

The Last Watch

by
Daniel Ziegler

Daniel Ziegler
1924 Huea Place
Honolulu, HI 96819
808 375-2242
dpzee@yahoo.com

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EXT. SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR, STATEN ISLAND - MORNING

It is 1969. The Sailor's Snug Harbor on New York's Staten Island, home for retired merchant seamen, seems almost deserted except for a few old men shuffling along a path. The majestic Greek Revival buildings that make up this complex are crumbling, paint peeling from their bricks and columns. In contrast, the grounds are ablaze with the colors of late spring, with new growth.

A late model sedan pulls into a gravel lot and parks. ROSENBERG, a man in his early 30's, emerges holding a well used leather briefcase. He wears corduroys and a tweed jacket. He briskly enters the main building through a side door.

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

Rosenberg stands across a desk from a late middle aged, severe female RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

ROSENBERG

I'm Rosenberg. I'm here to do the story about the Harbor.

The Receptionist looks at him blankly, chews gum. Rosenberg fiddles in his pocket for a scrap of paper with a name on it.

ROSENBERG (cont'd)

I'm from the Tribune. A Mr. Carter told me I could talk to some of the men...do some interviews...

RECEPTIONIST

Oh. You're the writer. Have a seat.

She calls into the inner office.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Mr. Carter! That writer's here!
(To Rosenberg) What's your name, hon?

ROSENBERG

Rosenberg.

RECEPTIONIST

You wanna sign in, Mr. Rosenberg?

He gets up and signs a register at her desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
Have a seat.

He sits.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SAME SCENE - LATER

Rosenberg has been staring at his watch when the Receptionist addresses him.

RECEPTIONIST
Mr. Rosenberg?

He gets up and crosses quickly to her desk.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
Somebody'll be with you in a
moment.

He stands there a moment.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)
Have a seat.

CUT TO:

INT. HALLWAY OF SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR - NOON

Rosenberg is being led down the hall by PARTRIDGE, a talkative old man. There are boxes in the halls, signs that the institution as a whole is packing up, which it is, and moving to a new facility in North Carolina. Rosenberg tries to get notes as the walk.

PARTRIDGE
...and then you should talk to Wallaby, cause he's the only one who could care less about where they're sending us. Closing down the fort here, they is. Got some swampland in the Carolinas all picked out for us. Wallaby's one you ought to have a talk with. But you'll do awright with Ayers, too. He been here longer than most of us. Gonna tell you all about the Snug Harbor Watch, back in the war, I reckon. You ever hear about that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROSENBERG

No.

PARTRIDGE

Make you the only person round here that ain't. Ayers'd told you by now 'cept you ain't been here 5 minutes.

ROSENBERG

Try 2 hours. In the office with that woman.

PARTRIDGE

2 hours? That's nothin'. Had a lawyer in there once spent the night on that bench. Had to beg her to let 'im pump ship next mornin'.

The Partridge laughs at his own joke as he points Rosenberg into a room.

PARTRIDGE (cont'd)

Right in there. And it's straight back down to the office with you when you're through. Go wanderin' around and she'll have my ass.

INT. AYERS' DOOR

Rosenberg enters the open door a step.

ROSENBERG

Mr. Ayers?

AYERS answers from within.

AYERS (OS)

Guess so.

CUT TO:

INT. AYERS' ROOM - LATER

Ayers is an ancient man who sits in a red vinyl armchair. His mouth is the only part of his body that moves.

AYERS

Ain't been a decent pice of beef served here since the fifties, I reckon. Feed us like dogs...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rosenberg sits with a partially filled reporter's pad on his lap. He checks his pad as Ayers rattles on.

ROSENBERG

What about the ... (reads his own note) ... Snug Harbor Watch?

AYERS

Hear about that, did you?

ROSENBERG

What was it?

AYERS

Who was it.

ROSENBERG

OK. Who was it?

AYERS

I'll tell you who it was. It was Jake Nelson and them. Nelson was the one who started it, see. He come here to the Harbor, was his problem, before he was ready. Maybe he never woulda been ready. Maybe it was just five minutes too soon. Thing is, you can't tell a man to sit down if he's got to walk. Was the spring of '41 when Nelson come over on the boat from New York like a sack of bad news.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - MAY, 1941, MORNING

A ferry plods through the upper New York harbor toward Staten Island. It is a small ship, loaded mainly with crates and bundles of goods.

AYERS (OS)

Like the rest of us, he'd waited a few years for a bed at Snug Harbor. But most of us when we got here had as much as we'd care to, stood as many watches as any man ought in one life. Him, he was itching to go from day one. Made everything taste bad for a lot of us.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We all knew we wasn't heroes or nothing, but we'd put in our time on the merchants, and a lot of us'd fought in the Great War. We wasn't trying to get out of nothing, just trying to live out our days quiet like they'd promised us we could.

TITLES roll over.

On the fore deck stands JAKE, his open collar letting the cold spring wind blow down his chest. He is a young 65 years old. He stares straight ahead at Staten Island growing larger before him. He does not look back at Manhattan.

EXT. FERRY DOCK, STATEN ISLAND

The ferry pulls in to the small dock across Richmond Terrace from the Snug Harbor. Jake disembarks, and walks up the pier, stepping in the way of the bustling men throwing crates on the dock.

MAN

Watch your back!

ANOTHER MAN

Move it, pal.

Jake makes his way off the pier and up to Richmond Terrace.

EXT. FRONT GATE, SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR

Jake enters a faded yellow gatehouse with its sign above the archway, "Sailor's Snug Harbor 1831." Before he gets through, the GATEKEEPER, a shriveled man lost inside a faded plaid shirt, calls to him from the room on his right.

GATEKEEPER

Hey, buddy! Yeah, you! C'mere pal.

Jake stops in front of the open doorway of the room in which the Gatekeeper sits, leaning back on an old office chair. Across the table sits an old man with whom the Gatekeeper is playing dominos.

GATEKEEPER (cont'd)

Visiting or business?

JAKE

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GATEKEEPER

Are you here ta visit somebody? Or
are you here ta do some work? You
want I should repeat myself slower?

The Gatekeeper moves in toward Jake in the doorway.

JAKE

I came to stay. I mean, they told
me there was room...

GATEKEEPER

You're a guest? Why didn't ya say
so in the first place. Awright,
Captain, sign in here.

He puts a register on the domino table which Jake signs.

GATEKEEPER (cont'd)

Go right up them steps. First
office on your left. Check in
there. Welcome to Snug Harbor,
Captain.

JAKE

Thanks. But I'm not a Captain.

The Gatekeeper and his friend are already back in the game.

EXT. THE GROUNDS

Jake walks up the path toward the tall white columns of the main hall. On either side of the path are benches dotted with the old sailors who are the residents of this place. Some watch the newcomer as he walks by. Others gaze at a newspaper or lean over a cane and stare at the ground. Jake glances, side to side, at the old men sitting there until his eyes come upon a fountain. It's pool-green, and surrounded by a wall with stone urns, a statue of Neptune wields a trident in its center. There is no water in it. He skirts the fountain and heads toward the main hall.

INT. THE MAIN HALL

Jake looks up at the magnificent hall, warm and richly finished, but dimmed by time and neglect. A mahogany balcony encircles the room, and paintings of great ships at sea hang on the walls. Over some of the transomed doors, painted Gothic lettering spells out slogans like "Port after stormy Seas," and "Rest after dangerous Toil."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake takes a couple of steps in and hesitantly peers into the door on the left. An old man with a leg and a half darts out of the office, brushing Jake out of the way. Jake checks the passage again and sees it is now clear. He enters the office.

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

At three oak desks sit two men and a woman. Another man sits on a bench along the wall. The young receptionist (who is the same woman that Rosenberg will meet 25 years from now) looks up at Jake disinterestedly.

RECEPTIONIST

Can I help you?

JAKE

My name is Jake Nelson. I was told there was room for me...I got a letter...

RECEPTIONIST

Name?

JAKE

Jake Nelson.

The Receptionist looks through some papers. Not satisfied, she goes to a file at the back of the office. A resident comes in and sits on a chair against the wall. The Receptionist returns with another pile of papers. She sits.

RECEPTIONIST

Nelson...Nelson...Nelson....Ah.
Nelson. First name?

JAKE

Jake.

RECEPTIONIST

Jake Nelson?

JAKE

Yes, ma'am.

RECEPTIONIST

Log?

JAKE

Ma'am?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RECEPTIONIST

Can I see your merchant's log,
captain?

JAKE

Oh. Yeah.

He reaches into his duffel and pulls out his tattered log book: a history of his life at sea. The Receptionist looks at it for a while and does a mental calculation, checking to see if the new man has indeed served the required time in the Merchant Marine to allow admission.

RECEPTIONIST

Twenty-two years in the merchants?

JAKE

Yes, Ma'am.

Satisfied, she places the log in a file in the bottom drawer of her desk.

JAKE (cont'd)

That's my log...

RECEPTIONIST

Keep your pants on. It's just for safekeeping. Awright Mr. Nelson. I got some forms you got to fill out. Do it today and get them back to me tomorrow. Go ahead and stow your things. Dinner is at 12 hundred hours. It ain't at 12-oh-five. Oh, Mr. Evans?

Old EVANS, a resident and office helper, has been shuttling back and forth, in and out of rooms in the office. The receptionist gathers some forms from her desk and hands them to Jake. To Evans she gives a key with a tag on it.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

Enjoy your stay, Captain.

JAKE

Yes, ma'am. But I'm not a cap...

EVANS

Mornin' Captain. Allow me to show you to yer new lodgings. Right this way.

He extends his bony arm to the door.

INT. HALLWAYS

Jake trails slightly behind the crumpled old Evans, who walks with a surprising sprightliness.

EVANS

Gonna like it here, captain. Gonna eat three squares a day, gonna sleep in a bed, gonna have somebody to talk to if you wanna talk. Nobody gonna pry yer mouth open if you don't.

They round a corner and enter a stairwell. Evans fairly hops up the steps with Jake trailing behind, stops at a landing and opens a wooden door into the hallway on the second floor.

EVANS (cont'd)

Let's see where they got you. Must be in...

He studies the keys in his hand. Suddenly he stops short.

EVANS (cont'd)

Whoa!

JAKE

What's the matter?

Evans recovers and starts down the hall. He slowly regains his cheerfulness, and rattles on as they walk down the hall.

EVANS

Uh, nothing. Nothing at all. Didn't think they was puttin' nobody in there with Nichols. Nothing wrong in the world. You and Mr. Nichols' gonna get on famously. Famously. You can depend on it. Nothing in the world... famously...

They have come to the door of room E217. Evans knocks timidly at the door. There is no answer. He knocks again.

EVANS (cont'd)

Mr. Nichols, sir? I know you're in there, Mr. Nichols. Why don't you open the door and say hello to yer new roommie?

There is no response.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

EVANS (cont'd)
 I got a key, Mr. Nichols. We're
 coming in anyway. Aw, c'mon
 Nichols, open up, will ya?

No response.

EVANS (cont'd)
 (to Jake)
 A little hard of hearing, is all.
 (to the door) Here we come!

Evans inserts his key and opens the door.

INT. ROOM E217

Jake peers over Evans' shoulder to take in the room. It is neat with spartan furnishings. 2 beds, 2 chest-of-drawers, 2 writing tables, 2 windows. That's it. Laying back on a neatly made bed, head propped against a single pillow is NICHOLS. He is easily 70 years of age, but seems to be not so much old as weary. A thick diary book lies underneath his hand on the bed, unopened. Evans takes a couple of steps into the room, his unsure entrance belying his happy talk.

EVANS (cont'd)
 Mr. Nichols, sir, morning, sir. I'd
 like you to meet Mr. Nelson. He'll
 be yer new roommate. Well, see ya
 later. Good luck!

And Evans is past Jake and out the door. Jake stands there for a moment before walking evenly into the room and setting his duffel at the foot of the other bed. He looks around the room. He sits down on the bed. Nichols stares ahead of him out the door which Jake hadn't closed.

JAKE
 Bed's alright. Bit soft. Had worse.

For a long while the two men say nothing, Jake hunched over on the bed, Nichols staring out into the hall. Finally, Jake rises and goes to the window.

JAKE (cont'd)
 Nice view, anyway. See the harbor
 from here. I like the fountain.
 That's Neptune, isn't it? God of
 the sea.

NICHOLS
 Dry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake honestly hadn't expected Nichols to speak and turns briskly around.

JAKE

What?

NICHOLS

Ain't worked in years.

Jake realizes what his roommate is talking about as he turns back to look at the fountain outside.

JAKE

How long have you been here?

NICHOLS

Dry as a bone.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ROOM E217 - NOON

Both men are lying back on their beds, Nichols as before, Jake in imitation of his new roommate. Jake's gear has been stowed. The door has been closed. From someplace not far off there are a series of bells. Wordlessly, Nichols rises and dons an old coat. He opens the door and exits the room, leaving the door ajar. Jake watches this with some interest. As Nichols leaves, Jake puts his head back on the pillow. He stares at the ceiling a moment. Then Jake gets up quickly and follows Nichols out of the room.

INT. HALLWAY

Nichols strides down a corridor. Jake hurries to catch up.

INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY

Nichols disappears through a door. Jake doesn't seem to be gaining ground, although it doesn't seem like Nichols is rushing.

INT. TOP OF STAIRWAY

Jake follows Nichols down the stairs. The door at the bottom of the stairway is still swinging from Nichols' exit by the time Jake gets there.

INT. ANOTHER HALLWAY

Nichols makes a final turn around a far corner. Jake turns the last corner and stops short. In front of him is a long corridor between two buildings with rows of windows and benches lining either side. Seated and standing along this sunlit corridor are scores of the residents of the Harbor, old men in old clothes, several with crutches, most of them dressed too warmly and shaved not enough. Several of them are talking amongst themselves, though not a few sit quietly staring out the windows on the opposite side.

Nichols is already sitting down at the near end of the corridor. At the far end are the double doors to the dining room. The men are all waiting for lunch. A couple of benches down from Nichols and on the opposite side, a group of men are listening to an animated but absent old fellow named DONAHUE, who tells a story of dubious authenticity.

DONAHUE

So there we is. Two hundred miles
up the ass of the Yangtze river. So
deep into China make your eyes
squint by themselves and your teeth
stick out.

Donahue crudely imitates a Chinaman. A couple of the men laugh.

DONAHUE (CONT.) (cont'd)

We ain't got nothin' to eat but the
soles of our shoes, and none of the
farmers'd even sell us a grain of
rice. So there we is. Captain says
he needs 3 brave volunteers, that
might not make it back alive, so I
raised my hand...

SAILOR 1

He was scratching his head!

A few men laugh.

SAILOR 2

Thought they was handing out clean
underwear!

A lot of men laugh. Donahue ignores them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONAHUE

Plan was to take the launch ashore late at night with a bunch of gunny sacks and raid this temple they got along the river. If we was to get caught, the Captain said, we was on our own.

SAILOR 3

And there ain't no chow mein for dinner!

They all laugh. Two bells ring and the double doors at the end of the hall open.

SAILOR 4

Speaking of chow...

The men that have been seated rise slowly and begin to shuffle into the dining room. All the men around Donahue get up as well. The storyteller himself tries to go on, but finds he is talking to the backs of his audience. Only Jake is still seated, watching Donahue as he tries to compete with the lure of lunch. Donahue doesn't notice Jake.

DONAHUE

So we get ourselves ready, load our guns and grab some pots we was going to cook up some rice in on the spot...that's how hungry we is...

INT. DINING ROOM

The men file into the dining room and seat themselves at long tables with stained white tablecloths running the length of the room. On the tables are bowls and spoons and tureens of soup.

When all the men have found their places and sat, the GOVERNOR, the humorless uniformed man who is in charge of the institution, remains standing at the head of the table at the front. He waits for silence. It takes some time.

GOVERNOR

For this food we are about to receive, we thank Almighty God, who has provided for us all our days at sea and now, in the autumn of our years in our Snug Harbor. Amen.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A few of the men, not nearly all, mutter "Amen" in response. They wait for the Governor to be seated before saying anything else. And then the room slowly fills with the sounds of dinner: clinking dishes and a murmur of conversation.

Jake sits at one table, not far from Nichols, who eats in silence. On the other side of the table is Donahue, who is trying to continue his story, though he has lost much of his audience to the soup. Next to him sits HADLER, a stocky, hirsute man, Donahue's friend, who is trying to eat in peace.

DONAHUE

So we snuck ashore like cats, and
on up to this temple they got
there. They got this wall, musta
been a thousand feet high. On the
other side is two thousand Chinamen
guarding that rice like it were
gold...

The soup is thin and, judging from various reactions of the men, tasteless. Jake simply stares into his bowl. One man at another table pours salt into his bowl. Another watches him for a time before saying something.

2ND MAN

Leave off with the salt and save
some for the rest of us.

1ST MAN

Ain't enough salt in the ocean make
this crap taste like anything.

2ND MAN

Then leave off with it and pass it
over here.

1ST MAN

I'll use it till I'm through with
it.

HADLER

Shut up and eat it, both of you,
before they take it away and we'll
have to listen to you crying
hungry.

Hadler achieves peace, and goes on eating. As do other men in the hall, their gaping toothless mouths slurping soup and trying to gum the hard, stale bread.

Back at Jake's table a plate of gray meat is passed around and something that could be mashed potatoes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake takes a small portion of each. A few of the men load their plates and eat with fervor, though most pick. Nichols eats steadily, but without relish.

Jake samples the food on his plate and chews. He swallows. He then puts down his fork and his knife, which had barely been sharp enough to cut the meat. He watches the others eating, taking in the room from man to man. He then pushes his chair back from the table with a loud scraping noise, gets up, and walks out of the dining room. All the men stop eating in mid-chew and watch the newcomer walk out on dinner.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ROOM E217 - EARLY AFTERNOON

Jake is standing by the window, staring out at the fountain when Evans, the man who showed Jake his room that morning, knocks twice and sticks his head in the door.

EVANS

Mr. Nelson?

Jake doesn't turn around to face him.

JAKE

Yes?

EVANS

Governor wants to meet you.

JAKE

OK.

He doesn't move.

EVANS

He's waiting. I'm supposed to fetch you.

JAKE

Lead the way.

Jake turns and follows old Evans out.

INT. HALLWAY

Jake is about to pull the door to his room shut when he sees Nichols coming down the hall toward their room. He leaves the door open. The two roommates eye each other as they pass in the hall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLS

Nice.

INT. GOVERNOR'S STUDY

It is a warmly furnished room of brass and mahogany, nautical trimmings such as barometer, ship's clock and sextants. On the walls hang portraits of the past Governors of the Harbor, which give the effect of a gallery of judges. Behind an imposing desk, the Governor sits, writing a letter. He does not look up as Jake enters.

GOVERNOR

Have a seat, Mr. Nelson.

Jake sits in a rich armchair across the desk. For a while, the Governor continues writing before setting down his pen and looking up.

GOVERNOR (cont'd)

I understand that today is your first day as a guest of Snug Harbor, Mr. Nelson.

JAKE

Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR

I trust you find your accommodations suitable. Your room is satisfactory?

JAKE

Yes, sir.

GOVERNOR

And your first meal as a guest, Mr. Nelson. I trust you enjoyed the meal we served you?

JAKE

Sir, I...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GOVERNOR

Mr. Nelson, at Snug Harbor we term the residents "guests." This is not to be euphemistic, but to impress all who come here that they are indeed guests, here only by the grace of the estate of Robert Richard Randall, without whose generosity, most of these men would be living on the streets...

JAKE

Sir...

GOVERNOR

...and as guests, we expect those staying here to show some manners and this includes appreciation of the food we graciously see fit to serve and respect for the decorum of a civilized dining room.

JAKE

Sir...

GOVERNOR

That will be all, Mr. Nelson. See you at supper.

With that, the Governor turns back to his work.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Evans is leading Jake down a hall in the basement of one of the buildings.

EVANS

Governor says you got to find yerself a hobby. Idle hands do the devil's work, he says.

JAKE

He ought to know.

INT. HOBBY SHOP

Evans has led the way into the hobby shop, shabbily equipped and only partially in use by a handful of men who sulk around, working at a snail's pace on various projects that seem like they will never be finished. One man actually has fallen asleep at a work bench, his fingers dripping glue.

EVANS

What you got here is a whole slew of different things you could work on. You got yer baskets, nets, paintings, ships in bottles, that sort of stuff. Once a year you got yer open house when you could sell the crap to family and folks passing through. Be surprised how much you could get, too. Folks figure it's authentic.

Evans leads Jake to a far corner of the shop where a few men seem to be working more intently than the others.

EVANS (cont'd)

Over here you got yer model boats. Some of 'em float, some of 'em don't. Good ones sail pretty good.

Evans continues talking although Jake hardly hears him. He is looking at the models in various stages of completion. Some men are still carving hulls, while others are rigging sails. A couple of the models are impressively detailed.

EVANS (cont'd)

Tradition has it you take yer model down to the waterfront when she's finished and show the fellas how well she do, though there ain't been any Cup winners lately, I could tell you that

JAKE

I'll do this.

EVANS

Wait a while, Captain. You got to know what yer doing to build one of them...

JAKE

I'll do this.

INT. DINING ROOM - SUPPER

The men are squawking at each other through mouths full of food. Donahue is fairly shouting his story - the same one he evidently tells everyday in various versions - over the din.

DONAHUE

Musta been 10 thousand chinks on
the other aside of that wall,
guarding that rice with their
lives, buzzin' like a hive of
bees...

Everyone ignores him. Jake sulks in front of his plate, picking at it now and again. The burly, unshaven fellow named Hadler sitting next to him, shoves a plate in front of Jake's nose.

HADLER

Seconds, Mr. Nelson?

Several of the men nearby laugh. Jake stares straight ahead.

From a table across the room, a man much younger than the rest, a bland faced man named FLETCHER, watches Jake intently.

INT. ROOM E217 - LATE NIGHT

Jake stares out the window at New York Harbor and the city beyond.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ROOM E217 - LATER

Jake lays on his bed, his small desk lamp pointed to illuminate the pages on a well worn slim volume, from which Jake faintly reads aloud.

JAKE

"It profits not that an idle king
match'd with an aged wife
I mete and dole unequal laws unto a
savage race.
I cannot rest from travel,
I will drink life to the lees."

The last two lines are muttered with some conviction, Jake pauses in the nighttime's stillness. From across the room:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLS
Put out the light.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. THE HOBBY SHOP - AFTERNOON

Many of the men are gathered around GRIFFEN, a neat man with long fingers, who is putting the finishing touches on a model schooner, a very fine model. They offer comments, which Griffen seems not to notice. An overweight fellow named REMPLEY seems to be the ringleader.

REMPLEY
Has stubby little masts, don't she?

SECOND MAN
Perfect proportion, I'd say.

THIRD MAN
The hell you'd know about proportion. Never been on a sailing ship in your life.

SECOND MAN
Sure as hell have.

THIRD MAN
Been on stink pots all your life.

REMPLEY
Mr. Griffen here spent his life in an engine room. Ain't that right, "Chief Engineer" Griffen? Got a little diesel motor stuck in that thing to make her go?

Some of the men chuckle. Griffen looks up at Rempley as if to say something, then turns back to tinker with his model.

FOURTH MAN
She got beautiful lines, Griffen.
Don't listen to 'em.

Jake sits by himself at the far end of the work table, carving the hull of a model sloop. He takes no notice of the argument. Rempley turns toward the new man.

REMPLEY
(to Jake)
What do you think, "Captain" Nelson? Think she'll sail?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

All the men turn toward Jake, waiting for his reply.

JAKE
I wouldn't know.

REMPLEY
'Course you wouldn't. You could
tell that from the scow yer
carvin'.

THIRD MAN
He couldn't make a cork float!

All the men laugh, except for Griffen, who merely continues his adjustments. Rempley has walked over to Jake and is looking over his shoulder at the carved hull. He speaks to the others.

REMPLEY
How would you sink a fine ship like
this?

SECOND MAN
Don't know.

REMPLEY
You'd put it in the water!

They all roar with laughter, except Griffen.

REMPLEY (cont'd)
Why, this piece of garbage'd sink
in mud!

They laugh. Jake continues carving.

REMPLEY (cont'd)
You and Griffen here oughta
compete. The "Race-to-the-Bottom-
Regatta!"

They laugh. Griffen has picked up his schooner and is walking out of the shop.

REMPLEY (cont'd)
Where you goin', Griffen?

GRIFFEN
I'm gonna put her in the water, see
for myself.

REMPLEY
Not without me, you ain't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rempley follows Griffen out the door, with the others right behind, laughing. Jake looks up briefly, and then returns to carving.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. THE GROUNDS - LATE AFTERNOON

Jake walks along one of the paths in front of the Harbor. There are a couple of men sitting in the benches along the path, but Jake doesn't look at them. Instead he is staring out into New York harbor. He slows and stops, his gaze becoming more intent, as if there is something in the harbor he hadn't expected to see.

It is a large number of merchantmen laying at anchor, many more than one might expect. Jake studies them for a while before continuing his lonely stroll.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. PATH - MORNING

Jake walks up the path towards the ornate Randall Memorial Church. It is an overcast Sunday morning, and though organ music pours from the elaborate building, only a trickle of old men are heading in that direction.

A number of yards behind, the stringy young Fletcher follows Jake towards the church.

INT. CHURCH

One of the heavy church doors opens, letting daylight flood into the great hall for a second, and Jake walks in. It's ornate inside as well: marble and mahogany and stained glass. A small handful of men sit apart from each other in a few of the pews, so that there is a circle of empty seats around each man.

Jake does not cross himself as he enters, but slips into a pew in the back of the church and sits, listening to the somber organ recite Bach.

A couple of moments later, daylight floods the church floor again and Fletcher walks in. The younger man strides over and sits in Jake's pew, just a couple feet away. Jake studies Fletcher for a moment, then watches as the CHAPLAIN takes his place at the altar.

INT. CHURCH ALTAR

The Chaplain looks over the meager turn out and frowns. He speaks in a booming voice, but one that is booming by design, for effect.

CHAPLAIN

Once again I see that many of you have decided there are more important things to do with your Sunday mornings than to commune with God and Christ. Maybe you are out worrying your fingers with hobbies and chores. Maybe you are sleeping off a drunk. Maybe you are simply staring at the four walls of your room waiting for God to come to you.

The Chaplain pauses, his huge eyes burning.

CHAPLAIN (cont'd)

Well I have bad news for you. God isn't coming to you. God isn't making house calls on Sunday morning. You have to come to God. When the sea rages mightily and your ship is tossed on the waves, do you drop your anchor there and pray for a safe harbor to come to you? No, of course you don't. You summon your strength and sail on, sail on to find a haven from the storm. You seek it out. You do not rest till you have found it.

A couple of men are actually lulled to sleep by the Voice, loud as it is.

CHAPLAIN (cont'd)

Christ is your haven from the raging storm of this life. The Church is his port. Ships of all nations can come to rest in his calm cove. And I am his faithful tug, ready to guide you into harbor, ready to...

The rear door of the church opens and shuts, blue-white sunlight briefly dousing the altar; the Chaplain seems not to notice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CHAPLAIN (cont'd)
...lead you to your final
destination. For you are all
sinking, all so close to slipping
below the waves into the depths we
know of as damnation....

EXT. CHURCH

Jake comes out of the church and squints in the daylight. He stands there a moment before the door opens again and Fletcher comes out, the Chaplain's drone drifting out of the open door. Fletcher squints as well, stands a couple steps away from Jake. Jake looks at him curiously.

JAKE
He talks good.

Fletcher nods his head.

JAKE (cont'd)
Doesn't say much but he talks good.

Fletcher nods again.

JAKE (cont'd)
You work here?

Fletcher shakes his head.

JAKE (cont'd)
Visiting someone?

Fletcher shakes his head again.

JAKE (cont'd)
Uh-huh. You talk much?

Fletcher pulls a small pad and a pencil from his pocket and scribbles a couple of words on it. He rips the sheet off and hands it to Jake, who reads the page quickly and nods his head.

JAKE (cont'd)
Sorry. I didn't know.

Fletcher shrugs his shoulders.

JAKE (cont'd)
What's your name?

Fletcher writes. Jake reads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE (cont'd)
Good morning, Mr. Fletcher.

Jake offers his hand and they shake.

INT. THE GAME ROOM - AFTERNOON

It is a rainy, gloomy day. Several men are reading papers or listening to the communal radios through headsets. On one of the tables, a slight man with a bum leg, SAMMY, is putting new tubes in a radio. Another man watches him, fascinated.

SAMMY
That oughta do it.

He turns the radio on and big band music pours out. Sammy smiles. At another table, Jake and Griffen play checkers. Jake moves a man.

JAKE
So how did she go?

GRIFFEN
Who?

JAKE
Your model. Yesterday. How did she sail?

GRIFFEN
Oh.

Griffen makes his move, capturing one of Jake's men. A pause. Jake makes his move.

JAKE
So?

GRIFFEN
She did ok, I guess. Needs more canvas, is all.

He jumps another of Jake's men. Jake moves.

JAKE
Seen all the traffic out in the harbor past week?

GRIFFEN
Yeah.

He jumps another of Jake's men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Where do you suppose all them
merchants are heading?

GRIFFEN

Making the Murmansk run, I guess.
Your move.

Jake moves without thinking.

JAKE

Russia?

Griffen makes a move.

GRIFFEN

That's what I hear. Convoy's
forming in the harbor, gonna meet
its escort up offa Halifax. Then
off to Murmansk. Them that make it.

Jake makes his move, barely looking at the board.

JAKE

How do you mean?

Griffen moves.

GRIFFEN

What I hear, the North Atlantic
ain't no Sunday stroll these days.
U-boats don't get you, the dive
bombers will. Your move.

Jake moves.

GRIFFEN (cont'd)

Anyhow, there ain't enough sailors
on half them ships to run 'em
through weather. An' they can't
bring up enough green ones fast
enough to keep up with the ones
going down. Damn Merchant Marine
ain't what it were when I was
shipping out.

Griffen tentatively moves a man, keeps his finger on it, then
satisfied, releases the piece.

JAKE

Would you go, if you were younger?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

 GRIFFEN

Hell, no!

 JAKE

Even if you was helping the
Russians fight Hitler?

 GRIFFEN

I'd rather shine ol' Adolph's shoes
then ship out on a boat like as not
gonna get torpedoed. Have to be
nuts. Your move.

Jake moves. Griffen studies the board.

 GRIFFEN (cont'd)

Anyhow, nobody's gonna ask me. I'm
long since retired by now. Suppose
I stood as many watches as one man
ought in my lifetime.

Griffen jumps four or five of Jake's men with a flourish.

 GRIFFEN (cont'd)

Your move.

INT. THE HALLWAY OUTSIDE THE DINING ROOM - LUNCH

The men are - as before every meal - waiting along the long,
bench-lined hall to be let in for the midday meal. Donahue is
telling another part of the "rice story" to a couple of men
too deaf to hear him, and so let him go on.

 DONAHUE

...weren't nobody but myself
volunteered for the duty. Cap'n
hissself thanked me for my bravery
and tol' the President of the
United States was countin' on me to
put rice on his table...

Farther down the hall, Hadler and some other men are arguing
loudly about the war.

 FIRST MAN

Ain't none of our business.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER

The hell it ain't! I'd like go over there and rip the ears off the side of Hitler's head an' shove 'em up his butt so he could hear me kick his ass!

SECOND MAN

Not unless he hits us first, is what I say.

HADLER

I could give a black rat's ass what you got to say. You in the Great War?

SECOND MAN

No, I was in the Merchants already.

HADLER

Then you ain't seen what these Krauts'll do. So shut your mouth before your teeth fall out.

Jake has worked his way toward the group of men.

THIRD MAN

We're already helping 'em plenty by sendin' over supplies and guns, ain't we?

HADLER

Ain't enough.

JAKE

I agree.

They all turn toward Jake, mostly because not many had actually heard him say anything in the two months since he had walked out of lunch.

HADLER

Nobody cares what you think, pal.

From down the hall, Donahue's story has gotten louder. He is imitating the dying Chinamen who he had, according to this version, shot by the thousands. Hadler turns in his direction:

HADLER (cont'd)

Donahue, would you shut the hell up!!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

(then to himself:) Man's got rice on the brain. (then to Jake:) You was saying?

JAKE

I was saying that I agree with you, hundred per cent. When are you leaving?

HADLER

What?

JAKE

Sounds like you're planning to go over there and take on Hitler yourself.

HADLER

What are you, some kind of wise ass?

JAKE

Just hoping for an early end to the war. We send you over there and the Germans won't stand a chance, don't you think?

This last has been directed at some of the spectators of this brewing storm, a couple of which have begun to snicker at Hadler's growing discomfort. Hadler rises on the next exchange, as the two square off on either side of the long hall.

HADLER

I think you better put a lid on it, pal.

JAKE

I think somebody oughta put together a little going away party for you. You know, brass band, wave the flag sort of thing. I hate sad good-byes.

HADLER

That'll be enough...

JAKE

And since you'd be your own little army, you could play general and give orders all day long. 'Course there won't be anyone over there who'd listen to you...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER

That's it...

Hadler moves toward Jake as if to attack him, but from the crowd, Fletcher appears and, seeming lost, walks in front of Hadler.

HADLER (cont'd)

Git outta my way, half-wit.

But before he can move Fletcher out of the way, the bells for dinner ring and a rush of men pour between the him and Jake, towards the opening doors. Hadler is swept towards the dining room, but glares back at Jake as he goes.

HADLER (cont'd)

I ain't finished with you.

Jake follows the surge of men slowly. Jake speaks quietly to no one in particular.

JAKE

I ain't finished with you either.

INT. ROOM E217 - MORNING

Jake is lying in bed with the sheets covering his head. Nichols is up and dressed. He is placing his diary, a small book overflowing with pictures and scraps of paper, in the top drawer of his dresser. He puts on his coat and leaves the room.

A short while later, Jake pulls the covers from him and looks about the room. Satisfied his roommate has left for breakfast, he goes to Nichols' dresser and pulls out the book. He returns his bed and sits, opens the book and begins to sift through. He finds a tattered photograph of a family, Nichols with a woman who must be his wife, and two children. The door opens quietly and Nichols appears. He watches Jake for a moment before saying anything.

NICHOLS

Interesting?

Jake is startled. He quickly replaces the pictures in the pages of the book and rises to return the book to its drawer.

JAKE

I'm...sorry...

Nichols crosses to take the book from Jake before he can replace it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLS

If I ever catch you in my things
again, I'll kill you.

INT. THE HOBBY SHOP - AFTERNOON

Jake is still working on the hull of his sloop, which has come a long way, and is almost ready for the addition of the mast and sails. Griffen is tinkering with his schooner, evidently trying to improve her performance. He holds it in front of one of the large rusty fans which blow hot air across the room, watching to see how the sails respond to the breeze from different angles. At the other end of the worktable, some of the other men work on their models. On the far side of the room, others weave baskets, tie nets.

JAKE

What happened to Nichols?

GRIFFEN

Happened how?

JAKE

Why's he like that? He don't talk
to anybody, don't seem to have any
friends...

GRIFFEN

You do?

JAKE

Thanks. I got an excuse. I'm new.
How long has he been here?

GRIFFEN

10 years maybe. Longer. Was a time
he wasn't like that, you know.
There was a guy we called Preacher
used to be in that room with him.
Called him that 'cause he used to
go to all the funerals, said they
reminded him he was still alive. So
when somebody'd die, Preacher'd go.
Mostly he was the only one who
would. Funerals ain't popular
'round here.

JAKE

I ain't surprised.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRIFFEN

Anyway, him and Preacher'd sneak out of here every now and then and come back stinkin' drunk. Go down to the gin mill and jaw all night about plans to bail out of here for good. Buy a piece of land somewhere, or rent an apartment in the city, anything to keep from dying here.

JAKE

What stopped them?

GRIFFEN

Never had the dough, I guess. Then a couple of years ago, Preacher died. And nobody went to his funeral. Ain't that a bitch?

JAKE

Nichols?

GRIFFEN

Nope. An' he ain't said much of anything to anybody since. You're the first one they stuck in there with him.

JAKE

Wonder why...

GRIFFEN

Just leave him be. He won't bother you none.

JAKE

I wonder...

INT. THE READING ROOM - EARLY EVENING

The high ceilinged, paneled room is filled with long oak tables, at which sit several men reading papers and magazines. One old guest sits behind a desk: a volunteer Librarian. Suddenly a man at one of the tables curses.

MAN

Goddammit. Somebody's been cuttin' things outta my paper.

Another man holds up his newspaper, showing a hole where an article had been.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ANOTHER MAN
Mine too. Third time this week.

A THIRD MAN
What did they cut out?

SECOND MAN
How the hell would I know? It
ain't here!

LIBRARIAN
Shhhhhhhhhh!

INT. DINING ROOM - EVENING

Usual scene, with some unusual looking meat being passed around the table. The seat where Jake sits is empty.

ONE MAN
Where's Nelson?

ANOTHER MAN
I don't know.

HADLER
(with a mouthful of food)
Who gives a good goddamn?

FIRST MAN
Where's your roommie, Mr. Nichols?

Nichols looks daggers at the questioner who quickly backs off.

FIRST MAN (cont'd)
A man's got to eat....

THIRD MAN
Then what're we doin' here?

A couple of grunts of agreement from around the table, then the chatter stops and they eat in silence.

EXT. THE GROUNDS - THAT NIGHT

Nichols walks back to his room. He passes a group of men who are laughing together, but doesn't join them. He stops for a moment to look out over the harbor at the lights of the amassing fleet of merchants ships. Then he walks toward E Building.

INT. THE DOOR OF ROOM E217

Nichols pauses for a time at the door before going in. He opens the door and takes two steps inside and stops.

INT. ROOM E217

Jake is kneeling on his bed, taping a newspaper article to the wall, which is nearly covered with various scraps of paper. On the bed around him are scores of newspaper clippings and their trimmings, tape and scissors. Jake takes a look at his roommate and then continues his collage. He doesn't stop working as his roommate comes in.

NICHOLS

What in hell are you doing?

JAKE

Making a scrapbook.

NICHOLS

Not in here you ain't.

JAKE

Yes I am. See?

NICHOLS

Take it down.

JAKE

It's on my side of the room.

NICHOLS

Take it down.

Jake starts reading from the wall.

JAKE

Did you know that in 1940 alone,
German U-Boats sunk 36 American
merchantmen without a single loss?

NICHOLS

Take it down.

JAKE

Says over here that at the rate
American seamen are being killed
there won't be a merchant marine at
all within five years.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Listen to this: "With the drop in enrollment in the Merchant Marine Academy, government leaders on both sides of the Atlantic are at a loss on how to maintain the present re-supply efforts to the Allies...."

NICHOLS

I'm warning you...

Jake reads from another part of the wall.

JAKE

Listen to this: "In a speech before the House of Commons, Mr. Churchill said that, unless significant effort is made to protect American shipping, the war against Hitler will be lost in a matter of months."

Nichols will tolerate no more, and crossing to Jake's side of the room, begins to rip clippings off the wall. Jake tries to stop him. The two old men wrestle down onto Jake's bed, papers flying all over. Though they fight fiercely for a time, they are quickly exhausted. Nichols slumps down on the floor, Jake propped up against his wall.

A group of men who have gathered at the door to watch the fight stare in amazement, haven't having seen a physical fight in years. Suddenly, Nichols begins to chuckle. Then Jake joins him. As they laugh, the spectators at the door move away.

NICHOLS

Haven't wrestled in years.

JAKE

You must've been good.

The laughing subsides as the two men regain their wind. Nichols reaches over and picks up one of the clippings he has ripped from the wall and looks at it.

JAKE (cont'd)

They need our help.

NICHOLS

I'm just an old man.

JAKE

With a hell of an arm lock.

EXT. A COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

It is a bright, sunny day. A door on the side of one of the buildings opens and Jake emerges, carrying his model boat. The model is finished structurally, but it hasn't been painted or trimmed, and so it looks rougher than the impressive projects of some of the other men. Still, it is a beautiful sloop.

The door behind him swings shut as he walks away. A moment later, the door opens again and out comes a small crowd of spectators, led, of course, by Rempsey, who had given Griffen such grief when he launched his boat. At the back of the group is Fletcher, the young mute.

EXT. THE GROUNDS

Jake walks across the front lawn, oblivious to the group following behind, laughing and jeering from time to time. As they go, men from around the grounds join till the crowd numbers almost 30 men. Jake walks through the gatehouse to the front gate. From within:

GATEKEEPER

Good luck, Captain!

JAKE

Thanks.

GATEKEEPER

Hope you got insurance for that thing!

The Gatekeeper is still laughing when the stream of old men following Jake pass through the gatehouse.

EXT. RICHMOND TERRACE

Jake crosses the busy street and walks down the ramp to the ferry dock. The group following him amasses on the far side of the street waiting for a gap in the traffic. When it comes, they hurry across as fast as a group of old timers might.

EXT. THE FERRY DOCK

The dock is quiet now in the early afternoon, none of the bustle that came in with Jake when he first arrived on Staten Island. Jake is already at the edge of the dock by the time the others arrive, setting the sails according to the winds in the channel that separates Staten Island and New Jersey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

To the right lay Manhattan and New York Harbor, filled with the gathering flotilla headed for Murmansk.

The crowd of men gather around and jostle for a good view. There is quiet until Rempsey, who is front of the gallery, hurls the first insult:

REMPLEY

She'll sink like a stone.

2ND MAN

Faster.

3RD MAN

Nah, she couldn't beat a rock to the bottom.

4TH MAN

Lookit that keel! I bet she wins even if you give the rock a head start.

The MEN start making book on the facetious race with a great deal of joking and laughing. One of them has picked up a rock from the shore and holds it up.

5TH MAN

Here's the favorite in the first race, paying 2 to 1 to win. Place your bets, place your bets...

3RD MAN

Wait a while! How're we gonna know who wins?

REMPLEY

I know! We'll send the Captain down there hisself to judge!

With that he nudges Jake off the end of the pier, still holding the model in his hands. But as Jake goes briefly under, the model ship stays afloat. Her sails fill with the moderate breeze from the channel, and she gets underway with a healthy heel and surprisingly good speed toward the upper harbor. Suddenly, the men on the pier fall silent and watch the boat, which moves beautifully through the water. She behaves as if manned by the most sensitive of sailors, and even seems to trim her own sails to adjust to minute shifts in the wind.

Jake has worked his way toward the shore so that he stands in a couple of feet of water.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He watches the progress of his model not with pride so much as with satisfaction with a job well done. A couple of the men finally notice Jake standing there below them.

4TH MAN

Ain't you gonna stop her?

One man moves toward a small dinghy tied up to the dock.

2ND MAN

Quick! Somebody help me with the dinghy. We could still catch her.

JAKE

Let her go.

6TH MAN

You oughta save that boat.

JAKE

No! She's a boat. She belongs at sea, not on a shelf somewhere.

The men have focused on Jake, but nobody, not even Rempley, utters a word.

JAKE (cont'd)

She ain't stuck here like you. Sitting on a bench, guessing the tonnage of ships passing by, staring at the walls, waiting to die. She'll sink, sooner or later, but she'll be sailing when she does.

Jake has climbed up the shore, and now stands above them looking down on the dock below.

JAKE (cont'd)

Nobody leaves here. You come to port in your "Snug Harbor" and you never set out again. Its like death row, don't you see? A bit more comfortable maybe...but can you leave?

Jake singles out one unsure man.

JAKE (cont'd)

Can you?

7TH MAN

Sure I can.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Where you going? Grandchildren in Jersey? Maybe you got a sister in Brooklyn been dying for you to come and stay with the family for a couple of years. Nothing permanent, you know, just till you drop dead.

An 8th man, an amputee with a missing arm, steps up.

8TH MAN

We could go work if we wanted. Nothin's stoppin' us.

JAKE

What're you going to do? Hang paper maybe?

8TH MAN

Wait a minute...

JAKE

Nobody wants us. You got family - they're happy you're here. Can't get a job 'cause we're too damn old. Just left here to die...

REMPLEY

I don't see you packin' your bags.

A number of men mumble agreement to that.

JAKE

You ain't been watchin'. Anybody wants to come along, they're welcome.

He turns, and walks up the ramp toward the road, the group of men watching him silently. At the top of the ramp stands Nichols, who had been watching the whole thing. A few hundred yards away from the shore, Jake's model sails unflaggingly into the busy harbor.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. ROOM E217 - LATE NIGHT

Jake is reading from his small book. Nichols' light is off but he is awake. Jake doesn't turn pages, simply stares at the same page.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLS

What the hell are you reading all the time?

JAKE

Tennyson.

NICHOLS

What's it about?

JAKE

It's this poem called Ulysses about a guy that sailed around for twenty years and still couldn't sit still.

NICHOLS

Sounds like a jerk.

JAKE

Not really. See, when he gets back home to this island he owns in Greece, he finds out that his wife's got a new old man, his son is running the business, and there ain't much left for him to do.

NICHOLS

So what does he do?

JAKE

Well, he calls all his crew together and asks them to go back out to sea with him again, seein' as they were all happier sailing around discovering stuff than sitting on the porch growing old.

NICHOLS

They go with him?

JAKE

I don't know, it doesn't say. But he's got his argument down pretty good. Listen to this:
"Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Of all the western stars, until I
die.
It may be that the gulfs will wash
us down:
It may be we shall touch the happy
isles,
And see the great Achilles, whom we
knew.
Tho' much is taken, much abides;
and tho'
We are not now that strength which
in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which
we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but
strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and
not to yield."

NICHOLS

That's how it ends?

JAKE

Yeah. What do you think?

NICHOLS

Sounds like a jerk to me.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HOBBY SHOP - MORNING

The men are arguing over a boat being built by Sammy, the slight, high pitched old man whose leg had been injured in the first world war, and who walks with a pronounced limp. Every man has an opinion of how high to step the mast so that she'll sail best.

A MAN

She'll have too much sail up, I'm
telling you. One good blow and
she'll scuttle.

REMPLEY

Horsecrap! She ain't gonna move if
she don't have no cloth up.

SAMMY

I'm just trying to make her sail
good, not fast, Mr. Rempley.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REMPLEY

Good is fast, Sammy. Remember that.

Jake has been shuffling through a pile of wood blocks in a bin, looking for the raw material for a new boat when Sammy calls him over.

SAMMY

What do you think, Mr. Nelson?

JAKE

About what?

SAMMY

How high the mast should be for this hull.

Jake comes over to where the others stand. Nobody jeers at him this time, however.

JAKE

How high do you want it?

SAMMY

I think it should be like this.

He holds up a piece of wood which is slightly shorter than the length of the hull.

SAMMY (cont'd)

But then it won't be so fast, will it?

JAKE

No, it won't, but it'll be more stable. If it were my boat, though, I think I'd push her a bit more. She's got a sound keel on her, and a wide enough beam to handle more sail than that, I'd say...

REMPLEY

That's what I told him!

JAKE

I think you're right, Mr. Rempsey. Sometimes you want to push it a bit more, Sammy, see what she'll do. If you play it safe, she won't sink, but she won't win no races either.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

Maybe you're right. Thanks, Mr. Nelson.

Jake goes back to the wood bin.

INT. THE READING ROOM - AFTERNOON

Hadler and Donahue discuss an article they have read in the day's newspaper. From another table, Jake gets up to leave, slipping his slim book of poetry into his jacket pocket. He is walking out when he is stopped by Hadler.

HADLER

Hey Jake! You seen this?

Jake leans over to look at the paper.

HADLER (cont'd)

Says they spotted a U-Boat offa Ammagansett. Probably unloading spies onto Long Island. Could you imagine that?

JAKE

Hard to believe...

HADLER

No wonder all our boys are getting shot outta the water. Them Krauts can't even keep to their own side of the ocean.

DONAHUE

That's the ticket! If we woulda had a sub in the Yangtze, we coulda slipped right up to that temple they had there with them Chinks none the wiser. As it was we hadda take this leaky little raft.....

HADLER

Donahue, do me a favor and shut up, will ya?

Jake has been slicing the article out of the paper with a pocket knife during this last exchange. He pockets it before Hadler turns back to him.

HADLER (cont'd)

What do you think of that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

I thinks it's a damn shame.

DONAHUE

Sure it is. But what can you do?

JAKE

I'll let you know.

Jake walks on. Hadler calls another old seaman over.

HADLER

Hey Morris! Take a look at this,
will ya.

But when Morris gets over there, Hadler sees he's pointing to a hole in his newspaper. He looks after Jake.

INT. DINING ROOM - LUNCH

The usual scene. Soup is served into bowls. It looks like creek water. One of the men at Jake's table pushes it away from him.

MAN

This ain't fit for human
conception.

2ND MAN

Consumption.

3RD MAN

That's a disease, ain't it?

2ND MAN

What you might get from this soup.

1ST MAN

I don't have to eat this.

2ND MAN

Then don't.

4TH MAN

I ain't eatin' it neither.

He pushes away his plate of soup as well.

5TH MAN

Jake, you eatin' your soup?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Why, you want seconds?

The men roar with laughter. Encouraged, Jake pours his soup back into the tureen. Then another man does it. Then everybody is pouring soup back into its serving dish shouting at the old waiters to take it back. Evans is busy trying to restore order.

EVANS

Stop it! There'll be trouble!
Mark my words! The Governor ain't
gonna like this!

Somebody shoves the tureen in front of Evans. Another man sticks a spoon in his hand. Another tucks a napkin in his collar. Then they all march out of lunch, the men at the other tables cheering them on.

INT. ROOM E217 - AFTERNOON

Jake kneels on his bed, taping a clipping to the wall, which is now almost covered. There is a knock at the door.

JAKE

Come in.

The door opens and the Governor enters. Jake stops his work and rises to his feet.

JAKE (cont'd)

Good afternoon, sir.

GOVERNOR

If you think you are helping these
men by inciting them to
dissatisfaction with their lives
here you are wrong.

JAKE

Sir, I...

GOVERNOR

For one hundred years retired
seamen have thanked their lucky
stars there has been a place to go
after no one wanted them anymore,
after their lives have become
useless to society, and I will not
allow you to destroy that!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Nobody's useless! A man is only useless if he thinks he is. Or if somebody tells him so.

GOVERNOR

I will not be spoken to in that manner. You will remember that as a captain is to a ship, I am to Snug Harbor. And you, Mr. Nelson, are bordering on mutiny.

JAKE

What're you trying to protect...?

GOVERNOR

You will cease to disrupt our haven here, or you will find another place to go...if you can. And clean off this wall by tomorrow morning.

The Governor turns sharply and walks out. Jake watches him go before returning to his wall and the clipping at hand. The headline reads, "MERCHANT FLEET CALLS FOR VOLUNTEERS."

EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

Nichols watches from the path as one of the Harbor's residents says good-bye his visiting family. It seems to be the old man's son, his daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren, who jump up to hug their grandfather one at a time before their father ushers them into a dark blue Packard. As his wife climbs into the passenger seat of the car, the young man shakes hands with his father.

Nichols stares.

INT. THE AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

A large number of the residents are in attendance, watching the newsreels. Even so, the great auditorium, built in the heyday of the Sung Harbor when a thousand men lived here, is only partly filled.

After a story about the war in France and Hitler's increasing strength abroad, a segment comes on the screen about the German U-Boat war led by Admiral Doenitz, and the success of the wolf packs in disrupting allied shipping.

As the screen fills with images of American merchant ships being sunk by submarine attack, the audience becomes visibly somber.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Though there isn't a stray eye in the house, most intent on the subject on screen seem to be Jake, Griffen and Hadler. The newsreel tells of the increasingly bold U-Boat attacks, some right off the coast of Long Island and New Jersey, necessitating nightly blacks outs for the shoreline communities. And as the death toll of the Merchant Marine is enumerated, not a head is turned away except Nichols': he is looking at Jake.

The newsreel ends and the feature begins. THE GREAT DICTATOR with Charlie Chaplin. As the men cheer, Jake rises and, disturbing everyone in his row, makes his way out of the theater. Fletcher, sitting alone near the back of the auditorium, watches Jake go.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE AUDITORIUM

Jake stands at the top of the steps of the auditorium for a moment. Snug Harbor is quiet except for the drone of the crickets. Jake walks down the steps onto the grounds but stops at a voice behind him.

NICHOLS

Wait.

Jake turns to see his roommate at the top of the steps. Nichols joins him and they walk together.

NICHOLS (cont'd)

I been thinking...

JAKE

Me too.

NICHOLS

...why you been puttin' up all them stories about the U-Boats and the war.

JAKE

Yeah?

NICHOLS

Yeah.

They walk in silence for a while.

NICHOLS (cont'd)

An' it seems to me a damn shame young boys got to die like that when they got their whole lives ahead of 'em.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Yeah. So?

NICHOLS

So...I want to go.

Jake stops in his tracks.

JAKE

You...

NICHOLS

I ain't thickwitted. I got the message. I want to go with you.

Jake doesn't say anything.

NICHOLS (cont'd)

When do we ship out?

Jake smiles, placing his hand on Nichols' shoulder.

JAKE

Soon as we sign our crew.

INT. DINING ROOM - LUNCH

In the midst of the meal, Jake leans over and whispers something in Hadler's ear. The latter seems confused for a second, and then nods, a smile on his face.

Hadler then leans over and whispers in Donahue's ear. Donahue smiles first as if he had heard a joke, then looks fearfully at his friend.

INT. HOBBY SHOP - AFTERNOON

Griffen picks up his model schooner - he is still fiddling with the same one - and finds a small piece of paper stuck in her rigging. He unfolds it and reads a short message. Folding it up and sticking it in his pocket, he looks furtively around the room.

EXT. THE GROUNDS - AFTERNOON

Nichols walks past the small garden that Sammy and another man are tending. He slyly hands Sammy a note and walks on.

EXT. THE GROUNDS - LATE NIGHT

A group of dark figures on the lawn waits. As we hear their voices, we recognize Jake, Nichols, Hadler, Griffen, and Donahue.

DONAHUE
(in full voice)
What's up, fellas?

HADLER
Shhhhhh!! (whispering) Can't you
shut up?

NICHOLS
We oughta go.

JAKE
Let's give him a minute.

Hadler lights a short end of a cigar. The match illuminates the old faces gathered around in the cool summer air. A figure appears from the shadows, walking with a limp. It is Sammy.

SAMMY
Sorry fellas.

JAKE
C'mon, lets go.

They start off down the road to the west gate.

GRIFFEN
Where we goin'?

DONAHUE
What's goin' on, Jake?

HADLER
SHHHHHH!!!

They walk out of sight, whispering questions and shushing each other.

INT. LOCAL SALOON - LATER

The six old men sit at a large oaken table covered with spilt beer. They've been drinking. Hadler reaches out to grab the rear end of the tough-faced BARMAID. As he misses, he nearly falls from his chair. The others laugh loudly. They are having the time of their lives.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER
(in his cutest voice)
Oh angelcake!!! Another round,
please!

She ignores him as the others laugh. When they've finally calmed down a bit, Jake speaks, not a little drunk.

JAKE
So you're probably wondering why I
called you all here.

They laugh again.

JAKE (cont'd)
I been watchin' you guys a few
months now and I decided what you
need is a little vacation. See some
new sights.

They all hoot in agreement. Only Nichols knows what's coming.

JAKE (cont'd)
So I'm inviting you on a cruise I'm
taking.

HADLER
Where we goin'? Bermuda?

JAKE
Murmansk.

The chatter stops on a dime. They all turn and stare at Jake. A long silence is filled with the murmur of other drinkers at the bar and the clink of beer mugs.

HADLER
Murmansk.

JAKE
Yeah, Murmansk. The convoy forming
in the harbor's headed on the
Murmansk Run, supplying the
Russians against Hitler. I hear
they're short of crew.

HADLER
The Murmansk Run?

JAKE
Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER

An' yer saying we oughta sign on?

JAKE

Why not?

GRIFFEN

Because it's a suicide run, that's why.

JAKE

You were planning to live forever?

GRIFFEN

Well, no, but I was thinkin' about one more baseball season....

DONAHUE

(to Jake)

Yer outta yer mind!

JAKE

Mr. Donahue, all I am is tired of sittin' on my ass waitin' to die. You get sunk in the North Atlantic, you don't even gotta wait to drown. The cold'll kill you in a couple of minutes! Way I see it, you're busy fighting for your life one minute, dead the next.

Nichols, who has already made his decision to go along - though the others don't know this yet - winces at Jake's calculation.

NICHOLS

We could survive, you know...

JAKE

I hadn't thought of that...

HADLER

I don't believe you.

JAKE

You can believe it, Mr. Hadler. I'm goin'. With or without you, I'm goin'.

They mull this over for a moment as the barmaid brings over some beers, vaguely suspicious of the calm at this table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BARMAID

You's need somethin' else?

Nobody so much as notices her and she goes away.

SAMMY

So what do you need us for, Jake?

JAKE

Well, I figure one old guy, they'll say what good is that, and maybe turn me down. If we got us a group of experienced seamen, it'll be a different story.

HADLER

Then you gotta problem, 'cause far as I could see, all you got is one old guy.

NICHOLS

Two old guys.

The others turn and look at Nichols, who sips contentedly on a whiskey neat, happiest he's been in years.

GRIFFEN

You're with him, Nichols?

NICHOLS

Wouldn't miss it for the world.

Griffen thinks this over for a moment.

GRIFFEN

Be back for spring training?

JAKE

Opening day.

GRIFFEN

In that case you got three old guys.

JAKE

You're in?

GRIFFEN

If I live that long.

JAKE

Good man. Anybody else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

When do you gotta know?

JAKE

Right now would be best, Sammy.

HADLER

Well I for one will be hell-fired
if you go to fight a war and get
all the glory for yourself, you son
of a bitch. Me and Donahue's goin'!

DONAHUE

(confused)

Wha...?

NICHOLS

Sammy?

They all look at Sammy. He shrinks back in his chair.

SAMMY

I dunno, fellas. I can hardly walk.
I don't think so. I'm sorry. I
really am.

JAKE

Well that settles it then. Convoy's
pulling anchor next Thursday. I
figure it's best all around to cut
it tight, so's that by the time
they figure out we're gone, we'll
be out to sea. That gives us four
days to take care of business. Mr.
Nichols?

NICHOLS

Right. Won't be needin' much, I
reckon, 'cept your log books and
your duffel. There's a couple of
other details but that can wait.
We'll meet next on Monday night at
midnight by the fountain. Clear?

The others agree. Jake raises his mug.

JAKE

To the Snug Harbor Watch.

They raise their mugs soberly and drink, each only half aware
of what he has agreed to. Then to brighten the atmosphere:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER

Donahue, how come you never tol'
none of us 'bout the time you was
on the Yangtze River patrol?

DONAHUE

I never told you about that?

They all laugh heartily, except Donahue, who smiles, not getting the joke.

INT. ROOM E217 - LATE NIGHT

Jake sits at the small writing table working on a letter.
Nichols reads in bed.

NICHOLS

What're you writing?

JAKE

Letter.

NICHOLS

To who?

JAKE

My wife.

NICHOLS

You're married? What're you goin'
to tell her?

JAKE

Tell her good-bye. Again.

NICHOLS

Any kids?

JAKE

Yeah. I gotta son who ain't gotta
father.

He goes back to his writing.

NICHOLS

I got a couple myself. It's funny.

JAKE

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICHOLS

How I don't miss them no more.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. FRONT PATH - DAY

Hadler is whistling as he strolls down the path toward the gatehouse. He nods a greeting to a couple of men sitting on a bench on the sunny side of the path. They stare right through him, as if he hadn't passed. Hadler shakes his head with a smile, keeps on whistling.

INT. GATEHOUSE

The Gatekeeper and a guest are playing dominos when Hadler sticks his head in. The two players do not look up.

HADLER

Who's winnin'?

GATEKEEPER

None of your beeswax, Hadler.

They keep on playing. Hadler keeps on watching.

HADLER

Beats me, though.

GATEKEEPER

What do you want, Hadler?

HADLER

How you can just sit here playing dominos after what's happened.

The Gatekeeper barely takes the bait.

GATEKEEPER

What happened, Hadler?

HADLER

You ain't heard?! Hitler's dead.

GATEKEEPER

You're full of shit as a Christmas goose.

HADLER

All over the radio.

The Gatekeeper pauses suspiciously for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GATEKEEPER

Yeah?

HADLER

Sure thing. Killed in a bombing
raid.

GATEKEEPER

Well I'll be a monkey's uncle. What
do you know about that! Hitler's
dead! How about that?!

The Gatekeeper leaps up, as does his companion. They hug, and then hug Hadler in turn.

GATEKEEPER (cont'd)

What do you know about that! I
gotta hear this!

The Gatekeeper strides out of the gatehouse, his companion after him, leaving the dominoes behind. Hadler watches them get halfway up the path, and then starts fishing in the drawers of the Gatekeeper's small desk.

EXT. FERRY DOCK - DAY

Donahue wanders down the edge of the dock to where the Governor's launch sits tied up. Clearly nervous, Donahue goes into his Yangtze rice story crouch and sneaks onto the dock, avoiding imaginary enemies, till he comes alongside the small boat. Looking behind him, Donahue drops into the launch and begins to snoop around.

INT. MAIN HALL - LATE NIGHT

Alone in the great hall, Griffen stops in front of the door to the administration office. He pulls out a set of skeleton keys and, checking up and down the hallway, tries one in the lock.

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

Griffen pulls the door shut behind him and pads over to the receptionist's desk. He pulls open the bottom desk drawer and begins to thumb through the collection of log books kept there.

INT. MAIN HALL

Griffen pulls the door shut lightly behind him and hurries down the hall.

INT. MAIN HALL BALCONY

From a shadow on the balcony that surrounds the main hall, Fletcher watches Griffen sneak off.

INT. ROOM E217 - EARLY MORNING

The wind-up alarm clock on the table next to Jake's bed rings at 6:00. Jake reaches over and grabs the clock, pulling it to him and turning it off.

JAKE

One more day.

Jake pushes the covers off of him and sits up, swinging his feet onto the floor. He looks over at Nichols.

JAKE (cont'd)

Sleepin' in?

Nichols doesn't move as Jake rises and goes to his closet to get his coat. He puts on the coat and heads to the door on his way to the bathroom down the hall. He opens the door and stops. Nichols still hasn't moved. Closing the door, Jake walks slowly to Nichols' bed. He looks down at his friend. Nichols doesn't breathe.

JAKE (cont'd)

Christ.

Jake sits down on the edge the bed and drops his head.

INT. GOVERNOR'S STUDY - AFTERNOON

Jake has burst into the study. He is agitated and speaks loudly.

JAKE

A friend of mine has died...

GOVERNOR

Many men die here, Mr. Nelson.

JAKE

He was a friend of mine...

GOVERNOR

Friends die, too, of course. So will you, so will I.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

I got special arrangements for the burial. Things that Nichols woulda wanted.

GOVERNOR

Everything has been arranged already. Just leave it to us.

JAKE

He asked to be buried at sea.

GOVERNOR

I beg your pardon?

JAKE

It was his request. He don't want to be taken up to Monkey Hill. He wants to be buried like a sailor.

GOVERNOR

Every man I've buried here has gone to Monkey Hill. Stokers as well as captains are buried there. I'm sure it will be good enough for your friend.

JAKE

It ain't my request. It's his.

GOVERNOR

It is not up to Mr. Nichols, who I remind you is dead. And it certainly isn't up to you. It is up to me. There are ways we do things here, as I hope you may someday get through your head, Mr. Nelson, and one of them is the way we bury our dead: simply, quietly, and with dignity.

JAKE

Dignity for one man ain't the same for another.

GOVERNOR

That is all, Mr. Nelson.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

That is not all, sir! There are 600 guys here - guests, you call 'em - that ain't got nowheres else to go, ain't got no family, most of 'em, or what they got visits 'em once a year if they're lucky. Some of 'em can't hear, some of 'em can't see, bunch of 'em can't hold themselves till they get to the head. They're beat to the socks, some of 'em, sitting on a bench like a pile of shit. Maybe all they got to look forward to is their dying day when they can finally air out of this goddam jail. And you got the nerve to talk about dignity!

GOVERNOR

Mr. Nelson, I hope you will be very proud to discover you are the only man in my 20 years here I have ever asked to leave the Snug Harbor. Please make arrangements for yourself: as of Friday your room will be occupied by a man who will appreciate what we are doing here.

JAKE

"Arrangements" been already made!

Jake storms out of the study.

EXT. THE GROUNDS - DAY

It is a soft October day, the sun warm to the skin. Many men are sitting on the benches lining the walks, some talking, most staring ahead of them. Few even glance at the procession passing by: The Chaplain, two employees pushing a cart on which Nichols' coffin has been set, and Jake, following a few steps behind.

Hadler and Donahue sit on a bench. As the procession passes them, Jake tries to get them to join along.

JAKE

He was your friend.

HADLER

Don't matter to him no more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Just walk with us. He woulda wanted that.

HADLER

I'll be following along soon enough. No sense makin' the trip twice.

JAKE

Ain't you comin' with me tomorrow?

HADLER

Just leave us be, dammit! Followin' you, look what it got Nichols!

Jake must hurry now to catch the funeral party. The Chaplain leads the way down the shaded dirt road out the back of the complex. The men behind sit calmly on their benches, just another day.

EXT. MONKEY HILL - LATER

The overgrown cemetery the men call 'Monkey Hill' is on a steep hill surrounded by a brick wall. The procession enters a gate and stops. Ahead of them, Jake can see that many graves are dug in various places on the slope. The GRAVEDIGGER meets them at the gate. The Chaplain starts up the hill.

GRAVEDIGGER

Where do you want?

JAKE

Why are there so many?

GRAVEDIGGER

We dig 'em now 'fore the ground gets cold an' hard in the winter. No law says a sailor's gonna die in the summer an' mos' of 'em wouldn't oblige such a law if there were.

JAKE

You got something further up the hill?

GRAVEDIGGER

Liked high places, did he?

JAKE

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They start up the hill.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONKEY HILL - LATER

The Chaplain and others have long since gone. Jake sits on a rock near the fresh earth. He reads from his book.

JAKE

"Death closes all: but something
ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be
done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with
Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from
the rocks:
The long day wanes; the slow moon
climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices..."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MONKEY HILL - DUSK

The wind has risen and whistles loudly through the thick branches. Griffen has come to the gate in search of Jake. He walks sheepishly: he is afraid of the cemetery. He doesn't see Jake in the darkness and turns to leave. All of a sudden, Jake walks up behind him, scaring him half to death.

GRIFFEN

I seen you weren't at dinner.

Jake doesn't say anything.

GRIFFEN (cont'd)

I'm sorry I couldn't come with you.
I had some stuff to do. Listen,
about this Murmansk Run... I don't
think... when I heard about
Nichols... it ain't that I... I
can't go with you, Jake.

Jake doesn't say anything.

GRIFFEN (cont'd)

I gotta go.

Griffen turns to go, but Jake grabs his arm and starts to pull him into the cemetery.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

I wanna show you something.

Griffen pulls against Jake as he is half-dragged toward Nichols' fresh grave.

JAKE (cont'd)

Here lies a man that's finally found his Snug Harbor.

Jake pulls Griffen towards one of the empty holes nearby.

JAKE (cont'd)

Now, here's your harbor, pal. Dug especially for you. 'Course, we haven't ordered your stone yet. But there's plenty of time for that once we got you snug in there.

GRIFFEN

Jake, please...

JAKE

Not yours? Beg your pardon. Hard to tell one hole from another in this light.

Jake drags him to another open grave.

JAKE (cont'd)

How 'bout this one? This one's even better. Out of the wind, comfy... downright snug you might say, wouldn't you say?

GRIFFEN

Let me go, please...

JAKE

Why go now? Just drop dead while you're here. Save somebody the trouble of carting you back. Hey, not a lotta joes can choose their own grave.

GRIFFEN

Let's go back...

JAKE

Go back??? Why go back? If you're gonna be dead, be dead in a cemetery.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Why take up room for the living,
for chrissake. This is where you
belong!

GRIFFEN

What do you want me to do?!

JAKE

To live, man!

GRIFFEN

I don't know how...

JAKE

I'm telling you how. If you back
out now the others will, too. Don't
let me down. Don't let Nichols
down.

GRIFFEN

I can't...

JAKE

Then stay here and die!

Jake starts down the hill alone, heading out of the cemetery.
Griffen stands frozen by the open grave.

GRIFFEN

Jake!

JAKE

May God rest your soul.

GRIFFEN

Nelson!

JAKE

I'll send somebody around to cover
you up tomorrow. If you change your
mind, you know where to meet the
living.

GRIFFEN

NELSON!!!

But Jake is gone. Griffen stands at the edge of the open
grave, the wind howling.

EXT. THE GROUNDS - MORNING

The wind of the previous night has brought a rainstorm of the
heavy, all-day variety. The benches are all empty;

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

the fountain, for once, is filling with water. The lights inside the buildings glow yellow.

INT. ROOM E217

Jake stands by the window and looks out at the fountain. The room seems empty: all of Nichols' effects have already been removed. Jake's own things have been pulled out of his dresser. He has been packing his bags.

INT. HADLER AND DONAHUE'S ROOM

There is knocking at the door. Hadler and Donahue are both on their beds. They do not answer. They hear Jake's voice from outside.

JAKE (O.S.)

Open the door a minute. I just want to talk to you.

Hadler and Donahue lie still, staring up at the ceiling. There are a couple more knocks before Jake gives up. The two men listen to Jake walk away down the hall.

INT. SAMMY'S ROOM

Sammy is tinkering at the back of a radio set when he hears the knocking at the door.

JAKE (O.S.)

Sammy! You in there? Listen, it ain't too late! You can still go along! Are you in there?

Sammy doesn't respond, stands perfectly still. Jake finally walks away.

INT. GRIFFEN'S ROOM

Griffen quietly folds undershirts on his neat cot. He stops as he thinks he hears someone walk up to his locked door. He stares at the door for a while, but no one knocks.

INT. DINING ROOM - LUNCH

A typical noisy lunch, dishes clanking, conversations muffled through mouthfuls of food. It is in the middle of the meal that Jake enters the dining hall and walks to his table. There is a hush as the men watch him cross the room. Clearly, the news that he's been expelled has gotten around.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Evans wears a smirk, but most of the other men remain expressionless. When he gets to his seat, which is at the table with Hadler, Donahue and Griffen, Jake doesn't sit down, nor does he look at anyone in particular. Instead he speaks aloud to the entire room, calmly and pleasantly.

JAKE

Good afternoon, gentlemen. There will be a meeting of the Snug Harbor Watch tonight at the arranged time and place. All members are requested to attend.

The Governor glares but says nothing as Jake reaches down to the table and picks up what might be a piece of meat from a serving plate. He puts it in his mouth, chews and swallows.

JAKE (cont'd)

My compliments to the chef.

And he walks out.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

The door to room E217 opens and Jake emerges, carrying the duffel he had arrived with a few months ago. He pauses a moment and then closes the door quietly. He walks down the deserted hall and opens the door to the stairway.

EXT. SIDE DOOR OF E BUILDING

Jake exits the building and, closing the door silently, walks up the steps to the path. He walks away from the building without looking back.

EXT. THE FOUNTAIN

Jake slows slightly as he makes out three figures standing in the dark next to the fountain. The red glow of a cigar indicates Hadler's presence. As Jake nears the men, he sees that Donahue and Sammy are also there. All the men have their duffels at their sides. There is a moment of silence as Jake joins them, each man making eye contact with him. They are excited, pleased with themselves. They are ready to go.

JAKE

Sammy?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

Changed my mind. I thought a radioman might come in handy.

JAKE

Good. (to Hadler) Griffen?

HADLER

Dunno. I guess not.

They stand there a moment. Then, following Jake's lead, each man silently lifts his bag and they start to shuffle off to the main gate. Then they hear Griffen's voice calling from the darkness.

GRIFFEN

Hey! Wait for me!!

All four men turn back and shush him as he joins their group.

HADLER

Where the hell've you been?

GRIFFEN

Packing.

HADLER

You're twenty minutes late.

GRIFFEN

I'm twenty years late.

JAKE

You got the logs?

Griffen reaches into a pocket and produces each man's log book. He hands them out.

JAKE (cont'd)

Good man. Let's go.

They continue toward the gate.

EXT. THE FRONT GATE

Jake is the first one there and begins to climb the iron gate when Hadler comes forward.

HADLER

Save your energy, Captain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a broad smile, he produces the set of keys he had snatched from the Gatekeeper and opens the front gate.

HADLER (cont'd)
I'm too old to be climbing fences.

They are about to go through when Sammy sees someone standing right behind them a few paces off.

SAMMY
(whispering)
Fellas....

They all turn and freeze, but are relieved to see it is Fletcher coming out of the shadows.

HADLER
Aw, Fletcher, you scared the hell outta us.

JAKE
What is it, Fletcher?

GRIFFEN
Fletcher, we're going out for a couple of nips, you understand. Drink? Whiskey?

As Griffen pantomimes drinking, Fletcher stands impassive.

HADLER
Leave 'im be. He couldn't tell nobody if he wanted to. Let's get going.

They start through the gate, but Fletcher follows them.

HADLER (cont'd)
Damn!

SAMMY
I think he wants to come along.

GRIFFEN
You wanna go with us Fletcher?

HADLER
We ain't takin' that lame-brain with us!

GRIFFEN
Shut up, Hadler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER
Don't tell me to...

JAKE
Quiet! (to Fletcher) Do you know
where we're going?

Fletcher nods his head.

JAKE (cont'd)
You wanna come?

Fletcher pulls out his merchant log book from his jacket in response. Jake looks around to the others, getting silent approval from each, except for Hadler who just scowls.

JAKE (cont'd)
Let's get going.

The group, now six, makes their way through the gate. Hadler secures the lock and throws the keys back over. They land inside with a clink.

EXT. SMALL BOAT IN NEW YORK HARBOR - LATE NIGHT

Hadler is at the oars, pulling steadily. The others sit huddled with their packs. Hadler speaks between strokes.

HADLER
Donahue, try to remember... what
you did with... the keys to this
thing.

DONAHUE
I can't find 'em. Sorry, buddy.

HADLER
(mimics him)
"Sorry, buddy." Damn... In my day
we had these things called sails...
String 'em up on this tall thing
called a mast... Let the goddamn
wind do the goddamn work...

With another stroke Hadler puts down the oars.

HADLER (cont'd)
Somebody spell me on these, will
ya?

Fletcher gets up and moves carefully to take the oars from Hadler.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As they make the switch, the boat drifts slowly around, so that all the men are looking at the Snug Harbor buildings on the shore of Staten Island. As Fletcher takes the oars, he plies one oar in the water, turning the boat towards New Jersey again. In the right direction, Fletcher digs in, a solid stroke. Now only he, sitting in the opposite direction from the others, watches Staten Island recede.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PIER IN NEW JERSEY - PRE-DAWN

Five tired men climb out of the launch onto a shaky pier jutting out into the Hudson River. Fletcher is first, then he helps the others up. Donahue remains in the boat and has moved up to the wheel. He holds up the ignition key for the boat.

DONAHUE

I found it. The key.

From up on the pier:

HADLER

Now he finds it!

But instead of climbing up on the pier, Donahue inserts the key and starts the boat's engine. It idles. The others are staring down at him.

DONAHUE

Could we go home now?

Nobody on the pier says anything.

DONAHUE (cont'd)

We could get back before the Governor finds out.

Nobody moves. Donahue turns off the engine and sits down.

DONAHUE (cont'd)

I'm sorry fellas. I ain't cut out for all this. I gotta go back. I guess I just needed some time to think about it. Had the keys all the time.

HADLER

Well, I'll be a sonuvabitch...

Donahue laughs to himself, lightly and sadly, and then starts the engine again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DONAHUE

Somebody want to cast me off?

Hadler throws off the line and Donahue pulls the boat away from the pier and into the river. The others watch the launch pull away as day breaks over the city.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. CHURCH STREET, MANHATTAN - MORNING

The busy city street is teeming with pedestrians and traffic. The Snug Harbor Watch, in need of a meal and a shave, make their way through the throngs and up to the front of the Maritime Workers Union building. Young seamen dash in and out of the front doors, many carrying duffels on their way to man the ships in the harbor.

Fairly dodging the younger men, Jake leads his crew inside.

INT. MARITIME UNION HALL

Inside is a havoc of rushing men, filling out forms, making phone calls and chattering to their mates. From one end of the hall a RED-FACED MAN calls out names from the index cards in his hand.

RED-FACED MAN

Hayman, M.L.; McDaniel, A.B.;
Groover, T.J.; Van Deltsen, J.E.;
Lambert, R.; Singleton, P.C...

On the benches that line the hall, groups of young men recount tales of their recent shore leave in New York City with howling laughter. Others are quieter, reading newspapers and smoking cigarettes.

Jake leads his crew to a desk at the far end of the hall, where a UNION MAN concentrates on a stack of paperwork in front of him.

JAKE

Excuse me..

The Union Man looks up at the five ragged old men before his desk.

UNION MAN

Yeah?

JAKE

Yessir. We're ready for assignment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

UNION MAN
For assignment?

JAKE
Yeah. Sir. On a ship. We're
volunteerin' for the Murmansk Run.

UNION MAN
(smiling)
The Murmansk Run?

JAKE
Yessir. I'm sure you could use some
seasoned sailors in service.

UNION MAN
You want to join the service?
There's a Salvation Army three
blocks up Broadway. If you hurry,
you fellas might still catch lunch.

The Union Man tries to go back to his work.

JAKE
I'm serious, sir. We're all five
veteran mariners with log books to
prove it!

UNION MAN
I'm serious too! You're all five a
bunch of old rummies what had a bit
too much last night. Now get out of
here before I throw you out.

Jake leans across the desk and grabs the Union Man by the
lapels, pulling him up out of his chair. Face to face over
the desk:

JAKE
If you don't think us old rummies
could handle the job, "sir," why
don't I prove it to you here and
now by kicking your ass!

The others pull Jake back and he releases the Union Man, who
immediately reaches for the phone and dials frantically.
Hadler steps in front of Jake and tries to calm him down.

UNION MAN
Operator, get me the police!

Before the Union Man gets through, a man in master's stripes
steps up to the desk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He is CAPTAIN CARNESKI, master of the Omaha Ranger, a tanker in the harbor. He speaks directly to the Union Man.

CARNESKI

Wait a while, Mr. Waters. I'll take care of this.

UNION MAN

Did you see what this bum did?

CARNESKI

It's all right. We'll deal with it. You can put the telephone down.

The Union Man reluctantly puts down the phone and glares at Jake.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

Gentlemen, may I have a word with you?

UNION MAN

I don't want them crazy bastards on any union ship, you hear me?

Carneski motions the five to a corner of the hall. They follow him over, Hadler keeping a hand on Jake, who is still fuming.

CARNESKI

Quite an impression you made on Mr. Waters. May not be the best way to get what you want out of that one.

Jake, who has calmed down, is a bit embarrassed by his behavior.

JAKE

I guess he had it coming...

CARNESKI

Captain Louis Carneski at your service. What can I do for you?

GRIFFEN

We wanna sign on a ship to Murmansk.

Carneski doesn't laugh. Instead he looks at all the men in turn.

CARNESKI

All of you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

All of us together, sir.

CARNESKI

Well, let's see your log books,
then.

The men pull out their ragged log books, and Carneski looks them over. Only Jake's log does he takes in his hand and flip through.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

(to Jake)

Ever been in the Navy?

JAKE

No, sir.

CARNESKI

Let's walk.

With that he starts out the door, the men following.

EXT. THE EAST SIDE DOCKS

Carneski walks briskly, with purpose, while he talks to the men.

CARNESKI

I've made the run to Russia three times, which makes me a curious statistic. See, tankers are the prime target for a U-Boat. Blue plate special. Two reasons. First, the Germans want to keep fuel from getting to Stalin. And second, one torpedo is usually all it takes to blow a tanker sky high.

A couple of the men swallow hard at the thought.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

You might guess tanker tours ain't the first choice of most sailors.

JAKE

Nossir.

CARNESKI

Seeing all that, I've had a deuce of a time finding seasoned crew.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Half the kids they're sending up
are so green they don't know a
hawser from a halyard.

Carneski stops at the head of a pier where his launch waits
to take him out to the Omaha Ranger. The men stop around him.
Sammy has been straggling, and he finally catches up.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
Still interested?

JAKE
Yessir.

CARNESKI
OK. I'll take four of you. (to
Sammy) I'm sorry, but four is all
I need.

JAKE
No deal.

CARNESKI
What?

JAKE
We all gotta stick together, sir,
or it's no deal.

CARNESKI
I see. (to Sammy) What's your
classification, sailor?

SAMMY
(proudly)
Radioman, first class, sir.

CARNESKI
Sparks, eh? Suppose a veteran
could come in handy.... Allright,
gentlemen, you got yourselves a
job. Be here at oh-seven-hundred
tomorrow. And...stay out of the
Union Hall, will you?

All business, Carneski climbs down the ladder into his launch
and speeds away. The men on the pier wait till he's headed
out till they shout for joy at their success.

HADLER
Let's go get some chow. I'm
starved.

They march arm in arm off the pier and into the city.

INT. NEW YORK NIGHTCLUB - NIGHT

The Snug Harbor Watch sit at a dim table and watch a STRIPPER do her routine. The nightclub is crowded with SAILORS and filled with noise and smoke. The five have been drinking heavily and they gawk and hoot as the stripper does her finale and leaves the stage. A juke box blasts big band music. Hadler raises his beer.

HADLER

To the Snug Harbor Watch.

It's the fifth time one of them has made such a toast and the others lift their mugs weakly. Griffen and Sammy take small sips from their beers. Fletcher drains his.

HADLER (cont'd)

Jesus Christ, Fletcher, where'd you learn to drink like that?

Fletcher wipes his mouth and burps in response. The others laugh.

At the next table, a group of young Navy MEN hoot for the next GIRL, an Asian beauty in a flimsy robe covering pasties and a g-string. The young men are obnoxious drunk and shout to the stripper on stage.

MAN 1

Hey snooky, wanna be our mascot?

MAN 2

Yeah, you can sit on my bowsprit!

The young men laugh. Jake, who has been watching them for a time, is on a slow burn. The rest of the Snug Harbor guys nervously keep one eye on Jake, and one on the beauty on stage, who grinds to a slurring tenor saxophone. The young men aren't through.

MAN 3

Take a lookit this, slope. This'll make your eyes round!

MAN 2

Hey! Is your cooch slanted too?

As the men laugh, Jake rises and starts to the other table. Griffen tries to grab him but loses his grip. Jake looms over the table of drunken Navy squids.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

Tell her you're sorry.

MAN 1

Wha...?

JAKE

Apologize to the lady.

MAN 1

She's a fucking stripper. What're you, nuts?

Jake grabs the man by the shoulder. The table of Navy squids rise to their feet, an imposing bunch of youngsters. The table of the Snug Harbor Watch rises in response. A sorry match-up. Hadler leans over to Griffen, shaking his head.

HADLER

Why does he have to do shit like this?

Griffen shrugs. Men from around the bar begin to take notice of the showdown. The stripper dances vaguely, amused at the scene below her.

MAN 1

Go take a powder, old man, before I knock you clear into next week.

Jake smiles into the young man's face. The two stand there, shoulder to shoulder, cigarette smoke in swirls around them. Then Jake reaches back in one quick movement and slugs the younger man, sending him crashing backwards onto his table.

Hell breaks loose. The other squids make a move for Jake, who retreats, lifting a chair in his hands. From behind, Hadler taps one of them on the shoulder, and the boy's face meets a fist when he turns around.

Amid the shouts of dozens of cheering ONLOOKERS, two of the Navy men grab Sammy and prepare to pulverize him. Fletcher hurries over with a mug in his hand and raps one of them on his head.

From across the floor, four huge BOUNCERS begin shoving their way through the pandemonium and flying beer.

Jake, meanwhile, stands toe to toe with the big mouth he had belted, and though the younger man lands more punches, Jake doesn't seem to notice. He lets the squid do his best and then, having had enough, hauls off and clocks him, sending him reeling.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

But by now, the bouncers have arrived, one each taking a hold of Hadler, Fletcher and Jake. A fourth bouncer grabs both Sammy and Griffen by their collars.

EXT. ALLEYWAY

From a door in the side of a brick wall, Sammy, Fletcher and Griffen stumble out in a hurry, all three squeezing through the doorway at once. They spread out into the alleyway against the far wall as Hadler, and then Jake, are thrust through the door by some unseen force. Jake winds up on his ass in the middle of the alleyway, his nose bloodied, his hair matted with beer and sweat. The others are laughing.

HADLER

Boy is Hitler in for a surprise.

They pull Jake to his feet and shuffle down the alley, Sammy propped up between Hadler and Fletcher, Jake still taking an imaginary swing now and then at an imaginary enemy.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ON DECK OF THE OMAHA RANGER - LATE AFTERNOON

The Snug Harbor Watch stand at the rail as the huge tanker is piloted out of the harbor and through the narrows. They all peer into the sun to see what they can of the Snug Harbor on Staten Island. No one says a thing.

EXT. OMAHA RANGER - DAY

Men perform their various duties as the huge ship steams away from land and into the open sea.

EXT. ON DECK

Jake has coiled one of the thick hawsers - the ropes that tie the ship to the pier in port. He bends to lift the heavy coil when a young SEAMAN walks by.

SEAMAN

Let me give you a hand, dad...

The seaman tries to get an arm in but Jake angles him away.

JAKE

I got it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake carries the coil forward as the seaman shrugs and continues aft. When the seaman disappears, Jake drops the coil, and holds his back in pain.

INT. CREW SALOON - DAY

Several of the CREW of the Omaha Ranger are eating around a long table. Jake, Sammy and Fletcher sit together at one end. The others are all in their late teens and early twenties, young and brash. One young man named MC TEAGUE is particularly offensive. He calls down to the Snug Harbor men with a mouthful of food.

MC TEAGUE

So what did they, kidnap you guys
from the geriatric ward?

A few of the men snicker.

MC TEAGUE (cont'd)

(to his mates)

The English used to do that. Kidnap
all these guys and make 'em sail
whether they wanted to or not. But
the English made sure they still
had a mouthful of teeth and two
strong legs.

At this last, Sammy squirms uncomfortably over his plate. Jake stops eating altogether, but smiles.

JAKE

(to Sammy)

Don't listen to 'em, Sammy. Just
eat your meal, buddy.

ANOTHER MAN

If you remembered to put in your
teeth.

The young men laugh more openly.

MC TEAGUE

But don't forget to take 'em back
out after chow or the German
subs'll hear them chatterin'.

JAKE

Long as you don't forget to wear
your rubber diapers so when you
piss your pants the rest of us
don't got to slide around in it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The old men, and even a few of Mc Teague's mates laugh. Mc Teague rises from his place.

MC TEAGUE

What's that supposed to mean, old man?

JAKE

Only that, in my experience, children frighten easily in battle.

MC TEAGUE

I ain't no child!

JAKE

You ain't no war hero, neither.

MC TEAGUE

And you are?

ANOTHER MAN

Yeah, the Civil War!

The joke lessens the tension in the saloon a bit, but Mc Teague presses on, his voice rising.

MC TEAGUE

You're an old fart, is what you are.

JAKE

And you're a snotnose punk.

MC TEAGUE

Oh yeah?

Just then Lieutenant NATHANIEL LUTHER, the pint-sized commander of the small Navy contingent assigned to the Omaha Ranger to man her puny defenses, enters the saloon. He is starched and ironed, every hair in place.

LUTHER

What's all the hub-bub?

MC TEAGUE

None of your business, Luther. This ain't your mess.

Luther ignores Mc Teague completely and turns to Jake.

LUTHER

Is there a problem in here, sailor?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

No sir...well, one, sir.

The men at Mc Teague's end of the table watch Jake suspiciously. Luther brightens, pleased at an opportunity to put Mc Teague and the other brash young Merchant Marines in their place.

LUTHER

What's that?

JAKE

Your fly's undone. Sir.

It is. Luther reddens and marches out. The men break out laughing, young and old alike. When the laughter subsides a bit, Jake speaks.

JAKE (cont'd)

I think you'll find we got at least one thing in common. And that's a warm regard for the United States Navy.

Mc Teague is not convinced, but seems willing to let it ride for the moment.

INT. ENGINE ROOM - DAY

OILERS, FIREMEN and STOKERS dash in and out of the crannies of the engine room, tending to the machinery of the great boilers and engines. From a platform above, Griffen climbs down into the busy center of the room. He strolls around, appraising the fine old plant in the heart of this vintage ship. An oiler bumps him from behind he rushes by. Another man has to double step around Griffen, who seems to be in the way no matter where he goes. A third man is held up.

MAN

Hey! Watch it, Pop.

Griffen backs out of the path of traffic into a quiet corner. He watches from there.

EXT. FOREDECK - DAY

As Lieutenant Luther supervises, two Navy RATINGS struggle mightily with one huge artillery shell. They place it on a pile near the 4" gun that has been mounted on the deck of the normally unarmed tanker.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hadler struts up with cigar in mouth, reporting for instruction at this, his assigned battle station. The Navy sailors watch Hadler, and watch Luther watching Hadler.

HADLER

Reportin' for battle drill, sir.

LUTHER

First thing is no smoking around live ammunition. So put it out, sailor.

HADLER

Nope. What's the second thing?

LUTHER

Great. Another one. You old guys think you're something special, don't you? Well, while you're on my detail, you obey my orders or you go on report.

HADLER

You gonna show me how to shoot this thing or not?

Luther decides to play the old man's game.

LUTHER

OK, mister. You want to learn how to shoot? First you learn how to load. Get one of those shells over here.

He points Hadler to the pile of 4" shells. Hadler wedges the cigar deeply in his mouth and goes to the pile, the Ratings watching with amusement. But their mouths drop as Hadler bends and lifts the large shell in his thick arms. He turns smoothly and brings the shell to where the two ratings stand in front of the gun. Suddenly, Hadler starts to stagger.

HADLER

Help!

He drops the shell into the arms of the first rating, who falls back against the gun with its weight. The second rating comes to the rescue of the first as they set down the shell. Hadler pulls a box of matches from his shirt pocket and strikes one.

HADLER (cont'd)

Sorry 'bout that. My cigar was going out.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Hadler lights the stogie, Luther stalks off.

INT. CREW CABIN

Jake fishes in his duffel for a flannel shirt. From across the cabin, Fletcher watches him.

Jake puts on the shirt and tucks it in. He dons his oilskin jacket and then picks up his slim volume of Tennyson from his bunk and places it in the jacket pocket. As he turns to leave the cabin for his watch, he sees Fletcher staring at him.

JAKE
What, Fletcher?

Fletcher points to Jake's chest. Jake looks down at himself, not understanding. Fletcher points again, indicating the pocket. Then Jake pulls the book out of his pocket.

JAKE (cont'd)
This?

Fletcher nods. Jake hesitantly steps over and hands the weathered book to him.

JAKE (cont'd)
Don't lose it.

Jake goes out.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - LATER

Carneski is reading when there is a knock on the door.

CARNESKI
Come in.

The door opens and Lieutenant Luther steps in smartly.

LUTHER
I wish to lodge a formal complaint
against your crew, sir.

CARNESKI
My crew?

LUTHER
Yes, sir. They have been
disrespectful, disorderly, and a
threat to the effective defense of
this ship.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI

Why, they're a fine bunch of kids...

LUTHER

It's not the 'kids' that are the problem. It's those old guys. One of them injured my man with a 4" shell.

CARNESKI

He fired a 4" shell at one of your men?!

LUTHER

No sir. He... threw it at him, sir.

Carneski pauses a moment to give Luther a chance to say it's all a joke. When Luther remains silent, Carneski decides he's serious and can't help smiling at the young man's discomfort.

CARNESKI

Mr. Luther, let me suggest to you that any one of those 'old guys' aboard this ship have more battle experience than all your men combined.

LUTHER

Sir, my orders are to...

CARNESKI

Your orders are to obey my orders when it comes to the running of this ship. And I order you to relax. If you can't take a little heat from a 70 year old man, how the hell are you going to face the German Navy?

Luther sulks in the doorway.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

That will be all, Mr. Luther.

Luther turns to go but stops at Carneski's voice.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

Uh, Luther?

LUTHER

Yes sir?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI
He threw a 4" shell?

LUTHER
Yes, sir.

Carneski grins and shakes his head.

CARNESKI
OK, Luther.

The young Lieutenant goes.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN - NIGHT

Carneski sits at his fold-out desk, a gooseneck lamp pointed down on its surface. He has opened a folding file and slipped out its contents of memorabilia onto the desk. He fingers through some letters and photographs, singling out one old photo of the crew of a Navy cutter in the last world war. He bends the lamp closer as he studies the picture.

EXT. ON DECK - DAY

The Omaha Ranger is in the midst of a raging squall, the kind that only the North Atlantic can throw. Rain alternates with large hail, huge waves crash up against the hull of the tanker, sending walls of spray across her decks. As the tanker rides the crest of a wave, the freighter in the next column of the convoy can be made out through the storm off the starboard beam.

INT. ENGINE ROOM

The storm cannot be heard above the chugging of the huge diesel engines, but the violent pitching of the ship sends tools and loose crates sliding back and forth across the grating. A couple of oilers work frantically to meet the extra demand of the diesels in this weather.

INT. THE BILGE

A couple of men lean over a hatchway into the bowels of the ship, and hand tools to some others below as they try to stem a leak caused by the riotous storm.

INT. ANOTHER PART OF THE BILGE

Above an open hatchway, the CHIEF ENGINEER, Griffen and a couple of other men stand. Then a FIREMAN is pulled by the feet from the hatchway by some of the men. He hoists up a large pump which he has removed from the bilge. He hands the pump to one of the others as he catches his breath.

FIREMAN

This bilge'll be flooded in two hours, sir.

CHIEF

Let's have a lookit that pump.

FIREMAN

It's no use.

The Chief takes a cursory look at the spent pump.

CHIEF

Friggin' relic.

GRIFFEN

I could fix that.

CHIEF

Oh yeah?

GRIFFEN

Think so.

CHIEF

Knock yourself out. But I'm sealing this bulkhead in sixty minutes, mister, so you'd better do it quick.

Griffen grabs a wrench from a tool kit on the floor and begins to disassemble the pump.

EXT. ON DECK

Back out in the driving squall, Hadler and a couple of ordinary seamen, Mc Teague among them, wrestle with a couple of huge crates which have come loose and slid across the deck and are perilously close to being tossed over the rail. As a couple of the men inch the crates back to their stowed positions with large pry bars, Hadler finishes rigging a block and tackle to the mast and begins to take up the slack on the chain.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hadler begins to haul in the chain in earnest, and a couple of the men join him and lend their strength to the effort. Exerting himself to the maximum, Hadler cannot seem to will the large crates to move. Over the crashing storm, he exhorts the others to try harder.

HADLER
C'mon, goddammit. Pull you momma dolls!

Another figure falls in behind Hadler and the group of men make another heave on the chain. The crates begin to slide back to their position. After a while, the pulling becomes easier and the crates are brought back to safety. The other men rush to lash them down.

Hadler, spent with the effort, turns to see who had provided the extra juice on the chain. It is Fletcher, water dripping from his smiling face. Hadler slaps him on the shoulder in thanks and turns to help the men stow the errant cargo.

INT. BRIDGE

From inside the bridge, Carneski sees Jake fighting his way outside along the rail, the spray and driving rain pouring into the half open doorway.

Carneski leans out into the weather. He can barely be heard above the raging storm.

CARNESKI
Mr. Nelson! MR. NELSON!!

EXT. THE RAIL

Jake stops when he hears his name and looks into the bridge at the beckoning Master of the ship.

INT. BRIDGE

Jake removes his sopping sou'wester and stands dripping in front of Carneski. The FIRST MATE and HELMSMAN share the bridge. The Helmsman wrestles furiously with the huge wheel as the ship dances in the sea.

JAKE
Yes sir?

CARNESKI
Follow me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Captain turns to the others on the bridge.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
 Keep her steady, Number One. Call
 me if there's any change.

FIRST MATE
 Aye aye, sir.

Carneski exits out the rear hatch of the bridge. A moment later, Jake follows him through.

INT. PASSAGEWAY

Carneski passes the navigation room, in which the NAVIGATOR is busy plotting the ship's progress while trying to maintain some control of the instruments sliding across his table. With Jake behind him, Carneski ducks into the second doorway.

INT. CAPTAIN'S CABIN

The cabin is small and spare, but luxurious for this ship. There's a bunk tucked in one corner, a locker in the other. Down the center is a bench and table. Bracing himself against the fixed objects in the cabin for stability, Carneski gestures Jake in and opens the locker.

Jake stands next to the bunk, gripping a handrail on the wall for support as Carneski produces a bottle of scotch from the closet. Standing up, Carneski is thrown into the mahogany bench on the far wall. The driving storm beats a frantic rhythm on the two portholes.

CARNESKI
 Sit down.

Jake hesitates, looking down at the well-made bunk and then the dripping puddle on the floor beneath his soggy oilskins.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
 Sit down, for chrissake.

He does. Carneski takes a swig from the bottle and then hands it over to Jake, the pass made on a sudden lurch of the boat.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
 I got glasses, but it doesn't make
 much sense in this weather.

Jake draws appreciatively on the liquor bottle, letting its warmth settle into his damp, cold bones.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks inquisitively at the master of the ship, not knowing why he is here.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
Rough weather, eh?

JAKE
You could say that...

CARNESKI
Haven't seen a storm like this since the last war. You?

JAKE
It's been a while, sir.

CARNESKI
Was in a Navy frigate. Convoy escort too. Fall of 1917, just declared war on Germany. We didn't know a U-boat from a houseboat back then.

Jake takes a hit from the bottle and passes it back. A sudden gale fires hailstones against the porthole like a shotgun blast.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
Yeah, but we had spirit back then. Fought hard. We were kids. Nothing could have sunk us, not the goddam Bismark. We were running a convoy up around Scapa Flow, running the blockade. Weather so bad the bow disappeared under every wave. I kept thinking the rest of the ship was going to break away, leaving us floating in the bridge, no engines, no boat. Just the bridge.

Jake stares out the porthole at the sheets of rain.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
And then the bow watch - this poor stiff's been beaten silly for the last two hours - he runs back to the bridge and shouts, "U-Boat off the port beam!" I remember feeling sorry for the Germans. They had to be out in this crap just like us. Next thing I know, the Captain's barking orders for a hard turn to port, full steam... he's attacking!
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

We can barely keep the goddam ship
afloat and this crazy son-of-a-
bitch is chasing submarines!

Carneski gives a short laugh of appreciation. Jake is now
staring at him. Slowly, Carneski turns up to face Jake.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
Braver than Dick Tracy, that guy.
We would've sailed through hell for
him.

Jake reaches for the bottle. Carneski hands it over.

CARNESKI (cont'd)
What ever happened to him, do you
think?

Jake smiles sadly.

JAKE
I'm sure it's a long story.

He sips the Scotch.

CARNESKI
It's a long way to Murmansk.
Captain.

Jake does not try to correct him.

INT. RADIO SHACK - CONTINUOUS

The First Mate is leaning over the SPARKS as a jumbled
message is coming in. Sparks' hands fly over the dials in an
effort to get the message clearly.

SPARKS
Convoy new heading, I think... I
can't copy... I'm losing it.

The Sparks shrugs his shoulder as the receiver goes silent.

FIRST MATE
Must have been a good reason for
the escort to break radio silence.

SPARKS
Should I try to raise them, sir?

The Mate looks to the aft passageway before making his
decision.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MATE

Raise 'em, Sparks.

Sparks turns to his transmitter and, flicking a couple of switches, taps out a hailing message. He stops and listens for a reply. There is none. He taps out the call again, and again there is no reply. The First Mate strides out of the shack.

INT. BRIDGE

The First Mate enters the bridge and lifts his binoculars to the jagged horizon, leaning against a bulkhead to brace himself against the ship's rolling. He looks off the starboard beam for their nearest neighbor in convoy and sees nothing.

FIRST MATE

Damn.

He pans the horizon before dropping the binoculars to his chest and ducking out the back hatch.

INT. PASSAGEWAY

The First Mate sticks his head into the Captain's cabin.

FIRST MATE

Sir, there's a problem in the radio shack.

Carneski emerges from his cabin and brushes past the First Mate, careening off the bulkhead as the ship dances in the relentless storm. The Mate follows right behind. A moment later, Jake emerges and hurries off aft, away from the bridge.

INT. RADIO SHACK

Carneski and the First Mate crowd into the small room where the Sparks works frantically at the back of the transmitter.

CARNESKI

What's going on here, Sparks?

Sparks straightens up at the Captain's voice.

SPARKS

Transmitter's out. I've tried everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI

Who gave the order to break
silence?

FIRST MATE

I did, sir. Escort Command was
relaying course corrections when
the radio went.

CARNESKI

Fantastic. Any of our neighbors
getting close?

ANOTHER OFFICER

No sign of the convoy, sir.

CARNESKI

That's just great.

Carneski points to the wire cage which houses the old
transmitter that was original equipment on the tanker 40
years ago.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

What about that?

SPARKS

Sir?

CARNESKI

That's a transmitter. Can you raise
them on that?

SPARKS

That's an antique, sir. It doesn't
work.

CARNESKI

Have you tried it?

SPARKS

I don't know how...

Sammy leans into the radio shack, holding on to the sides of
the hatchway and putting his weight on his good leg.

SAMMY

I think I can make it work, sir.

CARNESKI

Carry on, then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Sammy enters the crowded room and opens the cage, Jake appears in the doorway.

INT. ENGINE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Griffen is putting the last twist on a nut of the pump housing. His hands are covered in grease, his hair matted in sweat and grime. But his eyes are bright.

A couple of the ENGINEER'S MATES watch from over his shoulder.

 GRIFFEN
 That oughta do it.

He steps back and lets one of the mates lift the heavy pump and start aft. Griffen's call follows him.

 GRIFFEN (cont'd)
 Take it easy on her, now. Don't
 flood her all at once.

The mate grins.

 MATE
 Aye, aye, Chief.

Griffen turns his attention to a young OILER who's been waiting for his attention all this while.

 OILER
 Mr. Griffen, sir, I was wonderin'
 if you got a minute...

 GRIFFEN
 Lead the way, son, lead the way.

The oiler starts off toward the huge engines, Griffen right behind.

INT. RADIO SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Sammy leans back from the behind the huge instrument with its large glass valves. With the Sparks and some other crew staring, Sammy throws some switches and the old thing comes alive, spewing sparks and flashes of light like a frankenstein laboratory. Sammy taps out a hailing message. There is stillness in the cramped room as the smoke clears. And then, to everyone's amazement, the machine comes back to life. Sammy listens on his headsets and jots down on a pad. When the machine stops, he turns up to Carneski.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SAMMY

Escort Command says proceed with communication, sir.

The radio crew breaks out in applause. Carneski pats Sammy on the back. Sammy grins from ear to ear.

EXT. AT THE PORT RAIL - NIGHT

Jake is standing at the port rail, enjoying the clearing weather and the first stars they have seen since the squall had come up. The sea still rolls, but its surface is glassy and black.

From aft, Hadler strolls up and joins Jake, leaning elbows on the rail and gazing out to sea.

HADLER

Sure beats watching it in the newsreels.

JAKE

Yeah.

Low on the horizon, a full yellow moon peaks out above a cloud.

JAKE (cont'd)

No convoy ships on this side.

HADLER

So?

JAKE

So we're on the port flank.

HADLER

Yeah, I guess we are.

JAKE

With a nice bright moon lighting us up like a practice target.

HADLER

Yeah.

They look at the moon a while.

HADLER (cont'd)

All I wanted was to be involved again, you know that? Now we're committed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

What's the difference?

HADLER

It's like bacon and eggs. The chicken is involved, but the pig is committed.

JAKE

Beats watching it on the newsreels.

HADLER

Yeah.

INT. RADIO SHACK - DAY

Sammy receives a message over the huge receiver. He jots down letters on a pad of paper. When the transmission is complete, he looks at the paper and frowns, not understanding its coded content.

INT. PASSAGEWAY

Sammy limps down a passageway towards the officers' mess. He sees Fletcher coming the other way.

SAMMY

Hey Fletcher, you was in the Navy.
You know how to read this?

Fletcher takes a look at the paper and shakes his head. But then he motions Sammy to follow him in the opposite direction.

SAMMY (cont'd)

Hey, where you goin'?

Fletcher keeps going, Sammy right behind. Fletcher still has the paper.

SAMMY (cont'd)

Hey Fletcher, gimme that. I gotta give that to the Captain.

Fletcher turns a corner, Sammy chasing.

INT. OFFICER'S MESS - DAY

The Captain and a couple of officers are eating lunch as Sammy peaks into the cabin, Fletcher right behind him. The First Mate motions the Captain's attention to the hatch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI

Yes, Sammy, what is it?

SAMMY

This just come over from Western Approaches. It's in code, sir.

CARNESKI

Let's see, Sammy.

Sammy hands it to Carneski. The Captain glances at it a moment and hands it to Lieutenant Luther.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

Make any sense of that, Luther?

Luther hardly looks at the copy.

LUTHER

I'm sorry, sir. I am not at liberty to decode Naval communications.

CARNESKI

Mr. Luther, while you're on my ship, you'll do as I say. Now you wanna keep your little Naval secret? You can fucking swim to Murmansk.

LUTHER

I'm sorry, sir.

Carneski slams his fist against the table.

CARNESKI

Get the hell out of my sight!

Luther struts out of the cabin, leaving Carneski fuming. The other officers are silent. Sammy still stands by the door.

SAMMY

Captain?

CARNESKI

What do you want, Sammy?

SAMMY

Uh... well... Fletcher here took the liberty of... well, when the message came in code he figured we may need a Navy code book so...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI

Don't tell me you stole Luther's
code book...

SAMMY

Fletcher can't tell you nothin',
remember?

CARNESKI

I cannot condone thievery aboard my
ship.

Fletcher drops his head. The men around the table smile as
Carneski takes a second to lighten up.

CARNESKI (cont'd)

Oh, alright, Fletcher, give it
here.

His face brightening, Fletcher brings the code book over to
the table. The men gather around as Carneski decodes the
communique.

EXT. BRIDGE WING - DAY

On the exposed wing of the bridge, Carneski scans the
horizon, the sea smooth and wide, a cold autumn sun turning
the water black and silver. Ahead and to the starboard, other
freighters sail peacefully through the late afternoon day.

Beside him, Jake stands, hands behind his back, his nostrils
flaring to admit the cool sea air. He seems a couple inches
taller now than he ever did back at the Harbor.

CARNESKI

So we intercepted a Navy message
today...

JAKE

Yeah, I know.

Carneski looks at him quizzically, then nods.

CARNESKI

Sammy.

JAKE

We kind of stick together, sir.

CARNESKI

So we lost half our escort.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

It's a ruse, sir. The Germans send the Tirpitz out of one of them fiords in Norway and the whole goddam Navy rushes over there to fight her. When they get there, she steams back upstream and all our destroyers are left standing there jerking off. Sir.

CARNESKI

Try 'Lou,' will ya?

JAKE

And we're out here without an escort waitin' to get our goddam asses blown outta the water, Lou, sir.

CARNESKI

I don't remember you this optimistic.

JAKE

I seen what the Navy can do.

EXT. ON DECK

The SIGNALMAN on watch holds binoculars to his eyes. The glasses are trained on one of the remaining escorts, a small British corvette, whose signal light flashes incessantly. The Signalman watches until the corvette turns hard towards the center of the convoy to signal other boats. Then the Signalman runs aft towards the bridge.

INT. BRIDGE

The Signalman rushes onto the bridge.

SIGNALMAN

Captain! Signal from HMS Hermes, sir. Convoy to come north to heading 042 degrees at 1900 hours. Multiple contacts with German U-boats.

CARNESKI

Here we go. Thank you, Johnson. Maintain your watch.

The Signalman goes. Carneski turns to his First Mate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARNESKI (cont'd)

Double the fore and aft watches,
Number One. Prepare all the boats
for a fast launch. And inform that
idiot Luther, will you. Let's see
if the son-of-a-bitch and his baby
boys can shoot straight.

FIRST MATE

Aye aye, sir.

The Mate hurries off the bridge. Carneski turns to Jake.

CARNESKI

So, Captain, do you stay with the
convoy and hope they miss us, or do
you make a run for it?

JAKE

I thank my lucky stars I ain't the
one's got to make that choice.

CARNESKI

C'mon Jake, what would you do?

JAKE

OK, what would I do? Multiple
contacts... that means there's at
least a couple of U-boats shadowing
right behind us, right? And not
enough escorts left to keep them
underwater, right?

CARNESKI

Right.

JAKE

And we're second to last in our
column, right?

CARNESKI

Right.

JAKE

So if we drop out now, or even veer
north, we'll probably be seen. And
if Gerry sees a lonely tanker, you
can bet we'll have plenty of
company.

CARNESKI

And if we stay in convoy...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE

We're a good target in the middle
of a lot of good targets.

CARNESKI

So you'd stay in convoy?

JAKE

And if I was still a Catholic, I'd
pray.

INT. CREW SALOON - DUSK

The seamen that are not on the doubled watch sullenly pick at their meal. The ship rolls gently, the steady throb of the engines below the only sound in the cabin.

Jake sits with Griffen and Fletcher. Only Fletcher finishes his plate.

JAKE

Want some more, Fletcher?

Jake gently pushes his plate over to Fletcher, who digs in. Griffen and Jake smile to each other.

GRIFFEN

Well, I guess I'll see if the Chief
needs a hand below.

JAKE

Stay near the hatch.

GRIFFEN

Yeah...

Griffen starts to go.

GRIFFEN (cont'd)

Listen... I... I wanted to say
thank you, Jake. I may not get a
chance later. I'm glad you picked
me to go.

JAKE

Best man for the job.

Griffen is about to say something else but changes his mind. He leaves. After a moment, Jake slowly gets up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE (cont'd)

Guess I'll get some rack. Gonna be
a long night.

He leaves Fletcher and the others in the saloon.

EXT. FOREDECK GUN

Around the forward 4" gun, leaning against the curtain of steel which wraps around it, a couple of the Navy ratings in flak jackets murmur in low tones to each other. Luther walks up and has a couple of words with them. He then ambles off aft.

A couple of steps away, Hadler stares out to sea, a smouldering cigar sticking out of his grizzled face, his eyes calm and steady on the horizon.

INT. RADIO SHACK

Sammy dozes over the huge old transmitter, his head leaning against his arm. One of the RADIOMEN gently taps Sammy on the shoulder and he wakes with a start.

Seeing the smile on the younger man's face, Sammy grins and rubs his red eyes awake.

INT. BRIDGE

Captain Carneski watches the clock as the time reaches 19:00. He turns to the Helmsman and nods. The man brings the wheel to port a full turn and, watching the movement of the compass in front of him, brings it back when the turn is complete.

HELMSMAN

Heading oh-four-two, sir.

CARNESKI

Steady as she goes.

EXT. STARBOARD BRIDGE WING

Mc Teague is watching the freighter sailing parallel to the Omaha Ranger in convoy. As he watches, the ship explodes in flames.

MC TEAGUE

Christ! Captain! Oh my God!!
She's... Oh Christ... Captain!!
Ship torpedoed off the starboard
beam!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Carneski rushes out from the bridge at the sound of the explosion. As he gets there, a more distant blast is heard as a ship farther away is hit. On the horizon, a red glow lights the spot. Carneski turns back toward the bridge.

INT. BRIDGE

Carneski races back to the bridge just as Sammy is limping in from the radio shack.

SAMMY
Captain?

CARNESKI
Yeah, Sammy.

SAMMY
Message from the Commodore, sir.

CARNESKI
Go ahead and read it. No secrets here.

SAMMY
(reading)
Multiple U-boat attack. Stop. Break formation and proceed to rendezvous 17A. Stop. Good luck. Stop.

CARNESKI
(to the Helmsman)
Come north 10 degrees. All ahead full.

HELMSMAN
Coming to oh-three-two. All ahead full.

CARNESKI
Full alert, Number One.

FIRST MATE
Aye aye, sir.

The First Mate steps back to a speaking tube and announces battle stations. A series of bells signals the alert to the crew as the WATCH from the port bridge wing rushes in.

WATCH
Torpedo!!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Frightened beyond further words, the Watch just points toward the port beam. The hissing of the approaching torpedo, like the sound of a hot iron dropped in water, is heard on the bridge. Carneski doesn't pause to look.

CARNESKI
Hard to starboard!!

The Helmsman spins the wheel and the ship lists as the hard turn is executed.

EXT. FOREDECK

As the ship leans into its turn, Hadler rushes over to the port rail. He sees the trail of the torpedo as the ship tries to turn out of its path.

HADLER
Holy Mary...

EXT. THE OMAHA RANGER

It is in the aft section of the ship around the water line where the torpedo hits home in a huge explosion of fire and water.

EXT. AFT DECK

On deck above the point of the explosion, a few men fall. The aft mast buckles and comes crashing down on deck. Other men run forward to escape the flames which roar up from the oil ignited below.

EXT. OCEAN SURFACE

In the crimson light of the blazing tanker, a German submarine surfaces a couple hundred yards off.

INT. BRIDGE

On the bridge, panic has begun to set in.

FIRST MATE
U-Boat surfacing off the port beam,
sir!

CARNESKI
(to the Helmsman)
Hard to port!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HELMSMAN

Sir?

CARNESKI

Hard to port, mister!

FIRST MATE

You're going to ram them, sir?!

Carneski just stares ahead, waiting for the submarine to come into his sights.

HELMSMAN

Hard to port...

EXT. ON DECK

Jake rushes on deck and goes straight to the rail. He sees the submarine open fire from its deck guns. Then he looks to the bow of the wounded tanker as it swings hard to port and steams toward the attacking submarine. Jake raises his fist into the air.

JAKE

Go get 'em, Lou!

He takes off forward at a run.

INT. PASSAGEWAY

Fletcher runs down the passageway and vaults a ladder to a lower deck.

INT. LOWER DECK

The roar of the oil flames is interrupted by an explosion from aft. Fletcher braces himself against a bulkhead and then continues on when the shudder of the decking subsides. He disappears into a hatch to the engine room.

EXT. THE FOREDECK

While trying to get a clean shot off with the 4" gun, the two Navy Ratings go down in a hail of machine gun fire from the surfaced submarine. Hadler mans the gun himself and fires it, the shell falling far off its mark.

HADLER

Come and get it, you sons-of-bitches!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The submarine is almost dead ahead and so close that men can be seen jumping down the deck hatch on the bridge as the craft dives to escape the onrushing tanker. Hadler opens the breech and turns to get another shell, but standing there, a shell in his arms, is Luther. Together the two men reload the gun.

INT. THE BRIDGE

Carneski strains to see the U-Boat ahead of them through the smoke pouring from fires on deck.

FIRST MATE
She's diving, Sir!

CARNESKI
More power!

HELMSMAN
Engine room not responding, sir.
We're losing speed.

Carneski slams his fist down.

CARNESKI
Damn!

EXT. THE BOW OF THE OMAHA RANGER

As the ship loses way and her bow wake falls, the submarine dives easily underneath her path.

INT. BRIDGE

The First Mate turns to the Captain, whose fury of the last few moments has left with the escape of the U-Boat.

FIRST MATE
Think she'll be back?

CARNESKI
Give the call to abandon ship,
Number One.

FIRST MATE
Aye aye, sir.

The Mate goes to the aft bulkhead of the bridge to make the call.

EXT. ON DECK

Men are lowering the lifeboats. The tanker is afire, but seems to be holding steady in the water.

Jake runs past these men toward the gun where Hadler and Luther fire away at the wake of the submerged submarine.

INT. ENGINE ROOM

Fletcher, on a platform surveying the ruined engines and pumps, looks frantically over the scene of distress. Pressurized steam escapes in hissing jets from some of the ruptured pipes. Seawater rises steadily in the bilge. Several firemen scramble up ladders to get above through open hatches. One terrified YOUNG MAN leaps up the ladder onto the platform where Fletcher stands and nearly knocks Fletcher over as he runs by.

YOUNG MAN

Abandon ship, pal. Are you nuts?

Then Fletcher's eye catches the boot of a man underneath a crushed bulkhead. He slides down the ladder and finds Griffen and the Chief Engineer trapped underneath sheets of twisted metal. The Chief is dead, having taken a fatal blow to the head. Griffen, however, opens his eyes as Fletcher checks his neck for a pulse.

GRIFFEN

Get out of here, Fletcher. I'm gone.

Fletcher gets up and rummages around for a length of pipe and, finding it, begins to pry the bulkhead up from Griffen's crushed body. But the bent metal moves only an inch or so, and Griffen himself is too far gone to help.

GRIFFEN (cont'd)

Go on, man. Save yourself. I ain't scared no more.

Fletcher tries again to pry up the wall when another explosion rocks him off his feet. Griffen is knocked out. As Fletcher gets up, he again begins to work at the bulkhead.

The Engineer's Mate is one of the last to abandon the engine room, having bravely checked for survivors of the torpedo's deadly blast. He sees Fletcher at work and runs to him, pulling him away from the victims below him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ENGINEER'S MATE

C'mon, we got to get out of here.

Fletcher pulls free and starts back to work. The Engineer's Mate grabs his arm again.

ENGINEER'S MATE (cont'd)

I don't go till you go. You wanna
save a dead man, or kill a live
one?

Fletcher stops and looks at the mate. The water and steam continue to fill the engine room. He goes back to his prying motion but stops after a couple of heaves. The Engineer's Mate stands his ground. Fletcher looks down at the face of Griffen, who shows no signs of life. He drops the length of pipe and lets the Engineer's Mate lead him toward the ladder out of the engine room.

INT. RADIO SHACK

Sammy is tapping away an SOS, giving the ship's position as Hadler and Jake rush in.

HADLER

C'mon, Sammy. Time to go.

SAMMY

But I still have to...

Hadler and Jake lift Sammy out of his chair in mid-sentence and carry him out of the radio shack.

EXT. ON DECK

Jake and Hadler help lower Sammy into one of the boats. Down below, Mc Teague helps guide Sammy into the boat safely. He looks up at Jake and nods.

On deck, the flames leap higher, the heat forcing some of the men trapped aft to jump into the water and swim for the boats already away.

Jake turns to re-enter the burning superstructure of the bridge. Hadler stops him.

HADLER

Where are you goin'?

JAKE

What about Griffen and Fletcher?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A huge explosion from the bowels of the ship, one of the oil tanks blown, is his answer. The deck has become unpassable, the heat unbearable.

Jake can no longer see a way through the flames to get below, and lets Hadler lead him to the lines to the lifeboats below. One by one, Jake and Hadler disappear over the port rail. They are the last men down.

EXT. THE BRIDGE

As the ship burns hotly, the face of Captain Lou Carneski can be seen inside the glass enclosed bridge. He is steering his ship out of the path of the lifeboats escaping in the water.

INT. A LADDER BELOW

The Engineer's Mate, with Fletcher right behind, marches up the ladder, burning his hand on one of the metal handrails.

EXT. ON DECK

Fletcher and the Engineer's Mate emerge on deck, flames closing in on all sides of them. The lifeboats are all long gone. They run as far as they can aft, but are stopped by a wall of fire. Like from a flamethrower, oil fire closes in on them from forward now as well. Trapped, both men climb over the rail and leap into the icy water.

EXT. THE BRIDGE

The bridge, as well as the whole superstructure, is afire. Flames cover the windows of the bridge where Carneski had last been seen.

EXT. JAKE'S LIFEBOAT

Though the boat is desperately overcrowded with survivors of the Omaha Ranger, it is stable and well afloat as men pull at the long oars away from the burning tanker. Jake, Hadler and Sammy watch the ship burn.

Then, a torpedo from an unseen U-Boat finishes off the great tanker with an immense blast. In a ball of fire, the ship splits apart and crashes in on itself, the bow and stern meeting high in the air as the hull folds.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The men in the lifeboat, already several hundred yards away, shield their faces from the heat.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. A BRITISH TRAWLER - DAWN

Silhouetted against the first light of dawn, a small British trawler plows slowly through the water, looking for survivors from the night's attack. One British SEAMAN at the bow sees two bobbing red dots ahead of them - the red lights on the life belts the men wear under full alert. The seaman calls back to the man on the bridge.

SEAMAN

Sir! 100 meters off the port bow!

EXT. BRIDGE

From the open bridge of the trawler, the British OFFICER steers the boat over.

OFFICER

Let's get some hands on the port side, then. Look alive!

EXT. PORT RAIL

On a section of one of the crates from the deck of the Omaha Ranger clings Fletcher. One hand grasps the wooden raft, the other hand holds onto the arm of the Engineer's Mate, whose face is submerged, his body frozen stiff.

Several of the Brits on board heave Fletcher out of the water. But though they get him on board, Fletcher clings to the body still in the water. Fletcher is dazed and numb from the cold.

SEAMAN

Let him go, mate. 'E's gone. It's all right. You done your best.

Slowly, Fletcher unclamps his icy hand, and the make-shift raft with the Mate's body floats away. The Brits pull Fletcher onto the deck of the trawler and cover him with blankets.

EXT. MURMANSK SHIPYARDS - DAY

Huge cranes belching black smoke stand against a somber grey sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

At docks extending as far as the eye can see, freighters lay tied up, their holds bared to the monster cranes. Longshoremen, longshore-women, actually, direct the iron hooks into the open holds as trucks queue up along the wharf to receive their burden.

Many of the piers are empty, a sign of the devastation of allied shipping. At a couple of piers, military ships lie silently, their crews off on well-deserved leave, some of the ships evidencing the scars of a hazardous tour.

EXT. A PIER

The crew of the USS Huckleberry toss their hawsers to the women along the wharf as they accept the gangway swung over to the deck. Strains of the Star Spangled Banner, off-key and out of rhythm, come from down the pier where a small brass band squeezes out the notes like a chore. The BANDLEADER is conducting twelve ancient MEN in Communist uniform, a frail tribute to the incoming American warship and her tattered passengers. Around the bandstand, a small crowd of curious CHILDREN are dwarfed by the great machinery and vessels of the shipyard.

EXT. THE GANGWAY

A stream of survivors begins to file off the cutter. First to come are a couple of stretchers, which are hurried off into ambulances on their way to hospitals. Then come the rescued merchant sailors that the cutter had plucked from the freezing waters. Many of them are wrapped against the chilly air in blankets and borrowed oilskins.

Jake, Hadler and Sammy tread cautiously down the gangway, as if untrusting dry land after their toil at sea. They gather in a group on the wharf, away from the stream of the haggard victims of their convoy. The band plays.

EXT. MURMANSK STREETS - LATER

Jake and Hadler walk slowly so that Sammy can keep up. The streets are curiously devoid of men except for the occasional patrol of SOLDIERS. At a corner, the men stop and watch a group of women LABORERS shoveling through the rubble of a bombed out building.

INT. A RUSSIAN STORE

Inside a small store, Fletcher, looks inquisitively at a thick Russian CLERK who stands behind a wooden counter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Clerk repeats something in Russian to Fletcher, but Fletcher still doesn't understand. Again the Clerk repeats the Russian words, very annoyed at the customer who refuses to respond.

Finally, Fletcher reaches into his pocket and pulls out more coins, placing them on the counter beside a small pad and pencil. The Clerk gruffly takes up most of this additional money and turns away. Fletcher pockets his change and the pad and pencil he has just purchased and, wrapping his collar up against his chin, turns to the door to go.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE STORE

Fletcher emerges into the grey street and turns left, aimlessly wandering. He stops when he hears his name.

JAKE (OS)

Fletcher!

Fletcher turns around to see Jake and Hadler running to him, Sammy hobbling behind. He breaks out in a wide grin as his friends reach him and encircle him with great hugs.

HADLER

What happened to you?

Fletcher fumbles in his pocket and starts to pull out the pad and pencil. But he stops when Jake speaks up.

JAKE

Where's Griffen?

Fletcher simply shakes his head. The others are silent for a minute in respect for their friend.

HADLER

C'mon, Fletch, we're gonna get us
some of this Rusky vodka we been
hearin' about.

They walk off together down the street towards town.

INT. MURMANSK BARROOM

The bar is half-filled with old men who tell each other stories in loud Russian. They are, for the most part, all extremely drunk. A few of them wear decorations from the 1st World War. Some have lost limbs; one man passes a glass of vodka down to another on a rolling cart, his legs had been shot off in another generation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jake, Hadler, Fletcher and Sammy sit apart at a table along the wall of the dim barroom. They raise their glasses.

SAMMY

To the Snug Harbor Watch.

They drink. Hadler raises his glass.

HADLER

To those sons-of-bitches on Staten Island what said we couldn't make it!

They drink. Fletcher fishes in his coat pocket and pulls out his pad. He flicks a bit of wood away from the lead on his pencil and scrawls quickly. He hands the note to Hadler.

HADLER (cont'd)

Yeah, Fletch. To Griffen.

They drink. Jake keeps his glass held up.

JAKE

Nichols.

They drink again. Jake signals to the large barmaid and swings his finger around the four glasses, indicating another round. He pulls paper money out of his pocket and drops it on the table.

JAKE (cont'd)

Bastards probably robbin' us blind.

HADLER

Anyway, at least Griffen didn't die in that old smelly place. I ever tell you what I hated most about Snug Harbor? Was the stink. The stink of a bunch of rotting old men. Smells like piss and puke. You know?

The thought sobers them considerably.

SAMMY

We better get back, Jake. It's way past curfew.

JAKE

The devil with curfew. I ain't ready to look at another boat till I'm blind drunk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He leans back as the barmaid places four tall glasses of clear vodka on the table and snatches up most of the money left there. Jake grabs his glass and drinks half of it in a gulp.

EXT. MURMANSK STREET - LATE NIGHT

The four men, thoroughly drunk, weave arm in arm down the deserted street singing "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Jake still sips from a glass he had taken with him from the bar.

EXT. STREET NEAR THE WHARF

As the drunken four round the corner, they are confronted by a Russian patrol, two SOLDIERS with rifles slung low across their shoulders, who have come to the corner from the cross street. The Soldiers stand their ground and question the four in Russian. Jake doesn't speak any Russian.

JAKE

How're you doing, fellas. Drink?

Jake offers his glass to one of the Soldiers, but the Russian, a boy in uniform actually, slaps it away in fear. The other young Soldier repeats his question in Russian, nervous and fidgeting with his rifle.

JAKE (cont'd)

Well if you won't drink, then the hell with you. C'mon fellas.

Jake turns and leads his four around the Soldiers. They start to sing "Yankee Doodle" again when one of the Soldiers grabs Sammy.

SAMMY

Hey!

The others turn around and Jake, seeing the Soldier holding Sammy, rushes over and takes a swing at the young man. Jake's punch connects and drops the Soldier. The other Russian moves in, but Hadler raps him from the side and he goes down as well.

Sammy freed, the four run laughing down the street towards the docks. There is a shout in Russian from behind them but the four, drunk beyond care, continue running, Sammy doing his level best to keep up with the others.

Then a shot rings out and Sammy stumbles and falls. The others stop and turn to see their friend down on the ground.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Forgetting now about their drunk and their boat and the Soldiers who come rushing on, Jake, Hadler and Fletcher run to the side of their friend.

INT. JAIL CELL - MORNING

Jake, Hadler and Fletcher slump in the small cell, Hadler with his eyes closed, sleeping.

From down a hall, a US NAVY OFFICER is escorted to the cell by a RUSSIAN military man. The Russian pulls keys from a ring on his uniform belt and opens the cell door.

NAVY OFFICER
Rise and shine, gentlemen. Time to go.

Hadler wakes and three get up and shake off their hangovers.

JAKE
What about Sammy?

The Navy Officer shakes his head.

JAKE (cont'd)
They just shoot him and that's that?

NAVY OFFICER
It was way past curfew. You knew that. You took your chances.

JAKE
That's all you can say?

NAVY OFFICER
I'm sorry, gentlemen, but there's nothing to be done.

JAKE
We did this for them. That's why we come over here. For them. This is what we get.

HADLER
They didn't know. They was just scared. C'mon, Jake.

Hadler leads Jake out of the cell, with Fletcher right behind. Jake passes within inches of the Russian official.

JAKE
Goddamn you. We did this for you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Russian is silent as the Navy Officer leads them out of the jail.

EXT. ON DECK OF THE HUGH KILLINGTON - DAY

A small 10,000 ton freighter steams slowly out of Murmansk Harbor. Fletcher, Hadler and Jake stand on the aft deck, watching the dreary outpost city recede from view.

AYERS (VO)

After a ship empties her hold,
she'll reprovision for the trip
home and go. She'll ride high,
without her cargo as ballast,
and'll be hard to handle in
weather. Sometimes it seems like
sailors after a rough passage'll
act the same, like they was
dreamin' or somethin'. Maybe it's
cause the rough trip is behind 'em
now and they got nothin' to look
forward to but a long haul an'
lonely rooms an' the next trip out.

Hadler puts an arm around Jake, but when the other man doesn't respond, Hadler turns and walks away.

INT. CREW CABIN - NIGHT

Jake lies in his lower berth. Above him, Hadler sleeps soundly. Jake pulls the slim volume of Tennyson from his pocket and opens it to "Ulysses," the pages stiff and brittle from age and saltwater. He stares at the page for a while in the dim light, and then closes the book.

JAKE

"...all times I have enjoy'd
Greatly, have suffer'd greatly,
both with those
That loved me, and alone; on shore,
and when
Thro' scudding drifts the rainy
Hyades
Vext the dim sea: I am become a
name..."

He tosses the book away from him onto the cabin floor.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. CREW CABIN - EARLY MORNING

Jake sleeps now as well. Hadler snores loudly from above. Only a few of the bunks are empty, evidence of a light watch on deck. The ship rolls gently.

And then suddenly, an explosion rocks the cabin. The men wake immediately. As the ship begins to list heavily to starboard, Hadler is rolled out of his berth and tumbles to the floor.

HADLER

What the....!?

The ship's bells can be heard above and voices from without shouting "Abandon Ship!" Hadler pulls Jake out of his bunk as other men struggle into their coats and oilskins. Jake is sluggish and seems to move aimlessly.

HADLER (cont'd)

C'mon, Jake! Move!

Hadler throws Jake's coat over him and half drags him out of the cabin.

EXT. ON DECK

The ship is in chaos. Fire licks out of the ship's holds in pockets on the deck. Men dash in every direction, pulling large rafts to the rail and wrestling with the davits which hold up the lifeboats. Hadler leads Jake aft, but stops to grab a SEAMAN who is running by, struggling into a life jacket.

HADLER

What happened?

SEAMAN

We hit a mine! Abandon ship!

The seaman hurries forward.

EXT. AFT DECK

Hadler and Jake hurry over to one of the lifeboats where they see Fletcher and a young BOSUN'S MATE struggling to free the boat from its lines, fighting the gravity of the listing ship. As Hadler rushes to help, the stern of the freighter begins to lift from the churning water, signaling a very fast sinking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADLER

C'mon, Jake, goddammit, give us a hand here.

Jake listlessly responds, circling around to the side of the boat where Fletcher is trying to heave it out over the gunwales. In a sudden lurch of the sinking ship, the lifeboat is thrown back, and Jake is pinned against the davits. He doesn't cry out, but Hadler sees his predicament and rushes over.

From the inside of the ship, the brutal sound of bulkheads collapsing rises above the roar of the flames. The scream of a man trapped below pierces the din. A group of men at the rail help pull the lifeboat away from the davits and Jake is freed.

Fletcher, meanwhile, has gotten the lines freed and begins to lower the boat away. But the rope breaks free from him and the boat crashes down to the gurgling sea below. Though Fletcher is thrown clear, Hadler's leg is caught up in the lines as they fly overboard, and he is whisked out into the churning sea.

JAKE

Hadler!

Jake tries to rise but his crushed legs give way underneath him. The ship makes a final lurch as the bow dips low and the stern deck is lifted high in the air. Three of the men around the lifeboat are caught off guard and thrown tumbling forward down the steep slope of the deck. Jake manages to grab hold of the davits.

Fletcher, grabbing the lifelines along the rail, makes his way to Jake and, lifting the much larger man over his shoulder, climbs over the rail, straddling it. Grabbing hold of the lines which miraculously still hold the lifeboat far below, Fletcher pushes off from the side of the boat, Jake clinging onto his back. The heavy rope burning the palms of his hands, Fletcher slides himself and Jake into the lifeboat.

EXT. THE LIFEBOAT

The huge rudder and useless propellers of the freighter rising high above their small boat, Fletcher pulls hard at the oars to get them away from the sucking whirlpool the sinking ship creates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

From the stern deck high above, a MAN leaps into the water, his heavy clothing in flames. Fletcher doesn't see him, but Jake does.

JAKE

Over there!

He points to where the man flails in the water. Fletcher pulls the boat around and reaches the struggling man. He ships the oars and leans over the gunwales to grab him. Jake, although he cannot get up, reaches an arm over the side of the boat and helps heave the man aboard. Fletcher jumps back to the oars and pulls hard. The rescued man does not move.

As Fletcher gets the boat to safety, the freighter's huge boilers break free inside her ruptured bowels in a huge explosion. Fletcher stops his rowing and he and Jake watch in terror as the ship rapidly sinks. The half of the doomed ship still above water gives a sudden shudder and, spewing flames and smoke, slips down beneath the surface.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. LIFEBOAT - NIGHT

The young man lies unconscious in the bottom of the boat. Fletcher tends to the burns covering most of his face. Jake stares back at the last of the burning flotsam on the ocean where the Hugh Killington sank, already a mile away.

JAKE

You know what the bitch is, Fletcher? Well, actually there's two bitches here. First thing is, current's taking us straight out to sea. Second thing is, no convoy.

Fletcher tends to the wound.

JAKE (cont'd)

Get it? No convoy, no rescue boats. What do you think of that?

Fletcher doesn't look up.

JAKE (cont'd)

What do you think of that, Fletcher?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LIFEBOAT - DAY

Fletcher has raised the mast and small sail, but there is not a breath of wind and the boat drifts sideways out to sea. Occasionally there's the rap of a small chunk of ice as it slaps up against the hull.

Fletcher pushes the small mast out to catch more wind. The mast swings lazily back in as soon as he lets it go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LIFEBOAT - DUSK

Jake doesn't help as Fletcher heaves the lifeless body of the bosun's mate over the side of the boat and into the water.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LIFEBOAT - DAY

Jake looks very weak. His lips blistering from the exposure, his eyes closed. Fletcher pats Jake's pocket, in search for the book there. Jake smiles weakly without opening his eyes.

JAKE

I threw it out.

Fletcher slumps back into the boat. He nibbles at one of the hard biscuits from the survival rations. The wind freshens slightly and the sail above them billows.

JAKE (cont'd)

"...Life piled on life
Were all too little, and of one to
me
Little remains: but every hour is
saved
From that eternal silence,
something more
A bringer of new things..."

Fletcher watches Jake carefully.

JAKE (cont'd)

Don't worry, Fletch. I know it by
heart.

The boat drifts slowly.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE LIFEBOAT - NEXT DAY

Jake wakes slowly. His face is drawn and very pale, his lips cracked and bleeding. He weakly lifts his head to see Fletcher pulling at the oars. Beyond the bow of the boat Jake sees why Fletcher is rowing with such earnest. A barren shore lies in front of them, not a mile off.

JAKE

Well I'll be damned...

EXT. ON THE SHORE - DAY

Fletcher has thrown together some wooden boards that he had found along the beach of this desolate, treeless shore. Propping them up with a few rocks, he completes a crude shelter, a lean-to against the bitter wind. A hundred yards away lies the lifeboat pulled up onto the rocks, its dirty sail flapping in the breeze.

Fletcher comes around to the front of the shelter and disappears inside.

INT. THE SHELTER

Inside, the cold sun pours through the gaps between the weathered boards. Jake lies still, his head propped against a couple of life jackets from the boat. Around him the last of the emergency rations are arranged. Jake breathes shallowly, and when Fletcher enters the tiny space, he can barely open his eyes.

Fletcher wraps the blankets tightly to Jake, being gentle around his ruined legs. Jake has precious little voice left.

JAKE

Snug.

Fletcher smiles. He brings the last gallon jug of water to Jake's side and offers the old man a sip. Jake shakes his head.

JAKE (cont'd)

I done some figuring... the currents... I been in these waters...

He clears his parched throat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAKE (cont'd)

I figure we're on Spitzbergen,
maybe... oughta be fishing on the
coast... Lapplanders.

Fletcher doesn't move.

JAKE (cont'd)

You know, I been thinking about
that guy Ulysses. In the poem. I
used to think he was sailing around
all those years 'cause he wanted
to. Meetin' the dames, collectin'
souvenirs. But you know what,
Fletcher? Now I think that all he
wanted to do was to get back home.
Just got lost.

Fletcher watches him steadily.

JAKE (cont'd)

Go get help, Fletch. I'll watch the
fort.

EXT. SHORE

A small bundle on his back, Fletcher walks away from the tiny
shelter in the rocks, along the barren coast.

INT. THE SHELTER

A spot of sunlight filtering through the boards creeps slowly
across the rocky ground and onto Jake's face. He blinks
against its brightness and closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. ON THE SHORE - DAY

Fletcher climbs out of a small fishing vessel, followed by
several LAPPLANDERS in their bright, multi-colored hats and
coats. Fletcher hurries up the shore to the shelter he had
built a couple of days earlier. The only sign of life is a
few gulls that circle aimlessly above and alight on the rocky
coast.

INT. SHELTER

Fletcher lets his eyes adjust to the darkness inside, but he
knows before he can see. Jake is dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fletcher falls to his knees alongside the corpse and touches the dead man's cold face.

EXT. THE LAPP FISHING BOAT - DUSK

From the aft deck of the small trawler, a couple of the Lapps help Fletcher with the body. They have made a shroud from some of their traditional brightly colored cloth. One of the men utters a few words in his native tongue. And then they gently let the shrouded corpse slip into the ice-blue water.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR, STATEN ISLAND - DAY

It is early March, one of those mild March days that signal the coming of spring before winter has actually left.

From up Richmond Terrace, Fletcher comes walking, a small duffel on his back. He walks at an even pace, looking straight ahead of him. He turns and enter the front gate of Snug Harbor.

EXT. GATEHOUSE

The Gatekeeper stares in open amazement at seeing Fletcher after all these months. He and his companion leave their game of dominoes and follow Fletcher into the compound.

EXT. FRONT LAWN

As Fletcher walks up the path, the conversation on the benches stops and the men in their coats turn up to him and stare. One by one, these men rise from their newspapers and conversations and follow, till a group of 30 men trail him.

EXT. STEPS OF E-BUILDING

Fletcher begins to climb the marble steps up to the front door of the stately but crumbling dormitory. He stops a couple of steps from the top. He turns around to look at the faces of the men who had followed him, old and creviced faces, their eyes shining bright with expectation. Some of the men meet eyes with him: Donahue and Rempley, Evans, and Ayers as a younger man. Fletcher sits down on the steps. As the men gather around him, he reaches into his pocket and pulls out his pad. A man leans over Fletcher's shoulder and reads as the young man begins to write.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAN
(reading)
When we left there was five...

As the men settle in for a good story, and as Fletcher continues to scratch away, the tired voice of Ayers takes over.

AYERS (VO)
Fletcher made it back to Snug Harbor and told us the story I just told you. He didn't stay long, though. There was our allies to supply, and there was other boats going over. It was a long war.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. AYERS' ROOM, SAILOR'S SNUG HARBOR - DUSK, 1967

The sun has set and Rosenberg and Ayers sit in the near-dark, Rosenberg no longer scribbling but hanging on the ancient man's every word.

AYERS
Some of the others went with him the next time. A lot of guys, matter of fact. Me, I was too old to go, I guess, though I thought about it more'n once after that. Anyway, somebody had to hold down the fort. Somebody had to be here to listen to the stories these guys was bringin' back with 'em. Them that come back.

Ayers falls silent. Rosenberg sits for a while in the dimness and then quietly rises, collecting his jacket and his note pads. Ayers doesn't say a word as Rosenberg crosses the room and exits.

INT. HALLWAY

Rosenberg walks down the center of the hallway, silhouetted against the last light of day in a window at the far end. As he reaches the end of the hall, he turns and pushes through the swinging door to the stairway and disappears. The door swings back, and back again, and stops.

FADE TO BLACK