

and each steps up to the porthole where INSIGNA points out the park.)

JOHNSON. (To DOWDY.) Hey, Dowdy, smell that shoe polish? These guys have gone nuts!

DOWDY. I went down the ship's store the other day to buy a bar of soap and, do you know, they been sold out for a week! No soap, no Listerine, no Mum! Nothin'! (DOLAN, wearing the messenger's belt, enters. The men greet him excitedly.)

STEFANOWSKI. What's the word on liberty, Dolan?

DOLAN. The old man's still asleep.

INSIGNA. I'll get him up! I'm going up there and tap on his door! (Picks up a heavy lead pipe.)

DOWDY. (Grabbing INSIGNA.) Like hell you are! You're going to stay right here and pray. You're going to pray that he wakes up feeling good and decides he's kept you guys sweating long enough!

MANNION. That's telling the little crud! (INSIGNA and MANNION threaten each other. DOLAN is interrupted by the sound of static on the squawk box. Instantly all men turn toward it eagerly.)

DOLAN. (On squawk box.) Now hear this! Now hear this!

WILEY. Here we go! Here we go!

STEFANOWSKI. (Imitating the squawk box.) Liberty . . . will commence . . . immediately!

GERHART. Quiet!

DOLAN. (On squawk box.) Now hear this! The Captain's messenger will report to the Captain's cabin on the double!

DOLAN. He's awake! (He runs out.)

PAYNE. Won't be long now!

MANNION. Get into those whites! We're going to be the first ones over the side! Give me a hand! (Now there is a general frenzy of preparation—the men put the last-minute touches to shoes, hair, uniforms.)

GERHART. (Singing to the tune of "California, Here I Come.")

Ee-liss-ee-um, here I come! . . .

Ta-ta-ta-ta-da-tah . . .

SCHLEMMER. (To GERHART.) Watch where you're going! I just polished that shoe.

INSIGNA. (These men gather around him. LINDSTROM remains unhappily alone.) Now listen, you guys! Stefanowski and me are going to work alone for the first hour and a half! But if you pick up something first . . . (Produces small map from his pocket.)

We'll be working up and down this street here . . . (They study the map. Now the squawk box is clicked on again. All the men stand rigid, listening.)

DOLAN. (On squawk box.) Now hear this! The Captain is now going to make a personal announcement. (Sound of squawk-box switch.)

CAPTAIN. (On squawk box.) How the hell does this thing work? (Sound of squawk-box switch again.) This is the Captain speaking. I just woke up from a little nap and I got a surprise. I found out there were men on this ship who were expecting liberty. (At this point, the lights start dimming until the entire scene is blacked out. The speech continues throughout the darkness. Under the CAPTAIN'S speech the strains of Polynesian music can be heard.) Now I don't know how such a rumor got around, but I'd like to clear it up right now. You see, it's like this. Because of cargo requirements and security conditions which has just come to my personal attention there will be no liberty as long as we're in this here port. And one other thing—as long as we're here, no man will wear white uniforms. Now I would like to repeat for the benefit of complete understanding and clearness, NO LIBERTY. That is all.

SCENE 6

The lights come up on the CAPTAIN'S cabin. Against the L. bulkhead is a settee. A chair is placed C. Up C. is the only door. The CAPTAIN is seated behind his desk, holding a watch in one hand and the microphone in the other, in an attitude of waiting. Just over the desk and against the R. bulkhead is a ship's intercommunication board. There is a wall-safe in the R. bulkhead. After a moment there is a knock on the door.

CAPTAIN. Come in, Mister Roberts. (As ROBERTS enters, the CAPTAIN puts the microphone on the desk.) I been expectin' you.

ROBERTS. Okay, what about it—when does this crew get liberty?

CAPTAIN. Well, in the first place, just kinda hold your tongue.

ROBERTS. When are you going to let this crew go ashore?

CAPTAIN. I'm not. This wasn't my idea—coming to a Liberty Port. One of my officers arranged it with a certain Port Director—gave him a bottle of Scotch whiskey—compliments of the Captain.

The Port Director was kind enough to send me a little thank-you note along with our orders. Sit down, Mister Roberts. (ROBERTS sits.) I'll admit I was a little pre-voked about not being consulted. Then I got to thinking maybe we oughta come to this port anyway so's you and me could have a little talk.

ROBERTS. Let's quit wasting time. Don't you hear that music? Don't you know it's tearing those guys apart?

CAPTAIN. (Rises, goes to ROBERTS.) Now you listen to me. I got two things I want to show you. (He unlocks the wall-safe, opens it and takes out a commander's cap with gold braid "scrambled eggs" on the visor.) That's the cap of a full commander. I'm gonna wear that cap some day and you're going to help me. (Replaces cap in safe, goes back to ROBERTS.) I guess there's no harm in telling you that you helped me get that palm tree by working cargo. Now don't let this go to your head, but when Admiral Finchley awarded me that palm tree, he said, "You got a good Cargo Officer, Morton; keep him at it, you're going places." So I went out and bought that hat. There's nothing gonna stand between me and that hat—certainly not you. Now last week I told you there wasn't going to be any more letters. But what do I find on my desk this morning . . . (Taking letter from desk.) Another letter that says "friction between myself and the Commanding Officer." That ain't gonna go in, Mister.

ROBERTS. How are you going to stop it, Captain?

CAPTAIN. I ain't, you are. (Goes to his chair and sits.) Just how much do you want this crew to have a liberty anyhow? Enough to stop this "friction"? (Leans forward.) Enough to stop writing letters ever? Because that's the only way this crew is gonna get ashore today—or any other day. (Leans back.) Well, we've had our little talk. What do you say?

ROBERTS. (After a moment.) How did you get in the Navy? How did you get on our side? You're what I joined to fight against. You ignorant, arrogant, ambitious . . . (Rises.) jackass! Keeping a hundred and sixty-seven men in prison because you got a palm tree for the work they did. I don't know which I hate worse—you or that other malignant growth that stands outside your door!

CAPTAIN. Why, you stinking little —

ROBERTS. How did you ever get command of a ship? I realize that in wartime they have to scrape the bottom of the barrel, but where the hell did they ever scrape you up?

CAPTAIN. (Shouting.) There's just one thing left for you—a general court-martial.

ROBERTS. That suits me fine. Court-martial me!

CAPTAIN. You've got it!

ROBERTS. I'm asking for it!

CAPTAIN. You don't have to ask for it, you've got it now!

ROBERTS. If I can't get transferred off here, I'll get court-martialed off! I'm fed up! But you'll need a witness. Send for your messenger. He's down below. I'll say it all again in front of him. (Pauses.) Go on, call in Dolan! (The CAPTAIN doesn't move.) Go on, call him. (Still the CAPTAIN doesn't move.) Do you want me to call him?

CAPTAIN. No. (He walks upstage, then turns to ROBERTS.) I think you're a pretty smart boy. I may not talk very good, Mister, but I know how to take care of smart boys. Let me tell you a little secret. I hate your guts, you college son-of-a-bitch! You think you're better than I am! You think you're better because you've had everything handed to you! Let me tell you something, Mister—I've worked since I was ten years old, and all my life I've known you superior bastards. I knew you people when I was a kid in Boston and I worked in eating-places and you ordered me around. . . . "Oh, bus-boy! My friend here seems to have thrown up on the table. Clean it up, please." I started going to sea as a steward and I worked for you then . . . "Steward, take my magazine out to the deck chair!" . . . "Steward, I don't like your looks. Please keep out of my way as much as possible!" Well, I took that crap! I took that for years from pimple-faced bastards who weren't good enough to wipe my nose! And now I don't have to take it any more! There's a war on, and I'm the Captain, Mister, I'm the Captain, and you're welcome to wipe my nose! The worst thing I can do to you is to keep you on this ship! And that's where you're going to stay! Now get out of here! (He goes to his chair and sits. ROBERTS moves slowly toward the door. He hears the music, goes to the porthole and listens. Then he turns to the CAPTAIN.)

ROBERTS. Can't you hear that music, Captain?

CAPTAIN. Yeah, I hear it. (Busies himself at desk, ignoring ROBERTS.)

ROBERTS. Don't you know those guys below can hear it too? Oh, my God

CAPTAIN. Get out of here. (After a moment, ROBERTS turns from the porthole and slumps against the CAPTAIN'S locker. His face is strained.)

ROBERTS. What do you want for liberty, Captain?

CAPTAIN. I want plenty. You're through writin' letters—ever.

ROBERTS. Okay.

CAPTAIN. That's not all. You're through givin' me trouble. You're through talkin' back to me in front of the crew. You ain't even gonna open your mouth—except in civil answer. (ROBERTS doesn't answer.) Mister Roberts, you know that if you don't take my terms I'll let you go out that door and that's the end of any hope for liberty.

ROBERTS. Is that all, Captain?

CAPTAIN. No. Anyone know you're in here?

ROBERTS. No one.

CAPTAIN. Then you won't go blabbin' about this to anyone ever. It might not sound so good. And besides I don't want you to take credit for gettin' this crew ashore.

ROBERTS. Do you think I'm doing this for credit? Do you think I'd let anyone know about this?

CAPTAIN. I gotta be sure.

ROBERTS. You've got my word, that's all.

CAPTAIN. (After a pause.) Your word. Yes, you college fellas make a big show about keeping your word.

ROBERTS. How about it, Captain. Is it a deal?

CAPTAIN. Yeah. (ROBERTS picks up the microphone, turns on a switch and thrusts the microphone at the CAPTAIN.) Now hear this. This is the Captain speaking. I've got some further word on security conditions in this port and so it gives me great pleasure to tell you that liberty, for the starboard section . . .

ROBERTS. (Covering the microphone with his hand.) For the entire crew, every single one of them.

CAPTAIN. Correction; Liberty for the entire crew will commence immediately. (ROBERTS turns off the microphone. After a moment we hear the shouts of the crew. ROBERTS goes up to porthole. The CAPTAIN leans back on his chair. A song, "Roll Me Over," is started by someone and is soon taken up by the whole crew.)

ROBERTS. (Looking out of the porthole. He is excited and happy.) Listen to those crazy bastards. Listen to them. (The crew con-

tinues to sing with increasing volume. Now the words can be distinguished:

Roll me over in the clover,
Roll me over, lay me down
And do it again.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS