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By the time the *Essex* survivors were rescued, in February of 1821, they were completely emaciated. Chris Hemsworth, who plays Owen Chase in "The Heart of the Sea," also endured a dramatic weight loss following his 500-calories-a-day diet which he endured for the film role. On November 22, 2015, he tweeted this photo—of his emaciated body—via his Twitter account.

On the morning of February 18, 1821, Benjamin Lawrence—a boat steerer who was on board Owen Chase’s whaler—saw a sail roughly seven miles away. Could the survivors, aboard the small boat, intercept the nearby vessel which was sailing off the coast of Chile?

After working as hard as they could to reach the larger ship, the men of the *Essex* could read her name. She was the *Indian*, based in London.

When an officer of the British vessel asked the men in the small boat who they were, and where they were from, Owen Chase—the *Essex* First Mate—could hardly answer. Starvation had made him weak and his dehydrated tongue could barely form these words:

Essex ... whaleship ... Nantucket.

Owen Chase, Benjamin Lawrence and Thomas Nickerson were still alive but lacked the strength to climb aboard the *Indian*. One can only imagine how the men aboard the rescue ship viewed these *Essex* survivors whom Chase called “the most deplorable and affecting picture of suffering and misery.”

What was the exact point where the three men were rescued—and—how many days had passed since the whale had wrecked their ship? Rescue occurred at latitude 33° 45' South, longitude 81° 03' West on the 89th day since Chase and his crew mates had left their sinking ship.

William Crozier, captain of the *Indian*, ordered that the *Essex* whaleboat be towed behind his ship. His plan was to sell the boat after reaching the Chilean port of Valparaiso. With proceeds from its sale, Crozier would setup a relief fund for the three survivors.

During the next night, however, the weather worsened dramatically. The boat disappeared in the ensuing gale.

Meanwhile ... the two men left in Pollard’s boat were still at sea, getting weaker and weaker. They were about 300 miles south of the point where Owen Chase and his men were rescued.

Ninety-four days after leaving the wreck of the *Essex*, George Pollard and Charles Ramsdell were nearing St. Mary’s Island. Off the Chilean coast, St. Mary’s was the same island where the men had made their first stop after rounding Cape Horn the prior year.

Barely alive in their boat, the two men suddenly heard voices. Beyond weak—Pollard later describes their condition as one of “horror and despair”—they were on the verge of rescue.

Twenty-one men aboard the *Dauphin* could not believe what their eyes were telling them. Two starving men, in a small whaleboat, were surrounded by bones. Too weak to even stand, the two survivors were lifted onto the *Dauphin's* deck.

George Pollard recovered enough to have dinner the night of his rescue with Captain Zimri Coffin (of the *Dauphin*) and Captain Aaron Paddock (of the whaleship *Diana*, from New York).

Like the "[Ancient Mariner](#)," in Samuel Coleridge's poem—who could not stop telling his story to the Wedding Guest—Pollard spewed out word after word after word of his horrific story.

When he returned to his own ship, that night, Paddock wrote down Pollard's tale. He said it was “the most distressing narrative that ever came to my knowledge.”

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/RESCUE-of-the-ESSEX-SURVIVORS-In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/RESCUE-of-the-ESSEX-SURVIVORS-In-the-Heart-of-the-Sea-The-Tragedy-of-the-Whaleship-Essex>

Media Stream



Owen Chase Was Emaciated When Rescued

Photo of Chris Hemsworth—Owen Chase in "The Heart of the Sea"—shared by Chris Hemsworth via his Twitter account (on November 22, 2015) depicting how his 500-calories-a-day diet caused him to become emaciated for his film role.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Owen-Chase-Was-Emaciated-When-Rescued>