

GLOUCESTERBOYS

Written by

Garrett A. Hughes

Adapted from

Captain R. Barry Fisher  
"A Wharf Rat's Tale"

37 Bridlewood Trail  
Honeoye Falls, NY 14472  
585-624-5910  
gah@garrettahughes.com

Registered WGAe

BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "Gloucester, Massachusetts. Spring, 1932."

FADE IN:

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - MORNING

The hands indicate seven o'clock. The bell in the clock tower RINGS out the hour.

A large herring gull, perched near the top of the tower, lifts its head and lets out a series of loud CRIES.

EXT. STREET #1 - SAME

With the clock tower RINGING in the background, JACK BELDEN, almost 12 years of age, exits the front door of a modest, white, two-story frame house.

The house, not unlike others on the street, is bordered by a picket fence. A crushed stone driveway leads to a small barn.

Jack is wearing a newsboy cap covering a thick crop of light-brown hair, and a river-driver's shirt with the sleeves bunched up over his elbows.

He closes the front door, hops down the porch steps, runs down the walk, and opens the fence gate.

Turning onto a sidewalk he runs two steps, stops, backtracks and latches the gate, then he continues his maniacal pace.

EXT. STREET #2 - SAME

With the clock tower RINGING in the background, CONOR O'FARRELL, age 12, BANGS through the door of a second-floor apartment onto an outside staircase.

He's pulling a jersey over his head and has a biscuit half-in, half-out of his mouth. Conor is tall, skinny - all red hair and freckles.

He's wearing long canvas pants that look as if they've been made of cast-off sailcloth. They are held up with a belt that is obviously too big for his waist.

He leaves the door ajar and races down the stairs adjoining the building. The building is squeezed in among others of wood-frame construction; most are in need of a coat of paint.

Conor's feet seem not to touch the stairs as he races down. Reaching the bottom, he turns and runs through a short driveway leading to the street.

The street is narrow and steep and descends to the harbor, which can be seen in the distance.

EXT. OUTER HARBOR - SAME

Patches of fog drift by. The muffled RINGING of the clock tower can be heard in the distance. ETHAN DUNLOP, age 10, is rowing a Banks dory.

His father, LIAM DUNLOP, age 42, sits in the stern.

Ethan has locks of blond hair down to his shoulders. Both Ethan and Liam are wearing oilskin trousers, sea boots, and woolen shirts over flannel jerseys.

Liam is hauling up a lobster pot. He takes out a lobster, checks the size, pegs the claws, and tosses it in a tub with several other lobsters.

(Ethan and his father both speak the Gloucester idiom with the influence of a Nova Scotian dialect.)

ETHAN

Pa, ya promised.

LIAM

Thet, I did, son. No need to remind me. Jes' head fer the dock.

Liam rebaits the pot, and tosses it back in the water. Ethan turns the dory sharply and rows quickly toward the inner harbor.

INT. BOY'S BEDROOM - SAME

A nickel key-wind clock sits on a table next to a bed. It is TICKING rhythmically. The face shows seven o'clock.

The alarm SOUNDS as the hammers pummel the ringers on top of the clock.

LENNY BELL, age 11, is lying prone on his bed wearing only a pair of dark shorts. His pillow covers his head.

The bedroom floor is a torrent of clothing. Hanging from the ceiling are several model biplanes of World War I vintage.

On the wall is a large picture of two boys in a Banks dory. One of them is Lenny.

A complete set of the "Scribner Illustrated Classics for Young Readers" can be seen scattered among the shelves of a bookcase.

At first there is no movement on the bed. Then Lenny's arm reaches out, his hand seeking the clock. When he finds it, his fingers enclose the ringers causing a muffled CLATTER.

Lenny pulls his head out from beneath the pillow, replaces it with the clock, and then rests his head of dark scruffy hair on top of the pillow.

Lenny remains in this position until the alarm is totally silent, then he puts the clock back on the night table.

He sits up, reaches on the floor for a pair of pants and a shirt, and pulls them on.

He stands up, searches the floor, finds a pair of Keds, puts them on standing up - without lacing them - and pads slowly toward the door of his room.

EXT. VACANT LOT NEXT TO THE INNER HARBOR - LATER

Jack runs up out of breath. He puts his head down while resting his hands on his knees. After a few moments of deep breathing he lifts his head and visually inspects his surroundings.

The lot contains what remains of a torn-down wooden building. Among the rubble are two Banks dories in need of repair.

The dories are surrounded by hand-painted signs on cardboard stock.

They read with a few misspellings: "KEEP OFF," "STAY OUT," "NO TRESPASING," "PROPERTY OF THE 4 BROTHERS," "U ARE BEIN WATCHED."

Jack walks over to one of the dories and runs a hand along the gunwale from stem to stern.

Conor approaches at a dead run.

(Jack speaks the Gloucester idiom.)

JACK  
(shouting)  
Yer as slow as molasses, Conah.

Conor slows down and begins dragging his toes on the ground. He gets down on his hands and knees and begins to crawl.

JACK

Slowah than that e'en.

Conor lays down on his stomach, head down, not moving. Jack picks up a clod of moist dirt and tosses it at Conor narrowly missing his head. Conor lifts his head.

(Conor speaks the Gloucester idiom with a hint of an Irish brogue.)

CONOR

Ya couldn't hit the broadside av a schoonah.

Jack picks up another clod and tosses it directly at Conor. Conor rolls deftly out of the way, gets up, grabs a stick the size of a baseball bat, and assumes the position of a batter.

CONOR

Yer muthah's got a mustache.

Jack picks up another clod, pats it into a nice round shape, and assumes the stance of a pitcher.

CONOR

Come on MacFayden. Ya ain't put one ovah the plate all day.

Jack winds up and sends a fast ball right down the middle.

Conor swings and hits it dead on, SPLATTERING the clod into a thousand pieces.

Conor drops the bat and brushes dirt out of his hair and eyes.

CONOR

Home run.

JACK

Popup.

Jack lifts his left hand showing that he's holding another clod.

JACK

Easy out. The Yanks couldn't hit thar way out av a papah sack.

Ethan runs up. Conor walks toward him.

ETHAN  
Am I late?

CONOR  
Wall, Ethan, ya missed me 'ome run.

JACK  
(moving toward Ethan)  
'Twarn't no 'ome run. I'm holdin'  
the ball.

ETHAN  
Were Captain Walker 'ere yet?

JACK AND ETHAN  
Nope.

ETHAN  
Where's Lenny?

JACK  
Dunno.

ETHAN  
Do ya think the Captain will show?

JACK  
If'n Cap'n Walker said'l be 'ere,  
'ill be 'ere fer sure.

ETHAN  
What if he jes' pulled a fast one  
on us? Maybe he had us drag these  
dories ovah 'ere 'cause he needed  
the help.

Jack and Conor look at each other incredulously, but don't respond.

ETHAN  
What time is it now?

Jack and Conor look at each other and smile.

CONOR  
Noogie?

Jack nods agreement.

Ethan's face shows apprehension. He turns and starts to run.

Jack tackles him. Conor wraps one arm around his head, and uses his other hand to administer the noogie to Ethan's head.

ETHAN  
Yeowwww. 'nuf. 'nuf.

JACK AND CONOR  
Ha, ha, ha.

They release him and Ethan stands up.

ETHAN  
(tearfully)  
Twarn't fair. Two agin one.

CONOR  
Easier that way.

ETHAN  
Promise ya won't do thet ever agin.

CONOR  
(mockingly)  
I promise I won't do thet ever  
agin.

Conor smiles and looks at Jack.

JACK  
Me too.

CONOR  
Next time I'll use me othah hand.

ETHAN  
Yer a dope.

CONOR  
Takes one ta know one.

EXT. CLOCK TOWER - LATER

The hands reach eight o'clock. The bell in the clock tower commences to RING out the hour.

EXT. VACANT LOT NEXT TO THE INNER HARBOR - SAME

While the clock tower bell is still RINGING, Captain Wallace Walker (CAPTAIN WALKER), age 56, comes into view of the waiting boys.

Captain Walker is short and stocky. He has white hair, a bushy white beard and dark eyes. On his head he wears a master mariner's cap - always in a cocked-back position.

He's walking fast with his hands in his pockets. He frequently hitches up his pants as he walks.

Not far behind Captain Walker is Lenny. Lenny is imitating the Captain's walk and hitching up his pants whenever the Captain does.

Captain Walker takes his cap off his head revealing a balding crown. He wipes his forehead with the sleeve of his jacket.

(Captain Walker speaks the Gloucester idiom with the influence of a Prince Edward Island dialect.)

CAPTAIN WALKER

Good mornin' to ya, young fellahs.  
Good mornin'. Glad ta see yer on  
time.

Lenny strolls around the Captain and joins the other boys who all give Lenny a dirty look.

CAPTAIN WALKER

I see the Corinthian is in; let's  
go find out how Carl done on this  
trip. Timmy Foote is cook with him,  
and thet man turns out good  
doughnuts. Let's go and get a mug-  
up and get the news.

JACK

What about the dories?

Captain Walker fixes Jack a look of mild reproof.

CAPTAIN WALKER

(tips his cap)  
Wall mastah Jack, they was thar all  
night, they are thar now, and  
they'll be thar aftah we get our  
mug-up. Come along now, ya'll.

INT. FOC'SLE OF THE FISHING SCHOONER "CORINTHIAN" - LATER

Jack, Conor, Ethan and Lenny are sitting at one end of the foc'sle table; Captain Walker and CAPTAIN CARL OLSEN, 55, captain of the Corinthian, are sitting at the other end.

Captain Olsen has short blond hair - almost white - balding at the temples; a round cheerful face, and bright blue eyes. He's wearing a simple white T-shirt.

TIMMY FOOTE the cook, age 33, is serving the men and boys as needed.



Timmy is a lanky fellow, short brown hair, a perpetual smile on his face. He's wearing a striped cotton apron.

When he's not waiting on the men and boys, Timmy is fussing about the galley taking stock of what's in the food lockers and making notes on a clipboard.

The boys are quiet but restless, shooting furtive glances at the two captains.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Wall, it's thet time o' yeeah, ya know. What was the wind doin' out thar?

(Captain Olsen speaks the Gloucester idiom with a Scandinavian accent)

CAPTAIN OLSEN

'Twas easterly. Now ya know what that means. Forty days o' rain an' fog.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Wall, did ya have rain an' fog?

CAPTAIN OLSEN

No, that night we had a mack'rel sky, so's I decided ta set early the next mornin'. 'Twern't out fer more'n a couple av hours...

The boys continue to look at each other fitfully, and finish the scraps of their donuts, tea, and crumb cake. The serving plates are nearly empty.

Timmy walks over to the boys' side of the table.

TIMMY FOOTE

You boys want more doughnuts, tea or somethin'?

JACK, ETHAN, CONOR

No, thanks. Nope. Can't eat no moah.

(Lenny works at the Gloucester idiom. His accent, however, is New York Lower East Side.)

LENNY

Got any more of them doughnuts?

TIMMY FOOTE

Sure, do.

Timmy takes the empty doughnut plate, fills it with a half-dozen doughnuts from one of the food cupboards, and places it back on the table.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Now I'm of a mind ta head down ta Bean Town tomorra fer a Sox game. They got a special goin' outa 'ere at nine o'clock. Ya wants ta join me, Wallace?

CAPTAIN WALKER

Now why in blazes would I wants ta waste me hard-earned coin on them blokes? If'n I's ta come home with a load o' fish like the Sox's winnin's, I'd lose me boat.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Wall, I thought you might enjoy a day at the park if'n not the playin'. How many times ya been outa this town in the last yeeah.

CAPTAIN WALKER

(tips his cap)

Once't. Had ta go ta Rockport fer a fun'ral.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

See. Ya ain't e'en been off this gol a'mighty islan' in a yeeah's time.

The boys are swinging their feet and DRUMMING on the table with their fingers. Lenny pulls his head toward the center of the table and whispers to the other boys.

LENNY

Should we ask 'em about the dories?

ETHAN

Yeah, I'm gettin' mighty frunxious.

CONOR

Well, I s'ppose he'll get 'round ta it soon 'nuf.

Jack doesn't say anything, but looks over at the two captains who are still conversing.

CAPTAIN OLSEN

Wall, it was a good year fer the football team out the high school.

(MORE)

They gonna repeat this comin'  
yeeah?

CAPTAIN WALKER  
Mebee. Mebee not...

CAPTAIN OLSEN  
Guess mebee they will what?

LATER

CAPTAIN WALKER  
... Heerd the fam'ly's a-movin' to  
the city 'cause a losin' their dad  
an' all.

CAPTAIN OLSEN  
Yup. Thet come as a shock, I  
'spect. An him on the way home with  
a good load o' fish. It's them gol  
darn widow makers. They lives up ta  
their name a'right.

CAPTAIN WALKER  
Now ya take the Killarney. She  
don't have nothin' stickin' outa  
the bow ta sink a man in two fathom  
o' water come a breeze o' wind. All  
them jib stays is bent right ta the  
deck. I ain't ne'er lost a man  
forward like thet.

There is a pause in the captains' conversation. Captain Walker takes this opportunity to look over at the boys.

CAPTAIN WALKER  
Say. You boys finished yer mug-up?  
Get 'nuf o' Timmy's donuts?

The boys all nod their heads in unison but keep quiet. Their expressions reveal their impatience with the question.

CAPTAIN WALKER  
Wall, mebee it's time we come back  
to them dories. (tips his cap) Any  
av you young fellahs got any coins?  
You'll need some scratch fer  
caulkin' n' putty n' nails to  
fasten 'er up with.

After a quick search of their pockets and a brief huddle over the table they sit back and reveal eighty-four cents sitting on the table top.

JACK  
No Cap'n Walker, we ain't got much money.

CAPTAIN WALKER  
(tips his cap)  
Wall boys, get a hold onto me when you got the coin. One o' them two dories is boun' to be yer own rebuilt dory. Ya see, if I was ta come up with the scratch fer yer dory, 'twouldn't be right, 'cause, ya see, anythin' you get for nothin' ain't worth nothin'. Unnerstan' me? Get my drift?

JACK  
(looking around)  
We unnerstan', Cap'n Walker.

EXT. VACANT LOT NEXT TO THE INNER HARBOR - LATER

The boys are on their haunches speaking powwow fashion.

ETHAN  
How much da ya think we'll need?

JACK  
He didn't say. I'd guess mebee twenty dollar.

LENNY  
That means we gotta make \$19.16.

There is a pause while the boys contemplate that figure.

CONOR  
That's a heap o' pen boards.

ETHAN  
That's more'n a couple o' foc'sles.

LENNY  
I can sell some o' my marbles.

JACK  
I need ta get me a new axle fer me soapbox if'n we're gonna sell fish.

CONOR  
Where ya fixin' ta get that axle?

JACK

Town dump.

CONOR

(rolls his eyes)

Yer askin' fer trouble. Better go out ta other way. Them Portagee own that dump, if'n ya know what I mean.

JACK

Ain't no one gonna know. I'll go early.

EXT. THE TOWN DUMP - MORNING

Jack is scrambling over piles of trash that are obscured briefly by clouds of fog. Occasionally he moves a large piece of trash to peer underneath.

Seagulls SCREECH and take to the air as Jack disturbs them from their own searches.

Jack picks up a broken curio of earlier vintage, looks it over, and heaves it to a new location.

He spies the top edge of a cloth-covered baby carriage, digs the carriage out of the pile by hand, dumps it upside down dislodging a nest of SQUEALING baby rats.

He takes a screwdriver and wrench out of his pants' pocket, and removes an unbroken axle from the carriage. Two hard rubber wheels with white hubcaps are attached.

He puts the wrench and screwdriver back in his pocket, and turns around to face MANUEL RAPOSO and two friends.

Manuel, 12, is husky, dark-complected and carries a mop of shockingly curly ebony hair. He is slightly taller than Jack, and wears faded long pants and a black sleeveless jersey.

Manuel's friends, FARO PEIXE and MATEUS ROMERO are equally dark complected with dark hair and of similar build. They are slightly younger and smaller than Manuel.

Faro's clothing is of noticeably poorer quality than either Manuel's or Mateus's. Both Faro and Mateus are wearing long-sleeved jerseys of dubious color.

(When speaking English, Manuel speaks with a Portuguese accent.)

MANUEL  
Whatcha got dump boy?

JACK  
None o' yer business.

MANUEL  
It be my business when yer in my  
dump.

JACK  
Ain't yer dump.

MANUEL  
Is now. (reaches out) Give it here.

JACK  
Reckon it's mine. I found it.

MANUEL  
Reckon it's mine.

Manuel turns his head toward Faro and Mateus and shouts in Portuguese.

MANUEL  
Tomemos-lo, amigos!

Manuel, Faro and Mateus rush Jack as one.

Jack takes a roundhouse swing with his free right hand at Manuel who ducks and counters with a SOLID LEFT to Jack's right eye.

JACK  
Uhh!

Jack drops the wheeled axle, stumbles backwards, and falls to the ground.

Manuel picks up the axle and runs off followed by Faro and Mateus.

EXT. "WESTERN AVENUE" - LATER

Jack is walking slowly along Western Avenue at a point overlooking the outer harbor.

He stops and removes his sweater. He ties the sweater around his waist and pulls the sleeves of his shirt over his elbows.

From his vantage point the masts of several fishing schooners are visible in the inner harbor. One schooner is sailing from the inner to the outer harbor.

The men on deck and aloft are busy getting up sail and preparing her for sea. They continue to add sail as she cruises through the outer harbor.

EXT. A TOWN WHARF - LATER

Jack is walking slowly; now and then he KICKS purposefully at landlocked flotsam and jetsam.

He stops to look over the fishing schooner, "KILLARNEY," berthed alongside the wharf.

Suddenly he releases a venomous KICK into a large coil of rope lying on the wharf. He's accosted verbally by Captain Walker who has just exited the aft companionway.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Ain't no way to treat me new  
stays'l halliard, Jack.

Captain Walker is dressed in grease-stained work clothes; his sea boots are dripping wet, and he's holding a heavy spanner in one huge hand while pointing at Jack with the other.

JACK

Twern't meant to harm it none,  
Cap'n Walker.

Captain Walker moves to the rail keeping his eyes on Jack.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Now if I was ta guess, ya caught  
thet eye on the jibe of a yardarm  
twarn't on no boat?

JACK

Ain't nothin'.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Looks fresh. Come aboard, son. I  
got some ice thet'll take the sting  
out o' thet.

Captain Walker goes below. Jack swings himself easily over the bulwarks near the aft companionway: the tide being favorable for such an action.

Hundreds of gulls occupy the rooftops of the ships' chandleries and warehouses lining the wharf. They CRY ceaselessly as they vie for positions on the roofs.

EXT. DECK OF THE FISHING SCHOONER "KILLARNEY" - CONTINUOUS

Jack moves forward and inspects the Banks dories stowed amidships. They are stacked one inside the other on both port and starboard sides.

Jack runs his hand slowly and lovingly over the length of the gunwale of the nearest dory.

Captain Walker reappears with a towel filled with crushed ice. He's still holding the spanner.

CAPTAIN WALKER

Set yerself down on the cabin trunk  
heeya, an' hold this up ta thet  
eye.

Jack moves to the cabin trunk and sits. Captain Walker gives him the ice-filled towel and Jack puts it on his eye with a slight wince.

They observe each other for a moment or two, then Captain Walker walks aft and gives the wheel a couple of turns. Apparently satisfied, he goes below.

Jack continues to hold the ice to his eye while TAPPING his heels on the cabin trunk. He's looking down the wharf and spies Conor jogging his way.

Jack jumps off the cabin trunk, dumps the ice over the side, wraps the towel around a shroud, and conceals himself from Conor's approach.

As Conor passes Jack moves to the rail.

JACK

(lowering his voice)  
Young fellah!

Conor starts and looks over to see Jack.

CONOR

Ya just scared the be-jaysus outa  
me, Jack.

JACK

Where ya bound?