

## The Last Lifeboat

### Script Treatment

The following is the script treatment for UC Irvine's production of *The Last Lifeboat*. This document serves to articulate my lighting ideas and how they will contribute to the overall storytelling of the play. It also contains a scene-by-scene break down of the piece with selected research images. I have included, in red text, questions that I have for the rest of the design team.

My working concept for this piece is two-fold. The first part is to divide the play into two distinct worlds: the world of J Bruce Ismay before the sinking of the Titanic and his world after. We should be able to follow his emotional journey and see a change in his outlook on life after the Titanic was lost. The second part is for lighting to suggest whether we are moving in a linear or non-linear direction in time.

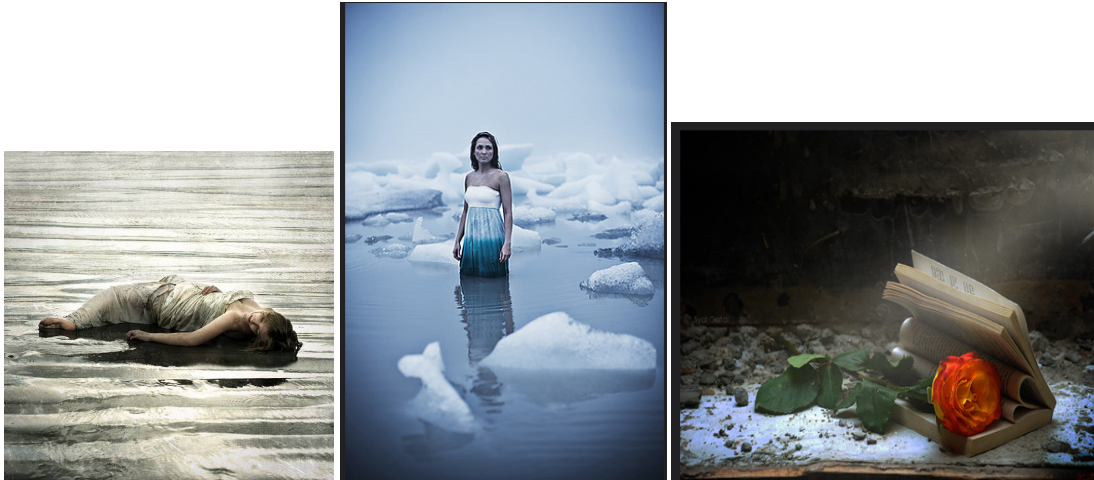
In order to effectively follow Ismay on his journey, lighting will need to clearly show how his world instantaneously changes when he wakes up on the Carpathia after being rescued from the Atlantic Ocean. It will need to show his new reality, how he copes with the changes and how he is now perceived in the world.

The world pre-sinking should have a sense of normalcy to it. A lot of the action early in the piece portrays everyday life for an upper class ship builder. Ismay's father wants him to follow in his footsteps; he takes him to work, influences what kind of girl he should date and how he should behave in order to be a well-respected member of society. Because of, or maybe despite, all this influence his father has on him I understand Ismay as a 'do good' child who was always out to do the right thing. I believe that lighting should reflect the innocence and curiosity of growing up combined with the rigidness of the society of the time. Lighting for this world should be very defined and vibrant. Lighting should fall on the warmer side of the palette and also portray a heightened reality. In other words, this world should feel like we are in a simpler time.



The world post-sinking should show a change in Ismay's life and emotional state. We should stay mostly in the pre-sinking world up until the point where he wakes up on board the Carpathia. At that point we should shift fully into the post-sinking world. I am interested in foreshadowing the post-world at the lifeboat meeting with Hearst, Andrews and Ismay. The anxiety that Ismay feels at this meeting is the same

feelings of uncertainty that he most definitely feels after the Titanic sank. This world will be different than the pre in several aspects. I believe that this world will have a much colder, flatter and more of a monochromatic feel to it. I am interested in suppressing shadows to make the world feel less defined. I imagine that the shadows in this world will be very minimal. I am intrigued by the 'grey light' effect that is sometimes found in old dusty buildings. I think that the post world should only be present when Ismay himself is present. The idea is to show how Ismay's life has changed after the accident; everyone else would not see the world through his lenses.



The second part of my concept deals with transitioning both in linear and non-linear sequences. I want to exert an external pressure on Ismay for the moments that we travel backwards in time. I understand the catalyst to him remembering, and thus transporting us, to his past is Sophie getting his signature and then mocking him. His astonishment about what just happened, I believe, caused his anger to boil over making him remember his journey. Lighting should add growing pressure to him to the point where his memories 'explode' out and he is instantly back in his childhood. At this point lighting should continue to increase in intensity to the point that it is so bright that the audience is temporally blinded and then it quickly returns to its regular levels. The transition moments where we move forward in time should be quick and clean.

This piece should be presented in a life like manner except for one moment. In order for a psychological change to one's psyche to happen like this a notable event or chain of events has to happen. In this case the traumatic event is the sinking of the Titanic itself. The chaos on the deck of the ship as Ismay hesitates about getting into a lifeboat or not should be presented as very stylized chaos. I am not sure that Ismay actually remembers first hand the events leading up to him being safe. I am interested in using sound and lighting together to create chaos. This is the moment that I want to shift from normal day-to-day lighting to using foot lights as the key source. I believe that changing the direction of the source to something unnatural the feeling of chaos will be more pronounced. The shadows that the up lights will

create will also create an ominous, haunting feel as the Titanic is foundering. Sound and lighting will work well together to imply a heartbeat during the lifeboat lowering sequence; **will there be a heartbeat as a constant during the chaos on the ship's deck?**

1:1

This is a nightmare that Ismay is having about his own death. The characters are confused; some are relieved, some are sad while others are angry. As this is not a 'dignified' burial at sea, the mood should be overcast and dreary. The actors should be lit from unrealistic angles to heighten the idea that this is an extrapolation of Ismay's dream.

1:2

Ismay wakes up just before he is put overboard. Like all dreams regarding one's death or demise the final end rarely seems to happen. He wakes up in the nick of time out of breath and safe in his house. Lighting should be in the cold post world feel for this scene. It will keep the continuity through the post world by implying it here before we leave for the past.

1:3

This scene takes place in the insurance adjustor's office. Afternoon sunlight is shining down on the blue floor. The outside is cold and uninviting. Ismay should feel like he is being confined within his own guilt of the tragedy. I believe that staying within the post world here would be good.

1:4-5

These scenes take place outside later in the day from scene 1:3. The world should still be uninviting and scary for Ismay. This will be the last time that we see the post world until we arrive on the Carpathia later in the play. There will be a dramatic shift to the pre-sinking world at the end of scene 1:5.

1:6-7

After Ismay's anger boils over and he has transported us back into his past, presented as the here and now, we arrive at Thomas Ismay's shipyard. This is the first time that we see the pre-sinking world. In contrast to the world that he just departed this world has a heightened sense of simplicity to it. I believe that Ismay went here first because it is in a world and time far away from his current problems. Lighting will fall in to a much warmer tone and have much more definition than before. It will emphasize the fondness of these memories.

1:8-10

We leave the home of the Ismay's and are now at a grand ball. I am interested in creating a mysterious and awkward feel for this scene. I think that Ismay doesn't quite know what to do with his interaction with Vivian and lighting should make express that idea. As we move into 1:10 Ismay is starting to mature and show some

signs of independence but those are quickly suppressed by his desire to appease his father. Lighting should continue to confine him.

1:11-14

These are the letter scenes between Vivian and Ismay. I imagine that they will be on opposite sides of the stage and I will be able to separate them with a void of light in the middle. I think having tight light with hard edges during this sequence will give the idea that each character is contained in his or her own world and really has no way, except through the post, to communicate with the other. This will also create the illusion of distance between the two.

1:15

We are at another ball, this time Ismay is all grown up. The lighting for this scene should be reminiscent of the last ball. Some of the same props are used, e.g. the punchbowl, so I understand the feel to be similar to the first ball. The big difference in this scene is that Ismay has more confidence about him and lighting should be more revealing about Florence.

1:16a

We find ourselves in an elevator going up to Mr. Hearst's Penthouse. I want to create an elevator on the floor out of very defined light. I see the people in the elevator as being lit from the sides, making them somewhat float in space leaving only the definition light on the floor. When the scene ends and the 'doors' of the elevator open and the characters walk from one quality of light to another to show a change in location.

1:16b

We find ourselves at the party of William Randall Hearst. This scene should be elegantly lit. I see this as being lit kind of like the ball but much more of a 'grown up' feel. I want to express the idea that Hearst's apartment is in the Penthouse suite in the middle of the city. I almost see lighting a small sunset on the projection fabrics as if we are seeing out of his windows.

1:17

We arrive at the hospital where Thomas Ismay is lying in bed ready to die. The world is changing around Ismay but the constant, his father, is still with him. I think lighting should add a sense of anxiety to Ismay. Ismay was caught a little bit off guard with him just being handed the company but quickly rebounds and tries, one last time, to do what his father wants him to do. **Would it be possible to do some heartbeats with sound at this moment?**

1:18a

Ismay is alone with the gun his father just gave him before he passed. I see this scene as very intimate and revealing about Ismay and his relationship with his father. Lighting will be very tight around Ismay giving us access to his eyes.

1:18b

Ismay is attending a meeting about how many lifeboats Titanic should carry. When the Ismay and Andrews cave to Morgan about the number of lifeboats lighting will shift to the post-sinking look for a brief moment. This is a great opportunity to briefly foreshadow his life after before returning to pre-accident.

1:19-22

These are the 'at sea' scenes. This is the highlight of the play for Ismay. The grandest ship in the world, the ship that *he* built, has set sail. Everything is going great. I want to return to the warm tones for these scenes. The worries from the lifeboat meeting seem to have been for naught, everything is going great. This is all about to change in the upcoming scenes.

1:23

We return to the breaking of the fourth wall with the cast speaking directly to the audience like they did at the top of the piece. Like the eulogies at the top of the piece the characters are remembering their times onboard the Titanic. I want to light this from a different angle but still remaining in the warm tones.

1:24-26a

This is the actual moment that Titanic impacts the iceberg. Starting out 1:24 in the pre world and subtly shifting it to the cold post world would be great. I do not want to stay there and would like to snap back to the pre warm feel at '...well I hope you enjoyed it' (21).

1:26b

Here we are on the deck of Titanic after Angela is safely in the lifeboat with her mother. Chaos and pandemonium are starting to take hold. I am interested in shifting from reality to an alternate reality using lights on the stage floor. Shifting to up light will help portray the chaos as it will introduce shadows in places that we have not seen before in this piece.

1:27

Ismay is in the lifeboat and it is being lowered down. I want to stay with the up light idea for this scene but add in a lighting effect that will complement the sound of a heartbeat that will be playing. These pulsing lights will also symbolically represent the passing of portholes on the way into the ocean. I see these lights as coming from the side and very defined.

2:1

We find ourselves off of Titanic and in a lifeboat floating in the Atlantic Ocean. It is a dark, clear night outside. I want to play with indirect light bouncing off of the stage deck like the glimmer of water. Sound and projection could aid in creating a floating effect for this scene.

2:2

This scene is a quick remembrance to another time. This should be the last time that we are in the pre-sinking world.

2:3

We return to the lifeboat floating in the Atlantic Ocean in this scene. Same look as before but the water effect is more turbulent this time around.

2:4-6

In this scene Ismay has been rescued and wakes up in a room onboard the Carpathia. This is the scene where we turn to the post-world full heartedly. He remembers these events through a different lens than the more happy memories of his previous life.

2:7

This scene fills in some of the gaps describing William Randall Hearst learning of Ismay's survival. I want to treat this scene differently than the other scenes that Ismay is directly apart of. I do not believe that Ismay would have been privy to this particular conversation so his 'clouded' view should not be expressed in lighting here. I am interested in making Hearst seem very driven.

2:8

In this scene we are introduced to Senator Smith at the docks beside the Carpathia in New York City. Ismay still is in disbelief about what happened and lighting returns to his post-accident view.

2:9

This is the scene where Ismay learns how the general public perceives him.

2:10

In this scene the ghost of Ismay's father comes to him. I think sound will play a crucial role in this scene. I believe that Ismay thinks that he let his father down and that is the ultimate disappointment for him. I want lighting to come in on him and have his world close in around him. This is a very intimate moment between him and his perception of his father.

2:11

The inquiry of Ismay begins in this scene. I want to use a very defined source coming down on him almost like an interrogation light. I do not want it to be a traditional down light shining down on the table. I am more interested in having it come from outside the room as a symbol of the weight of the outside world bearing down on him.

## 2:12-13

This scene involves Florence and Ismay's children talking about him. Again, since he is not physically present I want to return to the warmer tones for this scene. I want to stay with the warm tones for 2:13 as well because this scene does not directly involve Ismay's psyche.

## 2:14-15

These two scenes are very different yet very similar to each other. 2:14 takes place in a very public space with the reporters and the 2:15 takes place in a very private intimate setting. We should go from lighting trying to contain him to it allowing him to express how he is feeling with Florence.

## 2:16

This scene fills in more of the trail when Ismay isn't present. I am interested in keeping with warmer tones in this scene.

## 2:17

In this scene Florence goes to visit Hearst. Ismay is not present and she tries to get him to stop turning the public against her husband. I imagine that this scene takes place late at night. The moonlight will be shining through the window. Florence tries to appeal to Hearst's desires but it doesn't work. We return to warmer tones for this scene.

## 2:18

We are at the train station with Florence and Ismay. Florence is about to leave, leaving Ismay in New York City. I want to return to Ismay's post-accident world. This is where he also finds out that Florence knew Vivian was in the boat with him. Lighting should start to impose on Ismay in this scene as he senses that the world is about to change. After Florence says, "Whatever the reason, if it saved you, that's all that matters." (38) I want lighting to expand out again as Ismay realizes that Vivian is not really mad about that.

## 2:19

Ismay is back in the inquiry in this scene. We return to the bright, harsh window light as he is being interrogated more.

## 2:20

In this scene the 'witnesses' testify hard and fast. Lighting should be fast and sharp at this point. These are the testimonies that will either save or break Ismay. The sound of the gavel falling at the end stops the quickness of the scene and we then find ourselves in Smith's office.

## 2:21

This scene is where Ismay learns that he has been acquitted. Lighting should open up and allow him to feel less confined. The burden has been somewhat lifted though he knows that there still will be a British inquiry but for now he is safe.

2:22

The relief of being acquitted begins to spread to his family. The burden has been lifted and lighting isn't quite as cold as it was previously in the post-accident part of the play. It is still very soft but a little bit of warmth begins to peak through

2:23

The journalists appear and judge Ismay for his actions. The callousness of these comments should be shrouded in very cold, direct light.

2:24

Ismay begins to return to a normal sense of his life. I still want to remain in the cool environment but want the world to be more defined than it was before. The social commitments seem to be returning and the tragedy seems to be behind him.

2:25-26

Ismay and Florence are at the theatre. For scene 2:26 I am interested in the idea of a play within a play. I want to light the opening of *The Tempest* like it would have been lit in the early 1900s. I want the play itself to have a very warm feel to it but the world that Ismay is in is to be cold.

2:27

We leave the theatre and go to the street where Florence and Ismay are talking about the play. The world should be closing in around Ismay again as all the memories of the Titanic come flooding back to him.

2:28

Ismay and Florence are at home. Ismay is angry. Very cold, undefined light will be used here. Whatever sense of normalcy that he had has vanished.

2:29

In this scene Ismay is acquitted by the British inquiry. Ismay thinks that the tragedy is behind him and once again the world seems to not oppress him as much. Lighting will regain a bit of definition but still be in the rather cool tones.

2:30

The board of the White Star Line has ousted Ismay from the company in this scene. The cold, grey light returns stronger than ever in this scene.

2:31

After all these years the allure of the Titanic still intrigues many and the journalist that comes to the door is no exception. **Lighting should be back in the pre-accident feel for this scene?**

2:32-33

Ismay is an old man. Time cannot heal his wounds. He has never gotten over the guilt and frustration of the events in his life. Lighting should still be in the cold contained feel.

2:34

This is the scene where Ismay meets Angela. This scene should start out in the post-accident world but when he realizes whom Angela is it should abruptly change to the pre-accident world. I think this is the moment that throughout everything that has happened to him he realized that his action onboard the ship that night did affect someone in a positive light.

2:35-36

Ismay's death should be a very intimate moment as he leaves the world alone. We again here the Chaplain like we did at the beginning and lighting should still be overcast and dreary.

2:37

The cast breaks the fourth wall and talks directly to the audience for the final moment. Lighting should light them in such a way that implies that the mystery of the Titanic still stands today. I am interested in lighting them with cross light to define the sides of their faces in order to leave the audience with a sense of wonder.