

AND SO IT IS
A Group of Short Stories

by

GLADYS MARIA HINDMARCH

B.A., University of British Columbia, 1962

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department
of
English

We accept this thesis as conforming to the
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

July, 1968

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and Study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the Head of my Department or by his representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

Department of English

The University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, Canada

Date July 31, 1968

ABSTRACT

"And So It Is" is a group of eight short stories which were written to be read aloud. The reader should lead with his ear and follow with his eye. The story is in the sound, in the details, in the motion, and not in the plot or the characters. What happens is in no sense important; how it happens, is.

All of my writing is based on incidents which did occur. So, "And Etc." is the story of a girl about to write an exam; "With My People" is about an Indian student who once wrote a paper for me as a teacher; "Where They Are," "Such As It Is," "They Know What They're Doing," "Other Men Make The," "A Single Scrambled," and "Some Trip This Is Going To Be" are stories of a girl's first introduction to boat-life as a mess-girl on a west-coast freighter.

I attempt neither to enlarge nor diminish events, but naturally they change, take shape, assume a form as I write. So, although various listeners have called my fiction comic, symbolic, realistic, absurd, poetic, literal, imaginative, all I can say is that these stories are based on incidents which did occur and that they are oral.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|------|
| AND ETC. | 1 |
| WITH MY PEOPLE | 7 |
| WHERE THEY ARE | 13 |
| SUCH AS IT IS | 20 |
| THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING | 31 |
| OTHER MEN MAKE THE | 40 |
| A SINGLE SCRAMBLED | 48 |
| SOME TRIP THIS IS GOING TO BE | 53 |

AND ETC.

It is a warm, not too sunny, somewhat vague summer morning: the trees the weeds the boulders dont stand out sharply, they blend into the air and each other. But they rarely do have sharp edges: sometimes in the fall, sometimes on a clear late winter afternoon, sometimes very few times riding down into the city, the buildings, the cedar boughs, the sea edge, and the trees on the far mountains are separate, distinct. But today's just like yesterday which was like yesterday before that: everything's soft, blending, quiet, unclear. And today, not like yesterday, I'm supposed to write an exam, Amerrikan Literachoor, Mark Twain to the present, but the present stops with Hemingway who isnt really that present at all. Occasionally the couch grass just outside my window moves. And occasionally I look at my book, American Poetry and Prose, which is filled with remarks such as "naturalism ventured to philosophize," and I say to myself, now just what does that mean. Naturalism ventured: a personified, useless, generality.

Kids are playing fort near the woods at the edge of the field in a pile of stumps and tree limbs that were moved there by the bulldozer yesterday. I'm supposed to be leader, I'm the oldest. How rapidly they make use of what they have: they are what they are even while playing. No I am, I'm the biggest. No, they're not playing. I'm the one who is. I play by daydreaming, by arguing in my head, by never fighting

with anyone: they're much more here, in what they're doing, than I am. I dont have to take you just cause you're my brother, just cause you're my brother. What I have to do is, what I have to do is, to get physically keyed up, tuned in, or in tone for writing that exam. But I dont want to. But you have to. Look at your notes. They're not notes, they're just quotations that interest me. Okay, read them over. But they wont have any connection with the exam because I wont be asked what it is that I do know, I'll be asked what Dr. Russell thinks it is that we should know.

The trouble with me is I never say or do anything. That is, I never say anything that matters to whomever I should say it: Dr. Russell, you're a fart-face, you've no right to stand there lecturing giving us comments by two editors of two anthologies as if they were you own. Attack. A gang of boys ascends the fort using maple sticks as swords. To friends I talk, yes; but no, I criticize, and not about what they're doing, only about what someone else has done or isnt doing. Scardee-cat, scardee-cat, cant get off the: the littlest one, no more than three, cant make it all the way up, is stuck. Stuck, he's stuck, I'm stuck, and Russell is stuck too. But he gets paid for being stuck, for sticking students, I bet he even asked to teach the course, a full professor, or so the calendar says, he could choose what he wanted or at least could say what he didnt want.

One of the older boys pulls the kid down, he's out of it, wish it was that fast for me. I go to the can and iron a blouse and listen to a girl talk about her exam: I just give them what they want, that's the only way to get through. So simple if you can do it, I think, if that's the way you are: I wonder if that's how Russell was, probably, if he can repeat the crap in that book, most likely. I come back to my room and try to read, and eat a cracker, and try to think, but look out the window: they're gone. My bed is unmade, probably they're playing somewhere else, my books are scattered on the desk in front of me, on the bed by my side, got tired of that one, on the shelf to my right, so they switch, it's as simple as that. I don't want to write the exam. You've said that before. Maybe I should play I'm a student about to write a test. Nah, play has to be real or it ain't any fun. Maybe I should write in my notebook.

I am supposed to be studying. Here I am, writing this, sitting in a messy room, and I'm supposed to be studying. Dear Dr. R.: do you think Pound would be happy if he knew he had two CLASS poems and one HOME poem being worried about by eighty or so people here during the last few hours and God knows how many other people elsewhere on this continent, hundreds I suppose, maybe even two or three thousand? And do you think he "uses symbolism" as other people USE pens, marbles, capers, dill-weed? a sprinkle here, a teaspoon there, dubs on you, click and click, put in a purse, a pocket,

a bag, a mouth, a throat, covered by cloth or paper or lettuce or skin? collect, knock, mix, USE? Can you say, quite honestly, that William Carlos Williams ever USED symbolism in his life? That is, I know you argue that words themselves are symbolic, but is there no such thing as the LITERAL anymore? I know that is an impossible question for you to answer because I know you dont know what it means.

Well, you've had a few moments to think about it, what is your reply? Oh, that Paterson is a city, that there are cities everywhere, therefore Paterson, or father-son, is symbolic of all American cities (fathers beget sons and they all have similarities), and nothing else? No, nothing else. That's because that is not what is going on, that's why you've got nothing, that's why you are nothing, that's why you cant even read a poem, much less comment, because you perceive only the symbol whether it is present or not. I shouldnt have said that, you dont even perceive the symbol, it's simply a clickety-split-plop you've read elsewhere. And the elsewheres you read never have it straight, that is they do not deal directly with the thing itself, they are, as far as I can make out, simply secondary sources of secondary sources of secondary sources.

Okay, I've done that and managed to waste another twenty minutes. Get dressed. Go write the thing. I dont want to. That doesnt matter. I will, I will, exams start when they start and not when students do. They are published on a list

a month or more in advance--as if that makes them more real-- a date, an hour, a room in a building that is never the same room and seldom the same building you go into all year at regular times on alternate days of the week. Get dressed, walk through the trees, around wide puddles, over gravelly parking lots, past fallen branches, ugly buildings, rows of cars, huge sewer ditches, into halls, people, people everywhere, clip-boards, cigarettes, yellow blouses, hairy arms. What's this? When's that? I couldn't care less. Always this last chatter chatter chatter. Do you have a light? When was The American Grain written? He was an imagist, wasn't he? Quick, tell me some other things he wrote.

Not even the right titles, information and categories are things to throw around, to show off with, it doesn't matter if you've read the works or not, what is said about is much more important than what is said. There are clusters of students about the closed grey doors: some silent, looking down; some running to the can; some yakky, reading aloud; some slowly pacing the corridor; some pensive, hiding fear; some laughy, talking about tomorrow the teacher sailing marks the essay anything to keep away from the moment, the test. The door opens, inside on bloated arm desks, face down, every second seat, lie the exams. The invigilators, and Dr. Russell is not one of them, talk from the front, simultaneously: Math 205 on the right, English 409 on the left. Whose right? Whose left? Doesn't matter, the students I recognize are on this side, so, here it is.

Sign your name, place your number, course, date, section and instructor's name. Why that? Definite at least. A Xerox sheet with eight questions on: answer four; write carefully; candidates will be marked for organization as well as content. Every question ends with etc.: one says discuss TWO class poems and ONE home poem by EACH of the following FIVE writers as to symbolism, technique, imagery, meaning, rhythm, tone, innovations, and etc.: 3 poems X 5 authors X 7 items at least, that is 105 and more things to do in 180 minutes divided by 4 which is 45 minutes not counting organization. Each prose question refers to THREE novels and ONE novella or TWO short stories, plus etc.; and the one drama question just happens to cover FIVE plays one of which is a trilogy so that makes seven, and etc. Shit on him and shit on them: heads down, someone clicks a ballpoint pen, another dips and scratches, the one next to me keeps kicking his leg. And no-one walks out.

WITH MY PEOPLE

One day the teacher walked into class and said, I want you to write. Just write. What about? one student said immediately; how long? said another; what for? said a third. Anything, she said, this room, who's next to you, your grandmother's wart, how you feel right now. What if you cant? said a student; what if your mind goes blank? I wont believe you, she said, nobody's mind goes blank--you still see, you still hear, write about why you cant get started, write about the girl in front of you who's writing so much. What for? said the student who had said that previously. Cause I want to see how you write; not you, personally; but you in general, the whole class. So, they did, the whole class, they brought out or borrowed or got paper from her, and wrote.

The next day the teacher walked into the class and read some papers. The first one was by a student who could explain something in such a way that he understood it but the person to whom he was explaining thought he was crazy. The second one was about putting down what he thought the teacher thought he should think rather than what he himself actually thought. The third one was about how teachers must spend most of their time thinking up boring topics to impose on students, how this was a campaign which was almost one-hundred percent successful, and how, now, with no topic, it was impossible to write. The class talked about these papers and the students asked about essay writing and the teacher listened and tried

to answer their questions.

Near the end of the period she said, the one paper I most want to read I havent because the writer would be known. Why dont you? said one student, we're here to learn, arent we? She's right, said another, I wouldnt want everyone to know if it was me. I wouldnt care, said a third. I would, said a fourth, why dont you read papers from other classes? They all talked about this for a few moments except four or five who seldom said anything and then the buzzer went. There was a short boy-man in the class who was very short, no more than four feet eleven, probably four eight. She stopped him as he passed her table, I'd like to see you, she said. And the four or five who remained noticed, stood back, watched the little man in his denim outfit look straight up at her.

Now? he said flatly. Do you, do you have another class? she said as she tried to move away from but couldnt help but be held there by his eyes. I can miss it, he said, it doesnt matter. Are you sure? she said quietly so that the others could not hear. Yes, he said with no hesitation, a command almost. He walked to the door and stood there and waited while she talked with the others, then the two of them left together. They were an odd pair moving through the halls: he so definite, his clothes, probably bought in the child's section of a department store, so clean, so new; she so insubstantial almost, although she certainly was not what you would call a small woman, above him, awkwardly swinging her

coloured woven bag against a short mauvey skirt.

Her office was full, it didnt bother him, but she said let's try to find a place and he led the way. Just outside of the chemistry lab was an empty table: here, he said; okay, she answered. She sat down, arranged herself, tried to ask him what she had to ask him but it came out, did you fail the course before? Yes, he said, I dont think the way they do. Was it the, the literature? she asked trying not to look at the huge bump he had below his left shoulder, trying to look at him directly in his eyes. I imagine it's alien to you, so unreal. She was safer now, in her own territory, and he saw that and answered yes. They talked for a few moments about what he could do for her (no literary assignments) and then she asked what she had wanted to ask although now what she really wanted to ask was about his size and his bump.

Why not? he said, it's right, it's true. Of course, she thought, I'm so stupid, he's taken that as an insult, how silly of me not to have guessed. But he hadnt taken it as an insult, it simply was so. After a moment they parted. He smiled just slightly as they did so and that was strange for her because she hadnt seen him smile before and had supposed he simply never did. But it was also strange for her last night when she had read his paper; she had noticed him in class because of his size, because he never talked even when they were in groups of four or five, because she had asked him a question once and he simply repeated the text three times;

but she hadn't noticed his colour and hadn't thought about his origin, Okanagan Indian the paper said right near the beginning and she had had to bring out her seating chart to find out who he was.

The following day the teacher walked into the class and said, I'm going to read the paper I wanted to read yesterday. The four or five students who had remained after class knew who it was, looked at him. He looked at her. She started, quietly, and it was much like the others. The primary difficulty in essay is not in the presentation but in the spelling and word usage: they had gone through that yesterday, spelling she marked but didn't take grades off for, vocabulary should be the writer's own so DONT DONT DONT use big words with the idea they'll get you marks because unless they're natural to you the tone will shift and it'll sound awkward. Someone dropped a book and she looked up, waited a second.

The fact that I tend to mingle the Okanagan Indian dialect structure of a sentence into what I am trying to convey. Immediately, the class stopped shuffling, was quiet, for the first time since they had come together, it was so quiet that the traffic noise outside and the fluorescent lights inside could be heard. She read on into the stillness. My heritage is a piece of land surrounded by a barb wire fence with a sign saying INDIAN RESERVATION. DO NOT TRESPASS. She looked up at him who was looking at her totally expressionless, solid, there. Before I was a year old I was given a number and was

known by that number in the Indian Department. Someone near the front wrote a question in his book but she didnt notice, felt only the writer's presence, moved with his rhythms.

When I was two years old I felt the cold draft of the winter winds coming through the house that the white people call a shack. At three I knew the meaning of going to bed without supper, not because I was a bad boy, but because there wasn't enough food. At four I knew the pain of being laughed at because of my clothing, speech, and manners. Then at five I saw my father cry because the Indian Agent wouldnt let him sell his crop at the market for food and clothing. And at six I was gathered in a little church yard and loaded into a truck with others my age and sent to a residential school a thousand miles away. Yes, this is what I remember of my young days on a reservation.

She paused, could feel the whole class, tense, right there, waiting but not waiting. She glanced at him who was smiling, the first time he had had anything read out; but that was not it, he was smiling at them feeling sorry, being so quiet, the very thing he least wanted. The nuns and priest of that school were proud of molding me into a civilized Indian. For twelve years I wasn't allowed to go home for fear I may become difficult to teach. So for twelve years I never saw my parents and for twelve years I didn't hear from them. Because they couldnt write and my letters couldn't be answered and so alone I stood. The teacher looked at him and he could

see she also had it wrong, was moved, and they all could hear her voice starting to break, so she stopped before reading the last sentence, gathered it in, and then it came out.

For my allegiance is with my people and not the image makers. The class said nothing for a minute, what could they say, some looked at her trying to hold back, some looked at him who was smiling all over, others didnt look up at all. Then, as if one, they clapped. What for? It's right, it's true, isn't it. When that stopped they asked questions, he answered, directly, each one, closely, and he smiled at her as he took over and she smiled back and tried not to cry.

WHERE THEY ARE

The S.I.U. hall is actually an old bank. It is situated on the corner of Cordova and Main--across from the police station, a Chinese newsstand, and a second hand store. These four buildings--two wooden with windows, the other two made of stone--form the corner. The corner looks unbalanced because both the union hall with its large glass doors and the Chinese shop with its small glass door open into it. The pawnshop, covered by a canvas awning, merely faces the PUBLIC SAFETY BUILDING: old shirts, coats, shoes, guitars look out across the traffic into squares of wine and grey stone. People stand in front of the apple-orange-crackerjack-scandal-magazine store, and talk. Men sit on the granite steps of the hall, and smoke. But no one stops to look into the pawnshop window and all hurry past the police-court-station, to be, more often than not, stopped by a red light.

I've been here before: once with Ken, my exboyfriend, if you can call a lover ex or a boy, but he was not a man and not totally a lover and not really a friend; and once by myself on a day off from the Princess of Vancouver on which I worked as a stewardess. The first time, with Ken, I did not go inside for the simple reason he said I could not and mumbled something about members only so I sulked in his car and later tried to hide from him the fact that I'd enjoyed watching the people go by. The second time, by myself, I walked in early one morning after riding the busses for an hour or so. I sat

on the padded bench beneath a job board and wrote a letter to a friend of mine about the bus ride, the hall, and how I might want to become a police woman--at least I'd be in Vancouver, I had said, and I would, in all probability, see and do things I had not before, i.e. I'd get to know the city and people in a way that would be impossible otherwise.

I've got to do something, I think. Inside the hall there are few men: three sit at a table, one reading a newspaper, the other two playing checkers. I don't want to work in an office. On the right wall is a job board which is really just a series of glass cases filled with coloured cards: the man whose card is in the top left corner has first bid on a job; next to the right, second, and so on. I don't want to go back to school; but I've said that before. Two men are standing there looking at the cards: one is well tanned, has a short crewcut, is wearing a tight striped T-shirt; the other is old, has on pressed khakis, is smoking rollins: they are seeing where they are in relation to everyone else. I just can't see being cooped in one spot doing the same thing over and over again for another eight months or a year.

At the end of the hall on the far right is a coffee bar: behind it a fat woman is pulling used mugs towards her with a stick. She gives an impression of slowness but there is no wasted motion. On the immediate left is a curved red counter which starts from just inside the door and goes the

width of the room end: behind it, at a desk, a thin woman of thirty, is typing; on it, leaning from the inside, a white-haired man fills out forms. I walk towards him and he looks up. You used to be on Black Ball, he says. No...but I have a shipping book. That's odd, I could have sworn I saw you here before--just come back from the lakes? No...I, I asked you about a job in June while I was on the Vancouver and you told me to stay there because it was steady and.... Do you want to re-gis-ter? He doesn't understand, I'm not a member, I say.

Can you work...are you a-vail-ab-le? He speaks slowly and deliberately, asks a few more questions, then opens a brown 10¢ scribbler and carefully writes my name and telephone number in pencil. I notice the book is two-thirds full but dont ask him about it. He tells me that a messgirl might be getting off the Skeena next Thursday but not to count on it because women are always changing their minds, they say one thing and do another and it all depends on boyfriends and things like that, but she had told someone she was taking off although she hadnt notified the hall or him which she is supposed to do, and besides that I have to realize that if a member wants the job, she gets it; but if she isnt in the hall, she doesnt; so he'll phone me and tell me and I should be ready just in case.

I thank him and walk to the end of the hall--too quickly, too clumsily, everyone else, including the white-

haired man, moves slowly with grace. The woman behind the counter asks if I'm shipping out. I dont know. Come down here before ten and three everyday, she says, we're short-handed, good girls are hard to get. She gives me a coffee and smiles, you a student? I nod, is it that obvious, I think. Her whole body seems to smile, to be open, I didnt go past grade eight myself, didnt see no necessity to, those days. Alright, alright, I'm coming, she says to the guy around the corner, you must have built-in antennas or something, it seems that everytime I get myself into talking you just come a-running outa...she has an easiness of self and motion that I like. I'd like to ask her questions, to listen to her, to find out what I'd do. The man in the striped top says, let me get the kid's, then swings around the pillar and sits on the stool beside me. I can get you on next week if you want to, he says while looking at my boobs.

The rest is a blur of tan and blue eyes, of walking up an alley, and some beer at the Empress. The place is dark, as all our pubs are after walking in from outside on even a dull summer day. The place is crowded, compared with others, and the people are more talky even if they dont know you. Are you shipping out kid; what would I do, where do they go, is it hard; you never been on the outside? why it gets rough, why I've seen some real sailors who wouldnt even...dont listen to him, it's nothing. After a beer, on my way to the can an old woman asks for a cigarette, so, I give her one.

Dont do that again, honey, she'll be after you, you know, she sits here day after day begging, you know. You new to this part of town, aint you, well stay away, your kind dont belong here: cracked tiles, brandy, paper all over the can.

You sure you dont want some, sweetie, it's free, it'll warm you up, I aint got germs: no towels, only toilet paper, one sink is plugged with hair. What took you so long, got lost in the hole, shut up will you she's mine: a plump belly, a yellow T-shirt, three tattoos around the table. You know a fine girl like you has no business on ships, why dont you get a nice job typing or something: cardboard circles, peanuts, beer glasses all over the table. Maybe she should teach, no I think you'd make a good nurse, women shouldnt be allowed on boats period not even as passengers: cheezies, pastrami, cigarettes, more beer. Take one for yerself; thanks; we already have three university nuts around--that young yahoo, without the shoes, you know who I mean, that big monkey who played drums with the oil cans when we were unloading in Tahsis, or, or, or, or no, Rivers Inlet, the one who says he's taking science or something--Ken, that's his name, you know him?

I dont want to say I do because I dont want to be connected with him, and I dont want to say I dont in case I meet him around the hall, so I say I've heard of him and leave it at that because the man talking doesnt really expect me to know him anyway and with so many boats that dont ship women I

dont expect to see him either, because the summer we were both working and trying to get together it was impossible to for more than four hours every second week. C'mon, I'll give you a lift home, says the tanned fellow whose name is John.

You're not going to take her away from us already are you, says Whitey, the plump-bellied man, as he signals another round.

The bartender laughs at some jibe a guy at another table makes and a captain arrives from the alley entrance, hugs Johnny old boy howya doing, slaps Whitey you crazy shit still on the old tub? whatza matter with you, taking up homesteading?, falls backwards as John says this is Kurt, tips a table full of beer and knocks someone's money off: money, cigarette butts, beer juice, legs, on the floor.

Well aint that just, someone punches Kurt. Then Hal from our table hits that someone and it isnt like the movies or TV at all where it goes on for minutes with insults and grimaces and dodges and sounds: just two hits, like that, that fast. A broken nose without any seeing, just a sense of motion after, not during. C'mon kid, let's get out of here, quick. He shoves me past other tables where people arent the least bit concerned, out the alley where the cop station is, almost to the street. But he's hurt, I say, arent you going to...look I'm in enough trouble as it is without getting involved in a--Whitey knows him, he's got friends, he'll be looked after: water in an eye and a drop of blood coming out, legs straddled.

As we get to the curb Johnny lets go of my arm and says, if you want to go back, go; I'm crossing the fucking street and if you dont want to come it makes no difference to me. He walks across and I stay. Blue eyes, I cant think, so light, I dont know either, the light itself's bothering me, I cant help, I wish Ken were here, it, Johnny's probably right, I'm going back to see, I shouldnt get, he doesnt even know what happened to him. S'long kid, Johnny shouts, s'long. The light, as I turn into it, shows dust layers. I kick a stone with my toe. The telephone poles and the mesh-wire fence with its metal poles stand out: I hadnt noticed them before. I wonder if this is what it is like to be high or drunk. And I dont think of the fight. I only know I'm going there.

He's not inside and neither is Whitey and neither is Hal nor the guy with the broken nose. I see a cop talking to the tap man near the gents section up front so I leave out the back. I go down the alley thinking of the woman in the hall in her blue-flowered house dress; of Hal's quickness, it couldnt even be seen, faster than a leaning over to light a cigarette, just an arm out like that; of Johnny's clear light blue eyes, and Ken who is darker but what Whitey said of him. I turn the corner and go to the Cordova/Main intersection: a red turret two stories above the pawn shop, WE BUY AND EXCHANGE GOODS written on the window far below it: I guess the balance does make sense, people live there, I wait for the light then cross to that side.

SUCH AS IT IS

Ken is painting the outside of the wheelhouse. I can see him as I come up the grease covered gangplank in high-heels I should have had enough sense not to put on cause it's obviously not a passenger ship, and although the plank does have railings there are slits between the wood: and there he is, Ken, painting the outside of the wheelhouse. The very person I least want to, he turns and smiles in that loose shambly way of his, and says MISS Henderson, how DO you DO. Howdyalike that, fuck him, what am I supposed to say, pleased to see you here, well I certainly am not, how are you doing, that's quite obvious, whoya screwing now? It might be alright if I knew it was over, if it had in someway resolved itself, if we had had a fight or something definite. He comes closer, chest near my eye close, stands over me with his paintbrush.

I simply say, hi Ken, I didnt know you were on this boat. It's not fair, particularly on my first run, if he thinks he's, I try to turn right but his arm blocks me, going to: c'mon you big monkey, let the lass go, says a round man just behind him whose head I cant see. Some of us has manners, the short man in coveralls says, some of us knows when we're not wanted. But you dont know Jan, says Ken as he moves back. Ken waves his brush near my nose then turns towards his bucket. Jock introduces himself and a low voice from inside the cabin shouts, you gotta watchout for that

dirty old man. Dont listen to Beebo, he's just jealous, says Jock as he grabs my suitcase and takes me down the ladder, around the winch, and into the ship. You sailed before? he asks, just on the ferries; which one? the Vancouver; didya ever run into Tiger Smith? well they sorta tried to keep the girls separate from the crew by making us eat in different places, but, but isnt he the big Newfy; yeah, that's the one-- as you can gather for yourself this isnt the C.P.R.

Yes, I can see that THAT it certainly is not: grey dirty paper covers the floor, rags hang on a staircase railing, a broken chair lies legs up. This here's the passengers' lounge, he says, such as it is, and that's where the officers eat: toothpicks in a sealed jar, dirty mugs, an empty Crisco tin on the table; a couple of yards or so beyond it is a longer table covered in plastic, canvas bundles of laundry sit on the bench. We move into the galley which is about as big as a large bathroom, as hot as a cool sauna, and noisier than a print shop or a small mill. Get yourself a coffee, lass, I'll go an fetch Puppi, he shouts over the racket. The mugs are all in the sink, damn that Ken anyway, I try to rinse one out but there's no water, it's not that I'd, around the tap hangs a can with holes punched in the bottom and bars of what smells like Fels Naptha inside, mind that much if, water starts dribbling, I had, handle's too hot, done it before. I snatch a piece of sheet or pillow case off the wire that runs above both sinks and the drainboard.

But I havent and dont, I pour the coffee and manage to get some on the towel, know how, I look around to see that no one's watching, I'll make out, I rinse the towel off with water from the kettle.

That's not it, if only--I go into the room to my right which is perpendicular to the galley--if only we, there is a blackboard on the wall:

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Chicken noodle Weinerd + beans Beef Staw Vanilla Pudding or Peaches SHIFT 1300 | 1800 Call-Back Laundry please!! |
|--|------------------------------------|

Four different writings, 1300 that's 12 and 1 so 1 o'clock and it must be around 11:30 so an hour and a half from, if he didnt smile like he owns, I look at the table: sugar and honey and canned milk, coffee stains, salt and pepper and toothpicks, used ashtrays, chutney and H.P. and Tobassco and Worchester sauce, open newspapers, ketchup and mustard and paper napkins, marmalade. Me, no that's not it, he just doesnt like, I sit down, me to, green oilcloth I havent seen that since: a middle aged woman who has a pony-tail held together with a red elastic band walks in.

You the new messgirl, she asks, I'm Doreen, what dya go by? She has a dirty white rag pinned about her thick middle and her hair's all frizzy but she looks gentle. I'm Jan, are you the cook? Nah, I'm just through relieving Coco, gonna get off this stinking ship, thank God for that...got different shoes? In my suitcase--why dya say that? She looks at me half-questioning, then understands. The guys wont give you no trouble, you know what I mean, it's just the, well you shoulda seen the fucking mess Coco left me and the junk she ordered; you know Jan I dont care how gooda cook someone is, you know if they havent got enough meat there's nothing they can do, nothing; and you should see the pans, they're not big enough for ten and I had thirty so it's in and out in and out that damn oven which doesnt have a thermometer mind you so you have to open it to cool it down. I smile at her and try to say that sounds awful but it doesnt come out and she puts her hand around into the galley, picks up a knife.

Looka this thing will you, it's not sharp enough for bread, that damn Coco hid hers; you shoulda seen me trying to cut roasts with this thing, that was a sight to see: a small French knife meant for vegetables, I just look at her and it. No spices, just salt and pepper, and I ran outa flour even, just wait till I meet her, I'll let her know a thing or two. She's got a twisted smile and I think she's trying to convince herself that she will say something because she doesnt sound that angry and doesnt look the least bit vindictive. Have you

met that German broad they have as stewardess? Not yet. Well she's a case, outa my road, outa my way, eerrruhhh eerrruhhh, and fight? fight you never seen anything like it, she and Betty have been going at it all run and now they dont even speak to each other: so it's Doreen, tell Betty this; Doreen, ask Puppi for that; buttering toast is Betty's job; Puppi's got the boys' honey, Doreen, make Puppi bring the honey back. It sounds confusing I say and think if it is her job, she should do it, and if they dont have two honeys, they should get them, it doesnt make much sense.

She wants to talk on but has to start cooking so I ask her where I can put my suitcase, she doesnt know what side I'll be on much less where I'll be bunking, where I can iron a uniform, she doesnt know that either and then I notice that she's probably worn the same one all trip. So I do the only thing I can think of doing and that is using a towel on the galley counter because I cant see an outlet anywhere else. Okay here? I shout. Alright with me, she answers, but dont take too long because the boys'll be coming in. I look at my iron, AC/DC, I guess it'll work, at least the boat sounds lively and as far as Ken goes if I just...lookit, no water, how do they expect me to cook without water? Steam spurts out of the tap, Doreen stands back from it looking, and a little man-woman comes running into the galley, screeching that's my space at me, outa my way, outa my way. She pushes the towel I'm supposed to be ironing on over, swears in another language

at Doreen, and runs out of the room cawing about the chief or something and the boiler and greenhorns.

As she's going all I can see are hairy ankles, turquoise slippers, a white uniform covering an almost straight body, a shaved neck. See what I mean, Doreen says as she leans her hand on the counter, I dont know how Coco puts up with it. Doreen smooths out my towel and I start to iron the wrinkly collar. By the time the little crow returns I'm about halfway through. She opens a huge walk-in frig which is next to the sink, brings out two pounds of butter, gives Doreen a nasty look which Doreen ignores, then starts cutting butter about six inches from my towel edge. It's sheist union this and sheist union that and training new help who dont stick with it...are you going to stay with it, no, you wont stay with it, Puppi will show you, ask Puppi, Puppi will tell you, well Puppi wont, Puppi's sick of it, Puppi wont show anyone how to do anything anymore. She slams the butter into round fruit dishes and says you'll have to get your own. I just look down at her, the boys'll be in, I still look, if Betty doesnt set up you have to--she flies out of the galley to the officer-passenger side.

But, I say, but I dont know what to do, I think. Doreen smiles over to me from the stove, stirs the soup, doesnt say a word. I try to hurry but I'm not any good, I iron more creases in than wrinkles out, I better leave it as it...I need milk, Puppi announces to the two of us. Get your

own, says Doreen, I'm busy. Puppi marches up to me, eyebrows rippling, get me some milk? she says childishly. Why not, if it's so important, but where, and why cant she. I go towards the walk-in without saying anything, she tugs me by my blouse: not there--the boys' frig. She points me to the other room then stands at the doorsill, feet in galley, body leaning over to see and direct. Not that one, the enamel, she screeches. So, I move jars of water and cans of juice over and pull out the one she wants, she nods yes, but when I get it over to her she snatches it, no thank you, no smile, just a cold grab. Doreen takes no notice, keeps her back turned, fills the kettle. I wait till Puppi's out of the galley to ask: two stew to follow, one bean up, the crow caws from the other side. I wait for Doreen to dish out the beans before: Puppi runs in, elbows Doreen over, ladles soup into two bowls then takes all three dishes out at once.

Doreen, where can I: see she doesnt have to do that does she: we laugh because we both spoke at once and laugh I cross my legs laugh, Doreen looks at the tap laugh, at the knife laugh and laugh and laugh a curly headed young man walks in laugh sees the two of us, one bent over, the other standing on one leg, laugh and he laughs at us laughing at him looking at--two beans no dogs, Puppi caws--laughing at her. C'mon you two magpies, get the food on, he says between laughs. He picks up my uniform, first tripper? he says to me laughing as I follow him/it laughing into the next room and giggle yes as he throws it on the cluttered bench. I'm Beebo,

he says, and I laugh at his voice as he pulls unwhitened flat shoes out of my suitcase and gives them to me, so empty, so dirty, one by one, what a funny name. Laughing I cant tie them, the little plastic ends look so silly, and Beebo's busy pulling paper off the table and I cant ask him, I can so tie them but my foot wont stay and he notices and ties them for me. He puts a towel around my middle laughing, yanks it in, makes a knot. He gives me a rag to wipe the table with and puts silver down every time I go once over a space but it's certainly not clean: the flat little toothpicks in the saltshaker fall out and I keep laughing.

And it's shake a leg, c'mon, c'mon: glasses out of cooler, water jugs, one half-empty, dont let Lefty see that, bread from the walk-in on a saucer heel up, butter, cut some butter, we gotta cover for Betty, ashtrays, clean them, cant let her get canned too, crackers, around the dry cupboard past the stove on the other side to your right, get some honey while you're at it. Ho-ot, Ho-ot, Puppi caws as I run back past her and I miss. Be more careful, on a ship you gotta be careful, she screeches. I get the crackers to Beebo and two men walk into the mess: Hal from the Empress and whrripp-whruu, get a load of that, some run this is going to. Jan, this is Lefty, says Hal who I met last week. Lefty grins a cocky sorta straightforward grin as he looks me over but Hal's look is direct, right in. I want to ask Hal about the fight and the guy who was hurt but dont because something

tells me not to and Lefty and Beebo are here. They sit down, quite quickly: Hal on the outside near the door, Lefty on the inside on the bench taking up half the table, Beebo on the end in a chair his back to the frig.

Lefty bangs his elbows, where's my food? he roars. What will you have? I ask. Give me some beans, at least she cant ruin them. Then before I go into the galley I take the other two orders which somehow perturbs him, I sense, I thought he was teasing, but what the hell I can remember three things at once: soup please--it's packaged, isnt it?, yes, okay, I'll take it says Beebo; and it's tea only please for Hal. When I bring out the overboiled beans and murky chicken-noodle soup, Lefty asks the table at large, where's Betty? I hand him his plate and while he sniffs it: pisseyed, excuse my language, Jan, says Beebo, the lady is sleeping it off in her cabin. I go out and make Hal's tea and when I return it's pass the peanut butter and where the dickens are all the ashtrays; and when I return from the draining board Beebo says quite helpfully, Jan, love, when you make tea check to see the kettle's boiling, will you? see that? I go over and look in Hal's mug: the water is a light green, around the bag it's slightly brown. I'm sorry, I say to him, I'll make you another. But Hal says never mind, I didnt want it anyway. So Beebo reaches back without leaving his chair and opens the cooler and brings out the milk. Jan, that's not our jug, says Lefty more politely.

What's the difference, says Hal.

There's a few seconds silence before Jock arrives, sits on the outside next to Hal, orders soup me love, and then Beebo asks for more bread, and Hal passes the toothpicks to Lefty who says he didnt know anyone could do that to beans. Then it's why dont you sit down and rest your legs, you're entitled to a half-hour lunch and just because these other women around here dont take it is no reason for you not to: it's in the contract, one-half hour, thirty minutes, c'mon now there's nothing you can do till we're finished eating. They seem to want me to so I do on the bench next to Lefty with my feet on Beebo's chair rungs. So while Puppi runs back and forth through the galley slapping instant pudding into fruit dishes and Doreen smokes at the counter because more shore crew might turn up, I sit in the mess, as the boys call it, and drink water.

Hal offers me a Players, Jock passes it, I take it, and say thank you to both but I dont want to sit here and smoke because I know I should be working yet I dont want to do the dishes if it's going to take twenty minutes to fill the sink so I get up to start the water running: excuse me, I'll be right back, I'm just going to: but Lefty grabs me by the towel end and pulls. I push his arm: it's hard but not boney, I try not to hit the port with my head, duck, push harder and, Ken walks in. He smiles over as I knee Lefty in the thigh: dont bother, I can get my own, he

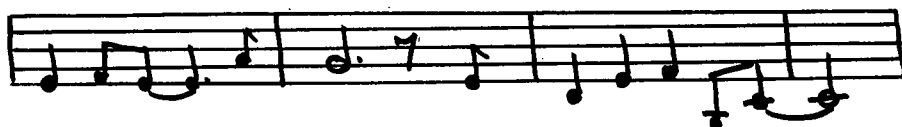
says. Dont bother, that's just like him, dont bother with anything but Ken, Ken, Ken. Ken, I say. He's in the galley talking with Doreen. And Lefty finally lets me go and as I stick out my arm to catch my balance Hal, Hal looks at me as if he has something figured out.

THEY KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING

Nobody is moving quickly because when they do move quickly they only have to wait so why move quickly. The longshoremen catch the slings, slowly place the pipes into the sides of wooden flats which are loaded with crates of beer. The men steady the wires as the winchdriver hauls the load up, then it swings above the dock over the water over the Nootka, pauses a few seconds as he moves to another handle, jerks as he centers it, then down it goes into the hold. The men on the dock stand there and wait and yak. Towmotors with full crates of Kotex, Toastmaster Bread, canned 7-UP, bails of wire, weave back and forth around the dock in and out the warehouse. The machines themselves move quickly but the men on them do not--it looks easy, they light cigarettes, stop when they load, stop when they unload: how many more...you going up to the Princeton...his old lady caught him last night. Nobody seems particularly happy or unhappy, they just know what they're doing and how to do it.

How come you're not at the Princeton with the others? the winchdriver asks me as he waits for the men below to unload. I dont answer, just smile at him: is that hard? Nah, wanta try it? he says as he steps out from the gears. I look at the metal sticks and huge green wheels of wire cable, shake my head; the man on the dock with the clipboard hollers, c'mon, c'mon, and I leave up the ladder, they

probably didnt think I'd go, past the wheelhouse, no one's inside, past the gangway, the tide's high enough now to move it to the lower deck, down the ladder to the poop deck. I lean on the rail next to the empty boxes and garbage buckets and crates filled with lettuce leaves and crumpled brown paper, watch the oil in the water, the night city neon just starting, think of Ken, it keeps shifting, we did also, changing, not fast enough, wonder where he:



not too far off but so lonely.

A body flops over me, tight, I cant, a rough chin scrapes my neck, breathe, get, hands glomb onto/into my tits. What are (I try to duck down) you: just seeing if they're real, Lefty says. Lefty, you're not seeing, you're... feeling. I try to be tough, he's not fooled, just stands there with that cocky grin: scared ya? he says. No, you, you didnt. Come have a mugup. I dont want one. Come have one anyway. We go through the hot mess to the hotter galley, he pours boiling water into a green square pot, swirls it

around: see this, it's mine, you dont use it for anyone but me. OcTOPus QuINTON in white paint, mixed upper/lower case, I wouldnt think of it: not even when I'm off and you're short, he says. I wont. I pour myself a cup of coffee after rinsing out a mug. Cut me a slice of onion, he says. I cant see any onion. Where are they? In the frig, wheredya expect? I cant remember seeing any there from the stores this afternoon but I go into the walk-in anyway which is jammed with supplies, look around at the meat packages, not there, the butter, no one would do that, the lettuce, the celery, green onions but not: the door shuts.

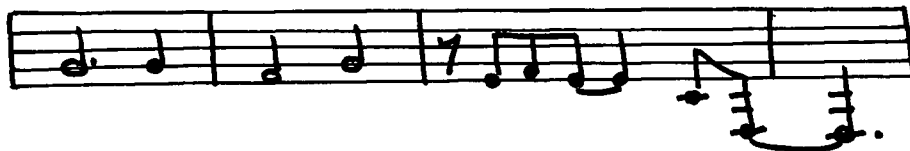
Let me out, Lefty; Lefty, I cant see. He laughs from the other side, a dirty gut laugh: Betty always has onion peeled, he says, on the deck, in a can. Let me...the door opens and I almost trip on the sill as I duck under his arm and just miss the pasengers' cups which are in a long white wooden case on the wall. I make it to the mess, eventually find the canned milk beneath a paper, start to pour, he's right there, Spanish onion in his mouth, one arm on the table, the other hand holding his tea which he puts down. He takes the huge oval thing out and says, howdya like boat life? I dont know, yet, I answer, I. Do you like men? Sure, I say stirring the coffee much too much and he notices. What type appeal to ya? Well I...how 'bout me? I look at him, medium built and loose-legged, brown eyes that dare me, biting his onion as if he knows who I am and how he is. He

sees me taking in the whole, looks proud, slowly slurps his bite down: do you like to suck? My God, what do you answer to that? I dont, I just walk out of the mess, open the door myself, and he follows to the poop deck.

Hal's there, leaning on the railing; and Jock, sitting on a wooden box which he gets up from, gives to me. Didnt mean to frighten you, you dont mind do you, says Lefty so all three of us can hear. He passes me, sits on the after peak. I look at Hal, he whistles:



and at Jock, he's not impressed; and at Lefty, his legs apart, waiting but not waiting: no, no I dont. He finishes his onion, licks a cigar, lights it with a wooden match struck on his thumbnail.



Hal looks at the sky and I do also, I feel more with him than anyone else. Going to be a good run, says Lefty looking at the sky and looking at the two of us and no one says anything.

The Nootka keeps shifting as she's being loaded, I steady myself by bracing my foot on one of the bits and pressing my hand, fingers spread, on the bulkhead as she moves the other way. Finally Lefty says, how much to go? to Jock who's right beside me. Zeballos last, again, he answers. Those hotshot supercargoes you cant tell them lads anything, why they wouldnt even know their ass from a hole in the ground unless: says Jock to me, for me, but I dont know what he's talking about. I watch the carlights move down the hills on the northshore. You seen the young monkey? says Jock. I shake my head up at his belly, not since noon. He's supposed to be on watch, Jock says. I didnt know that, I think, but he's none of my responsibility. Beebo aboard? he says to Lefty. With his klootch.

Hal passes between Lefty and me, goes into the crew's washroom which is just off the deck:



On the upper deck are some passengers, mainly old people, sloped bellies and knotted necks and heavy heels move close to the railing, they look at us a moment or so and getting no particular response, drift off. I watch the flag fold in and out, creating shadows, shifts of: you're a student, lass,

says Jock. Yeah, how can you tell? Always spot a student... I, I'd like to know, really, how: we talk of bumbershoots and saggy pants and uncut hair and baggy sweaters and as we talk Lefty looks me over, I'm not putting up much of an argument, such a stereotype, and as we talk Beebo swings down the ladder, I'm not here, he says to us, drops down to the crew's quarters, is gone. Jock winks at me and signals with his head to look up.

Beee-boo, a plump Indian woman calls from above. Bee-booo, she repeats as she stands above the ladder. You seen Beebo, she yells at Lefty. Not yet, he answers. Jock nudges over next to me, shrugs, happens all the time, lass. I know he's around here somewhere, she says, I know cause I seen him. Over his shoulder Jock calls up to her, why dont you check the wheelhouse, lass, or ask the mate. I look at her swelled out belly droopy breasts formless waist but cant quite make out her features because the light's between her and us. He's down there with you, isnt he. Isnt he, she yells at me or I take it that way, I shake my head towards her darkness but too rapidly. I'm coming down, she says, I'm coming. And she does.

Her full skirt blows up, blocks the light, but I can see her, no underpants, round brown rump, roly thighs, little tuft of hair. I turn my head and look at the rope wound round the bits: so little hair, I could see the folds, there arent any fibres on the rope, I thought that she:

alright, where is he? I can smell she's been drinking and I can smell Lavender perfume. She pinches my arm above the elbow, pulls it, hard, are ya going to tell or do I have to. I dont know, I say, I can feel little blood pricks float to the surface of my face and back. Lay off the kid, Beebo says as he runs out of the fidley, jumps over the quadrant, rounds the corner of the superstructure. She follows him as fast as she can waddle which is pretty fast: my money, you fucking boo-hunk, I'm not leaving ya till I get...

Lefty laughs at me. I rub my arm and keep looking down. You aint seen a pussy before? I dont look up or over. They're not all the same you know. I know you big guy, I think, I wish you'd shut up. Why dont you give the lass a little time, says Jock, show a little respect or something. I look at the creosote piles, smile over at Jock. Lefty does look a bit, Hal steps out of the crew's quarters as Ken comes down the ladder: where you been, lad, says Jock as Ken says, turn-to in five. Why I've just...mother-fucker, we hear the Indian woman shout and I turn to the other direction from which they left, towards the mess, the galley. Beebo laughs as he runs, it's all a big...white cocksucker, she yells as she passes the canned goods cupboard. Beebo nudges my leg as he passes, almost stumbles on the quadrant as Hal and Ken get out of the way so he can make it up the ladder. Her head is large, hair blown out, eyes small, almost a double squint. She pauses above Lefty, gives him a nasty look, spits on his

and I look at the piles, the lights, the edge of the green gangway being pulled in from above. And there she is, on the dock, waving and screaming as we start to move out, arms high, curved, a weird sorta dance to the fucking bastard and fucking ship. We back out past her and she stays there, solid, the same place, we start to turn, legs apart, arms fluid, screaming, and we're out and cant hear her no more.

OTHER MEN MAKE THE

Que sera, sera; whatever will be, will be; the future's not ours, to see: I hum and sing as I stand on the deck watching the graineries, huge cylinder shadows each connected, and the piers, some dark blobs others partially lit, pass by. It seems that the Nootka is not moving but the city is backing up: slowly, steadily, the hollows that are the streets which score the hills with even rows of light, pull over; in the hollows, scattered pairs of yellow lights and red lights drift. (sing) I asked my mother what lies ahead: ahead, university and then you'll get married. I look at the sky: a thin scrappy cloud, high up, moves between the dipper and me. (hum) Will there be roses, day after day, (sing) here's what my sweetheart said: I notice the galley buckets squished full of garbage, enough to feed, why think of it, I light a cigarette and watch the edge of the foam where it curls into the black water. Que sera, sera: I wish I could get that out of my head. I can feel the air through my uniform, filtered by cotton, on my arm, more direct, neither cold nor warm.

Thinking about your boyfried, Hal says. I turn around, he's just behind me, his eyes seem black, like an animal's, flat, near the surface, yet deep I could go, way in. As a matter of fact, I. He almost smiles but not quite. Do you mind if I spin a yarn with you? Spin a yarn? I say. Gab, he says, you know, talk. That's too much, I think, spin

a yarn, he's putting me on. Sure, I say. He grabs a wooden box from the garbage and puts it on the poop deck, then gets a rag from just inside the crew's quarters, shakes it out, lays it down: dont want you getting cable dressing all over that uniform. Thank you, I say as he sits on the after peak. Hope you brought some old clothes to put on when you're not working. I didnt, I think, but the stuff I've got isnt worth much. I gotta couple of cheap skirts, I say. No jeans. No, no jeans. Women dont look good in them, most women that is, he says, rain gear? Uh-uhh. You can use mine. I got extra. I look at him we are both about the same size. Will I need it? You might, if you want to take off and walk when we're in Ucluelet or Tahsis or Zeballos.

Far away places with strange sounding names, it's not far, just the West Coast, I look at the Lion's Gate Bridge as we start to pass under it, huge cement thighs, even with the engine noise I can hear the traffic whir above. Have one? Hal says as he leans over with a Players, such small legs compared to Ken or Lefty, so compact, so quick, the bridge whips, as he cups the match with his dark hand, by. Ken your boyfriend? he asks. And I smile at his black hair falling over his face and he moves his head up and away, flips it, so straight, so firm, used to be, I say. We smile at each other for a moment, what will be, will be, you havent smoked long, he remarks. No, how can you tell that? He blows a circle which drifts towards me, just misses my forehead. The way you

draw and the way you hold it like it doesnt belong. I cant see him sharply because I'm blocking the running light but I know he's slightly pleased with himself and I can very much, too much, feel his presence.

What happened to Kurt? I say trying to shift the mood/subject/emphasis/whatever but also wanting to find out because I'm curious and sense he wont talk when other people are around. You know that's a funny thing, he just went to the head and came out sober, dead sober, never seen a man who can do that like he does--the tapman even offered him one on the house, how do you like that, and they barred me. He looks so different when he talks, so: they, what? Barred me for a month and Kurt said if you wont serve my buddy you wont get none of my business till you do, so we went up to Whitey's. Can they do that? I say. Sure, I cant go into the Grandview or the Marble Arch either, disturbing influence, one of them called me; I never start a fight, I've never done that, never. I cant quite believe him but maybe it's so, he certainly didnt start the one I saw in the Empress. You know, it was thrown out of court. Uh-uhh. I had to go to court cause that twit got his beak in the way. I smile at him as he flicks his butt over the side. I got all tiddlied up, haircut, the works, and the judge just dismissed the case.

Behind him, far to the right, there is a sharp rock, one craggy tree on it: all black, a silhouette against the softness of the night park. I dont see why you shipped out,

he says, and I come back to him, the deck, after thoughts of Pauline Johnson, Indian poet, "As Red Men Die," chocolates. I, well I, I dont like school and I need some money and I dont like static situations--you know, offices and such and I guess I just prefer working with men or around men to working with women or inside. You're going to get hooked, he says. What? If you dont hit the beach and stay there when we get back to port, you're going to get hooked. I dont see why, I say. You havent been around long enough. I say to myself you're twenty-two years old and you have been around, no you havent, you have a bit and more than most girls but you havent really been around long enough as he says.

You seen the guys on this boat? Most of them I think. They cant stick to a shore job, none of them, they all tried it some time or other, several times, you ask, ask Lefty how many he's had, they just cant do the eight to five race or even stick to the bush for two months. You know how long I lasted last time? No. Three days, not even three days, I told them to shove it. I cant imagine him in the city delivering milk or repairing refrigerators, digging ditches or driving cab, certainly not selling certainly not in a store certainly not in an office. What did you do? I ask. Steeplejacking, he says, but those guys think they can tell you what to do. That's it, he doesnt like to be told, in fact he wont be told that's what: you're called, Ken shouts from the deck above. We look up at him, much larger than Hal, thick-thighed, well made. Then neither of us speak for

a moment, just watch the lights on the northshore, so many high-rises now, huge curls about the sea edge.

Feel like talking about it? he asks. No, not yet that is, I say. I'll relieve him. You dont have to do that. Just waiting anyway, he says as he gets up. You know that's what gets you about boat life, you work you sleep you wait you think, that's all there is to it. He smiles as he steps over the quadrant, then he slips up the ladder, so natural, so fast and yet it looks slow. I light a cigarette and try to pin the back of my hair up, it wont stay put, I should get it, damnit I dont know, cut, if I, I dont want to, see him, yes I: hi, says Ken from the ladder, just have to take a leak, he swings into the crew's quarters. He looks so, so boyish, overgrown crewcut, so, tear halfway up his shirt, he could afford, floppy thongs, I dont remember him being so, it's funny what six months can do but I just saw him less than a month ago, it's not the time, it's other men that make the, I dont want to think about it, I hope I look, Jamey said he dropped his chem because he was playing around too much. Playing around, playing.

A mop next to my eye, wet, through the port, twirling. I get up, move to the side, that could only be him, stand next to the railing and watch without saying anything. The mop moves to the side, quickly, back, to the other, then up and down, more slowly, retreating, a small circle, then in. Less than a moment later he jumps onto the wood that covers the

quadrant, puts his arms up, sways. You curling bastard, I think, same old Ken, never--he springs onto the peak, then steps onto the deck edge, next to me. I move away a few inches, I dont know what it, he shouldnt be this close it isnt, you're looking good, he says. So are you--nice of Hal to let you off early like that. I've got to, got to think of something to say so he doesnt take over, not about us, we dont know what happened, we tried it before and it just gets nowhere, huge circles and loops that seldom, if ever coincide, what to: he's a good head, Ken says, but you know why he did it, dont you. Whadya mean? Come off it, Jan, you know as well as I do. I guess so, I say, at least I know what you're insinuating, I think.

What have you been doing lately, that is what are you getting into now? I say, thinking, that's safe, last time I saw him it was the mind, he knows or should know I dont mean girls, and he usually moves around in one space for two or three months before. And he talks about the brain and ideas he has on chemical reactions, light responses, I dont ask him why he dropped chem, he doesnt have to tell me anyway, it obviously wasnt going where he was at the moment, hypnosis, nuerosurgery, his father's one, tantras and it's all in huge looping phrases I dont follow, I listen to a word or two and take off, come back in a minute or so and go into/onto another tangent, mostly about myself how I have nothing going for me at all, not quite, but other people are the center I depend too much on, less than five hours a day is all the body, I slept so much before we did break up, sixteen sometimes, and then,

then I couldnt take the fact that we had but it was so senseless as it was but he always does/did have something that, always someone too, listening, that switches also as he does.

He doesnt even notice I'm not, maybe that's what went wrong, at the beginning even he, but I did listen then, habits, habits are traps to be gotten rid of, the response, me listening, he talking, me taking in, he, he even did the cooking, both fucking every-so-often built up, always such: the light from the lighthouse at Pt. Atkinson turns, we've seen it together from so many city mountain water angles at so many past, now present, times; oh, I say, that's interesting, and he continues. So careless, the way he uses the language, and the observations are so: ambivalent's the word, he breaks in. What? I say, sorry I was thinking about something else. I just hate her sometimes when we argue and she fights, fights so coolly, and she makes me see things but I dont admit it, when it happens that is. Well I certainly didnt do that, not that we shouldnt have, argued: abstract, logical, she went around with a philosophy crowd before she met me.

And you're going to undo it, I think, the old power: she's younger, he says, she doesnt reach the same levels you do. Maybe that's what you need, I say and dont believe and really just want to get out of this, someone you can show and guide, I wish he would. Ken leans his head against one of the metal posts, rubs it up and down, slowly scratching loosely caressing, a thick neck but long, deliberately: you know you

shouldnt tell me about your girlfriends, I say, I dont want to hear about it. He stops rubbing, looks hurt, like he doesnt understand, I dont believe, little boy puzzled, he cant be as naive or unfeeling as he, but once: cant we at least be friendly, he says, you idiot, I think it just wont, okay let's try it, I say, I think I better turn in.

I try to smile, but: wanta hand with the garbage, he asks and snatches a small cardboard box from the heap next to him, chucks it over. Am I supposed to do it? I ask. Sure, as soon as she's out of harbour, see Pt. Atkinson and Pt. Grey. Uh-hmm. I look at the lighted towers of the university and well-spaced large buildings, few lights, and at the lighthouse on the northshore, winging, so quickly. They're the boundaries, he says. I dont really believe it's my job, what if I was in bed, but we do it anyway, sling and throw and drop huge small medium sized bags boxes crates into the dark rolls/folds of the sea. No sounds as they land cause the engine blocks it off. Only the three buckets left, I try one but cant lift it, he heaves another, then grabs mine, then the other and I smile as he puts the last one down and he smiles too, it's kinda fun, not the doing we used to, but fun to be doing together again.

A SINGLE SCRAMBLED

Short stack with sausage, Puppi calls; short stack with sausage, Coco answers, right up. Two in the water, five minutes; two in the water for five. Bacon and, over easy; bacon and, over easy. I'm not quite awake yet but then I never am awake until two or so hours after I get up. Somehow, dont ask me how, I've managed to get the overnight dishes washed with a minimum of confusion by doing them the easy way as Puppi calls it, i.e. stacking all similar things such as dinner plates and doing them in a pile right in the washing sink, lifting that pile to the rinsing sink, taking them out, placing a bowl on the long steel counter with its damp, but not too wet, terry towel on it so the crockery wont slip off and alternating the plates one slightly left, one slightly right, and so on, so they dry by themselves. Poached on two; poached on two. There isnt even a real sink plug, just a copper pipe which I place a rag over the end of and stick in the hole. Single sunnyside and; single sunnyside and. Puppi's feeding the passengers early and the officers as they come; but there's no boys, as Coco calls them, as yet, because it's the first day out and they all have hangovers or portovers and wont, she says, feel like much, just coffee and toast.

Single scrambled. Single what? Single scrambled, single scrambled for Chuckles. I cant scramble a single egg. Single scrambled, Puppi retorts as she struts into the galley, hands on flat hips, stands behind Coco. I know you cant, but

HE wants a single scrambled, Puppi caws. She turns, butters two pieces of toast on the wooden counter, slices them rapidly, leaves. Bastard, Coco says, cracks two eggs into a soup bowl, adds water from the tap. Whoever heard of a single scrambled? she says loudly enough for everyone on the other side of the deckhead to hear. Did you? she says to me then takes a drag from her cigarette which sits on a glass ashtray between the vanilla and salt. As she pours the eggs into a light frypan which she grabs from beneath the rinsing sink, I see a gapped toothed sour looking man come up behind her. I have, Chuckles roars, my wife has, every idiot has. I want a sin-gle scram-bled egg. Coco slams the cold pan on the stove without turning to him. And that's what you'll get, she says, now look what you've made me do: little globs of egg solidify on the grill.

I'm supposed to be peeling a potato, not a potato but a bucket full of potatoes, anyway I get back to the particular one which has deep dents all over it and try not to look at the two of them. Chuckles' thighs are only a few inches from Coco's uniform covered bum, she's scraping the egg off the stove top with exaggerated energy, as he appears to be trying to look angry. I put the finished potato, what there's left of it, into an enamel bucket full of cold water, pick up another unskinned one: he hasnt moved, she flips a pancake. Stack with bacon; stack with bacon. Bacon and over easy; bacon and over easy. How come it's not cooking, he says.

It'll cook when it cooks, Coco answers. Jan, pass us two coffee will you? Who's that? I hold on to the half done potato and look at Chuckles, he didnt say it; then I go to the galley edge, look into the boys' mess, no one's there. One black, one with both. I've heard that voice before, somewhere, where. Chuckles looks at me as if to indicate I'm just as stupid as Coco is in a different way then he flicks his head just slightly to the ceiling.

Above the galley center there's a hatch which I had noticed in terms of light before but it hadnt occurred to me to think of where it was or is in relation to the ship: just back of the wheelhouse, I think, as I move towards the stove so I can look up and see whoever it is because he's on the mess side of it and what with the angle and such I must go to: outa my way, outa my way. Sorry Poops, I wasnt thinking. She whizzes past me from behind, Chuckles leaves, I really wasnt thinking, I guess I shouldnt back up, I should know better than: a bald head fringed in black hair outlined by the white hatch made sharper by the rippling red plaid shirt, it's Skinney, the guy on watch. Okay, I say, two, sorry I didnt know where you were. I go to the mess side of the galley, finally I'm going to serve someone, and get the mugs which are behind white wooden slits and there's Puppi again, coming out of the walk-in, I press to the wall so she can pass and then Coco pulls herself closer to the stove so she can pass, out, out of the galley.

I hold on to the mugs as Coco pours and gives me a Puppi's-in-one-of-her-moods look. What do you want in them? I shout up to Skinney. One black, one with both. That's right, I forgot, I think, he did tell me: just a minute, I shout. Hurry on the scrambled will you. Puppi runs in to pick up three orders and Coco says, Puppi when you go out will you tell that man I cant cook it any faster than I...tell him I'm not the stove. Too much cream in the coffee but I stir it anyway, cant add a whole spoonful of sugar cause it's so full, better hurry, I pass the black up, a long fingered hand with a gold-jade ring takes it, then the white, part of it spills. Hope that isnt too much cream for you, I say. Doesnt matter as long as it's fresh and hot. Sure? Sure. I can take it back and pour: eeruh eerrruuhh, Puppi jumps back from the spots as if they're catchy or something, points her muscley arm, dances about them. Skinney gives me a fast smile, beats it. Dirty, dirty. She squiggles her eyebrows which go from her nose diagonally up through all the folds right to her hairline. Dirty.

I just look at the gnome-crow and dont do a thing. She tries to look snappy but is so Chaplinesque as she starts to order me that I smirk which only aggravates her eyebrows her whole body more. Ready on the scrambled, Coco says: Puppi, his highness's EGG is ready. I try to grab a paper towel from near the toaster which is by the work counter on a little shelf just above the galley bucket opposite the stove

but I cant quite reach because Puppi is in the way. She picks up the egg plate and leaves with it without toast or anything. Coco says, Jan, do you want to eat this? Yellow-gold-brown scrambled, half the portion, still in the pan. No, not yet anyway, it looks good I'm just not; so much for that, she says, and scrapes it into the galley bucket.

SOME TRIP THIS IS GOING TO BE

The afternoon is supposed to be my time off, but that doesnt mean it is my time off because I'm slow, and couldnt get the potatoes peeled for supper before nine in the morning when I had to scrub the mess and galley so the decks would be dry by the time the men came in for early mugup at quarter to ten. And because that took me longer than it should (simply because I didnt know how to wring the mop out properly even after Coco showed me how and I kept hitting my leg with the wooden squeegeemidoogle) Coco got behind, but not noticeably, because she can do anything fast, but she did get 'behind' in terms of her baking which she says is usually in the oven when the boys come in for mugup (so at lunch today they didnt have pies but tapioca pudding or fisheyes as they call it). And the guys insisted we have morning mugup with them (it's your right they said you gotta do it) so Coco and I did, and after that I washed their dishes and filled the honey jar and peeled carrots and onions and washed out the galley buckets and made bread crumbs and fetched cans of peas, tomatoes, and corn for Coco, and set up for lunch.

During lunch I couldnt peel and then I had to do the dishes again. And when that was finished, I ate with Coco and Puppi who were talking about Jack, the skipper, what a bastard he is, how he's out to fire half the crew; and about Kurt, the other skipper who was suspended just the trip before last because the messgirl was seen naked, in port, crawling

to his cabin even after, I gather, some of the boys had packed her down to her own. That's why she's off now, said Coco, she knows Jack'll watch every move she makes, just one wrong one and that's it, game over. So, anyway, here I am now, on the poop deck of a roly ship with a bucket of small-unpeeled-eye-studded potatoes between my legs, and a large cake tin on my lap for the peelings which every so often I dump over the side. Behind me, to my right, braced between the chair and bulkhead, is an enamel bucket two-thirds full of water which has a few peeled potatoes on the bottom.

I drop a white nicked peeled spud in it, pick another potato out of the bucket between my legs and wonder how long it'll take me to get enough done for supper. The one I'm doing now is no more than two inches long and has, fivesix seven eighnine eyes in it so I chuck the thing overboard, pick up another. One, two buckle my shoe; scrape scrape, it's all like rape; what am I doing, what am I doing, who do you do, who do you do; who, what, how are you. Got the water on kid? it's Lefty, smoking his cigar. No. You should have, you know, if you're outa yer bunk ya gotta watch the kettle. He passes over me and looks down into the peeled bucket. Howcome those are so small? I dont know. Betcha Betty left the small ones for you. She could have, there's nothing I can do about it. I know she did, she doesnt like anyone taking over, you know. Is that so? I say as I dig out an eye. Sure that's so; I'll tell ya something else that's so

too. What? Betcha didnt think of dumping the whole sack overboard and starting a new one. No, I didnt. See, I knew you were stupid, you wouldnt think of that, wouldja? No. Why dont you do it then? Coco knows I'm doing these. Listen all Coco has to be concerned about is we have spuds to eat, she doesnt worry about the size, that's not her job, is it?

I drop a spud into the bucket, pick up another one. Look, while I make the coffee, whydonyah open a new sack and see how big they are? How big they are, he leaves, how big they are, it's not her job. I scrape and peel, dig and peel, and peel and peel and I should, I know I should, no you shouldnt, you know you shouldnt. I get up to dump the lousy peelings overboard and notice we're entering a wide bay: a small clearing, far off, the light the land yellow there but dark around it, forest, Douglas Fir, a huge curve in the sea's edge, a smaller curve within it to the right, almost a bay within the bay, huge grey boulders spaced evenly about it just above the water line, pressed down by the forest yet not because each boulder is singular, itself, maybe they were placed there, maybe not. Our whistle blows and I dump the peelings, again, and the Nootka slows down. The sea behind us turns white, yards and yards of foam on huge (at least twenty feet high) slate green waves.

Quickly I go to the canned goods cupboard which is on the left just outside the crew's mess. I'm going to do it, I dont care, there's no need--I glance to the right to see

that no one's looking: on the door handle, entrance to the engine room, is an oily rag; inside, on the pipes hang a pair of clean paint-smotched jeans and three pairs of undershorts. I check the deck behind me then lift the lock off the cupboard. Below the shelves of cans are boxes of turnips, onions, carrots, parsnips; on the left hand side and to the back are two 50 pound sacks of potatoes; in front of these there's a gunny sack with about 10 pounds of small ones, some only an inch, why she cant boil them in their jackets like we do at home I dont know. I take my peeler and cut the cord with it by rubbing back and forth and by digging through the fibres with the end. It doesnt work. I should get a knife. Oh to hell with it, I'll peel what I have and ask her tomorrow about dumping the others over, after all she is the boss, that's what the man in the hall said, do what Coco tells you and you wont have any trouble.

I put the lock on the cupboard, go back towards my chair which has tipped over, and look out the side again. Quite a ways away is a long open boat right on top of a wave, it slides down, is hidden, a yellow blob a blotch of red and something beyond that, must be a man, his head, shoulders, yes, it slips up again, it is a man at the back, a woman with a red scarf at the front, down it goes, the yellow is smaller, probably a kid with a hat of some kind on. It crests again, the yellow is above the other two, I cant figure it out, I better finish those potatoes before they get here, I'm just

stalling that's all I'm doing, stalling, putting it off. I pick the chair up and sit down to peel, faster than before but not fast enough, wish they'd do themselves. Lefty comes out, stands over me, eats a raw onion sandwich made of raisin bread, butter, onion, H.P. sauce. You're chickenshit Jan, I knew you were. I try not to answer, dig out an eye. Where are we? I say suddenly. Clo-ose, gonna pick up a couple of inter-ports. A couple a what? Inter-port passengers, they'll get off at Ucluelet. Well, I say hesitantly, why arent we moving? Cause it's too shallow, there aint no dock there, cant you see that? Oh, I say, of course. One gulp and he finishes and he leaves.

I do a few more and get up to watch the boat, it doesnt seem any closer, I think it is a kid in the middle, standing of all things, I wonder what for. The yellow's more muted now, blunter, it's funny how sharp the light is on the coast, how sudden it switches. I think I'll try to get them done before they get here, a race, I leave the railing and look in the enamel bucket, there's at least eight inches of the buggers, I sit down and peel, faster than a few moments ago yet I dont seem to be getting any more done because I keep missing spots. But finally I do finish and look over the side again, it's closer, the kid has a yellow beanie on, there's a dog, and the woman is holding something. Strong red, small yellow against the grey of the boat, green of the water, distant yellow and green of the land. I swing the

buckets as I go to the galley, find the pot Coco used for spuds this morning, pour them into it, rinse them a couple of times, then swish out the buckets and wash the cake tin and put them all away where I think they belong.

I pass the stove, turn into the passenger-officer lounge, the chairs are all on the bench and the tables, it smells of bleach: dont walk, I just washed it. Puppi, I can just see her head peeping out from the table end: go above, she says, go around. Okay, I say and turn back, she has such funny button eyes, through the galley, wonder why she's working on her time off, to the mess, the deck, the quadrant, up the ladder, maybe it's the only time she can do it, past the sooty flag and the captain's quarters, hasnt left his bunk yet, Puppi said at lunch, didnt come down to eat, not even for coffee. I pass the back corner of the dark green wheel-house, he must leave to go to the can, then the front, all glass. Hal nods out at me from behind the huge wheel and a lanky sorta blonde man smiles then quickly looks down at his clipboard, must be shy or something, or maybe, no, I dont think so, well maybe it is him. Hal turns his head and they say something to each other and I move quickly to the corner of the railing.

I just start to brace myself by holding onto the gritty pipes and my uniform rides/blows up so while I support myself with one hand I pull it down and inbetween my legs with the other. As I stand there, feet together, I notice the men

below dont seem to be having any trouble, it probably wont take me that long to get the hang of it, Beebo and Jock are on the edge of the hold just behind a stack of lumber talking, just waiting, Lefty leans on part of the winch smoking a cigar. There's something different about them, I dont know what it is, it has something to do with the way they are talking, the way Lefty's leaning, not belligerent but more quiet or.... The boat's just a few yards off, the boy, about six, is still standing even though the water's so rough, the woman, who is slightly squat, sits, holds a baby. The two are Indian, strong high cheekbones, beautiful, oriental almost, they look proud, so unlike the coast Salish I grew up around. In front of the white man are three cardboard boxes and the dog, maybe German Shepherd, purebred of some kind. The man cuts the motor and steers the lurching boat alongside and tries to steady it there but it's almost impossible. The kid doesnt move, just stands looking ahead. The waves look like they're going to go inside but dont.

Suddenly I see the man who was in the wheelhouse down below next to Lefty. He's much taller than I thought he was, maybe six feet or six one. He stands holding his clipboard looking out. The man in the boat obviously recognizes everyone but me, he shouts a word or two to Jock and Beebo, waves to Lefty and the tall blue capped man, nods down at something in his boat which I cant see. Lefty starts the winch, winds the slings over to Jock and Beebo. Can you get on these,

lass, Jock shouts. The woman looks up at him, says nothing. Jock then grabs both pairs of wires in separate hands, stands on the pipes and Lefty lifts him to show her how. Jock's arms are out in a high loose U-formation, he lets go of one set, does a fat little dance. I giggle at the jig but the woman doesn't think it's funny, she talks excitedly to the man who can do nothing because he has to do everything he can just to keep the boat upright and in the same position. She won't come, he shouts, she says she won't come.

Beebo and Jock quickly place the wooden flats between the pipes then Lefty winds it up, over the side, then, very quickly, it jerks/drops down. It swings over towards their boat, the boy falls, the woman the man duck, then it swings back over them again. When it comes towards them for the third time, the kid grabs it. Lefty tries to lower it to a position so they can step slightly down to get on but the waves smack it, there's just a few inches between the boat top and the swell. The man gestures with his head for the woman to get on, she won't. Then the boy clutching one of the four wires, swings/leaps up, down, he's on, scrambles to get near the centre but it tips into the water, he grabs the board edge, holds on, goes down, under. His little yellow beanie floats on the dark water, he's still holding, I can see him, finally, it must be all of six seconds but seems like minutes, Lefty manages to get the pipe away from the kid loose, the board then floats and the boy pulls himself up onto it.

Thank God, I think, Beebo and Jock yell and the other pipe loosens itself as the board floats away from it. The kid just lies there on the grey board as the narrow pipe moves over him and the board drifts towards the Nootka, it hits then starts moving back towards the little boat: hold on, shouts Beebo, dont panic, stay put. Lefty gets the slings up to Beebo who jumps onto them then Lefty winds them up again, over the railing, and down over the side, down to the board. The board tilts up, the slings down, the slings move out, the board over, the board rocks up, the slings jerk over to it: up; out; down; one side; one end; another side; another end; rocking, swinging, tilting, jerking. Finally, the kid grabs the pipes and Beebo lets go of the wires with his right hand, gets hold of the boy under his shoulder, pulls as the kid pushes the board with the left foot, gets on the pipes with the right, then the left manages to find its way onto the thin pipes.

Beebo crouches slightly to balance the thing and the kid almost falls over but doesnt; then, very slowly, Lefty starts to wind it up, the kid moves to the end, holds the wires in one hand and clutches Beebo's arm with the other. Because Beebo's so heavy the pipes are at an almost 45 degree angle but somehow they dont swing out and in excessively, just slightly. The higher they get the worse it is, Beebo slides his leg over as far as he can and it straightens out a bit. Finally, after what appears to be five minutes, they

clear the railing; and Jock helps them, steadies it, then, down they go to the deck. The kid stands there, all wet, smiles, listens to what Beebo and Jock say to him, looks over the side to his mom or the woman I take to be his mom. She looks scared, no, apprehensive, I dont blame her; the man keeps moving the boat back and forth, keeping it out from the Nootka, but close; and the board has drifted way out, well I suppose they got plenty; but the woman, the woman, what can they do?

She sits there and waits as Beebo gets onto the slings again, is raised again, clears the side, comes down towards her. She looks at him, expressionless, doesnt move, doesnt say a thing. The man says something to her, she shakes her head; Beebo says something, the man translates. She catches the sling with one hand, then, very reluctantly lifts the baby up to Beebo who cradles it in one arm while he balances the slings, tries to steady them with his legs. She pauses a few seconds, looks resigned, then she comes up out of her crouch, lets go of the slings, turns, her bum is towards Beebo, and he swings the pipe under, and she grabs the wires with her right hand, holds the pipe near Beebo's foot with her left, lifts her legs slowly. Very slowly the slings are drawn up. Just as they're up above the railing I hear a voice next to me shout: what do you think you're doing? I turn, a hard looking man, medium height, get those slings down, wart next to his nose, jowly, dont ever let me see you

do that again. I take a fast look at him, he's mad, really mad, but I didnt have to look to tell that, I beat it right across the upper deck, down the ladder, over the quadrant, along the side deck, pass Coco's cabin, mine, pass the cupboard, into the hot mess.

Coco's there, sitting legs up on the bench, a mug of coffee on the table, a cigarette in her mouth. What happened to you? she says without removing the cigarette. I...the captain's mad...the guys...the sling: I try to explain and try to breathe and try to tell her, the kid almost drowned; no, he didnt; he's really got presence, he, he's so cool, his beanie...let me get you a cuppa coffee, she says, wanta borrow my comb? I take it, unpin my loose hair, for some reason I think of a teacher I had in grade four who blew up at a class because, I cant get it through these stinking knots, the captain didnt scowl, he meant it, never again. Coco comes out with the coffee: you know I knew something like this would happen, you know before I ever saw that guy, I knew there'd be trouble. Cream? Yeah. She pours it in for me. Sugar? No thanks. You knew he was put on here with orders to clean up the ship, didn't ya? Uh-hmm, I say. I didnt really, I think, I gathered that from what you and Puppi said at lunch. He's a mean one alright, mind you I dont know myself, I've heard it, that's why he's here, but you cant really tell till...

The engine starts up, interrupts her, my God she says. Whata racket, I shout, cant they do anything about that? They

could, she says, they could but they wont. She gets up and shuts the door which I didnt do properly, she closes the slitted peek-through, but it doesnt help much. I notice the guys didnt have mugup, she says, they'll be in in a minute, I guess the old man had something to do with that too. I guess so, I say, as if I know it but I dont, no wonder Lefty was fussing about the kettle, they were going to have it early, while waiting. Coco goes to check something that's in the oven and I go to my cabin, put lipstick on quickly, my hair is awful, well there's nothing I can do about it now just wet it down. I go back to the mess, shut the door tight this time. Have a cigarette, Coco says, it isnt any use trying to work when the boys come in. I take a Craven-A, light it, uncertain, enough potatoes? I say. Plenty, she answers, I hope that goddamn roast isnt dry--those buggers they turn up the stove and leave it there. Sitting on your ass again, says Beebo, you women you sure got a soft touch. He tousels my hair as he passes, some trip this is going to be, hey kid, some first run for you. I blush and look at Coco as he goes to the galley for his coffee.

She smiles back at me and Lefty steps in, heads straight for the galley, looks smug almost, not what I: right after him, Jock, thumb in suspenders, he snaps it, passes. Beebo lets him into the galley (there's not room for two to cross even sideways) then comes out, puts his mug down next to me. I'm in your seat, I say as I get up; stay down

kid, he says, you might as well while you can. What's up? Coco says as he swings the chair next to me around, leans the back of it on the table, sits down facing her. That son of a bitch, he thinks he knows what to do; so, we decided to fix him, we'll just do what he says. Well, what happened? He says we gotta use the boards no matter what. How will they get on? I say. He couldnt care less, says Beebo, he says if they wont, well they'll just stay where they are; and if they're already on the boat, they'll get off at the nearest port. Yeah, says Jock as he passes behind me, squeezes in front of Coco who has just slid over to the bench end, cant you just see that lassies, cant you just see that?

Half an hour overtime, Jock says, as he stirs his tea, and there'll be at least four on top of what we usually get, at least, probably six if this keeps up, and we're not going to bitch are we? why should we? we'll just do what he says. Why? I say cause I dont understand. It's this way, says Beebo, if he dont give us our mugup when we want it we cant help it if the job takes longer than it should, can we? I nod my head yes, no, and they see my confusion. You'll catch on, kid, you're going to have to. It didnt take us half an hour, says Jock, but when it goes five minutes into an hour, it's half an hour, understand? Uh-huh? I say. You know, Beebo says to Coco, that bastard wouldnt even let us take the fish for ourselves, he wanted it, he did, but old Bill wouldnt give it to him. Jock and Beebo laugh and Jock

says, did you see old Bill's face when he realized what was happening? They both laugh, Lefty comes in, what you joking about, he says, that man aint no joke. Old Bill, says Beebo, and the three of them smile.

Lefty goes and stands next to Beebo, pours honey into his tea, get me the contract, Jan. I look at him, all cocky again, bossing as usual. In the desk, lass, says Jock. I turn to my left, open the drawer on the little wooden cabinet, there's an orange scribbler, an air-letter pad, a black book, a purple one, two seabooks, one Sports Illustrated, beneath them some white paper, stapled. This? I say as I pull it out and shove the others back. Yeah, says Lefty as he steps around Beebo, that's it. He smiles at me as he takes it, a thanks of sorts, holds it between thumb and fingers, stomps back to his place. From now on we're going to use this, he says, it's our Bible, by God, and the only one we've got.