

In the Zone

CHARACTERS

SMITTY
DAVIS
SWANSON
SCOTTY
IVAN
PAUL
JACK
DRISCOLL
COCKY

*Seamen on the British
tramp steamer Glencairn*

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In the Zone

SCENE—*The seamen's forecastle. On the right above the bunks three or four portholes covered with black cloth can be seen. On the floor near the doorway is a pail with a tin dipper. A lantern in the middle of the floor, turned down very low, throws a dim light around the place. Five men, Scotty, Ivan, Swanson, Smitty and Paul, are in their bunks apparently asleep. It is about ten minutes of twelve on a night in the fall of the year 1915.*

Smitty turns slowly in his bunk and, leaning out over the side, looks from one to another of the men as if to assure himself that they are asleep. Then he climbs carefully out of his bunk and stands in the middle of the forecastle fully dressed, but in his stocking feet, glancing around him suspiciously. Reassured, he leans down and cautiously pulls out a suit-case from under the bunks in front of him.

Just at this moment Davis appears in the doorway, carrying a large steaming coffee-pot in his hand. He stops short when he sees Smitty. A puzzled expression comes over his face, followed by one of suspicion, and he retreats farther back in the alleyway, where he can watch Smitty without being seen.

All the latter's movements indicate a fear of discovery. He takes out a small bunch of keys and unlocks the suit-case, making a slight noise as he does so. Scotty wakes up and peers at him over the side of the bunk. Smitty opens the suit-case and takes out a small black tin box, carefully places this under his mattress, shoves the suit-case back under the bunk, climbs into his bunk again and closes his eyes.

Davis enters the forecastle, places the coffee-pot beside the lantern, and goes from one to the other of the sleepers and shakes them vigorously, saying to each in a low voice: Near eight bells, Scotty. Arise and shine, Swanson. Eight bells, Ivan. Smitty yawns loudly with a great pretense of having been dead asleep. All of the rest of the men tumble out of their bunks, stretching and gaping, and commence to pull on their shoes. They go one by one to the cupboard near the open door, take out their cups and spoons, and sit down together on the benches. The coffee-pot is passed around. They munch their biscuits and sip their coffee in dull silence.)

DAVIS—(*suddenly jumping to his feet—nervously*) Where's that air comin' from? (*All are startled and look at him wonderingly.*)

SWANSON—(*a squat, surly-faced Swede—grumpily*) What air? I don't feel nothing.

DAVIS—(*excitedly*) I kin feel it—a draft. (*He stands on the bench and looks around—suddenly exploding*) Damn fool square-head! (*He leans over the upper bunk in which Paul is sleeping and slams the porthole shut.*) I got a good notion to report him. Serve him bloody well right! What's the use o' blindin' the ports when that thick-head goes an' leaves 'em open?

SWANSON—(*yawning—too sleepy to be aroused by anything—carelessly*) Dey don't see what little light go out yust one port.

SCOTTY—(*protesting*) Dinna be a loon, Swanson! D'ye no ken the dangerr o' showin' a licht wi' a pack o' submarrines lyin' about?

IVAN—(*shaking his shaggy ox-like head in an emphatic affirmative*) Dot's right, Scotty. I don' li-ike blow up, no, by devil!

SMITTY—(*his manner slightly contemptuous*) I don't think there's much danger of meeting any of their submarines, not until we get into the War Zone, at any rate.

DAVIS—(*He and Scotty look at Smitty suspiciously—harshly*) You don't, eh? (*He lowers his voice and speaks slowly.*) Well, we're in the war zone right this minit if you wants to know. (*The effect of this speech is instantaneous. All sit bolt upright on their benches and stare at Davis.*)

SMITTY—How do you know, Davis?

DAVIS—(*angrily*) 'Cos Drisc heard the First send the Third below to wake the skipper when we fetched the zone—bout five bells, it was. Now whata y' got to say?

SMITTY—(*conciliatingly*) Oh, I wasn't doubting your word, Davis; but you know they're not pasting up bulletins to let the crew know when the zone is reached—especially on ammunition ships like this.

IVAN—(*decidedly*) I don't li-ike dees voyage. Next time I ship on windjammer Boston to River Plate, load with wood only so it float, by golly!

SWANSON—(*fretfully*) I hope British navy blow 'em to hell, those submarines, py damn!

SCOTTY—(*looking at Smitty, who is staring at the doorway in a dream, his chin on his hands—meaningly*) It is no the sub-marrines only we've to fear, I'm thinkin'.

DAVIS—(*assenting eagerly*) That's no lie, Scotty.

SWANSON—You mean the mines?

SCOTTY—I wasna thinkin' o' mines eitherr.

DAVIS—There's many a good ship blown up and at the bottom of the sea, what never hit no mine or torpedo.

SCOTTY—Did ye neverr read of the Gerrman spies and the dirrty work they're doin' all the war? (*He and Davis both glance at Smitty, who is deep in thought and is not listening to the conversation.*)

DAVIS—An' the clever way they fool you!

SWANSON—Sure; I read it in paper many time.

DAVIS—Well—(*he is about to speak but hesitates and finishes lamely*) you got to watch out, that's all I says.

IVAN—(*drinking the last of his coffee and slamming his fist on the bench explosively*) I tell you dis rotten coffee give me belly-ache, yes! (*They all look at him in amused disgust.*)

SCOTTY—(*sardonically*) Dinna fret about it, Ivan. If we blow up ye'll no be mindin' the pain in your middle. (*Jack enters. He is a young American with a tough, good-natured face. He wears dungarees and a heavy jersey.*)

JACK—Eight bells, fellers.

IVAN—(*stupidly*) I don' hear bell ring.

JACK—No, and yuh won't hear any ring, yuh boob—(*lowering his voice unconsciously*) now we're in the war zone.

SWANSON—(*anxiously*) Is the boats all ready?

JACK—Sure; we can lower 'em in a second.

DAVIS—A lot o' good the boats'll do, with us loaded deep with all kinds o' dynamite and stuff the like o' that! If a torpedo hits this hooker we'll all be in hell b'fore you could wink your eye.

JACK—They ain't goin' to hit us, see? That's my dope. Whose wheel is it?

IVAN—(*sullenly*) My wheel. (*He lumbers out.*)

JACK—And whose lookout?

SWANSON—Mine, I tink. (*He follows Ivan.*)

JACK—(*scornfully*) A hell of a lot of use keepin' a lookout! We couldn't run away or fight if we wanted to. (*to Scotty and Smitty*) Better look up the bo'sun or the Fourth, you two, and let 'em see you're awake. (*Scotty goes to the doorway and turns to wait for Smitty, who is still in the same position, head on hands, seemingly unconscious of everything. Jack slaps him roughly on the shoulder and he comes to with a start.*) Aft and report, Duke! What's the matter with yuh—in a dope dream? (*Smitty goes out after Scotty without answering. Jack looks after him with a frown.*) He's a queer guy. I can't figger him out.

DAVIS—Nor no one else. (*lowering his voice—meaningly*) An' he's liable to turn out queerer than any of us think if we ain't careful.

JACK—(*suspiciously*) What d'yuh mean? (*They are interrupted by the entrance of Driscoll and Cocky.*)

COCKY—(*protestingly*) Blimey if I don't fink I'll put in this 'ere watch ahtside on deck. (*He and Driscoll go over and get their cups.*) I down't want to be caught in this 'ole if they 'its us. (*He pours out coffee.*)

DRISCOLL—(*pouring his*) Divil a bit ut wud matther where ye arre. Ye'd be blown to smithereens b'fore ye cud say your name. (*He sits down, overturning as he does so the untouched cup of coffee which Smitty had forgotten and left on the bench. They all jump nervously as the tin cup hits the floor with a bang. Driscoll flies into an unreasonable rage.*) Who's the dirty scut left this cup where a man 'ud sit on ut?

DAVIS—It's Smitty's.

DRISCOLL—(*kicking the cup across the forecastle*) Does he think he's too much av a bloody gentleman to put his own away loike the rist av us? If he does I'm the bye'll beat that noshun out av his head.

COCKY—Be the airs 'e puts on you'd think 'e was the Prince of Wales. Wot's 'e doin' on a ship, I arks yer? 'E ain't now good as a sailor, is 'e?—dawdlin' abaht on deck like a chicken wiv 'is 'ead cut orf!

JACK—(*good-naturedly*) Aw, the Duke's all right. S'posin' he did ferget his cup—what's the diff? (*He picks up the cup and puts it away—with a grin*) This war zone stuff's got yer

goat, Drisc—and yours too, Cocky—and I ain't cheerin' much fur it myself, neither.

COCKY—(*with a sigh*) Blimey, it ain't no bleedin' joke, yer first trip, to know as there's a ship full of shells li'ble to go orf in under your bloomin' feet, as you might say, if we gets 'it be a torpedo or mine. (*with sudden savagery*) Calls they-selves 'uman bein's, too! Blarsted 'Uns!

DRISCOLL—(*gloomily*) 'Tis me last trip in the bloody zone, God help me. The divil take their twenty-foive percent bonus—and be drowned like a rat in a trap in the bargain, maybe.

DAVIS—Wouldn't be so bad if she wasn't carryin' ammunition. Them's the kind the subs is layin' for.

DRISCOLL—(*irritably*) Fur the love av hivin, don't be talkin' about ut. I'm sick wid thinkin' and jumpin' at iviry bit av a noise. (*There is a pause during which they all stare gloomily at the floor.*)

JACK—Hey, Davis, what was you sayin' about Smitty when they come in?

DAVIS—(*with a great air of mystery*) I'll tell you in a minit. I want to wait an' see if he's comin' back. (*impressively*) You won't be callin' him all right when you hears what I seen with my own eyes. (*He adds with an air of satisfaction*) An' you won't be feelin' no safer, neither. (*They all look at him with puzzled glances full of a vague apprehension.*)

DRISCOLL—God blarst ut! (*He fills his pipe and lights it. The others, with an air of remembering something they had forgotten, do the same. Scotty enters.*)

SCOTTY—(*in awed tones*) Mon, but it's clear outside the night! Like day.

DAVIS—(*in low tones*) Where's Smitty, Scotty?

SCOTTY—Out on the hatch starin' at the moon like a mon half-daft.

DAVIS—Kin you see him from the doorway?

SCOTTY—(*goes to doorway and carefully peeks out*) Aye; he's still there.

DAVIS—Keep your eyes on him for a moment. I've got something I wants to tell the boys and I don't want him walkin' in in the middle of it. Give a shout if he starts this way.

SCOTTY—(*with suppressed excitement*) Aye, I'll watch him. And I've somethin' myself to tell about his Lordship.

DRISCOLL—(*impatiently*) Out wid ut! You're talkin' more than a pair av auld women wud be standin' in the road, and gittin' no further along.

DAVIS—Listen! You 'member when I went to git the coffee, Jack?

JACK—Sure, I do.

DAVIS—Well, I brings it down here same as usual and got as far as the door there when I sees him.

JACK—Smitty?

DAVIS—Yes, Smitty! He was standin' in the middle of the fo'c's'tle there (*pointing*) lookin' around sneakin'-like at Ivan and Swanson and the rest 's if he wants to make certain they're asleep. (*He pauses significantly, looking from one to the other of his listeners. Scotty is nervously dividing his attention between Smitty on the hatch outside and Davis's story, fairly bursting to break in with his own revelations.*)

JACK—(*impatiently*) What of it?

DAVIS—Listen! He was standin' right there—(*pointing again*) in his stockin' feet—no shoes on, mind, so he wouldn't make no noise!

JACK—(*spitting disgustedly*) Aw!

DAVIS—(*not heeding the interruption*) I seen right away somethin' on the queer was up so I slides back into the alleyway where I kin see him but he can't see me. After he makes sure they're all asleep he goes in under the bunks there—bein' careful not to raise a noise, mind!—an' takes out his bag there. (*By this time everyone, Jack included, is listening breathlessly to his story.*) Then he fishes in his pocket an' takes out a bunch o' keys an' kneels down beside the bag an' opens it.

SCOTTY—(*unable to keep silent longer*) Mon, didn't I see him do that same thing wi' these two eyes. 'Twas just that moment I woke and spied him.

DAVIS—(*surprised, and a bit nettled to have to share his story with anyone*) Oh, you seen him, too, eh? (*to the others*) Then Scotty kin tell you if I'm lyin' or not.

DRISCOLL—An' what did he do whin he'd the bag opened?

DAVIS—He bends down and reaches out his hand sort o'

scared-like, like it was somethin' dang'rous he was after, an' feels round in under his duds—hidden in under his duds an' wrapped up in 'em, it was—an' he brings out a black iron box!

COCKY—(*looking around him with a frightened glance*) Gawd blimey! (*The others likewise betray their uneasiness, shuffling their feet nervously.*)

DAVIS—Ain't that right, Scotty?

SCOTTY—Right as rain, I'm tellin' ye'!

DAVIS—(*to the others with an air of satisfaction*) There you are! (*lowering his voice*) An' then what d'you suppose he did? Sneaks to his bunk an' slips the black box in under his mattress—in under his mattress, mind!—

JACK—And it's there now?

DAVIS—Course it is! (*Jack starts toward Smitty's bunk. Driscoll grabs him by the arm.*)

DRISCOLL—Don't be touchin' ut, Jack!

JACK—You needn't worry. I ain't goin' to touch it. (*He pulls up Smitty's mattress and looks down. The others stare at him, holding their breaths. He turns to them, trying hard to assume a careless tone.*) It's there, aw right.

COCKY—(*miserably upset*) I'm gointer 'op it aht on deck. (*He gets up but Driscoll pulls him down again. Cocky protests*) It fair guvs me the trembles sittin' still in 'ere.

DRISCOLL—(*scornfully*) Are ye frightened, ye toad? 'Tis a hell av a thing fur grown men to be shiverin' loike childer at a bit av a black box. (*scratching his head in uneasy perplexity*) Still, ut's damn queer, the looks av ut.

DAVIS—(*sarcastically*) A bit of a black box, eh? How big d'you think them—(*he hesitates*)—things has to be—big as this fo'c's'tle?

JACK—(*in a voice meant to be reassuring*) Aw, hell! I'll bet it ain't nothin' but some coin he's saved he's got locked up in there.

DAVIS—(*scornfully*) That's likely, ain't it? Then why does he act so s'picious? He's been on ship near two year, ain't he? He knows damn well there ain't no thieves in this fo'c's'tle, don't he? An' you know 's well 's I do he didn't have no money when he came on board an' he ain't saved none since. Don't you? (*Jack doesn't answer.*) Listen! D'you know what

he done after he put that thing in under his mattress?—an' Scotty'll tell you if I ain't speakin' truth. He looks round to see if anyone's woke up—

SCOTTY—I clapped my eyes shut when he turned round.

DAVIS—An' then he crawls into his bunk an' shuts his eyes, *pretendin'* he was asleep, mind!

SCOTTY—Aye, I could see him.

DAVIS—An' when I goes to call him, I don't even shake him. I just says, "Eight bells, Smitty," in a'most a whisper-like, an' up he gets yawnin' an' stretchin' fit to kill hisself 's if he'd been dead asleep.

COCKY—Gawd blimey!

DRISCOLL—(*shaking his head*) Ut looks bad, divil a doubt av ut.

DAVIS—(*excitedly*) An' now I come to think of it, there's the porthole. How'd it come to git open, tell me that? I know'd well Paul never opened it. Ain't he grumblin' about bein' cold all the time?

SCOTTY—The mon that opened it meant no good to this ship, whoever he was.

JACK—(*sourly*) What porthole? What're yuh talkin' about?

DAVIS—(*pointing over Paul's bunk*) There. It was open when I come in. I felt the cold air on my neck an' shut it. It would'a been clear's a lighthouse to any sub that was watchin'—an' we s'posed to have all the ports blinded! Who'd do a dirty trick like that? It wasn't none of us, nor Scotty here, nor Swanson, nor Ivan. Who would it be, then?

COCKY—(*angrily*) Must'a been 'is bloody Lordship.

DAVIS—For all's we know he might'a been signalin' with it. They does it like that by winkin' a light. Ain't you read how they gets caught doin' it in London an' on the coast?

COCKY—(*firmly convinced now*) An' wots 'e doin' aht alone on the 'atch—keepin' 'isself clear of us like 'e was afraid?

DRISCOLL—Kape your eye on him, Scotty.

SCOTTY—There's no a move oot o' him.

JACK—(*in irritated perplexity*) But, hell, ain't he an English-man? What'd he wanta—

DAVIS—English? How d'we know he's English? Cos he talks it? That ain't no proof. Ain't you read in the papers how all them German spies they been catchin' in England has been

livin' there for ten, often as not twenty years, an' talks English as good's anyone? An' look here, ain't you noticed he don't talk natural? He talks it too damn good, that's what I mean. He don't talk exactly like a toff, does he, Cocky?

COCKY—Not like any toff as I ever met up wiv.

DAVIS—No; an' 'e don't talk it like us, that's certain. An' he don't look English. An' what d'we know about him when you come to look at it? Nothin'! He ain't ever said where he comes from or why. All we knows is he ships on here in London 'bout a year b'fore the war starts, as an A. B.—stole his papers most lik'ly—when he don't know how to box the compass, hardly. Ain't that queer in itself? An' was he ever open with us like a good shipmate? No; he's always had that sly air about him 's if he was hidin' somethin'.

DRISCOLL—(*slapping his thigh—angrily*) Divil take me if I don't think ye have the truth av ut, Davis.

COCKY—(*scornfully*) Lettin' on be 'is silly airs, and all, 'e's the son of a blarsted earl or somethink!

DAVIS—An' the name he calls hisself—Smith! I'd risk a quid of my next pay day that his real name is Schmidt, if the truth was known.

JACK—(*evidently fighting against his own conviction*) Aw, say, you guys give me a pain! What'd they want puttin' a spy on this old tub for?

DAVIS—(*shaking his head sagely*) They're deep ones, an' there's a lot o' things a sailor'll see in the ports he puts in ought to be useful to 'em. An' if he kin signal to 'em an' they blows us up it's one ship less, ain't it? (*lowering his voice and indicating Smitty's bunk*) Or if he blows us up hisself.

SCOTTY—(*in alarmed tones*) Hush, mon! Here he comes! (*Scotty hurries over to a bench and sits down. A thick silence settles over the forecastle. The men look from one to another with uneasy glances. Smitty enters and sits down beside his bunk. He is seemingly unaware of the dark glances of suspicion directed at him from all sides. He slides his hand back stealthily over his mattress and his fingers move, evidently feeling to make sure the box is still there. The others follow this movement carefully with quick looks out of the corners of their eyes. Their attitudes grow tense as if they were about to spring at him. Satisfied the box is safe, Smitty draws his hand away slowly and utters a sigh of relief.*)

SMITTY—(*in a casual tone which to them sounds sinister*) It's a good light night for the subs if there's any about. (*For a moment he sits staring in front of him. Finally he seems to sense the hostile atmosphere of the forecastle and looks from one to the other of the men in surprise. All of them avoid his eyes. He sighs with a puzzled expression and gets up and walks out of the doorway. There is silence for a moment after his departure and then a storm of excited talk breaks loose.*)

DAVIS—Did you see him feelin' if it was there?

COCKY—'E ain't arf a sly one wiv 'is talk of submarines, Gawd blind 'im!

SCOTTY—Did ye see the sneakin' looks he gave us?

DRISCOLL—If ivir I saw black shame on a man's face 'twas on his whin he sat there!

JACK—(*thoroughly convinced at last*) He looked bad to me. He's a crook, aw right.

DAVIS—(*excitedly*) What'll we do? We gotter do somethin' quick or— (*He is interrupted by the sound of something hitting against the port side of the forecastle with a dull, heavy thud. The men start to their feet in wild-eyed terror and turn as if they were going to rush for the deck. They stand that way for a strained moment, scarcely breathing and listening intently.*)

JACK—(*with a sickly smile*) Hell! It's on'y a piece of drift-wood or a floatin' log. (*He sits down again.*)

DAVIS—(*sarcastically*) Or a mine that didn't go off—that time—or a piece o' wreckage from some ship they've sent to Davy Jones.

COCKY—(*mopping his brow with a trembling hand*) Blimey! (*He sinks back weakly on a bench.*)

DRISCOLL—(*furiously*) God blarst ut! No man at all cud be puttin' up wid the loike av this—an' I'm not wan to be fearin' anything or any man in the worl'd'll stand up to me face to face; but this devil's trickery in the darrk— (*He starts for Smitty's bunk.*) I'll throw ut out wan av the portholes an' be done wid ut. (*He reaches toward the mattress.*)

SCOTTY—(*grabbing his arm—wildly*) Arre ye daft, mon?

DAVIS—Don't monkey with it, Drisc. I knows what to do. Bring the bucket o' water here, Jack, will you? (*Jack gets it and brings it over to Davis.*) An' you, Scotty, see if he's back on the hatch.

SCOTTY—(*cautiously peering out*) Aye, he's sittin' there the noo.

DAVIS—Sing out if he makes a move. Lift up the mattress, Drisc—careful now! (*Driscoll does so with infinite caution.*) Take it out, Jack—careful—don't shake it now, for Christ's sake! Here—put it in the water—easy! There, that's fixed it! (*They all sit down with great sighs of relief.*) The water'll git in and spoil it.

DRISCOLL—(*slapping Davis on the back*) Good wurrk for ye, Davis, ye scut! (*He spits on his hands aggressively.*) An' now what's to be done wid that black-hearted thraitor?

COCKY—(*belligerently*) Guv 'im a shove in the marf and 'eave 'im over the side!

DAVIS—An' serve him right!

JACK—Aw, say, give him a chance. Yuh can't prove nothin' till yuh find out what's in there.

DRISCOLL—(*heatedly*) Is ut more proof ye'd be needin' afther what we've seen an' heard? Then listen to me—an' ut's Driscoll talkin'—if there's divilment in that box an' we see plain 'twas his plan to murrdher his own shipmates that have served him fair— (*He raises his fist.*) I'll choke his rotten heart out wid me own hands, an' over the side wid him, and one man missin' in the mornin'.

DAVIS—An' no one the wiser. He's the balmy kind what commits suicide.

COCKY—They 'angs spies ashore.

JACK—(*resentfully*) If he's done what yuh think I'll croak him myself. Is that good enough for yuh?

DRISCOLL—(*looking down at the box*) How'll we be openin' this, I wonder?

SCOTTY—(*from the doorway—warningly*) He's standin' up.

DAVIS—We'll take his keys away from him when he comes in. Quick, Drisc! You an' Jack get beside the door and grab him. (*They get on either side of the door. Davis snatches a small coil of rope from one of the upper bunks.*) This'll do for me an' Scotty to tie him.

SCOTTY—He's turnin' this way—he's comin'! (*He moves away from the door.*)

DAVIS—Stand by to lend a hand, Cocky.

COCKY—Righto. (*As Smitty enters the forecastle he is seized*

roughly from both sides, and his arms pinned behind him. At first he struggles fiercely, but seeing the uselessness of this, he finally stands calmly and allows Davis and Scotty to tie up his arms.)

SMITTY—(*when they have finished—with cold contempt*) If this is your idea of a joke I'll have to confess it's a bit too thick for me to enjoy.

COCKY—(*angrily*) Shut yer marf, 'ear!

DRISCOLL—(*roughly*) Ye'll find ut's no joke, me bucko, b'fore we're done wid you. (*to Scotty*) Kape your eye peeled, Scotty, and sing out if anyone's comin'. (*Scotty resumes his post at the door.*)

SMITTY—(*with the same icy contempt*) If you'd be good enough to explain—

DRISCOLL—(*furiously*) Explain, is ut? 'Tis you'll do the explainin'—an' damn quick, or we'll know the reason why. (*to Jack and Davis*) Bring him here, now. (*They push Smitty over to the bucket.*) Look here, ye murrdherin' swab. D'you see ut? (*Smitty looks down with an expression of amazement which rapidly changes to one of anguish.*)

DAVIS—(*with a sneer*) Look at him! S'prised, ain't you? If you wants to try your dirty spyin' tricks on us you've gotter git up earlier in the mornin'.

COCKY—Thorght yer weren't 'arf a fox, didn't yer?

SMITTY—(*trying to restrain his growing rage*) What—what do you mean? That's only— How dare—what are you doing with my private belongings?

COCKY—(*sarcastically*) Ho yus! Private b'longings!

DRISCOLL—(*shouting*) What is ut, ye swine? Will you tell us to our faces? What's in ut?

SMITTY—(*biting his lips—holding himself in check with a great effort*) Nothing but— That's my business. You'll please attend to your own.

DRISCOLL—Oho, ut is, is ut? (*shaking his fist in Smitty's face*) Talk aisy now if ye know what's best for you. Your business, indade! Then we'll be makin' ut ours, I'm thinkin'. (*to Jack and Davis*) Take his keys away from him an' we'll see if there's one'll open ut, maybe. (*They start in searching Smitty, who tries to resist and kicks out at the bucket. Driscoll leaps forward and helps them push him away.*) Try to kick ut over, would

ye? Did ye see him then? Tryin' to murrdrher us all, the scut! Take that pail out av his way, Cocky. (*Smitty struggles with all of his strength and keeps them busy for a few seconds. As Cocky grabs the pail Smitty makes a final effort and, lunging forward, kicks again at the bucket but only succeeds in hitting Cocky on the shin. Cocky immediately sets down the pail with a bang and, clutching his knee in both hands, starts hopping around the fore-castle, groaning and swearing.*)

COCKY—Ooow! Gawd strike me pink! Kicked me, 'e did! Bloody, bleedin', rotten Dutch 'og! (*approaching Smitty, who has given up the fight and is pushed back against the wall near the doorway with Jack and Davis holding him on either side—wrathfully, at the top of his lungs*) Kick me, will yer? I'll show yer what for, yer bleedin' sneak! (*He draws back his fist. Driscoll pushes him to one side.*)

DRISCOLL—Shut your mouth! D'you want to wake the whole ship? (*Cocky grumbles and retires to a bench, nursing his sore shin.*)

JACK—(*taking a small bunch of keys from Smitty's pocket*) Here yuh are, Drisc.

DRISCOLL—(*taking them*) We'll soon be knowin'. (*He takes the pail and sits down, placing it on the floor between his feet. Smitty again tries to break loose but he is too tired and is easily held back against the wall.*)

SMITTY—(*breathing heavily and very pale*) Cowards!

JACK—(*with a growl*) Nix on the rough talk, see! That don't git yuh nothin'.

DRISCOLL—(*looking at the lock on the box in the water and then scrutinizing the keys in his hand*) This'll be ut, I'm thinkin'. (*He selects one and gingerly reaches his hand in the water.*)

SMITTY—(*his face grown livid—chokingly*) Don't you open that box, Driscoll. If you do, so help me God, I'll kill you if I have to hang for it.

DRISCOLL—(*pausing—his hand in the water*) Whin I open this box I'll not be the wan to be kilt, me sonny bye! I'm no dirty spy.

SMITTY—(*his voice trembling with rage. His eyes are fixed on Driscoll's hand.*) Spy? What are you talking about? I only put that box there so I could get it quick in case we were torpedoed. Are you all mad? Do you think I'm— (*chokingly*)

You stupid curs! You cowardly dolts! (*Davis claps his hand over Smitty's mouth.*)

DAVIS—That'll be enough from you! (*Driscoll takes the dripping box from the water and starts to fit in the key. Smitty springs forward furiously, almost escaping from their grasp, and drags them after him half-way across the forecastle.*)

DRISCOLL—Hold him, ye divils! (*He puts the box back in the water and jumps to their aid. Cocky hovers on the outskirts of the battle, mindful of the kick he received.*)

SMITTY—(*raging*) Cowards! Damn you! Rotten curs! (*He is thrown to the floor and held there.*) Cowards! Cowards!

DRISCOLL—I'll shut your dirty mouth for you. (*He goes to his bunk and pulls out a big wad of waste and comes back to Smitty.*)

SMITTY—Cowards! Cowards!

DRISCOLL—(*with no gentle hand slaps the waste over Smitty's mouth*) That'll teach you to be misnamin' a man, ye sneak. Have ye a handkerchief, Jack? (*Jack hands him one and he ties it tightly around Smitty's head over the waste.*) That'll fix your gab. Stand him up, now, and tie his feet, too, so he'll not be movin'. (*They do so and leave him with his back against the wall near Scotty. Then they all sit down beside Driscoll, who again lifts the box out of the water and sets it carefully on his knees. He picks out the key, then hesitates, looking from one to the other uncertainly.*) We'd best be takin' this to the skipper, d'you think, maybe?

JACK—(*irritably*) To hell with the Old Man. This is our game and we c'n play it without no help.

COCKY—Now bleedin' horficers, I says!

DAVIS—They'd only be takin' all the credit and makin' heroes of themselves.

DRISCOLL—(*boldly*) Here goes, thin! (*He slowly turns the key in the lock. The others instinctively turn away. He carefully pushes the cover back on its hinges and looks at what he sees inside with an expression of puzzled astonishment. The others crowd up close. Even Scotty leaves his post to take a look.*) What is ut, Davis?

DAVIS—(*mystified*) Looks funny, don't it? Somethin' square tied up in a rubber bag. Maybe it's dynamite—or somethin'—you can't never tell.

JACK—Aw, it ain't got no works so it ain't no bomb, I'll bet.

DAVIS—(*dubiously*) They makes them all kinds, they do.

JACK—Open it up, Drisc.

DAVIS—Careful now! (*Driscoll takes a black rubber bag resembling a large tobacco pouch from the box and unties the string which is wound tightly around the top. He opens it and takes out a small packet of letters also tied up with string. He turns these over in his hands and looks at the others questioningly.*)

JACK—(*with a broad grin*) On'y letters! (*slapping Davis on the back*) Yuh're a hell of a Sherlock Holmes, ain't yuh? Letters from his best girl too, I'll bet. Let's turn the Duke loose, what d'yuh say? (*He starts to get up.*)

DAVIS—(*fixing him with a withering look*) Don't be so damn smart, Jack. Letters, you says, 's if there never was no harm in 'em. How d'you s'pose spies gets their orders and sends back what they finds out if it ain't by letters and such things? There's many a letter is worser'n any bomb.

COCKY—Righto! They ain't as innercent as they looks, I'll take me oath, when you read 'em. (*pointing at Smitty*) Not 'is Lordship's letters; not be no means!

JACK—(*sitting down again*) Well, read 'em and find out. (*Driscoll commences untying the packet. There is a muffled groan of rage and protest from Smitty.*)

DAVIS—(*triumphantly*) There! Listen to him! Look at him tryin' to git loose! Ain't that proof enough? He knows well we're findin' him out. Listen to me! Love letters, you says, Jack, 's if they couldn't harm nothin'. Listen! I was readin' in some magazine in New York on'y two weeks back how some German spy in Paris was writin' love letters to some woman spy in Switzerland who sent 'em on to Berlin, Germany. To read 'em you wouldn't s'pect nothin'—just mush and all. (*impressively*) But they had a way o' doin' it—a damn sneakin' way. They had a piece o' plain paper with pieces cut out of it an' when they puts it on top o' the letter they sees on'y the words what tells them what they wants to know. An' the Frenchies gets beat in a fight all on account o' that letter.

COCKY—(*awed*) Gawd blimey! They ain't 'arf smart bleeders!

DAVIS—(*seeing his audience is again all with him*) An' even

if these letters of his do sound all right they may have what they calls a code. You can't never tell. (*to Driscoll, who has finished untying the packet*) Read one of 'em, Drisc. My eyes is weak.

DRISCOLL—(*takes the first one out of its envelope and bends down to the lantern with it. He turns up the wick to give him a better light.*) I'm no hand to be readin' but I'll try ut. (*Again there is a muffled groan from Smitty as he strains at his bonds.*)

DAVIS—(*gloatingly*) Listen to him! He knows. Go ahead, Drisc!

DRISCOLL—(*his brow furrowed with concentration*) Ut begins: Dearest Man— (*His eyes travel down the page.*) An' thin there's a lot av blarney tellin' him how much she misses him now she's gone away to singin' school—an' how she hopes he'll settle down to rale worrk an' not be skylarkin' around now that she's away loike he used to before she met up wid him—and ut ends: "I love you betther than anythin' in the worrld. You know that, don't you, dear? But b'fore I can agree to live out my life wid you, you must prove to me that the black shadow—I won't menshun uts hateful name but you know what I mean—which might wreck both our lives, does not exist for you. You can do that, can't you, dear? Don't you see you must for my sake?" (*He pauses for a moment—then adds gruffly*) Uts signed: "Edith." (*At the sound of the name Smitty, who has stood tensely with his eyes shut as if he were undergoing torture during the reading, makes a muffled sound like a sob and half turns his face to the wall.*)

JACK—(*sympathetically*) Hell! What's the use of readin' that stuff even if—

DAVIS—(*interrupting him sharply*) Wait! Where's that letter from, Drisc?

DRISCOLL—There's no address on the top av ut.

DAVIS—(*meaningly*) What'd I tell you? Look at the postmark, Drisc,—on the envelope.

DRISCOLL—The name that's written is Sidney Davidson, wan hundred an'—

DAVIS—Never mind that. O' course it's a false name. Look at the postmark.

DRISCOLL—There's a furrin stamp on ut by the looks av

ut. The mark's blurred so it's hard to read. (*He spells it out laboriously.*) B-e-r—the nixt is an l, I think—i—an' an n.

DAVIS—(*excitedly*) Berlin! What did I tell you? I knew them letters was from Germany.

COCKY—(*shaking his fist in Smitty's direction*) Rotten 'ound! (*The others look at Smitty as if this last fact had utterly condemned him in their eyes.*)

DAVIS—Give me the letter, Drisc. Maybe I kin make some-thin' out of it. (*Driscoll hands the letter to him.*) You go through the others, Drisc, and sing out if you sees anythin' queer. (*He bends over the first letter as if he were determined to figure out its secret meaning. Jack, Cocky and Scotty look over his shoulder with eager curiosity. Driscoll takes out some of the other letters, running his eyes quickly down the pages. He looks curiously over at Smitty from time to time, and sighs frequently with a puzzled frown.*)

DAVIS—(*disappointedly*) I gotter give it up. It's too deep for me, but we'll turn 'em over to the perlice when we docks at Liverpool to look through. This one I got was written a year before the war started, anyway. Find anythin' in yours, Drisc?

DRISCOLL—They're all the same as the first—lovin' blarney, an' how her singin' is doin', and the great things the Dutch teacher says about her voice, an' how glad she is that her Sidney bye is worrkin' harrd an' makin' a man av himself for her sake.

(*Smitty turns his face completely to the wall.*)

DAVIS—(*disgustedly*) If we on'y had the code!

DRISCOLL—(*taking up the bottom letter*) Hullo! Here's wan addressed to this ship—s. s. Glencairn, ut says—whin we was in Cape Town sivin months ago— (*looking at the post-mark*) Ut's from London.

DAVIS—(*eagerly*) Read it! (*There is another choking groan from Smitty.*)

DRISCOLL—(*reads slowly—his voice becomes lower and lower as he goes on*) Ut begins wid simply the name Sidney Davidson—no dearest or sweetheart to this wan. "Ut is only from your chance meetin' wid Harry—whin you were drunk—that I happen to know where to reach you. So you have run

away to sea loike the coward you are because you knew I had found out the truth—the truth you have covered over with your mean little lies all the time I was away in Berlin and blindly trusted you. Very well, you have chosen. You have shown that your drunkenness means more to you than any love or faith av mine. I am sorry—for I loved you, Sidney Davidson—but this is the end. I lave you—the mem'ries; an' if ut is any satisfaction to you I lave you the real-i-zation that you have wrecked my loife as you have wrecked your own. My one remainin' hope is that nivr in God's worrld will I ivir see your face again. Good-by. Edith." *(As he finishes there is a deep silence, broken only by Smitty's muffled sobbing. The men cannot look at each other. Driscoll holds the rubber bag limply in his hand and some small white object falls out of it and drops noiselessly on the floor. Mechanically Driscoll leans over and picks it up, and looks at it wonderingly.)*

DAVIS—*(in a dull voice)* What's that?

DRISCOLL—*(slowly)* A bit av a dried-up flower. *(He drops it into the bag and gathers up the letters and puts them back. He replaces the bag in the box, and locks it and puts it back under Smitty's mattress. The others follow him with their eyes. He steps softly over to Smitty and cuts the ropes about his arms and ankles with his sheath knife, and unties the handkerchief over the gag. Smitty does not turn around but covers his face with his hands and leans his head against the wall. His shoulders continue to heave spasmodically but he makes no further sound.)*

DRISCOLL—*(stalks back to the others—there is a moment of silence, in which each man is in agony with the hopelessness of finding a word he can say—then Driscoll explodes)* God stiffen us, are we never goin' to turn in fur a wink av sleep? *(They all start as if awakening from a bad dream and gratefully crawl into their bunks, shoes and all, turning their faces to the wall, and pulling their blankets up over their shoulders. Scotty tiptoes past Smitty out into the darkness. Driscoll turns down the light and crawls into his bunk as*

The Curtain Falls)