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The Sea Chase

By James Warner Bellah

I remember when it began,

and where:

Sydney, Australia...

... the day Hitler rejected our ultimatum
to stay out of Poland.

I remember the ancient German freighter,
brooding at her moorings...

... coal bunkers and provision rooms
more than half empty...

... with the unsafe waters of two oceans
between her and home.

It wasn't as though her rusty carcass
was worth much...

... or her men unexpendable.

She was an old lady
of the ocean backstreets...

... who should have drowned herself
gracefully long before.

So this is the story
of a German tramp steamer...

... and a salute to a man for whom
the sea was a changeless way of life.

The story of a ship and a man...

... who became so much
a part of one another...

... that his heart was her power...

... his breath, her life...

... his stubbornness,
the steel of her sides.

I am Jeff Napier,
and I knew them both...

... back in the days before the world
took notice of them.

Before there was a story.

Her crew was of no credit
to any sea or land.

Their captain realized that, of course.

In later years, I sometimes
blamed myself...

... for making a challenge
of his problems.

But then, I knew that wasn't
the force that drove him.

I knew it was something much deeper.
Not loyalty, which is what one may owe
to others, but integrity.
A man 's supreme obligation to himself.
That was a recording of Berlin 's reaction
to Herr Hitler's defiant rejection of...
Turn off that wireless!
On the well deck! Get back to work!

- Jeff.
- Karl.
- Good to see you again.
- Good to see you too.
Let's go up to my quarters.
- Make yourself at home, Jeff.
- Thanks.

From the heavy cruiser von Moltke
to the tramp steamer Ergenstrasse.
How's your father?
I heard he was made vice admiral.
Oh, he's as fit as a youngster.
Bellowing for a sea command.
I'm afraid he's slated for a desk
at the admiralty this war.
- And there's going to be war, Karl.
- There is.

And I'm slated for internment,
is that what you're trying to say?
Well, that's one thing.
I see you still carry
the old imperial flag.
I do.
Quite different from the one astern.
You won't get an argument
out of me on that.

Look, I'm Number One
of the Rockhampton.
We received orders this morning
to make ready to sail.
- On a war footing?
- Yes.

Within the week,
we'll be fighting Nazism.
Now, you've been fighting it since its
inception, and there are plenty like you.

Karl, before this thing breaks,
why don't you establish yourself as...
A traitor?
They took away my command.
Would you take away my homeland?
Sorry.
Well, don't think
I haven't considered it.
But the Rockhampton,
a crack vessel of the Royal Navy...
...certainly isn't wasting
its executive officer...
...to make a survey of the harmless old
Ergenstrasse, without cargo or coal...
...unable to sail.
No. It's Elsa.
- Elsa who?
- Elsa Keller.
I met her in Hamburg.
She's waiting in the car.
- I'd like you to meet her, Karl.
- Gladly.
Didn't I read sometime back
you were engaged to a girl in England?
And I suppose there will be
the deuce to pay when I get back...
...but it'll have to be.
And this isn't just another girl
in Australia?
I'm gonna marry her.
Let's don't keep her waiting.
I still keep something
for special occasions.
Good. Don't bother
to come any further.
Thank you.
You sent for me, sir?
Go over to our consulate fast.
Clear us for Yokohama just as we are.
Yokohama?
We can't make Yokohama, sir.
Go to our consulate.
Get into plain clothes.
With news the way it is,

I want no brawls.
Aye, aye, sir.
That's all right, Brounck. That's fine.
- Karl.
- Come in, come in.
Putting a chill on this.
Elsa, this is Captain Karl Ehrlich.
Karl, Miss Keller.
Miss Keller.
Haven't we met before?
I can't quite recall, but the navy
seems to be mixed up in it somehow.
No.
- He wouldn't have forgotten you.
- But I was in the navy.
- Won't you sit down.
- Thank you.
I recall now.
I was on the Riviera
when I heard the captain was...
Relieved of his command.
Yes.
He spoke out quite boldly
against the new regime.
Until now, I didn't know
what happened to you, captain.
They didn't shoot me.
You know, my friendship with Karl
is a family matter...
...dating back a generation.
- Champagne, or should I freshen this?
- No, that'll do fine, thanks.
I have to report every four hours
to headquarters.
- Is there a phone aboard?
- Not aboard the ship.
- There's one on the next wharf.
- That'll do fine.
Do you mind if Elsa waits here
till I get back?
- Delighted.
- Well, don't be too delighted.
- I'll show you to the gangway.
- That's all right, I know the way.

It's as Jeff said.

I've known him since he was a boy,
which he still is, in some ways.

I don't know your entire history,
but I know enough.

So one of two things:

When he returns, either you tell him in
front of me or I tell him in front of you.

- Tell him what?

- About the Monte Carlo affair.

Jack Cavanaugh never knew
any attractive woman slightly.

There was the famous, or infamous,
cruise with Billy Norton.

Or the fact that Eric Carson shot himself
20 minutes before he was to marry you.

Merely gossip, captain.

Did you ever see a man
with his brains blown out?

You don't come into this one way
or the other, except for plain meddling.

Keep out of it.

There's a third alternate.

You can leave, never see Jeff again.

Just fade out with no explanation.

I'm not going to forget this.

No matter how long it takes,

I shall pay you back.

You have nothing now...

...but when I'm finished,
you won't even have this!

To what I promise you!

- Mr. Bachman.

- Yes, sir?

- What have you there?

- Explosives, sir.

- Explosives?

- Yes, sir.

Mr. Kirchner told me to plant them.

I was just coming to report.

They thought up a new one.

Crews of foreign ships are to be
medically examined before a clearance.

Our consul passed orders for us to

scuttle the minute we get news of war.

Take that stuff back
to the chief engineer.

- And don't go by the gangway.

- Yes, sir.

Get out of that shore gear,
get ready for sea.

I believe you're aware of my status
in Naval Intelligence.

I took the opportunity to ask the consul
to wireless home for further orders.
Possibly to fly me home.

Mr. Kirchner, we have not abandoned
this ship yet.

- Stemme.

- Sir.

You will go to the consul at once.

Pay him my respects
and inform him personally...

...that the weather forecast
for tonight is heavy fog.

Tell him I'll attempt to get out of Sydney
harbor tonight on my own responsibility...
...and shall so log it for his protection.

- Aye, aye, sir.

- Hurry it up.

- Yes, sir.

Your orders come through,
you'll be relieved of duty.

- Otherwise, you sail.

- We haven't a chance of getting out.

- You'll have to scuttle.

- You're mistaken, Mr. Kirchner.

That British officer
is in your quarters, sir.

Well. What happened?

- A little accident.

- What sort of an accident?

- Where's Elsa?

- She isn't here.

- What do you mean, she isn't here?

- I'm sorry, Jeff, but I can't help you out.

She just left and didn't say
where she was going.

- You mean to say she just walked off?

- You know women.

What are you trying to tell me?

I don't think she's gonna marry you.

You didn't tell her anything to make her change her mind, I suppose?

All right, I'll find out for myself.

But if she's not at the hotel,

I'll be right back...

...because you'll be here

for the duration.

Are you sure?

Yes, I'm sure.

Fog won't get much heavier now.

Where do you propose to take your first bearing?

- Here, sir.

- We won't be able to see it.

Perhaps we can hear it.

Five minutes to slack tide.

The men at their stations?

Yes, sir. Standing by fore and aft.

Also in the waist.

- Well?

- Charge has been set.

- Where do you want the detonator?

- Put it near the telegraph.

Cadet Stemme, are you still curious...

...about what happens to us

in case we're caught?

- You make it clear.

- Go to your station.

Yes, sir.

- Bridge.

- Bridge.

All ready below.

Engine room reports

all ready below, sir.

Wesser.

- It's a car, sir.

- Police?

Whoever it is, they're coming aboard.

Get back out of sight.

I must see the captain at once.

- Urgent.
- All right, sir.
Follow me. We'd better go up
on the other side.
It's the consul general, sir.
Our brilliant consulate service.
What does he...?
Get back to your station.
Captain Ehrlich, sir. Gentlemen.
As you know, I cannot condone
this mad venture, but if...
- What do you want, Mr. Consul?
- Consul general.
Mr. Consul General.
I have someone here
you must take with you.
I ask for coal and provisions
and get a passenger?
Sir, this is official.
Intelligence agent.
Must be out of the country...
...before the authorities make an arrest.
Cadet Wesser, bring the consul's...
The consul general's passenger aboard.
Yes, sir.
And you, sir, unless you wish
to sail with us...
...get yourself off this ship.
With pleasure. Heil Hitler.
The gangway's aboard
and the springs are in.
Make the signal
to let go the bowline.
Let go aft.
- Slow ahead.
- Slow ahead.
Slow ahead.
Slow ahead.
- Engine room.
- Schmitt...
...if we run aground or ram anything,
as is likely, let go with that charge.
- Ten degrees left.
- Ten degrees left, sir.

And hold her there.
Auf Wiedersehen, Sydney.
- Wesser, more coffee.
- Yes, sir.
If you don't mind my saying so, sir...
...well, you've been on your feet
over 11 hours now...
Are you suggesting that I go
to my quarters, Mr. Wesser?
Well, yes, sir.
Maybe you're right.
- Stemme.
- Sir?
That passenger, I'll see him now.
Show him to my quarters.
She's in your quarters, sir.
She?
I had a premonition.
Believe me, I don't want this
any more than you do.
You certainly haven't lessened
my problems any.
I don't know,
you might find me very useful.
The destroyer Cressy is north of you.
She left Brisbane late yesterday.
And two days ago...
Do you mind giving me a light?
- The destroyer Eden
left Melbourne on patrol.
The Rockhampton has been on
maneuvers with the Australian squadron.
Our friend Napier's
doubtless at sea again by this time.
Our friend Napier has doubtlessly
been at sea for the last six months...
...or you wouldn't have
this information.
- Are you sure?
- Quite.
I have to be, in my work.
The Eden and Cressy are old ships.
I wonder when they were
last overhauled.

That I don't know.
You see, I didn't go in for details.
No, I suppose not.
You were just in the business
of making men talk.
And they usually did.
But why marriage?
Wouldn't Jeff talk without it?
Or at this stage, did you want to add
a wedding ring to your trophies?
I had orders to acquire
British nationality by marriage...
...preferably into a naval family.
But I shall see that my failure
to comply is reported...
...completely, and with reasons.
So long as you had
to hurt Jeff so badly...
...I'm sorry it was
cold-blooded duty with you.
- Did you bring any baggage aboard?
- Only one case.
If you need any extra clothing,
we can outfit you from the slop chest.
Where do I sleep?
Right in here.
You'll find fresh bed linen in that closet.
- Here's the bath...
- I found it.
...which connects with
my sleeping quarters.
- There's a lock on both sides of the door.
- I found that too.
So we now share a wonderful bond:
Mutual self-preservation.
I don't want prison,
and you don't want internment.
You'd have been lucky
to get away with a prison sentence...
...so I don't think you'll complain if you
find this ship slightly similar to a prison.
Prison is only a state of mind.
Well, I'm in a tired state of mind
right now.

Bridge.

Have all officers report to the bridge
at the change of watch, and call me.

Aye, aye, sir.

And now, if you don't mind...

Your invitation to the wardroom
is accepted, gentlemen.

And I have not come empty-handed.

I have two signals here.

Number one, we have
declared war on Germany.

Finally.

Number two, a German freighter,
the Ergenstrasse...

...slipped out of Sydney last night.

Ours is the not-too-glorious task
of making a sweep and intercepting her.

Sit down, gentlemen.

There goes your leave, Napier.

- What will you have to drink?

- Beer, thank you.

It'd seem they'd find us something
more important to do.

This is our position.

One of the destroyers is somewhere
along this arc, about here.

I expect it to pass inshore of us.

The other one is about here.

I'm reducing speed shortly
so it'll pass offshore.

I hope. The Rockhampton,

I think we can discount at present.

- It'll be a tight squeeze, sir.

- And a chance.

Double the lookouts and turn tail
at every shadow of smoke.

- Keep ours at a minimum.

- But that destroyer...

...she can cut us off, sir.

That is no longer our course,

Mr. Bachman.

We're not attempting

to make Yokohama. That is all.

Sir, if we're turning south,

what will we burn for coal?
What will we eat?
There are no ports.
I'll appropriate food at the shipwreck
relief station on Auckland Island.
- But fuel...
- One thing at a time, Mr. Kirchner.
I think you're well indoctrinated
in the game of follow-the-leader.
- Yes, but I was under the impression...
- Muster all hands.
You're to keep all ports covered.
Smoking lamp is out
except on specific order.
And nothing to be thrown overboard.
- Nothing, from now on.
- I believe I have made it quite obvious...
...to everyone onboard this ship
what my political views are.
But now, for better or for worse,
we are at war.
This ship is halfway
around the world from its home.
I intend to bring it under the safety
of the flag stead light.
That is all.
What about pay?
He's gonna work us navy-fashion.
What's wrong with that?
I was in the old war.
- He talks well.
- Dishwasher third class?
Sergeant. I'll show you my medals.
Hey...
All right, down there.
Get on with the work.
Down there. Come on, break it up.
You might have asked me to the muster.
Is there a reason I should be in the dark?
- There is.
- What?
I'll tell you forward.
Find something to keep you busy
on the well deck.

You will keep off the main decks,
night and day...
...and off the bridge
unless specifically ordered there.
You can take your exercise
on the after part of the boat deck...
...and keep out of the inboard passage
to the officers' quarters.
Just where are we going?
I would also suggest you wear something
a little more suitable for the ship.
Why?
The officers and men aboard this ship
haven't had shore leave since Singapore.
Are you speaking entirely
for the officers and men, captain?
Not entirely.
We're all human.
But, unfortunately, at sea there's
no chance to enjoy our humanity.
Your meals will be served in your cabin.
I think that does it.
If there's anything else you need,
let me know.
Thanks.
By estimate, the Ergenstrasse
was carrying less than 600 tons of coal.
He has to go north, reaching for Truk
or other of the Japanese mandates.
With the Cressy in his path and ourselves
and Eden closing in, that's it.
Yes, that should be it.
Let's not be so pessimistic, Napier.
- Bosun.
- Yes, sir?
- Make sure the deadlights are closed.
- Right, sir.
So we play fox and hounds, captain?
Successfully so far, chief.
But from now on
it's an engineer's operation.
Let's take a look at the books.
See how much coal we have,
how much we're gonna need.

It's bad.

- You can burn wood, can't you?

- Sure, but...

Well, I'm getting you wood.

Figure out how many cords

you'll need for the 2600 miles...

...between Pom Pom Galli

and Valparaiso.

Pom Pom Galli?

Now to Auckland,

then to Pom Pom Galli?

On what coal we have and a prayer.

- Mr. Kruger.

- Yes, sir.

- Keep that headset glued to your ears.

- Aye.

To Valparaiso, one-third

the way around the world.

- That's right.

- You need saws and axes...

...to cut your wood.

- I'll make them for you.

- Good man.

We'll need double-bitted axes

and two-man saws.

But the next time home, I retire.

No more.

The years have run

their journey over me.

From now on, it's my little farm

and my grandchildren.

You know, it's funny

about grandchildren:

They seem closer to you...

You don't have any children.

No, I have no family.

But you get me to Valparaiso,

and I'll promise you yours.

The dreams, eh, captain?

The old days?

A man has weakness or strength,

Schmitt.

Weakness, you can hide,

like red lead over a sprung rivet...

...but it'll give under strain.
Strength, you cannot defeat. Ever.
Don't worry about me, captain.
I'll shovel you to Valparaiso.
I'll shovel you all the way home.
Tomorrow came, and the next day,
and the next...
... the Ergenstrasse still unreported.
We'd been hoping she'd break
wireless silence, but she never did.
Ehrlich was like a fox, choosing his
secret places and listening to us.
All we needed was one clue.
Then, with our speed...
... the search would end with
a flash of pursuit and a burst of guns.
With Ehrlich 's fuel range, we could rule
out the vast Pacific toward the west.
Eastward, he could reach the Indian
Ocean, but he'd be even worse off there.
And south? That didn 't seem probable...
... because nothing was there
except the Antarctic.
Careful, I'm afraid you're showing
a light here.
It seems to be stuck.
You'll have to keep it closed.
You know our captain's orders.
I think I'm going slightly mad,
day in and day out.
I've read until I'm blind.
I've walked my 10 feet
of private deck until I'm numb.
This is going to be an unpleasant trip
for a woman.
For anyone with no work to do.
Think the captain has a chance
of getting anywhere?
I don't know.
He has irritatingly good judgment.
At sea, he knows all the answers.
But if and when we ever get home...
What?
My uncle is very high in the party,

you know.
Then why are you on this ship?
Why not a more important job?
Don't judge by appearances.
As an agent, you should know better.
I'm Intelligence.
Navy reserve. Harbor survey.
And it seems that
I stayed at it too long.
I stayed in Australia too long.
What about my gramophone?
Would that help the mood?
I've got some wonderful recordings
of Wagner.
How cheerful.
Well, I... I've got some
popular things too.
Quite an excellent collection.
- Will you wait?
- Oh, I'll be at home all evening.
Memories...
Pleasant memories?
Exciting ones.
How long ago?
A thousand years.
Let's you and I go into partnership.
What kind of partnership?
We're in the same game,
let's play together.
You tell me your troubles,
I'll tell you mine.
And if we get a chance,
we'll haul out together.
That's fair enough.
What are your troubles?
Mr. Kirchner.
May I remind you
that you're not on a cruise ship...
...and this is technically still my cabin.
Yes, sir.
- I asked him to come in.
- I daresay you did.
I asked him to leave.
My officers' quarters

are off-limits to you...

...and this cabin is off-limits
to my officers.

Do I make myself clear?

Quite.

They're short of ships
in the North Atlantic.

That's probably where we'll be sent.

I wish they'd get on with it.

This fellow's short of stores and fuel.

He can't cause much trouble.

He has a genius for it.

Land ho!

Land ho!

- Where away?

- A point off the starboard bow.

- That'll be Auckland Island.

- I think it will be, Mr. Stemme.

- Log it.

- Yes, sir.

- Mr. Kirchner.

- Sir?

- Prepare to launch your boat.

- Aye, aye, sir.

- Mr. Kirchner.

- Sir?

I am forced to commandeer food
from the shipwreck station...

...but make sure that you leave
enough rations for any emergency...

...until the next relief ship arrives.

Aye, aye, sir.

Looks like we have company.

- Are there any more of you?

- No.

We're the only survivors
of the trawler Bermagui.

You can put that gun down,
whoever ye are. We are fishermen.

What ship are you?

The freighter Joanna,
Dutch East India line.

But we can't take you aboard.

Smallpox.

We can't touch any ports.
We have to tap your provisions.
Bosun, start loading those provisions
into the boat.
Do you think you're doing right?
Robbing a shipwreck station?
I'll leave enough till
another ship calls for you.
That's all well and good,
if we get the wireless working.
Don't worry.
We'll send out your SOS.
Mr. Kirchner, have you seen
the charts on the Chatham Islands?
Second officer corrected them, sir.
Took them to your day cabin.
Thank you.
- Yes?
- I have to look at a couple of charts.
Sorry to have bothered you.
I hope I haven't
bothered you too much.
You've got enough of that stuff
to keep you busy the whole trip.
Fortunately. What else is there to do?
- Have a drink, perhaps. Would that help?
- It never hurts.
Suppose you do get all the way home.
There's no place there for you,
under the present government.
What else could I do?
Certainly not default to the enemy.
Have you ever in your life made
a compromise with a conviction?
I was always afraid that if I started,
it wouldn't be easy to stop.
I suppose you're referring to me.
Intending an insult.
I think you should know
one thing, captain:
You can't insult me...
...because I hold no value
for the way you think.
And I know the way you think.

- Ideals and gallantries...
- That's right.
The officer's code.
That's the way my father thought.
He was a general.
A very great gentleman
of the old school.
But after the war,
when things changed...
...and he discovered that
uniforms, medals and honor...
...couldn't buy food and medicine
for his family, what did he do?
He couldn't beg
or violate the code, no.
So he shot himself.
Leaving me and my sisters
and my mother to survive.
That was his way...
...and your way.
But it's not my way.
I survived, all right.
I made my own life, my own code.
You have your medals and your trophies.
Well, I have my trophies too.
You see, I have succeeded,
Captain Ehrlich.
Did anyone ever tell you that
you're beautiful when you're angry?
The captain hasn't had shore leave
since Singapore.
You're quite a woman, Elsa.
He was in your room.
He came to get some charts.
Took him quite a while.
His only interest is his ship.
He's a strange man.
In anyone else,
his beliefs would be a pose.
Not Ehrlich. They're his life.
You sound as if you're losing
your dislike for him.
I don't think that will happen.
Anyway, what difference

does it make?
We're gonna be a long time
tied down on this ship.
A long, dreary time.
I expect we'll survive.
Well, with certain
compensating moments, perhaps.
Elsa...
...I find you a very
fascinating woman.
Do you?
I don't like impatient men.
I can be very, very patient,
as long as I know he isn't...
He isn't.
And he won't be.
Chief.
Chief, you're cutting down
on my speed.
We're gonna need every day and minute
when we get to Pom Pom Galli...
...when the Rockhampton starts making
its sweep to the north.
- What's the matter with you?
- Headwinds, captain.
It's the headwinds.
I didn't wanna tell you
until I was positive...
...but we don't have enough coal
to run to Pom Pom Galli.
- Are you sure?
- That's the story.
No coal, eh?
No coal.
Well, we got wood.
We'll burn this ship in her own fires.
Ask the engine room,
how does it look.
- Engine room.
- How's the wood lasting?
Four more hours, I can give you.
Chief engineer says he can
only give four more hours.
Then we'll start on the lifeboats.

And if that isn't enough...
...we'll tear out the hatches
and the doors...
...take our chances on the weather.
- Winkler.
- Yes, sir?
My sextant.
- Captain, sir.
- Yes?
I'm no informer, but I think there's
something you're entitled to know.
Know what?
From the forecastle...
...they're saying a ship
belongs to her captain...
...but the lifeboats belong to her crew.
How do you feel about it, Winkler?
I don't know, sir.
I haven't made up my mind.
- Stemme.
- Yes, sir?
- Have the chief meet me in my cabin.
- Right, sir.
Thanks for telling me.
All hands, turn to.
Trouble?
Perhaps not.
Chief.
Down to the lifeboats, huh?
Right.
- Bosun.
- Aye, sir?
Let go of the lashings on number three
and number four boats...
...and smash them for fuel.
All right, sir.
Schlieter, you other men, swing in
number one and number two boats.
All right, start working.
They're breaking up the boats, chief.
Yes. There are two more,
and we'll have to use those too.
Will you kindly stay off the bridge
and in your cabin.

Engine room reports
pressure still dropping, sir.
All right...
...break up boat number two.
Land ho! Land ho!
- Where away?
- A point off starboard bow, sir.
Log it, Mr. Kirchner.
Schlieter, don't let
there be a next time.
Ease your helm. Midship.
Row bottom at 20 fathoms, sir.
Let go!
Tell Mr. Schmitt...
...we're finished with the engine.
Present!
Fire!
Firing party, present!
Firing party, general salute.
Present.
We were instructed to continue
the search...
... and in order that the German ship
not be alerted...
... to make no mention
of the atrocity...
... until the authorities decided
to release the news.
But what the world would think...
... didn 't matter to the men
of the Rockhampton.
This was no longer the mere pursuit
of a freighter by a naval vessel...
... but a crusade against
the criminals of the Ergenstrasse.
And to me...
... henceforth, a hateful vendetta
against the friend I'd lost...
... somewhere back there.
Karl Ehrlich, a man I had
ceased to know.
From here to Valparaiso,
it's a 14-day run.
To get there, the Ergenstrasse will burn

30 cords of wood a day.
Mr. Schmitt will tell you
what that means.
It means we work 14 hours a day.
Full hours.
We get moonlight in four days.
When it comes,
we work 18 hours a day.
We know it's going to be hard
and difficult, but it's the only way home.
And for your further information,
this is an uninhabited island.
I repeat, an uninhabited island.
Now, we're short of provisions.
There's fresh water ashore,
but no food...
...except a few coconut palms
and breadfruit trees.
And I intend to ration them.
As for recreation, you'll have
little time for it.
However, there will be swimming parties
morning, midday and evening.
As we all know,
there is a woman onboard...
...so it will be necessary
for me to ask you...
...to wear some kind of clothing
during your morning and evening swims.
During the midday break, our passenger
will cooperate and remain in her quarters.
That is all. Bosun, turn them to.
Heinz.
I'm all right, sir.
Of course you are, but we got
more important work for you.
- You're an old soldier, aren't you?
- Yes, sir. Sergeant in the signal corps.
- So I've heard. You see that peak?
- Yes, sir.
You'll be our lookout.
You go up there and watch for smoke.
All points of the compass,
every daylight hour.

And no daydreaming.
We're all in your hands.
The ship, all of us.
- Yes, sir.
- Here. Wear my glasses.
Yes, sir.
Back to your pots and pans,
huh, soldier?
I am the lookout.
You are all in my hands.
Very thoughtful of you.
But don't you think that climb
is a little hard for him?
It is.
And it is also near midday,
if you don't mind my reminding you.
Mr. Bachman will see you
to your quarters.
Everybody up the boat deck
before you go below.
Both hands up to the elbows.
Nothing like brine for a toughener.
Won't help the rat bites.
- When did you get that?
- Last night.
Me too. On the leg.
Well, we'll see what we can
do about it.
- How are your people doing, chief?
- Keeping ahead of you, captain.
Good.
Brounck? Pack some food for Heinz.
I'll take it up to him tomorrow.
What have you there?
Some of the meat is rotten.
I was going to throw it over the side.
You'll keep it. We'll use
everything aboard this ship.
A lonely place for a grave.
We'll have to get it cleaned up
before we leave.
I wonder who it is.
Schaffner and Becht.
Fever got them.

I was young Stemme's age then,
in charge of the burial party.
Yes, we'll have to get it cleaned up.
And you remember their names
after all this time?
The Greeks believed that a man
was immortal...
...as long as his name
was remembered on earth.
These two were good men.
Seamen.
You wanna see the island,
I'm taking this food up to the peak.
Thank you.
You'd better take a little rest.
I hope the old soldier is all right.
Tougher climb than I thought.
In all your life,
you've never done very much...
...except for your men and your ships,
have you?
When I was a cadet, they taught us
that was a way of life.
Pretty hard to change what you learn
in your youth and believe.
And that's what this whole
fantastic voyage is, really:
A habit of life,
stubbornness of the soul.
Not entirely. This is a part of the war.
I'm still beating the enemy at it.
You've never really been
in love, have you?
Once or twice I've had
charming illusions.
But never strong enough
to chance marriage?
To put it another way,
I'm a practical man, a realist.
With only one love, the sea.
I never quite looked at it that way.
I'm beginning to understand
why men go to sea.
I've been watching it.

It's never the same.
One moment calm...
...then stormy.
Darkness, light...
- It's always changing.
- Like a woman.
A mystery.
Part of a great mystery.
When I first met you...
...I never thought I could sit here
trying to understand you.
Or even liking you.
I'll give you a hand, Mr. Kirchner.
That should stop you.
- Teaching her chess, chief?
- No, she's teaching me.
- Everything go well today, captain?
- Wonderful.
I'm glad to hear it.
I hear you've asked for
a work party for tonight.
That's the order.
Don't you think you're pushing
them beyond their capacities?
These men aren't you.
A man's capacity is
usually relative to his goal.
You've got them working
incredible hours.
While there's a full moon,
they'll work nights.
They won't be able to go on
if you persist in driving...
Elsa, in there.
I forgot to mention a highly probable
reason why I've never married:
I like to run my own ship.
Excuse me, sir, Miss Elsa.
Everything will be ready,
as you ordered.
Won't be able to give you
anything special to eat.
But this is the last bottle,
as cold as I can get it.

I found your navy buttons
and put them in your white jacket.
Special dinner tonight, Elsa.
Captain's orders.
Our best tablecloth.
Haven't used it since Singapore.
Brounck.
So not since Singapore?
- Did you remove the rat guard?
- Right now, sir.
- How's it going ashore?
- Nearly finished, sir.
Smear it as far out as you can.
That ought to do it in reverse.
I got to admit, I was wrong this time.
I thought he was gonna feed it to us.
Let's get back to the ship
and get clean.
- What's the matter?
- Rats!
Getting rid of some of our
more unwelcome passengers.
Don't worry...
...it's according to plan.
How's it working?
It's working.
I'd hate to come back to this island
20 years from now.
Ours was the desperation
of groping in the dark.
And then I began to remember an island
I'd once heard Ehrlich talk about:
Pom Pom Galli.
And our search was leading us
in its direction.
I knew he was fighting
the laws of nature...
... with survival hanging on the human
endurance of weary, driven men.
If we could overtake him,
he would hang.
He and his criminals.
We've scoured the Chathams,
Samoa, Fiji and the Tongas.

And it's very doubtful
he could make Pitcairn.
It almost has to be
one of the Tuamotus.
Some island with a deep harbor,
good water and a good stand of timber.
He has some idea about an island
in one of the more remote groups.
That's right, Pom Pom Galli.
A place Ehrlich said the German raider
went in the last war.
A reason why they
might not go there.
I can't bypass
all islands in between.
Unfortunately, I can name 50 such
islands over 1000 miles of ocean...
...but search parties will be organized.
- Thank you.
- This will take time.
It'll take Ehrlich time
to chop his wood.
The ax against the hangman's noose.
I got a system working for me
on these trees.
I pretend they're all named
Captain Ehrlich.
First I give him this!
Then I give him this!
And then I slice him port to starboard!
- How did it happen?
- It was an accident.
No, it wasn't. It was my fault.
Sorry, Winkler.
Get him aboard ship. Not you.
All right, the rest of you,
get back to work.
Schlieter, from now on, you're gonna
do the work of two men.
Not two like you, but two like him.
Best man in our crew.
And I don't think you can do it.
Like I've been telling you,
there's one lifeboat left.

Tahiti looks pretty good now, huh?
Oh, shut up! I'll show him who's
the best man in this crew!
Better hurry up with swimming.
You'll miss breakfast.
That'd be a great loss.
He means we might miss the pleasure
of our little excursion ashore.
Shark! Shark out there!
Shark!
Help!
Help!
Help! Help! A shark!
Woolrich, give me your shirt
for a tourniquet!
- Brounck.
- Yes, sir.
Clear a table
and boil all the water you can.
Break out some clean sheets.
Mr. Bachman.
- Sir?
- Get him into the mess hall.
Anything I can do, captain?
Looks like we're gonna have to...
- You better put an edge on that.
- I know, I know.
You can be of some help
in the mess hall.
Take this to shore and get rid of it.
You'd better get on
with your working party.
He's still alive.
Give her one.
It's awful nice of you
to do this, Miss Keller.
No trouble at all.
I'll have them for you tonight.
Thank you.
- I'll give you a hand with that line.
- Well, thank you.
You know, for the past
three or four days...
My leg! My leg!

My leg!

- My leg!

- Brounck! You know we need... Walter!

Hurry!

Walter.

He'd be more comfortable in my cabin.

- Get it ready, Brounck.

- Yes, sir.

Take it away!

Captain.

What is it?

I'm sorry to interrupt your work...

...and I have no intention of telling you how to run your ship.

The only important thing now is the condition of Stemme.

We're doing the best we can.

The Rockhampton has a doctor onboard.

Captain. A signal, sir.

Elsa, if I were to call the Rockhampton...

First, let me explain about gangrene...

This ship or 10 more like her isn't worth this boy's life.

Ashore there! Have Kirchner report aboard immediately!

Pardon me.

Kruger, join me in my cabin.

You sent for me?

At Auckland Island, Mr. Kirchner, you committed murder.

That word hardly applies in war.

You slaughtered those fishermen without cause.

- I did what was necessary, expedient.

- Log it as it happened.

I'm waiting, Mr. Kirchner.

Did they attack you?

I don't give my enemies the opportunity to attack me.

Were they armed?

I didn't waste time searching them.

So stated.

Sign it!

Ehrlich, I promise you,
you're gonna live to regret this.
You'll continue to
address me as "captain"...
...or spend the rest of this trip
in irons.
I consider you a filthy murderer, unfit
to grace the company of decent men.
You've dishonored a ship.
Were we to be captured now,
we'd be tried and hanged as criminals...
...and deservedly so.
There are good men aboard this ship,
Kirchner, and dark nights.
So for your own sake, say nothing
till we get to Valparaiso.
Now, crawl out of here.
Schlieter, you're doing all right.
- I got a system.
- I heard about it.
It works.
Probably never be any love lost
between us, but I was wrong about you.
You're doing a good job.
Heinz!
My heart...
You won't tell the captain?
Well, I'm afraid I must.
You're not fit to be here.
No, no, please.
Down there, I'm only Heinz,
the cook's mate.
Washing pots and pans.
- Up here, I'm the lookout.
- And we all depend on you.
- Yes, even Captain Ehrlich.
- Even the captain.
- I'm important now.
- Yes, you are.
But since we do depend on you,
you better get down and get some rest.
Of course. Of course.
They'll need somebody always alert.
Anyhow, I haven't missed everything.

At least once, a beautiful lady
had her arm around me.
Thank you, miss. Thank you.
Napier, I looked at those charts again.
There are many, many islands.
Needle-in-the-haystack stuff.
The more I think about it, the more
certain I am he's gone to Pom Pom Galli.
You may be right.
That's where we'll head for.
Right, sir.
Kruger tells me he has
a bearing on the Rockhampton.
She's getting closer, chief.
Captain, I've been going over my figures,
and with what wood we have cut...
Wesser.
Is he resting?
Didn't you hear me?
Is he resting?
What's it to you?
Do you wanna log it?
You wanna make it look good
in your reports?
You think of everything.
Pulling the strings on all of us
like we're puppets.
He's in there dying, understand?
You're getting your wood chopped.
- You're gonna be a famous...
- Wesser...
Nothing.
You young fool!
You know what the captain has been
doing for both you and Stemme?
Making you sailors!
Trying to make men out of you!
You realize how he feels
about Stemme?
What he would do for Stemme
if he could?
That boy isn't dying. He's dead!
He's been dead since eight hours
after that shark bite.

- When gangrene set in, he was...
- That'll do, chief.
Wesser, go below.
He's only a boy, captain.
He was overwrought.
- What he said...
- What he said was that...
...I've been trying to play God.
Perhaps he's right,
perhaps I have been.
Working them, driving them,
starving them, for what?
Integrity.
Integrity or vanity?
I don't know.
- I'm gonna signal the Rockhampton.
- Why?
If there was one chance in a million of
saving that boy, I would agree with you.
But there isn't, and you know it!
If you notify the Rockhampton
of our position...
...it means every man, including Wesser,
will be stamped a war criminal.
I tried to tell you before, captain.
I'm fairly certain, if we clear the wood on
the beach, I can get you to Valparaiso.
Don't make a decision tonight, captain.
Wait until morning.
All right, chief.
Prepare to get underway
in the morning.
We'll bury him at sea.
Bosun!
Stop that work.
There will be no burial.
Schlieter, take those men with you
and lower the boat again.
Yes, sir.
- That's the last boat.
- You heard the order, move.
Captain, I've got Winkler and Heinz
on the boat deck.
He can't mean that!

I don't know.
It'll mean medical attention
for you, Heinz.
And you'll walk again.
- I'm willing, sir.
- So am I, sir.
I knew you would be.
Thank you both.
Start heaving.
That's their story, sir.
They were carrying a charge
of explosives.
When they hit the reef,
it blew the keel wide open.
They had only one lifeboat.
Ehrlich got some of the injured into it,
and then there was a second explosion.
Anything to say about
the Auckland murders?
They denied it, of course.
- Have the surgeon take a look at them.
- Right, sir.
When a search disclosed no wreckage
or other survivors...
... we knew he'd slipped
from our grasp.
The Ergenstrasse,
that tired old woman of the sea...
... had gained the slight margin of time
necessary to reach Valparaiso.
She was fast becoming
an international heroine...
... and German propaganda
was smothering the Auckland incident...
... to make a legend of her.
Make her fast where she is.
Tell Mr. Kirchner to wait in
the mess room until I've seen the consul.
Yes, sir.
The consul's in your cabin, sir.
I'll see the port authorities
after I've talked to him.
Yes, sir.
Elsa, I wanna talk to you

before we go ashore.
About this great glory you've won?
Well, it's all yours.
Enjoy it.
But enjoy it alone.
Hepke, consul general.
Ehrlich, you've established
a great tradition.
Thank you, consul general.
Have a chair.
An accomplishment to be written
in the annals of the sea.
- The voyage isn't completed yet, sir.
- You achieved your purpose.
To risk capture again
might destroy everything.
You are proof that the great
Royal Navy is not, after all, invincible.
Now, give me the straight story on this
propaganda the British are putting out...
...those so-called murders
at Auckland Island.
It's not propaganda.
They were murders.
There's the proof.
I prefer to believe they were armed
belligerents erecting a wireless station.
That they were killed
in open combat.
The first land action in the Pacific,
and a gallant victory for us.
That story, with the news of your arrival,
has flashed around the world.
By what right do you compound murder
with a bald-faced lie?
By whose authority do you compromise
this ship and my personal honor?
Think of your crew.
Haven't they a right to a good name?
I intend they'll keep that right...
...not have it dragged through the mud
for one man's crime.
I plan to take the man responsible,
my chief officer, Mr. Kirchner...

...before a naval court-martial
as soon as we're home.
That's your privilege,
and it's quite correct...
...but for the sake of our country...
...let's not air our dirty linen here,
before an often hostile press.
What do you suggest that I do?
The Rockhampton is due in Valparaiso
tomorrow. You can't leave.
I'll take my chances with the British.
They won't waste a warship
watching this harbor for long.
Very well, captain, if you insist.
Seamanship is your forte. But I beg
to remind you, propaganda is mine.
- Lf I assist you, you must help me.
- I won't lie for you.
I wouldn't think of asking you to lie.
You haven't had the diplomatic training.
Just let me handle the press releases.
In exchange, I'll get you your clearance
papers, everything you need.
Kirchner will ask for a passport
and passage home.
I insist that he return
on this ship with me.
If that's your wish, of course, captain.
Don't forget, tomorrow you'll be guest
of honor at a banquet, Hotel Astur.
I've arranged quarters for you there,
and my aides will be at your disposal.
So for now, good day, captain.
Good day.
Must have been exciting, one woman
on a ship, alone, with so many men.
Especially with the great
Captain Ehrlich.
- He is so, so...
- I know.
Good evening.
- How perfect.
- Thank you.
You know, for once,

I'm actually sorry for Ehrlich.

Why? After all, he's achieved everything he's wanted.

Well, every man to his own desires.

- Where are we dining?

- A little caf.

- Do they have music?

- Oh, yes.

- Exciting?

- With you, yes.

Stand up straight, please.

Lean closer, please.

Easy, man.

She's enough for both of us.

- Take another picture.

- Thank you.

Here comes our captain now.

- Tell us how you evaded the English.

- No, Auckland Island, captain.

Now, I've covered that for you.

Have your pictures, but the captain's too weary to be interviewed.

- Even about Auckland Island?

- Take your pictures, sir.

All right.

Again we must emphasize, photographs, but no interviews.

It's been a long chase, Karl.

I wish I could say

it had been a good one.

All I care to hear is a retraction of these German lies about Auckland Island.

Do you say those men were armed?

Do you say they were building a military wireless on a shipwreck station?

Do you say they opened fire, these helpless, unarmed men I found dead?

Do you?

You were in command of that shore party.

- And you were the last to leave.

- British lies.

Not from Jeff Napier.

Do you?

Whatever my ship is charged with,
I am charged with.
The truth is set down in my log
for you or anyone else to read...
...the day you take my ship.
I never wanted to believe
you sanctioned those murders...
...but now I call you what you are:
A murderer, a liar and a coward!
Napier! You're forgetting
who and where you are.
Wait outside.
Captain Ehrlich, the Rockhampton
will be waiting for you.
Nothing would give me greater pleasure
than to have you attempt to leave.
Good night, sir.
- Elsa, please.
- Don't touch me!
The English are bad losers
and flaunters of international law.
Proceed with the banquet.
I'll join you later.
I'll soon have a statement ready
on this barbaric incident.
- Get the people to the banquet.
- Yes, sir.
Captain.
Your restraint was admirable, captain.
The courage of silence.
It made the English appear
all the more the aggressors.
Get out.
Oh, this has upset you.
- You shouldn't be alone.
- Perhaps not, but I can do without you.
You're tired. I'll see you
after you've had some rest.
- Operator.
- Miss Keller's room, please.
One moment, please.
- She's not?
- Shall I try later?
- Did she leave word where she'd be?

- I'm sorry, sir.
- Shall I try later?
- Thank you.
Thank you.
Elsa.
Oh, Karl!
That night aboard the ship,
I told you my way of thinking.
Yet I didn't tell you
the complete truth...
...because I never even
admitted it to myself.
Still, it was there.
You had your illusions and ideals.
I never had any illusions...
...but I had an ideal.
I've known many men, Karl.
I won't deny that.
But I never thought I would meet one
that I could be proud of.
Now I've found him.
Don't confuse sincerity of purpose
with success.
There's still 15,000 miles
to the flag stead light.
That's what I'm trying
to tell you, darling.
The consul has orders
that I should stay here.
But why must you try to go on?
You've done the impossible.
No one would think less of you now
if you accepted internment.
Oh, please, Karl, give it up.
Elsa...
...you call it an illusion.
Perhaps it is, but it's part of me.
I may fail, but I can't quit.
Hold me.
Tell me.
Tell me.
I love you.
With the scarcity of shipping
in this area...

...I don't think we can get in trouble until we reach here.

You've said nothing about Elsa.

Elsa remains ashore.

How about supplies?

Everything's onboard, sir, including ample fuel.

- Of course, our main worry...

- Is the men.

Some of them won't return to the ship, and I can't say I blame them.

They'll all be here, sir.

- Everybody's onboard, sir.

- Everybody, sir.

Good. Thank them for me, will you?

No, I'll go below

and thank them myself.

- Captain.

- We've got a problem, sir.

- Trouble ashore?

- Yes, sir.

Last night we're in the bars and we run up against some British sailors.

- A fight?

- No, sir.

- They seemed decent.

- A lot like us.

So we decided to have a contest.

- Drinking?

- Well, sort of, sir.

They promised to bring us back, sir.

And that's the last thing I remember.

But the problem is, sir:

How do you get rid of a tattoo?

- Looks like it's been there a long time.

- Not that one, sir.

Turn around.

This one, sir.

"Britannia rules the waves."

We maintained our blockade at the harbor...

... and no cat ever watched a mouse hole more intently.

Would Ehrlich chance it

or wouldn 't he?
It was becoming
an international thriller...
... with sympathy running,
as it always does, to the underdog.
And the dog
was about to have his day.
Number One!
- Sir?
- We're going to have more exciting duty.
Our cruisers Ajax, Achilles and Exeter
are in action off of Uruguay...
...against the Graf Spee.
We are ordered to proceed at once.
What about the Ergenstrasse?
Where's your sense of proportion, man?
A battleship is worth 10 tramp steamers.
Yes, but not 10 Ehrlichs, sir.
Napier, you're making this altogether
too much of a personal vendetta.
Then perhaps you'd endorse
my request for a transfer...
...to the North Sea patrol.
- He's gotta come through there.
- I'll see that you are accommodated.
Now, if you don't mind,
I have my ship to look after.
The lights of Valparaiso
are still astern, Mr. Bachman.
Any further instructions
for the night-order book, sir?
No further instructions
for the night-order book, Mr. Kirchner.
Just keep to your quarters
when not on duty.
No premonition this time?
For better or for worse.
While the Rockhampton headed
for the Graf Spee...
... I was in an airplane
bound for England.
But Karl Ehrlich,
through the fortunes of war...
... had once more gained valuable time.

He was still beating the sea and us.
Still sailing homeward
against almost impossible odds.
His obsession had made a new crew
of the men of the Ergenstrasse.
And in spite of my hatred for the man,
I felt a certain ironic admiration...
... for the captain who had welded
the steel of his own character...
... into that plodding heap
of scrap iron.
Fed and rested,
she beat her way up the Atlantic.
Her belly was full now of all
necessary coal and provisions...
... and new lifeboats
hung from her davits.
The storms threatened her,
yet in a way they aided her...
... by hiding her in their turbulence.
A little ship unnoticed
in a big ocean...
... battling and staggering
under the fury of the elements.
As I waited for her in the North Sea
at the crossroads of the war...
... I hoped desperately that no other force
would rob me of my quarry.
And I was alert day and night
for any report...
... which might be received in London.
This is Berlin calling...
... and here again is Lord Haw-Haw at the
microphone of our shortwave station...
... speaking to England.
We've all heard of the Ergenstrasse 's
game of hide-and-seek...
... with the Royal Navy.
It's been most amusing to report the
bungling British attempts to capture her.
We're therefore going to lend them
a helping hand.
Some enlightening clues to the evasive
Ergenstrasse 's whereabouts.

Of course, from their former record,
it'll do them little good.
Are you ready, admiralty?
The Ergenstrasse is now proceeding
along the coast of Norway...
... at a present speed
of about 5 knots.
At this moment, she should be
off the mouth of Korsfjord.
Captain!
The Nazis had made a decoy
of the Ergenstrasse.
Karl Ehrlich, on the brink
of fulfillment...
... had been betrayed by the new party
to which everything was expendable.
It must have been a shock,
but no surprise to him...
... because it didn 't alter
his determination.
Tell the engine room to cut down
on the smoke, Mr. Bachman.
Aye, aye, sir.
Yes, I've read that monitored report
of Lord Haw-Haw's broadcast.
They're inviting us
to send out heavy ships.
Ships that we need badly.
Give their air force a field day.
- A stupid invitation we won't accept.
- Thank you, sir.
I know I'm violating procedure,
coming directly to you...
...but this has become an issue
that I can't put aside.
How does your crew feel about it?
Same as I do, sir.
They're all volunteers.
If I consent, where do you propose
intercepting your friend?
Thank you, sir.
I believe somewhere in here.
Elsa, how long
have we known each other?

I've known you since that day
on the island.
When I was driving this crew
24 hours a day?
At the grave.
That's a long time ago.
When you said,
"They were good men. Seamen."
That they were.
Well, it's a poor reward,
a forgotten grave.
Not forgotten.
Immortality has nothing
to do with fame.
Come on outside,
I have a present for you.
That's the Norwegian coast.
Karl, you've kept another promise.
Perhaps your greatest.
You brought your men home.
- And to all that it means to them.
- And all that it means to them.
We'd better get out of the weather.
It means happiness and home
for everyone else onboard...
...but what about us?
What about you?
Arrest, imprisonment?
Probably. But we'll face that
when we come to it.
Let's face it now.
This is a neutral coast.
Why can't we land here
and let the men go on?
Elsa, you're asking the captain
to leave his ship?
Captain! Captain!
Ship off the starboard quarter, sir,
showing no lights.
Bearing red 10, sir.
Put a shot across her bows.
Let this go over her.
Stop engine.
Pass the word to abandon ship.

Move!

- Engine room.

- Schmitt, we will follow the plan.

Everybody out!

Clear the bridge.

When she loses steerageway,
get to the boat.

Aye, aye, sir.

She's losing headway, sir.

Lot of activity on the boat deck.

Might be some sort of trick.

Well, we'll see.

Elsa, this is our log.

Make sure it gets to Jeff Napier.

Schlieter! Hang onto this
for Miss Keller.

But aren't you coming
on the same boat?

No.

- Everything rigged below?

- Yes, but I'm staying with you.

Chief, I promised you
your grandchildren. Get in that boat.

- But...

- That's an order!

All right, everyone aboard!

Mr. Kirchner, report to the bridge.

Kirchner, you're staying
aboard with me.

- What?

- You're such a loyal party member...

...you'll fight for your cause,
while I defend my ship.

Your ship? You're a lunatic!

You have no crew,
no armament, no guns.

- But a propeller. One.

- Now...

There's no activity onboard
at all now, sir.

Boats are approaching us, sir.

Are we going to pick them up?

I don't like the look of it.

Throw a net over the side.

Prepare to take them onboard.
- Yes, sir.
- Bring the captain to me.
Here's our log.
Take it to your captain.
We have the survivors onboard.
The captain isn't with them.
This is their log.
They're changing course, sir.
Shall we commence firing, sir?
- No. Put a star shell over her.
- Aye, aye, sir.
Put a star shell over her!
He's making a hoist
from the bridge.
- What flag is that? It has no swastika.
- The imperial battle flag.
- He can't be going to engage us, sir?
- He is.
I think he's gonna try and ram us, sir.
- Commence firing.
- Aye, aye, sir.
Commence firing!
- Up 200.
- Up 200.
Hit on the well deck, sir.
Hit on the boat deck, sir.
You maniac!
Elsa. Strike that flag!
Elsa, the lifeboat.
The boilers are gone, sir.
Cease fire.
Cease fire.
Shall we break radio silence, sir?
Report the taking of the Ergenstrasse?
No.
I'll report this in person.
We'll search for survivors.
- Slow ahead.
- Slow ahead, sir.
We searched for survivors...
... but all that we found
was a riddle of the sea...
... some tide-swept wreckage

on the nearby beach.

Had the sea taken them...

... or had they reached the nearby shore
where the fjords could hide a secret?

Who can say?

There are only two people who can
answer that, wherever they are.

But knowing Karl Ehrlich as I did,
I have my own opinion.