, Meltiah Jordan Richardson master, Meltiah J. Richardson & others owner, home port Tremont

Schooner *Waterwitch* owner & master Enoch B. Stanley (Carrie's father)

Ralph Stanley says:

Built 1849 at Tremont, Schooner *Montezuma* 82 tons, M.J. Richardson master (1856 only)

Built 1856 at Mt. Desert, Schooner *Quickstep* 166 tons, Meltiah J. Richardson Wm. Preble & S. Newman owners, M.J. Richardson master 1856-1865

Built 1874 at Tremont by H.E. Newman, Schooner *Carrie M Richardson* 283 tons, Meltiah J. Richardson master

Made-Up "Facts"

Aunt Celia, Rebecca, and the anonymous men & women

Carrie met Meltiah in Boston

Marriage took place in Old North Church, Boston (it might have been on GCI)

The itinerary, events, and cargo during the first voyage of the *Carrie M. Richardson*