

# The Caine Mutiny Study Guide

## The Caine Mutiny by Herman Wouk

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## Introduction

Herman Wouk's best-selling novel *The Caine Mutiny*, subtitled *A Novel of World War II*, remains one of the greatest American novels to come out of World War II. Wouk, himself a WWII veteran who had served aboard minesweepers in the South Pacific, won a Pulitzer Prize in 1952 for this account of a mutiny aboard a fictional minesweeper, the USS *Caine*. Commercially speaking, Wouk is the most successful writer of his generation. In critical terms, his work is sneered at or altogether ignored. At a time when American ideals were questioned and literature was full of rebellious heroes, Wouk championed conservative morals such as valor, chivalry, patriotism, and loyalty. Almost half a century after its publication, Wouk's morally idealistic novel remains popular.

## Author Biography

Wouk was born into a wealthy family on May 27, 1915, in New York City. He graduated from Columbia University in 1934. His first job was writing for radio in New York, and then scripts for Fred Allen from 1936 to 1941. When war broke out, he put his writing talents into the service of the U.S. government and became a "dollar-a-year man," writing the U.S. Treasury Department's radio plays promoting the sale of war bonds.

In 1942, he joined the U.S. Navy and served aboard the USS *Zane* and the USS *Southard*, both minesweepers in the South Pacific. While aboard ship in 1943, Wouk-like the character Tom Keefer-began to write fiction. The experience aboard minesweepers was reflected in *The Caine Mutiny*. The novel was not autobiographical, except for the shared experience of Navy duty. It was, however, a staunch defense of the American ideals Wouk evokes in all of his work: valor, honor, leadership, patriotism, and chivalric heroism. The public loved Wouk's work. *The Caine Mutiny* was a best-seller for weeks and almost single-handedly rescued its financially challenged British publisher. Cape Limited, despite owning the rights to Alan Paton's phenomenally successful *Cry, the Beloved Country*, was saved by Wouk's World War II novel.

Before leaving the Navy, Wouk married Betty Sarah Brown on December 9, 1945. They had three sons: Abraham Isaac, Nathaniel, and Joseph. When he was discharged, Wouk began writing again. His first novel, *Aurora Dawn*, was published in 1947 and was a Book-of-the-Month-Club selection. In 1949, his play, *The Traitor*, had a short run on Broadway. Wouk's nonfictional interests include Judaic scholarship and Zionist studies. After the publication of *The Caine Mutiny*, he was appointed as a visiting professor at Yeshiva University. During the 1960s, he served as a trustee of the College of the Virgin Islands. Returning to the mainland, he served as a member of the board of directors for the Washington National Symphony (1969-71); scholar-in-residence at Aspen Institute of Humanistic Studies (1973-74) and then at Kennedy Center Productions (1974-75); and a member of an advisory council, Center for U.S.-China Arts Exchange (1981-87).

In addition to these public duties, Wouk wrote a number of other novels including *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. The latter was adapted for television and aired as a popular miniseries.



# Plot Summary

## Willie Keith

In a chapter appropriately titled *Through the Looking Glass*, the novel starts by introducing the reader to the protagonist of the novel, Willie Keith, from whose viewpoint the entire novel is told. Seeking a way to avoid being drafted into the infantry, Willie Keith—an educated, piano-playing dilettante—is joining the U.S. Navy. His days in training are interspersed with a series of flashbacks that introduce us to his former life and to his girlfriend, an Italian-American singer called May Wynn. A rebellious type, Keith immediately gets into trouble, and faces expulsion throughout his training period. He eventually passes, and is assigned to the USS *Caine*.

## The Caine

Keith arrives in San Francisco to report to his ship and amuses some military officers with his piano playing. To his horror, the *Caine* is a rusty vessel that seems on the verge of collapse, and Keith feels only contempt for it and his superior officer, Captain de Vriess. Keith hears that discipline on the ship is criminally lax and anticipates that the arrival of a new captain will mark a new order on board the ship. After failing to decode an important message, Keith is given an unsatisfactory fitness report; his life is changed again when Captain Queeg arrives to take over as commander.

## Captain Queeg

Queeg arrives early. His habit of rolling steel ball bearings in his palms contributes to the growing belief of his men that something is not quite right. The first time the *Caine* sets sail, he runs the ship aground and then fails to report the incident. The dangers of his obsessive need for discipline become clear when the ship fails a training exercise and loses expensive Navy equipment because Queeg is lecturing a sailor about his untucked shirt. When the crew is granted shore leave, Queeg browbeats the other officers into giving him their alcohol rations and illegally hoards liquor. Keith finds May and his mother waiting for him in San Francisco and introduces his girlfriend by her given name, Marie Minotti.

## Shore Leave

Willie, confused by his feelings after having sex with May for the first time, proposes to her, but she turns him down. He confides his feelings for May to his mother and she suggests he should look for someone of "their sort." Onboard the ship, Maryk is made Executive Officer, and Stilwell, desperate to see his wife, goes AWOL.



## The Mutiny

Queeg's behavior grows stranger and even cowardly, and the officers are increasingly disenchanted. Maryk refuses to allow their critical talk whenever he is present. Unknown to everyone else, Maryk records Queeg's aberrant behavior as he believes that Queeg is paranoid and psychotic. Tension escalates when Queeg places a ban on water usage and a container of strawberries is eaten anonymously. Queeg conducts a bizarre search for the culprit. After encouraging Maryk in his concerns about Queeg, Keefer refuses to back him up when Maryk wants to take their concerns to the Admiral.

A typhoon hits. With the ship in bad shape, Maryk decides that the Captain's orders are leading them into certain death, and he takes control of the bridge. He formally relieves Queeg of his authority, supported by Keith and Stilwell, and the section closes with Maryk guiding them all to safety.

## The Court-Martial

It is months later, and lawyers for Maryk's defense are being assigned. The only man who will take the case, albeit reluctantly, is Barney Greenwald. After meeting Maryk, Greenwald realizes that Keefer orchestrated the entire situation. The court martial of Maryk begins. Greenwald's strategy is to show that Maryk was justified in his opinion that Queeg had become unfit for duty. To prove this, however, the defense must chronicle Queeg's failures and bizarre behavior in court—a highly controversial strategy. Keefer sells Maryk out a second time, omitting his role in the affair. Against frequent objections from the court, Greenwald brings to light Queeg's illegal acts and wrongheaded decisions, allowing the man to incriminate himself on the stand with a show of his personality collapse under stress. Maryk is acquitted.

A party is thrown to celebrate Keefer's publishing contract and Maryk's acquittal. Greenwald dramatically accuses Keefer of setting the mutiny in motion, tells Maryk that his actions were unjustified, and says that Queeg was in fact the hero—a man who devoted his life to protecting the country and who cracked under the unbearable pressure of the situation.

## The Last Captain of the Caine

On board the *Caine*, Keefer has been made captain, and Keith is second in command. During a kamikaze attack, Captain Keefer jumps ship while Keith heroically battles to save it. Keefer is forced to admit to himself that he is no better than Queeg. Shaken by his experience, Keith writes to May asking her to marry him. The war ends, and Keefer is demoted, leaving Keith to become the last captain of the *Caine*. He and the crew sail back to America, where he is met again by his mother. He has still not heard from May. He tracks her down and finds that she is going by her real name, has bleached her hair, is involved with another man, and doesn't want him in her life anymore. In the final



scene, Keith stands in the drifting confetti of the Navy parade, vowing to himself that he will win her back.



# Chapter 1, "Through the Looking Glass"

## Chapter 1, "Through the Looking Glass" Summary

Willie Keith, a Princeton graduate, medium height, chubby, good looking, with curly red hair, and a talent for playing the piano and inventing party songs, enters Navy midshipmen's school at Columbia University to escape the Army. He reports to the chief, entering his new, strange world as easily as "Alice's stepping through the looking glass". Willie gets his shots before he and others have physicals. Willie cannot touch his toes without popping his back. He is diagnosed with "lordosis" (hollow back). Willie picks up his new uniform, study books, and a room assignment. He will report in the morning for another physical. He finds his Furnald Hall dorm room and his roommates, Keefer and Keggs. Keggs knows he will not pass. Keefer, a fat, hung-over, Southerner, goes to sleep on his cot as Willie practices toe touching.

Someone throws three mattresses and sets of bedding into the room. The men spend the afternoon in assemblies, marches, and aptitude tests. They discover that the elevators will not hold all the men assigned to the tenth floor. They must either climb nine flights of stairs or wait for the slow elevators to return to the ground floor. Edwin Keggs is a high school algebra teacher from Ohio. Roland Keefer is the son of a West Virginia politician. Willie thinks of his girl friend, May Wynn, and regrets his lost freedom.

## Chapter 1, "Through the Looking Glass" Analysis

The reader is introduced to Willie Keith, one of the main characters, and to Roland Keefer, the brother of one of the officers on the *Caine*, to which Willie will be assigned. All have enlisted in the Navy to avoid the Army. The metaphor of the elevator not exactly going all the way to the top of the building is commonly used to refer to someone "not all there mentally". It provides one of the continuing themes of the novel, whether used to refer to the Navy in general or a specific person, and highlights contradictions between expectations and reality. The novel is written from Willie's point of view. The reader knows from the beginning that Willie sees the Navy as Alice saw *Wonderland*, with many strange, not quite human beings populating it.



## Chapter 2, "May Wynn"

### Chapter 2, "May Wynn" Summary

Willie spends the first year of World War II playing the piano in cocktail lounges, enjoying his high draft number. When the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor, Willie thinks about joining the Navy. He falls in love with May Wynn, an attractive singer who auditions at the lounge where Willie plays. The owner offers May a job. Willie takes her to dinner and learns her real name is Marie Minotti. Willie asks her to marry him. She declines. She does not have a telephone number. He stays up all night playing her audition Mozart aria. Her job at the club lasts three weeks. She and Willie continue their relationship. When Willie receives his draft notice, he joins the Navy and starts Reserve Midshipmen School in December.

### Chapter 2, "May Wynn" Analysis

The reader meets another continuing character, May Wynn, Willie's girlfriend. They are obviously of different social classes. The reader is left to ponder their future relationship as friendship or marriage as Willie joins the Navy when World War II starts.



## Chapter 3, "Midshipman Keith"

### Chapter 3, "Midshipman Keith" Summary

Willie completes his physical with Captain Grimm, a gray, tired-looking Navy doctor, who tells Willie to go into a dressing room before he realizes he is due in surgery. Willie, fully dressed and awaiting instructions, goes to sleep on the examining table. When he comes out eight hours later, the doctor apologizes and passes him. When Willie returns to his room, he finds a big, battered rifle on his cot. His two roommates are fussing with their own rifles. They must learn to disassemble and reassemble their rifles by morning. Keefer, the Southerner, knows guns and shows them the trick - forcing the tough mainspring back into the bolt on reassembly. Keefer tells Willie to jam the butt of the bolt in his stomach and press the spring down with both hands. Willie does. The spring soars through the open window. Willie crawls out on the slippery roof to retrieve it while Keggs holds onto him. The Ensign who checks on enlistees walks into the room. Keggs falls backwards with Willie on top of him. The Ensign, two months ago himself a midshipman, sees the fear in their eyes, lectures them, but gives them no demerits.

Pass/fail or "Bilging Day" nears. Keggs is slow to learn, so he sets his alarm clock two hours before reveille for extra study time. Keefer fails often but keeps his average above expulsion level. Willie memorizes the page on Frictionless Bearings. The main question on the final exam is to *Explain the Frictionless Bearing*. Willie makes the highest score. Next he memorizes all the details of naval cannons and the use of submarines, which he recites to pass Tactics. Bilging Day comes and all pass. They are given official dress uniforms and weekend passes. He telephones and meets May for dinner at Luigi's. Willie cannot stay to hear her perform, so he gives her \$120 before he visits his family in Manhasset.

### Chapter 3, "Midshipman Keith" Analysis

The reader is confronted with an inept Willie Keith, who effortlessly gets into trouble. Things happen to Willie. The reader is intentionally introduced to "frictionless bearings", which will be important later in the book. It is ironic that Willie knows everything about frictionless bearings except the meaning of their later repetitive and symbolic use. Willie is in love with May. The reader is introduced to Willie's wealthy family.



## Chapter 4, "Midshipman Keith in Trouble"

### Chapter 4, "Midshipman Keith in Trouble" Summary

Willie's home is a twelve-room Dutch colonial surrounded by acres of lawns full of soaring old beech maple and oak trees, flower beds, thick high hedges. His mother, father, relatives, and neighbors greet him. The best china and silver hold a feast of food. Willie's dad is limping, walking with a cane because of an infected toe. Willie admits he has met a girl. His dad wants to meet her. Willie senses that his dad wants to talk about something important. Willie returns to New York to meet May, and her agent, Marty Ruben. Marty pays for their dinner. May thinks Marty is sweet for that. Willie considers him a threat to their relationship. Willie takes May to the Tahiti Club for drinks with his roommates. The Tahiti is jammed with officers and their girls. Roland Keefer is with a fat blonde, Tootsie Weaver, in a pink satin dress. The master of ceremonies remembers May and Willie and asks them to perform. Willie plays the piano and May sings Mozart with a "note of farewell and regret for passing love" that touches all the men who are leaving to fight. Tootsie cries. There is a storm of hand-clapping.

May tells Willie she does not want to see him anymore. He asks her to marry him. May sees herself as another Tootsie Weaver. They leave the Tahiti, catch a taxi, and passionately kiss without stopping. Willie refuses to stop at Furnald Hall. He and May talk. Marty thinks May would be acceptable to Willie's family if she goes to college. He can get her bookings in and around New York. Willie does not care. The taxi parks at Furnald Hall. Willie waits for May's answer as demerits pile up for his late return. May finally tells him to get out of her life. He is her punishment for not going to mass. Willie says he loves her. May tells him to drop dead. Willie races into Furnald Hall and the waiting Ensign. He receives twenty demerits, a lecture, and has to walk up nine flights of stairs. The elevator stops at midnight.

### Chapter 4, "Midshipman Keith in Trouble" Analysis

The reader learns more about Willie Keith's social status. His dad obviously has a serious problem with his foot. After the family reunion, Willie returns to May in New York. May recognizes their different social backgrounds and does not want to date Willie any more. Willie is in love with May and does not care. He risks his career to be with her. Willie's loyalty to his friends and to those he loves will continue to get him in trouble throughout the novel.



# Chapter 5, "Orders for Midshipman Keith"

## Chapter 5, "Orders for Midshipman Keith" Summary

On Sunday, 2500 midshipmen merge in dress array for inspection and drills. As they march, Willie's back is straight and his rifle at correct angle. He wants to be the most correct, admired, and warlike midshipman on the field. As Willie's squadron heads toward the fence, preparing to march off the field, Willie sees May. She waves, smiles, and says Willie wins. Roland Keefer, as squadron commander, orders a left turn. Another squadron leader orders a right turn. Willie, looking at May, turns the wrong way and marches into a vacant patch of grass. His battalion is far down the field. To return to his group would mean a solitary hundred-yard dash in front of the reviewing admiral. He joins the tall John Jay Hall midshipmen marching in the opposite direction. He is short and noticed. The men enter John Jay Hall and disperse. Willie wanders about and decides to leave. He presents a picture of May as his pass for official duty.

The Ensign captures Willie before he returns to Furnald Hall and turns him over to Commander Merton, who explains about Navy's laws and demerits. Willie's total has put him out of school unless he has an extraordinary excuse. Willie pours out his tale of May. Merton decides this is "temporary derangement" due to a girl. He remembers Willie's brilliant essay on the Frictionless Ball Bearing and gives him a total of forty-eight demerits and confines him to school until graduation. One evening Willie finds his father seated in the lobby of Furnald Hall, in a corner of a leather-covered sofa, with his cane is resting across his knees. His head leans wearily on his arm and his eyes are closed. When he sees Willie, he asks him to tell him about Furnald Hall. He cannot tour it. Willie may not make it as a naval officer. His dad offers him an Army commission in Public Relations. Willie declines. As his dad leaves, Willie sees he is quite sick.

May enrolls in Hunter College. Willie tries to improve his class standing, and is thirty-first place when school ends. The midshipmen are given a form asking for their three most desired duties. Keefer chooses Staff Duty, Pacific, and leaves the other spaces on the form blank. Keggs agonizes and writes Mine Disposal Training, which nobody else dares list, Submarines, Pacific, and his true choice, Local Defense, Atlantic. Willie wants to be near May. He puts Staff, Atlantic, Large Ships Atlantic, and Submarines, Pacific. He considers communications school, a five month course at Annapolis that Keefer's brother Tom attended. Graduation is the next day. They receive their orders. Keefer is assigned to Staff, Pacific. Keggs is too scared to open his envelope, so Keefer does. Keggs is assigned to DMS 21 - U.S.S. *Moulton*. The roommates study the ship in *Ships of the Navy, 1942*, and find it to be a narrow, three-stack vessel, described as a Destroyer Minesweeper, a converted World War I destroyer. Willie is ordered to report to San Francisco for transportation to DSM 22 - U.S.S. *Caine*.



## Chapter 5, "Orders for Midshipman Keith" Analysis

Several stories continue in this chapter. Willie is always headed in the wrong direction. May agrees to marry Willie. Willie's father is sick. Willie is afraid he will not succeed in the Navy, but sticks with his decision. The roommates receive their assignments. Roland Keefer is assigned to the Pacific Staff. Both Willie and Keggs are assigned to old, refurbished World War I destroyers converted to mine sweepers.



## Chapter 6, "Dr. Keith's Letter"

### Chapter 6, "Dr. Keith's Letter" Summary

Ensign Willie Keith checks into the Mark Hopkins Hotel in San Francisco. In his suitcase he has two mementos of his last hours in New York - a phonograph record of May's singing and a letter from his father. He picks up his father's letter, even though he promised his dad he would not to open it until aboard the *Caine*. Ensign Keefer interrupts to invite him to a party at the Junior Officer's Club. Willie is insulted by being ordered to the *Caine*. Keggs, two hundred below him in class rank, received identical duty. Ensign Keefer gets them assigned to the hospital ship *Mercy* for their voyage to Honolulu. Willie plays the piano and Keefer chases nurses. The two ensigns go to Pearl Harbor Navy Base. Keefer lands at the bachelor officers' quarters (BOQ). Willie hunts for the *Caine* for hours, gives up, and returns to the BOQ. Keith and Keefer attend the admiral's party that evening. Willie's piano playing again is a hit. The Admiral wants Willie to keep coming to his parties. He asks Willie where he is stationed. When Willie replies the *Caine*, the Admiral is surprised the *Caine* is still in commission. It left Pearl Harbor that day. The Admiral asks Captain Matson to take care of Ensign Keith. Captain Matson offers to fly Willie to Australia, where he might catch the *Caine*, or to put him on temporary duty in the officer pool until the *Caine* returns. He chooses the officer pool and rooms with Keefer.

As Willie unpacks, he finds his father's letter and decides to read it this time. He is sitting on the edge of the chair, letter trembling in his hands. It starts, "By the time you read this letter, I think I will be dead. . . The trouble I've been having with my toe is due to a rather vicious disorder, malignant melanoma. The prognosis is one hundred per cent bad." His father did not want to spoil Willie's departure by being in a hospital. He regrets he did not meet May, since either she or the Navy or both are having a good effect on Willie. He always believed Willie to be tough enough at the core. Dad sentimentalizes over Willie, since he will never see him again. His dad will mail him a Bible before he goes into the hospital and insists he read the Old Testament, the core of all religion. He asks Willie to take care of his mother and be kind to her.

Willie hurries downstairs to call his dad. Private calls can only be made at Central Building with censor's permission and a one week delay. He sends an urgent telegraph to his mother asking about his dad. He receives her reply at 11:30 A.M. - *Dad died three days ago. Sent you his love in last words. Please write. Mother.* Willie asks to fly out to look for the *Caine*. His request is denied. He remains at Pearl Harbor, decoding messages of battles and invasions in the Pacific and playing the piano for the admiral.

### Chapter 6, "Dr. Keith's Letter" Analysis

Willie is given a second chance to change assignments, but he refuses. He does not yet understand the condition of the *Caine*. He has not seen the ship. His dad's sending him





a Bible and recommending he read the Old Testament will help Willie understand some of the literary allusions later in the novel. Everybody on the *Caine* knows the name refers to the story of Cain and Abel in the Genesis, in which Cain kills his brother and is sent by God to wander the earth.



# Chapter 7, "The Caine"

## Chapter 7, "The Caine" Summary

Willie's coding duties take his mind off his father's death. He attends another of the Admiral's parties and picnics with the nurses, gaining a rosy tan and more weight. He also writes many letters to May, who is enjoying college and receiving high grades. Keefer receives a letter from his dad who says Keefer's brother Tom is on the *Caine*, having been sent there from communications school. Roland Keefer tells Willie that his brother Tom is "queer as a three-dollar bill". Tom is his half-brother, a high-brow who writes short stories, plays, and magazine articles.

On September 1st, Willie is awakened from a drunken, sound sleep by Paynter from the *Caine*, now in Pearl but shoving off at 0800 for target towing duty. Willie packs his gear and stumbles out to the dump truck Paynter has to take him to the *Caine*. The truck stops at steps leading down to the fleet landing. Three ragged sailors climb the steps and load Willie's gear into the boat while Paynter returns the truck to the car pool. Paynter gets on board and tells "Meatball", who steers the gig, a fat sailor dressed in amazingly dirty rags with a pure-white new hat, to shove off. The boat engineer, one "Horrible", nineteen years of age, small, gaunt, with a face blackened by stubble and grease and covered with pimples, with long, coarse black hair falling over his tiny, squinty eyes, curses at the motor until it starts. As soon as the boat leaves the dock, he removes his shirt, exposing a monkey-like growth of hair.

Willie gets Paynter's communications duties under Keefer. The gig goes to where they left the *Caine*. She is not there. The men hope she sank. Paynter insists they look around. They find the ship in the repair basin. Willie has to climb a ladder, cross a destroyer's deck, and walk a tarry plank over four feet of open water to get to the *Caine*. Paynter goes first, leaping onto the *Caine* when the plank wobbles. Willie takes off across the board and jumps when the plank heaves. Paynter introduces Willie to the Officer of the Deck (OOD) Lieutenant (jg) Rabbit. Ensign Harding has already boarded. Willie looks at the *Caine*'s quarterdeck. It is full of noise, dirt, bad smells, and thuglike strangers. Some are scraping paint. Others are carrying crates of cabbage. One is welding a bulkhead. The ship's paint is mottled. The deck is covered with orange peels, magazines, and old rags. The half-naked sailors have fantastic beards and haircuts.

Paynter shows Willie the wardroom, where the officers eat, and introduces him to the executive officer, Lieutenant Gorton, an enormously fat young man, nude except for tiny drawers. His room is decorated with pictures of girls in flimsy underwear. They try to decide where Keith will bunk. The Captain of the *Caine*, naked and carrying a cake of Lifebuoy soap, comes to the doorway. Captain De Vriess has a creased old-young face, blond hair, and a flabby white body. Willie remembers a regulation about not saluting a naked superior officer. Captain de Vriess assigns Paynter as assistant engineering officer. Keith and Harding, the new ensigns, are bunked in the clip shack, a metal box on the main deck. A shelf on one side holds empty clipping belts for machine-gun bullets



and cases of ammunition. Ensign Harding is asleep on a bunk welded to the wall close to the deck, even though it is 105 degrees inside.

Willie wanders around the *Caine*. He sees the ship as a pile of junk in the last hours of decay, manned by hoodlums. In the wardroom, he asks the African-American steward's mate mopping the floor for a cup of coffee. This is Whittaker, steward's mate second. A brass plaque reveals the ship has been named for Arthur Wingate Caine, a World War I hero. Willie finds a leather-bound loose leaf volume titled *Ship's Organization, U.S.S. Caine, DMS 22*. Willie asks Whittaker how long he has been on the *Caine* and how he likes it. Whittaker replies he has been there four months and it is the best ship in the Navy. He grabs his mop and runs out the door. Willie drinks bad coffee and reads that the *Caine* was built in 1918 in Rhode Island. It is 317 feet long, 31 feet wide, with top flank speed of 30 knots. The ship sweeps for mines ahead of invasion forces. Willie drops the book on the table, lays his head on it, and groans.

His misery is interrupted by the entrance of Tom Keefer, communications officer, dressed only in an athletic supporter. Tom is over six feet tall, small boned, stringy, with deep-set blue eyes and an intense, wild look. His mouth is wide with narrow and pale lips. Since Willie knows Tom's brother Roland from midshipmen's school, Keefer invites him into his quarters. Keefer lives in an iron cubicle crisscrossed with pipes at the head of the passageway. There are two bunks, and a prone, naked figure in the upper bunk. The desk is piled three feet high with books, pamphlets, wire baskets full of papers, and registered publications in a scrambled heap topped by a stack of freshly laundered khakis, socks, and underwear. As Keefer shaves and dresses, Willie describes his days at Furnald Hall with Roland. Steward's mate Whittaker enters and announces "Chadan". The man in the upper bunk rises, jumps to the deck, and dresses himself. Keefer explains that "Chadan" is steward-speak for "lunch." Keefer's roommate is Ensign Carmody.

## Chapter 7, "The Caine" Analysis

The reader is introduced to many of the continuing characters and shown the physical condition of the *Caine*, apparently the lowest of the low by class. Willie is taken to the *Caine* on a dump truck. The staffing of the *Caine* may be Navy standard, but the ship will obviously never again be in pristine or presentable condition. Willie does not like the sound of minesweeping, or that the two new ensigns have to bunk in the hot clip shack with the ammunition.



## Chapter 8, "Captain de Vriess"

### Chapter 8, "Captain de Vriess" Summary

Ensign Carmody takes Willie and Harding on a confusing tour of the ship. Carmody is an Annapolis graduate with narrow shoulders, pinched cheeks, foxy eyes, and a tiny mustache. As they finish the tour of the deck, he orders both to climb the mast, a wooden pole topped with a radar. The tiny iron grille at the very top of the mast is the crow's nest. Harding climbs first and Willie follows. Harding hits his head on the radar, turns green, and vomits. Willie gives him his hat to hold it. He has other hats. They leave this one in a corner of the crow's nest before they return to the deck and collapse in their bunks in the clipping shack.

As soon as Willie dozes off, Whittaker announces "Chadan" and shakes him. They join two officers and the captain at the wardroom table. Lieutenant Maryk tells Captain De Vriess that the clip shack is over the engine room and offers to hang a couple of bunks in other rooms. De Vriess thinks that would be a hull modification requiring permission. He asks the Ensigns if they can survive there. They are too scared to refuse. De Vriess asks if the two new Ensigns have started on their officers' qualification courses, bulky mimeographed sheafs of coarse brown paper dated 1935. There are twelve assignments, and the first must be turned in by 0900 in the morning. They are to complete one a day while in port and one every three days at sea.

The first is to make two sketches of the *Caine*, port and starboard, showing every compartment and the use of each. They make a bad rough sketch and give up, returning to bunks in the hot clip shack. The wind has shifted and is blowing the fumes from number three stack in, so the clip shack is now also hot and stinky. Willie, body covered in soot, staggers out in his drawers and stumbles down to the wardroom to pass out on the couch. Lieutenant Adams wakes him for the four to eight watch. Willie dresses. Adams gives him a gun belt, the leather-bound logs, and a battered *Watch Officers' Guide* before he goes to his bunk. The other guards are asleep. Willie tries to wake them without success. Lieutenant Adams returns at daybreak. It is time to inspect the lines. Adams admits the *Caine* has been in the forward war area since March of 1942, but they still need to stand watch in Pearl Harbor. He describes what the *Caine* did at the front - ran torpedoes up from New Zealand, dogfaces up to relieve the marines on Guadalcanal, and convoys all over the ocean. The *Caine* is a rundown supply scow, troop transport, screen, and mail carrier, generally used for dirty jobs. Willie vows to transfer in six months.

Adams sends Willie to wake the crew in their quarters. He goes down a narrow hatchway with a steep ladder to quarters dark as a cave and smelling like a hot and dirty gym. The Master at Arms turns on the light. Naked sailors fall out of bed. Adams sends Willie to breakfast. Keefer asks Willie to decode for a couple of hours. Willie goes to sleep at his desk, where Captain de Vriess finds him. Maryk defends Willie, who sees De Vriess as the person permitting the filth and sloth of the *Caine*. As soon as De Vriess



leaves, Willie begins decoding again. He deposits the decodes on Keefer's desk and falls asleep on his bunk in the clip shack. Willie is awakened for visitors in the wardroom. Captain de Vriess reminds him he must finish his first assignment. The sketches are in the ship's organization book. All he has to do is trace them.

Willie parties with Tom, Roland Keefer and three nurses. Tom recites long, drunken parts of *Paradise Lost* while Roland and the nurse flirt. Willie drinks. They go to a Danny Kay movie at CincPac, where Willie falls asleep. Tom Keefer takes him home and dumps him into the clip shack. Paynter wakes him an hour later to decode an important message addressed to the *Caine*. Willie slides out of his bunk and wobbles to the wardroom. Halfway through the message, Willie jumps for joy. Lieutenant Commander Philip F. Queeg will become the Commanding Officer of the *Caine* DSM 22. Paynter insists he could be worse than De Vriess. Willie takes the message to Captain De Vriess, who is finally replaced after six years on the *Caine*.

## Chapter 8, "Captain de Vriess" Analysis

Willie is too appalled by conditions on the *Caine* and his new duties to agree that he does not want to sleep in the stinking, hot clip shack. He is a long way from his clean, manicured mansion in Manhasset and is taking orders and performing shipboard duties. He will soon learn that Captain De Vriess has been doing the best he can with the ship and crew. Tom Keefer, the fledgling novelist, always recites poetry when drunk, most of it foreshadowing present or future conditions. Here, he launches into parts of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, describing man's fall from God's grace at the hands of Satan as a snake and vivid visions of hell.



## Chapter 9, "First Day at Sea"

### Chapter 9, "First Day at Sea" Summary

The *Caine* practices minesweeping near Oahu. Roland Keefer returns for dinner with a load of mail. Willie opens May's letter. She has returned to Hunter College. Roland announces his transfer to the aircraft carrier *Yorktown*. Tom Keefer discourses on how the war is the duel of the flying machines and they are stuck on the wretched *Caine*. "This ship is an outcast, manned by outcasts, and named for the great outcast of mankind. My destiny is the *Caine*. It's the purgatory for my sins." Captain De Vriess admits he has never thought of *Caine* being a symbolic name. Tom adds the extra "e" threw him off. Harding has a friend sent to the destroyer *Abel*. Tom comments that at least there he would be sacrificing his youth and writing efforts on an acceptably named ship. Captain De Vriess tires of the discussions and flees to a Hopalong Cassidy movie on another ship.

The *Caine* leaves Pearl at dawn in heavy rain. Maryk has the ship ready to depart. Willie is on the bridge as junior Officer of the Deck. De Vriess sends Willie to the pilothouse and guides the *Caine* out to sea between a battleship and a submarine. Willie, moderately happy now that the *Caine* is at sea, goes below for a cup of coffee. Tom Keefer orders him to update publications so he can work on his novel. When Tom returns, Willie suggests he do some decoding. Keefer orders Ensign Carmody, who has been decoding, to study *Navy Regulations* and Tom takes over the decoding. Willie asks Tom about his novel. The title is from the Old Testament book of Joel, "Multitudes, Multitudes." Willie flatters Tom by asking for the millionth copy, autographed.

Keefer explains that most of the Navy is repetition. They carry 112 publications and use 6, but all have to be updated. With decoding, about 4 messages a month concern the ship, but they have to decode them all. The work has been fragmented by excellent brains at the top who assume that near-morons will be responsible for the work. The Navy is a third-rate career for third-rate people until there is a war. Willie returns to the bridge with Maryk for the noon-to-four watch. There he learns that the minesweepers are unstable and roll a lot because there is too much weight aft with the sweep gear. They fall in line with the other minesweepers.

### Chapter 9, "First Day at Sea" Analysis

"Multitudes, multitudes" in the valley of decision from the Old Testament Book of Joel has to do with God's judgment on all the nations for their wickedness. The tone is very similar to the apocalyptic scenes in the New Testament Book of Revelation. It is fairly obvious that Tom Keefer is writing about World War II, and most likely the War in the Pacific. The precise contents of the novel and its plot line are never revealed. Tom also explains in some detail how the name *Caine* alludes to the story of Cain and Abel in the book of Genesis. Willie has seen the plaque in the wardroom and knows that the ship

was actually named after Arthur Wingate Caine, a World War I hero. Tom Keefer's literary allusions are sometimes a bit strained or unusual. Willie is so consumed with his dislike of Captain De Vriess that he has yet to separate the knowledgeable crew members and officers from the others.



# Chapter 10, "The Lost Message"

## Chapter 10, "The Lost Message" Summary

At 1600, all minesweepers form a slanting line and launch their sweep gear. Willie sees only confusion and panic. Captain De Vriess criticizes the launching for taking 45 minutes and wants it done in 30 minutes. Willie watches the sailors haul in the paravane under Maryk's supervision. A crew member drops a little red float which bobs away from the ship. Maryk swims and retrieves it. Willie, now soaked, is handed a message to decode, which he sticks in his soggy pocket and forgets. The next day they practice with dummy mines and return to Pearl. Willie visits Keggs on the *Moulton*, which, to Willie, looks like a ship should. The sailors wear clean uniforms and the decks are clean and painted. His friend Keggs is now extremely thin and pallid with gray in his hair. He cannot leave the ship because of a lost (but recovered) paravane. Keggs explains that everyone is responsible for everything on the *Moulton*. Captain "Iron Duke" Sammis enters. Keggs shows the Captain every dispatch.

Willie returns to the *Caine* to find an invitation to a reception for Rear Admiral Clough. He tries to understand why the *Moulton*, a model of naval order and efficiency, dropped a paravane, while the *Caine*'s crew, aboard a wretched Chinese junk, led all the ships in minesweeping performance. Captain De Vriess summons Willie to bring the action dispatch Willie stuck in his wet pants. De Vriess has a copy of this message, which detaches Captain De Vriess from the *Caine* and assigns Lieutenant Commander Philip F. Queeg as his relief. As punishment for losing the message, De Vriess confines Willie to the ship for three days, after the Admiral's party.

Willie is determined to transfer off the *Caine*. His mail includes a book from his father and letters from May and his mother. Dr. Keith sent Willie a Bible from the hospital and recommended he read Ecclesiastes 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with they might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest." Willie lies on his bunk and cries, skipping the Admiral's party. The next morning, Lieutenant Commander Philip Francis Queeg reports aboard the *Caine*.

## Chapter 10, "The Lost Message" Analysis

The reader observes the difference between the appearances of the two ships and their performances in action. As in *Wonderland*, things are not always as they seem. The captains of the two ships have different priorities, appearance and performance. Willie is beginning to understand which is more important. The Bible and the letter from Willie's now deceased father reduce him to tears yet again as he ponders his mortality. A paravane is an expensive, large device for cutting mooring lines on underwater mines.





# Chapter 11, "Captain Queeg Relieves Captain de Vriess"

## Chapter 11, "Captain Queeg Relieves Captain de Vriess" Summary

Captain Queeg arrives unannounced, greeted by a ragged boatswain and two filthy assistants who load Queeg's foot locker and bags into the boat. Queeg introduces himself to Ensign Harding, Officer of the Deck, and asks him to tell Captain De Vriess that he is on board. Harding tries to clean up the desk. Queeg asks Harding to keep his gear out of the oil slick. De Vriess greets Queeg on deck. De Vriess wears faded khakis, while Queeg is in dress Naval uniform with white collar and campaign ribbons. De Vriess leads Queeg to the captain's cabin. Queeg has been pulled from anti-submarine school in San Diego, with his family, to command the *Caine*. De Vriess wants a supply depot in Utah where there is no water. Queeg reaches into his pockets and brings out two bright steel ball bearings the size of marbles, which he rolls absently between the thumb and fingers of his left hand. Queeg admits he knows nothing about minesweeping. De Vriess recommends he read the manual and let First Lieutenant Maryk run the ship. He adds that Tom Keefer is a strange duck writing a book.

Queeg wants to scrape the *Caine's* rusted metal down to flat bright metal and paint it. De Vriess says the salt water causes rust to spread under new paint like a skin disease. Queeg has not handled destroyers except as Officer of the Deck. De Vriess offers to teach him, but Queeg declines. De Vriess is surprised. Willie is on his bunk reading when he is called to the wardroom to meet Queeg and provide a registered publications inventory and a transfer report.

De Vriess gives Queeg his keys and collection of mystery books. He tells Queeg that the ship rolls and pitches, the power plant is shot, the machinery is obsolete, and the men are too crowded. The engine room crew works under explosive air pressure. De Vriess dons his dress blues to leave the *Caine* on the "happiest damn moment" of his life. The men present De Vriess a silver wrist watch. De Vriess says he will keep it a half hour slow to remind him of the fouled-up crew of the *Caine*. Queeg comes on deck in khaki shirt and trousers. He is small in stature with sloping shoulders, hollow-chest, pot belly, and furrowed forehead. As Queeg walks the deck, he rolls the steel balls absently in his left hand. He orders an officer's meeting at 1630.

## Chapter 11, "Captain Queeg Relieves Captain de Vriess" Analysis

Incoming Captain Queeg immediately wants to improve the exterior appearance of the *Caine*, even though the leaving Captain De Vriess assures him mere paint is not



enough. Appearances are more important to Queeg than ship-handling ability, of which he has none. Queeg has never captained or maneuvered a vessel and refuses De Vriess' offer to show him how. He ignores De Vriess' advice about the worn down condition of the ship. The steel balls appear for the first time in Captain Queeg's hands without explanation, their existence and significance puzzling but apparently harmless. The reader should note that Captain De Vriess has been reading mystery books while Tom Keefer keeps a supply of great works at hand. The physical appearance of Queeg is also important for reasons explained later in the novel. The name "Queeg" was made up by the author and is still remembered and used in certain circumstances. It has many slight spelling variations that imply different meanings. The author does not explain why Queeg was ordered to command the *Caine*.



## Chapter 12, "The New Order"

### Chapter 12, "The New Order" Summary

At 16:30 the *Caine's* officers sit around the wardroom table, except for Willie, Gorton, and Captain Queeg. When the captain's doorknob turns, Gorton enters and announces, "All present, Captain". The officers stand as Queeg enters. He tells them to be seated. As he sits, he puts his cigarettes on the table and begins to rub the two steel balls between his fingers. Queeg never looks at the officers but keeps his eyes downcast. He wants things done *his* way, not the Navy way. He expects excellent performance from the crew. They have new watch standing orders. Tom Keefer reads in his room until Queeg summons him. Captain Queeg is standing at his washbasin shaving in his underwear. Keefer sees him as having a flat, hairless white chest, bulging little round stomach, and pallid skinny legs. Queeg has checked the publications manuals and reassigns Keefer as custodian, relieving Willie Keith from that duty until Keefer retrains him. Queeg says this will cut into Keefer's novel writing time, but he will have the time left after all reports are up to date, all changes entered, all correspondence cleared, and everything perfectly in order.

Willie goes to the quarterdeck at 2300. Keefer is on watch, sitting on a folded blanket, his back against the anchor, and gun belt on the deck. Willie has memorized the registered publications manual. He asks permission to visit the *Moulton*. There he finds Keggs studying blueprints for an engineering course. Willie describes Captain Queeg as a human being. The wardroom door opens and Captains Sammis and Queeg enter. Queeg goes to the *Caine*. Gorton chews out Keefer for not being on the gangway when the skipper returned. Queeg has already chewed out Gorton for that and for Willie's being on the *Moulton*. Keefer replies that Willie checked out with him since Gorton was asleep. Gorton restricts Keefer to the ship for twenty-four hours. A radioman enters with an action message sending the *Caine* to Pago Pago.

### Chapter 12, "The New Order" Analysis

Here the reader sees the first indications of Queeg's many mental problems. He makes changes in standing orders and sets up a special procedure for his entrance into the wardroom. He expects everything to be his way, not the Navy's way. Queeg does not look any of the officers in the eye. He is a small person in more ways than one. Willie again gets into trouble without trying. Keefer's manipulative manners are now noticeable as he instigates Willie's problems, while he, Keefer, sits on a blanket on the deck.



# Chapter 13, "The Best Goddamned Target-Towing Ship"

## Chapter 13, "The Best Goddamned Target-Towing Ship" Summary

Willie goes on bridge as junior Officer of the Deck, happy now the *Caine* is going to sea. Queeg, carrying his instruction book, *On a Destroyer's Bridge*, joins Willie. The *Caine* is tied to the *Moulton*. Muddy shallow water surrounds the *Caine*, leaving a few hundred yards of dredge channel in which to leave port. The lines are untied. Queeg orders all engines back one third. As the *Caine* moves, its anchor, decked on the *Moulton*, rips holes in the other ship, gashes a hole in the bridge, and removes a gun from the deckhouse plus two ammunition boxes and an antenna, all of which fall into the water. Queeg shouts wheel and engine orders that get the *Caine* stuck in the mud at a ten degree angle. He sends a blinker message to Captain Sammis on the *Moulton* apologizing for the damage. There is no visible damage to the *Caine*. Gorton suggests sending the regulation grounding report. Queeg ignores him. A tug tows the *Caine* to the main channel. Queeg conns the ship across the harbor to the fueling dock, steadily rolling the two steel balls in the fingers of his right hand. The *Caine* almost runs into a tanker. Queeg drops the balls into his pocket and saunters off the bridge.

ComServPac requests a written report about the grounding plus an explanation of the *Caine's* failure to report it. Queeg says ComServPac is fussy. He picks up his steel balls and writes his report. Willie takes the report to the ComServPac building, reading it on his way. Queeg blames the engine crew for not responding in time and suggests a drastic drilling program to improve the crew's performance. He did not send the grounding report immediately because help was at hand and damage to the *Caine* was nil. As a result, the *Moulton* is ordered to Pago Pago while the *Caine* remains at Pearl on target towing duty. Gorton goes to bed until Queeg buzzes him an hour later to come look at a dispatch, which Gorton saw when Willie decoded it. Queeg orders that nobody sees "action dispatches" except the coding officer and himself until he releases them. Queeg demands to know what the changed orders mean. He sends Gorton to ComServPac to find out. Lieutenant Gorton puts on clean clothes and goes to Captain Grace, the operations officer, who insists on a personal appearance by Captain Queeg.

Gorton reports to Queeg that the operations officer would not tell him anything. Queeg must go personally. Queeg wants to know why Gorton did not snoop around to get information. Now ComPacServ orders the *Caine* to pick up the target and operations order at the target repair base in the morning. Queeg, visibly upset and rolling the steel balls in his fist, reacts by ordering that the crew wear their shirts tucked inside their trousers. Failure to comply will result in heavy disciplinary action, including court-martials. He orders a meeting of all officers in the wardroom at 1300. Queeg lies on his bed and rubs his little steel balls over and over.



The officers sit around the wardroom table, rising when the captain enters. Queen has his head down and is rolling the balls as usual. Queeg is unhappy with the crew's performance now that they have to remain at Pearl and tow targets. When Queeg says that he blames the engineering department for the grounding, Tom Keefer has a coughing fit. Queeg continues that the *Caine* is going to be the best target towing ship the Navy has ever seen. Willie becomes the ship's morale officer, and his first duty is to make sure every man on the ship tucks his shirt tail inside his pants. Willie is startled. If any sailor is caught with his shirt tail out, his department head and Willie will be blamed. During the next two weeks, Queeg exaggerates caution in moving the ship, avoiding crashings or groundings. Willie posts a notice about the shirt tails, and the crew tucks them inside their pants. The crew enjoys the luxuries of an extended stay at Pearl Harbor. One morning Queeg orders the *Caine* into the channel in heavy fog with engines at dead slow. They sound foghorns. A tremendous foghorn blank from a tanker shatters the air. Queeg circles the bridge four times, stopping to yank the foghorn cord. The tanker slips past the *Caine*'s stern.

Queeg demands the course from Gorton, the navigator. Gorton replies that he did not think the captain wanted a course until the ship turned around. Queeg rushes into the pilothouse and issues engine and rudder orders to turn the ship. Helmsman Stilwell reports the *Caine* is heading 180. Queeg asks Keefer the course to the gate. It is 220. The helmsman reports heading 200, steadying up on 220. Queeg demands to know who gave him the order to "steady up". The helmsman thought that was what he was supposed to do. Queeg, enraged, replies that he is not paid to think. Stilwell's legs tremble, and he turns white from fear at Queeg's rage. He asks if he should come left again. Queeg screams at him not to do anything and asks what course he is on. The helmsman replies 225, coming right. He stopped steadying when Queeg told him to. Queeg now orders left and steady on 220. Queeg shouts for Maryk to come to the wheelhouse.

Queeg demands that Stilwell be relieved. He is an idiot. Maryk defends him as their best helmsman. Willie puts his head in the wheelhouse. There is a battleship ahead at 300 yards. Queeg, horrified, opens and closes his mouth three times without saying a word. He orders all engines full stop. The battleship passes the *Caine* with about ten feet of open water between them. Maryk sees the *Caine* is on the wrong side of the channel. Queeg orders another helmsman. The *Caine* drifts into sparking sunshine and green water with their way clear to the target repair base. Queeg orders the engines ahead one third and brings out his steel balls. The bridge atmosphere remains tense, since nobody understands what Stilwell did wrong. Willie thinks the captain lost his head in the fog, got scared, and took it out on the handiest sailor.

Stilwell takes the helm that afternoon, with Queeg's permission. Queeg is on the bridge and orders Willie to the bridge. Signalman Urban, his shirt tail outside his pants and his face frozen in fear, stands next to Queeg, again rolling his steel balls. Tom Keefer is on Queeg's other side. Willie tells Urban to tuck in his shirt tail. Queeg will not let him. The *Caine* is ordered back to base. Queeg wants to know Willie's excuse for Urban's having his shirt tail hanging out. The *Caine* itself swings in a wide arc to the right with target and towline lagging behind on the turn. Queeg orders Willie to submit a written report



and asks Keefer why the first man to violate his uniform orders is in his department. Keefer tries to pacify Queeg, who screams that the Officer of the Deck is responsible for everything that happens on his watch.

Helmsman Stilwell sees the ship is swinging in a circular path with target and towline ahead. Stilwell knows the *Caine* is going to pass over its own towline. He says nothing and holds the helm at right standard rudder. As Queeg orders Keefer to submit a written report about Urban's shirt tail being out, the target comes around again. Chiefs Budge and Bellison now see what is happening but cannot stop it. The *Caine* majestically steams over its own tow cable. Nothing happens to the target. The ship starts around again. Captain Queeg allows Signalman Urban to tuck in his shirt. Queeg confronts Stilwell, who has been holding at right standard rudder as ordered. Queeg orders all engines stop. Chief Bellison phones from the fantail to say the towline is broken and the target is gone. The *Caine* steams two miles as the target becomes to a bobbing dot on the waves. Queeg sends a radio dispatch to ComServPac: "Defective towline parted southwest corner gunnery area Charlie Target adrift, menace to navigation. Am returning to base. Suggest tug recover or destroy target at dawn tomorrow." Maryk suggests they use the motor whaleboat to recover the target. Queeg says he is not responsible for defective equipment and tells the navigator to return the ship to Pearl. Maryk and Keefer agree that Queeg is trouble. Maryk returns to the wheelhouse to suggest again they recover the target since it is worth thousands of dollars. Chief Bellison agrees they can recover it in about 40 minutes as he eyes the captain suspiciously. Queeg asks for instructions from ComServPac, which replies, "Act at discretion." Queeg orders the *Caine* to Pearl.

The next day, a sailor arrives with a mailgram from ComServPac to be delivered only to Captain Queeg. Queeg rips open the envelope and summons Gorton, the executive officer. The mailgram reads: "*At 1300 22 October commanding officer Caine will submit in person repeat in person written report on latest fiasco to operations officer ComServPac.*" Queeg asks Gorton what it means. Gorton says Queeg might have overestimated the difficulty of recovering the target. He assumed Queeg knew why he recommended that Maryk recover the target. Queeg decides he has to submit a written report to ComServPac because of Gorton's silence, which will go in his performance report.

## Chapter 13, "The Best Goddamned Target-Towing Ship" Analysis

In this lengthy chapter, the reader observes Captain Queeg in command action. He does not know how to get his ship out of the dock. In his first attempt, he damages the *Moulton* and gets the *Caine* grounded in mud. His reaction to ComServPac's request for an explanation is a written report blaming everyone else and the equipment, which he sends by way of an officer who is supposed to report back with the "real" information he obtained by snooping. Queeg does not want to deal with anybody in person. When the *Caine* is not sent to Pago Pago because of Queeg's obvious incompetence, he takes his anger out on the crew by demanding that all shirt tails be tucked in at all times. This

is a diversionary tactic designed to take the crew's minds off of Queeg's behavior and inabilities.

Under Queeg's command, the *Caine* cannot even tow targets correctly. He becomes so obsessed with shirt tails that he gives orders or fails to give them, causing the *Caine* to steam around in a circle and cut the tow line to its target. Queeg refuses to let Lieutenant Maryk recover the valuable target and retreats to the safety of port, sort of like hiding under the bed. Queeg's superiors at ComServPac are very upset because he is not following orders and has cut the tow line to a valuable piece of equipment. Still, he blames others for the events. Nothing is his fault.

ComServPac is an abbreviation for Command of Services in the Pacific.



# Chapter 14, "Queeg on the Carpet"

## Chapter 14, "Queeg on the Carpet" Summary

Willie asks Keefer what to put in his written report. Keefer shows him what he has written and teaches him Navy words. Queeg wants to make Willie sweat from the effort of writing an official document about a shirt tail. Keefer, however, enjoys writing Navy letters. He says Queeg is a refreshing change from De Vriess, who bullied by sarcasm while looking you in the eye. Queeg can't look anybody in the eyes, so he retreats into his official captain's identity.

Captain Queeg takes his written report to Captain Grace at ComServPac. Grace reads the report and calls it unsatisfactory, looking straight at Queeg, whose lower lip trembles. The report says nothing Grace did not know and explains nothing he wanted explained. Queeg has divided the blame among his exec, first lieutenant, chief boatswain's mate, and former Captain De Vriess. Captain Grace bluntly wants to know why Queeg did not recover the target. Queeg answers his officers failed to give him precise information. Grace replies that there is nothing complicated about recovering a target. It takes half an hour. Now they cannot find it. Grace says he knows this is Queeg's first command and tries to give him advice. Queeg's head sinks down between the shoulders, and he looks at Grace warily from under his eyebrows. Grace says that Queeg did not try to recover the target because he did not know what to do. He should admit this so they can put the incident behind them. Queeg stands by his version of what happened.

Grace asks if the *Caine* circled and cut its towline. Queeg is insulted. Grace persists - did this happen or not? Queeg replies that if this happened, he should recommend his own general court-martial. Grace adds that the admiral has heard of several other troubling actions by Queeg. Queeg wants to know in what respects the admiral finds fault with him. Grace replies that so far the *Caine* has aground in mud, damaged the *Moulton*, and lost an expensive target. The admiral blew up because Queeg could not make an obvious decision. Queeg says that it seems that he is being reprovved in one case for bothering higher authority and in another case for not doing so. The admiral needs to make up his mind. Grace, exasperated, now wants to know if the *Caine* is capable of combat assignments. Queeg cannot predict the future. Grace asks if Queeg would prefer another assignment. He can transfer Queeg to a state-side assignment with no reflection on his performance on the *Caine*. Queeg plunges his left hand into his pocket and brings out his steel balls. He replies that he is a stubborn, by the book man. The *Caine* will carry out all of its assignments or go to the bottom trying. Grace suggests that Queeg worry less about mistakes and more about doing the most sensible and useful actions in the circumstances.

Queeg returns to the *Caine* and catches Stilwell reading a comic book. Ensign Harding, the Officer of the Deck, is getting new gear on number one line. Queeg summons Harding to tell him Stilwell was reading on watch. Harding is supposed to know this





even though he was working elsewhere. Queeg starts shouting. An Officer of the Deck is responsible for everything that happens during his watch. Harding is removed from the watch list until he learns his duties and responsibilities. Stilwell is placed on report and six months' restriction to the ship. Queeg goes to his cabin and finds the two written reports. He summons Keefer to his cabin. Keefer's report is unsatisfactory. Queeg uses Willie's report, which Tom wrote, as an example. Keefer's report "tells me nothing I didn't know before and explains nothing I wanted explained" (repeating Captain Grace's comments to him). Keefer returns to his room, rubs both reports against his behind, dives into his bunk, and buries his face in his pillow, shaking with laughter.

Captain Grace reports to the Admiral that Queeg is one of those who are never wrong. He always has some argument to defend himself. He thinks Queeg is not very intelligent. The Admiral wants to relieve him. Grace defends Queeg because it is his first command. The Admiral says CincPac wants him to send two destroyer-minesweepers to the States for overhaul and new radar installations. He recommends the *Caine*.

## Chapter 14, "Queeg on the Carpet" Analysis

The reader now knows Captain Queeg lacks common sense. When Captain Grace offers him a very real opportunity for forgiveness and a change of duties to something he can do, he refuses. The word "grace" traditionally means forgiveness or mercy. Queeg does not take Captain Grace's advice but continues to blame his subordinates for events and evade questions. Queeg cannot say the *Caine* is capable of combat duties. The Admiral and Captain Grace opt to get the *Caine* to the States for overhaul to keep the ship and Captain Queeg where they can do no more immediate damage. At least that is their expectation.

Queeg's reaction to having to explain his actions to his superiors is to rage at his subordinates for petty infractions. Stilwell is caught reading a comic book on watch. Harding, the Officer of the Deck, is removed from the watch list. Stilwell receives six months' restriction to the ship, with disastrous consequences later in the novel. Queeg rejects Tom Keefer's written report on why Urban did not have his shirt tail in with the exact words Captain Grace used to reject Queeg's written report. It is becoming clear that Queeg does not know how to command. The reader sees that Captain Queeg is very angry. There is as yet no explanation for his conduct.



# Chapter 15, "Joys of the Homeward Voyage"

## Chapter 15, "Joys of the Homeward Voyage" Summary

Willie writes May and his mother, suggesting both meet him in San Francisco. Stilwell, who received six months' restriction to the ship, comes begging to Willie as morale officer. Stilwell wants to go home on leave. He has not been home in two years, and he has an unfaithful wife and a child in Idaho. Willie tells Stilwell to write them that he is coming home. The talk in the wardroom at lunch the next day is cordial, and Queeg even cracks jokes. Queeg wants to buy unused liquor rations at the officers' wine mess in the Navy Yard. The *Caine's* officers and the captain line up at the club's liquor counter and buy thirty quarts of scotch and rye whiskey. The next morning, Queeg asks a carpenter's mate to build a crate with partitions to hold 31 bottles. The mate returns with a heavy crate of fresh-sawed white boards with sheet lead for partitions.

Queeg holds drills as the *Caine* steams towards San Francisco. The entire crew is to wear helmet and life jacket or be docked one day's leave. Queeg stops the crew from putting on gear and wants Willie to turn in the names of noncompliant men. Queeg then orders Chief Bellison, as master-at-arms, to arrest the men throwing helmets and life jackets to the others. Since no names are forthcoming, Queeg docks every man three days' leave in the States. The convoy runs into stormy seas halfway to San Francisco. Willie goes topside and sees a wall of greenish-black water on the port side towering high over his head. The wall falls away to be replaced by one on the other side of the ship. Willie relieves Carmody on the bridge and believes the *Caine* might come apart. The ship groans from end to end and the bulkheads bend and sway, but the *Caine* holds. Stilwell begs Willie to ask Queeg about his leave. Queeg will not relent. Willie points out that reading on board is not as serious as transporting whisky on ship. Queeg replies that rank has its privileges. At this point, Willie throws up. Queeg sends him topside for fresh air.

Days of rolling seas, cold winds, and cold damp pass slowly, as the crew becomes gloomy and pale. Dog-tired officers eat in silence with Queeg, rolling his steel balls, at the head of the table. Willie loses track of time until one morning he awakes to find the ship gliding between a channel towards the piers of the Golden Gate Bridge. Queeg tells Gorton to head for Oakland. Willie is boat officer. The stone heavy crate full of liquor is lodged in the boat. The gig goes towards a concrete landing at the foot of a deserted street. Queeg is in the gig, his feet on the crate, rolling the balls. The gig reaches the dock. With all men pushing and pulling, the crate will not budge.

Queeg sees crewman Mackenzie standing on the deck, bowline in hand, watching. He orders him on board to help. Mackenzie drops the line and the gig moves away from the dock. Mackenzie returns to the rope. In the middle of chaotic yelling, cursing, and crunching, Horrible and the crate both fall into the water. Horrible floats. The crate sinks



like an anvil. Queeg commands the men to get grappling irons. Half an hour later Horrible determines the crate is sunk in ooze. Their lines will not bring up the crate. Queeg stares at the water and then blames Willie for the loss. He demands \$110 to pay for his losses. Willie suggests that the harbor police can grapple for it and pull it out. Queeg wants nobody to know about the crate. Transportation of liquor on ship for private purposes is against regulations.

The *Caine* returns to San Francisco. The tide pushes the *Caine* away from the dock. Queeg's orders cause the *Caine* to swing in towards the dock, too far away for the tie lines to reach the deck. Queeg makes another approach causing the ship to crash into the wharf at a twenty degree angle, creating a monstrous shaving gouged out of the pier. Queeg blames the Navy for not having a convenient tugboat. Queeg tries again. The *Caine* slips into position alongside the dock. The bow is closer than the stern. One line is secured to the dock. A passing tug pushes the ship into the dock. Queeg deprives the crew of two days' leave for lousy line-handling. Maryk stares at Queeg with disgust. Willie is first over the gangplank. Mrs. Keith hugs her son. He smiles gently at May and introduces her to his mother as Marie Minotti.

## Chapter 15, "Joys of the Homeward Voyage" Analysis

The reader sees more of the unpredictable character of Captain Queeg, who cannot steer the *Caine* and who habitually abuses the crew while himself flagrantly violating Navy regulations. Nothing is ever Queeg's fault. One by one the officers become disgusted with Queeg.



## Chapter 16, "Shore Leave"

### Chapter 16, "Shore Leave" Summary

Willie and May vacation in the Yosemite Valley but remain in separate rooms after making love to each other. That night, May crouches in a chair, shivering and crying. At breakfast the next morning, Willie talks about life on the *Caine*. Willie adds that his mother likes May. She wants to know why he introduced her to his mother as Marie Minotti instead of as "May". Willie realizes he is ashamed of her. That evening he wants to sleep with May, but she shoves him out her door. At breakfast the next morning, Willie asks May to marry him. May will think about it. They ride sad old horses through the snow. That night, Willie kisses May good night at her door. They ride the bus back to San Francisco, the *Caine*, and Willie's waiting mother. Willie again asks May to marry him. He loves her. She is not convinced.

### Chapter 16, "Shore Leave" Analysis

The story of Willie Keith and his relationship with May Minotti continues. They sleep together for the first and last time in this novel. The reader must decide why May is crying. "Good girls" did not have sex outside of marriage in the 1940's. Is she crying because of this willing breach of higher class morality or because she knows she will never marry Willie Keith?



# Chapter 17, "Two Bottles of Champagne"

## Chapter 17, "Two Bottles of Champagne" Summary

Maryk is duty officer on the *Caine* in drydock. The ship's iron corpse is being refurbished while the officers and crew stay in nearby barracks. Captain Queeg is home in Arizona. The depressed crew, whose shore leave Queeg delayed, is seething unhappily in the barracks, waiting for the day when they can leave. A drunk Ensign Harding staggers in about at eight o'clock and relieves Maryk. Maryk tries to wake Keefer, who says, "See you St. Francis lunch one o'clock".

Maryk grew up in San Francisco. He meets Keefer in the lobby of the elaborate St. Francis, where they eat an expensive lunch and drink champagne. Keefer wants to know why Maryk is depressed. Maryk believes something bad is about to happen. Keefer explains Maryk is just seeing his boyhood home after a long absence. Keefer invites Maryk to a Berkeley literary tea with many female club members. They both talk of family backgrounds. Maryk prefers fishing to being in the Navy. Keefer believes Queeg is a "waste product" of the system. He is a monster, a feeble little personality who cannot stand pressure.

At Berkeley, Professor Curran introduces Keefer at great length, extolling his publications, including that he may write *the* novel of World War II. Keefer talks for half an hour, leaving Maryk baffled and humiliated. At 20:00 Maryk calls the ship's office for a routine check and is told to return immediately. Maryk has been promoted and is the new executive officer of the *Caine*. Carmody has been reassigned. Tom and Steve will ride the *Caine* into the bone yard. Keefer is beside himself. He throws his hat to the deck and says, "God damn the *Caine* and strike everyone aboard it, including me, with a curse." Maryk looks gloomily around at the old ship.

At lunch, Mrs. Keith sees Willie has aged after his vacation with May and service on the *Caine*. He is thinner and tired, with an uneasiness and gloomy abstraction to his personality. She asks about his relationship with May. He has asked her to marry him and she is thinking about it. His mother tells him that while Willie's dad was in medical school, he lived with a beautiful brunette nurse. Willie should be honest about his feelings and whether or not he loves May. His mother broke two engagements before she married Willie's dad. Willie knows he wants a university career teaching literature. His mother wonders if May will fit into his picture. When they return to their room, Willie tells his mother that he does not want to talk about this any more. He meets May at another hotel. The next day he sees her off at the airport with a passionate kiss.

## Chapter 17, "Two Bottles of Champagne" Analysis

Life goes on. Keefer and Maryk exchange family background information. Maryk loves the sea and is a fisherman. Keefer is or pretends to be an intellectual and a writer.



Keefer describes Queeg accurately as a little man who cannot stand pressure. With Maryk's promotion to executive officer of the *Caine*, it is obvious that neither Keefer nor Maryk will ever be reassigned. They are further cursed. Willie's relationship continues with May.



# Chapter 18, "Stilwell's Leave"

## Chapter 18, "Stilwell's Leave" Summary

The *Caine's* overhaul is cut to three weeks. The *Caine* must leave for Pearl by December 29th. Maryk calls Queeg in Arizona about the schedule change and the crew's shore leave. Queeg tells Maryk to recall the crew members and let one man go for every one who returns. The two new officers, Jorgensen and Ducely, are aboard. Queeg orders them to start on their qualification courses. New radars are half installed. Stilwell asks Maryk for emergency family leave, based on a telegram that his mother is very sick. Willie tells Maryk that mother is fine but wife is astray. Stilwell's brother sent the telegram. Maryk gives Stilwell an emergency 72 hour leave.

Stilwell does not return to the *Caine* before Captain Queeg does. He sneaks aboard the ship. Queeg makes Keefer gunnery officer. Willie becomes communications officer. Willie looks at the two newcomers, Jorgensen and Ducely. Queeg asks Maryk if Stilwell was at muster. Willie says he is aboard. Maryk admits he gave Stilwell emergency leave because of the telegram.

Queeg insists Maryk write the Red Cross and find out the truth. Queeg blames Stilwell for all the trouble with ComServPac when they cut the towline. Maryk is startled to hear the Captain admit they cut the line. Queeg blames Stilwell's for not warning him the ship was in danger and vows to "get him". He also does not appreciate Maryk's evasiveness and sloppy handling of the Stilwell deal. He now knows the whole ship is against him, but he can handle that. He wants to know if Maryk is against him too. Maryk admits his mistake and vows not to repeat it.

The *Caine* is reassembled with the worst decay in the engineering plant patched. The ship has new radar. Keefer guesses that the *Caine* will not hold together long. On December 30, the *Caine* steams through the Golden Gate at sunset, minus twenty-five crew members. Willie is on the bridge, unhappy to be away from May. The bunks in the clip shack have gone to the new men. Willie sleeps in a bunk with Paynter as his roommate.

## Chapter 18, "Stilwell's Leave" Analysis

Very little refurbishing takes place, except, as seen later, of the Captain's cabin. Queeg's hatred of Stilwell becomes very open. Queeg blames him for the *Caine's* circling at his orders and cutting the towline. Captain Queeg is openly paranoid and admits to Maryk that the entire crew has turned against him. He never stops to ask why this has happened. It is noticeable that twenty-five crew members never return to the *Caine*, preferring military discipline to another tour of duty on the decrepit ship with the oppressive Captain Queeg.



# Chapter 19, "The Circle of Compliance"

## Chapter 19, "The Circle of Compliance" Summary

Willie realizes the turning points of World War II have already happened in Europe. As he stands in the black, cold wheelhouse of the *Caine* at midnight on New Year's Eve, he decides he was an idiot to go into the Navy and not the Army. The smart man's place is in the infantry. Sailors are being tossed on sickening seas heading to assault the Japanese barrier of mid-Pacific islands. The war against Japan will be the largest and deadliest in human history and will end in 1955 or 1960 when the Russians intervene. The *Caine* wallows through cold, rainy weather for two days in a floating, wet hell. The third day they enter the sunshine of the South Seas. Willie stands the noon-to-four watch as Officer of the Deck as Queeg dozes in his chair. Willie talks with Ducely, who already thinks the *Caine* is a horrible fate. He has escaped from the clip shack onto a portable cot in the ship's office. Ducely knows nothing about communications. He was commissioned into the Navy because his mother owns a Boston shipyard.

The *Caine* is to help capture Kwajalein Atoll and other Japanese strongholds in the Marshall Islands. Willie takes the operations order to Queeg in his refurbished quarters. Willie logs and files the mail. Keefer gives him a set of dog-eared ledgers and keys to the filing cabinet plus several handfuls of secret mail from under his dirty laundry. Keefer has been filing the mail using an incomprehensible system. Willie watches Jellybelly, in the ship's office, logging sacks of non-secret correspondence by typing entries onto green form sheets. Jellybelly says this is the Navy system. Mr. Funk created the other system in 1940 and they kept using it. Willie converts to the standard Navy system and can find any publication. Willie wonders about Keefer. Queeg now lies in his bunk or sits at his desk playing with a jigsaw puzzle, emerging at night to watch the movie. He gives orders through speaking tubes. He stops joining the officers for meals and eats almost nothing but ice cream with maple syrup brought to his cabin on a tray.

The fleet leaves Hawaii for Kwajalein in January. With radar spanning empty space accurately to within a few yards, the vast formation is precise and rigid, easy to maintain. Willie is Officer of the Deck. The *Caine* is on the right flank of the formation, in the inner anti-submarine screen. Captain Queeg issues orders that the main deck will always be spotlessly clean. The crew keeps the small patch of the deck between his cabin and the wardroom spotless. All of Queeg's orders are maintained within the precise necessary circle of compliance. The crew's attitude towards Queeg varies from mild dislike to poisonous hate. Stilwell remains Queeg's main target. Maryk winks at the circle of compliance and keeps the ship functioning. Keefer detests Queeg.

## Chapter 19, "The Circle of Compliance" Analysis

As the *Caine* heads into battle, Queeg becomes concerned about the cleanliness of the main deck. This is something he can observe and control, since he obviously cannot





captain the ship. He hides in his room, distancing himself from his men, working a jigsaw puzzle. Willie discovers Keefer has been doing "make work" in an obsolete and incomprehensible mail logging system. Keefer heads a group of officers who detest Queeg, whose main target remains Stilwell.



# Chapter 20, "The Yellow Stain"

## Chapter 20, "The Yellow Stain" Summary

The evening before the fleet is due at Kwajalein, Willie observes increased tension among the sailors on the bridge. Willie and the Captain know that the *Caine* is shepherding a wave of attack boats from their transport to a line of departure 1000 yards from the beach at dawn. Willie believes the *Caine* will be crippled and removed from battle. At 22:30 hours, Willie finds Queeg fully clothed, life jacket on, in the canvas bunk hanging over the navigator's table. As Willie falls asleep in his bunk, the general alarm sounds. He dresses hurriedly and goes on deck to relieve Harding. They are at Roi-Namur. Willie's first glimpse of combat is a small night gunnery exercise. At sunrise, the fleet halts 3 miles offshore. Attack boats begin to drop from the transports and cluster on the water. Keefer joins Willie on the port wing. Queeg appears, crouched over, head moving ceaselessly to and from over the bulky collar of his kapok life jacket. His eyes are squinted nearly shut. He asks Willie where the LVTs are that they will take to the beach. Willie points to APA 17, a huge gray transport 4000 yards off the port bow. Queeg vanishes behind the bridgehouse. A long line of attack boats emerges and heads for the *Caine*. Willie asks Queeg what to do. Queeg giggles and says, "Whatever you please". Willie stares at the captain, who resumes telling a story. Willie sees the boats coming at them. Maryk enters the wheelhouse, looks at the captain, and orders all engines stop.

Maryk talks to the lead attack boat by megaphone. The group is ready to proceed to point of departure. Queeg sticks his face in the doorway of the pilot house, demanding to know why they stopped. Maryk explains. Queeg asks the course and distance to point of departure and leaves Maryk with the conn. He heads for the atoll. There is nothing between the *Caine* and the Japanese island but water. The LVTs signal for the *Caine* to slow down. Queeg says they are supposed to be on the line of departure at H-hour. If the LVTs cannot keep up, they will throw over a dye marker at the spot. Queeg looks at the island. He orders Maryk to throw over a dye marker where they are and turn the *Caine* back to the safety of the sea.

After the attack force takes both islands, the *Caine* drops anchor in the lagoon. Willie goes to the flying bridge to watch the fleet blast the islands into the ocean. Since the Japanese will not surrender, the naval bombardiers annihilate them. The Kwajalein invasion is a grand classic of sea warfare, a lesson for the generations. Willie eats supper with Keefer, Maryk, and Harding. Keefer asks Maryk what he thinks about "Old Yellowstain's" battle performance. They left before reaching the line of departure, leaving the LVTs to fend for themselves. Maryk defends Queeg's orders. Keefer calls Queeg a poltroon, a mean-spirited coward.

Queeg enters the room, sits in the chair at the head of the table, and begins rubbing the steel balls in his left hand. He crosses his legs and dances the upper one, so that his whole slumping body bobs. There are heavy green shadows under his eyes and deep



lines around his mouth. Keefer brings Queeg a cup of coffee. After ten minutes of silence, Queeg asks Willie about the latest decodes and Keefer about Ducely's twelfth officers' qualification assignment. Being at battle stations since 3:00 A.M. is not an excuse. Queeg wants the assignment on his desk before Ducely turns in. Maryk says that the commanding officer is Captain Queeg and that is the only name he will be called in Maryk's presence.

## Chapter 20, "The Yellow Stain" Analysis

Captain Queeg is also a coward, as seen from his inability to complete his mission and escort the LVT's with Marines to the beach. Instead, he stops short and drops a yellow dye marker to indicate where the LVT's should stop and let the men off. This is obviously close to the shore. Maryk tries to complete orders correctly, but is stopped by Queeg's commands. The *Caine* heads back to the safety of the sea. Keefer calls Queeg "Old Yellowstain" and a mean-spirited coward. Maryk still tries to defend Queeg's orders and captainship. The Captain directs attention from this event to Ducely's officer's qualification assignment.



# Chapter 21, "Death and Ice Cream"

## Chapter 21, "Death and Ice Cream" Summary

The next morning, Willie watches the assault boats storm the beach, the tanks and Marines swarm forward, the Japanese return fire, and Marines die. He turns on the short-wave radio and eavesdrops on men in tanks. At lunch, while he is pouring thick chocolate sauce over his ice cream, the silverware and glasses rattle from an explosion. Willie, Keefer, and Jorgensen run topside in time to see the main Japanese ammunition dump explode. They are sitting and eating ice cream while the Marines invade Namur a few thousand yards away. Keefer retorts that war is a business in which a lot of people watch a few people be killed and are glad it is not them. Tomorrow they will be sweeping mines in the lagoon and the islands will be secured. The Marines will be eating lunch when they see the *Caine* blown sky-high. The *Caine* is ordered to Funafuti Atoll, escorting an LST group. This is far south, well clear of the battle zone. Queeg is eating ice cream out of a soup plate with one hand and working his jigsaw puzzle with the other. Queeg asks for Maryk and another big plate of ice cream. The radioman enters with another dispatch from Personnel assigning Lieutenant Rabbitt to the destroyer-minesweeper *Oaks*, being built in San Francisco. Queeg refuses to tell Rabbitt.

Willie is deciphering in the wardroom when Queeg enters, followed by Commander Frazer. A mess boy comes in with a steaming jug of coffee. Frazer has been ordered to the States to assume command of the *Oaks*. He has the roster and knows Rabbitt is on it. Frazer wants Rabbitt to fly back with him to the States. Queeg wants to wait for Rabbitt's relief, Harding, to achieve Queeg's standards of excellence. Frazer replies he cannot hold up commissioning the *Oaks* while waiting for Harding to meet Queeg's standards. Frazer will report to Washington that Queeg has had difficulty training a replacement for Rabbitt to suit his standards. Queeg says Harding is perfectly qualified. Frazer insists Rabbitt depart this afternoon. He will send his gig over for Rabbitt at 1600. Queeg requests a transfer. Within an hour after Rabbit leaves, Captain Queeg throws a major tantrum. Paynter has brought him a fuel and water report that the crew's consumption of water rose ten per cent during the Kwajalein operation. Queeg shrieks that they are forgetting the value of water. He orders no water for officers' and crew's personal use for forty-eight hours as the *Caine* heads for Funafuti.

## Chapter 21, "Death and Ice Cream" Analysis

The *Caine's* crew eats ice cream and watches the Marines fight and take the Japanese-controlled island. After Lieutenant Rabbitt is transferred to the *Oaks*, Captain Queeg has a major temper tantrum and deprives the officers and crew of water for personal use for two days. This is yet another example of his irrationality and misdirection of his anger. He cannot strike back at Naval Personnel, but he surely can punish his crew.



# Chapter 22, "The Water Famine"

## Chapter 22, "The Water Famine" Summary

The *Caine* stinks as it steams 200 miles to Funafuti with a destroyer and six LST's. The stack gas is not blowing away. The air is hot and damp. The officers and crew cannot shower, so they work, holding hands over noses. After 24 hours, Maryk asks the Captain for mercy because of the extraordinary lack of wind. Queeg is sweating, lying naked in his bunk with two fans blowing on him. Maryk reports they have plenty of water to last until Funafuti. Queeg refuses to relent. The men have enough water in their soup and coffee not to get dehydrated.

Wind conditions remain intolerable. Stack gas comes through the ventilators. The sailors sleep in clusters on the deck, using life jackets for pillows, breathing in gasps through the night. At sunrise, the *Caine* resembles a plague ship. Lifeless, dirty, half-naked bodies are sprawled all over the decks. The crew rises and moves through chores with leaden limbs. The *Caine* is 50 miles from the equator, sailing due south. The air grows hotter and more humid each hour. The African-American sailors begin to bootleg water in the aft engine room, where the evaporators are. Word spreads. The crew uses the water, but the officers refrain. At 15:00, Ducely drops his head on his arms, beside the coding machine, and announces he is going to get a drink of water. Willie says that if he does, he will throw him over the side. Ducely resumes decoding.

Captain Queeg has no private toilet and must go below to use the officer's head in the wardroom passageway. The officers spring into action when they hear the clang of the captain's door. Queeg appears. Willie and Ducely are decoding and do not look up. They hear a sudden frightful yammering in the passageway. Willie jumps up, hoping the captain has electrocuted himself on a defective light socket. Queeg is screeching unintelligibly into the officers' shower room. Ensign Jorgensen, naked as a cow, is wet and taking a shower. Willie and Ducely hear " - *dare* to violate my orders, my express orders? How *dare* you?" Jorgensen says he was using the water in the pipes. Queeg, incensed, orders that the officers' restriction will continue for another 48 hours while the crew's water restriction goes off at 5:00 P.M. Jorgensen must submit a written report explaining why Queeg should not make out an unsatisfactory *fitness* report for him. Before Jorgensen can say more, Queeg flounces into the head and slams the door. As Jorgensen begins to whine, Willie tells him the water supply for 9 men dying of thirst has coursed away into the huge cleft between his buttocks.

The officers go without water for two more days while cursing Jorgensen. The breeze changes. The fumes of stack gas and cabbages on deck abate. Funafuti Atoll is a necklace of richly green, low islands, in the middle of the ocean. The *Caine* enters it shortly after sunrise and is secured to the destroyer tender *Pluto*, ahead of the other ships. Lines for steam, water, and electric power are hurriedly run from the *Pluto* to the *Caine*. Willie is first to the *Pluto*, saving himself days of decoding. The tender decodes and mimeographs fleet messages for other ships. The *Pluto* has a blacksmith shop, a



barbershop, a carpenter shop, a laundry, a stainless-steel kitchen with hundreds of chickens frying, a bakery, and other civilized enterprises. The sailors are clean, older, fatter, more peaceful, and eating ice cream out of paper cups. They contrast sharply with the coyotes of the *Caine*. Willie goes to the communications office, where scrubbed yeomen in fresh blue dungarees have regular files with all of the decodes Willie wants and a series of new fleet letters. Weeks of Willie's work is done. One of the decodes is Willie's promotion to Lieutenant jg, which Queeg must approve. Willie buys collar pins anyway.

Willie returns to the rusted, littered quarterdeck of the *Caine*. He smiles at the crew and realizes he never had such loyal relatives or friends. Willie tells Jellybelly there are six mail sacks, four official and two personal, on the tender. Willie goes to his room and sticks the lieutenant junior grade bars into his new khaki shirt. He is elated by his promotion.

## Chapter 22, "The Water Famine" Analysis

The reader sees the effects of Captain Queeg's water rationing on the crew's morale as the *Caine* steams towards the equator and no winds blow. Willie again contrasts the *Caine*'s physical condition with that of another ship, larger, clean, and well-supplied. Now he realizes that he has never had as many loyal friends as are on the *Caine*. He has family.



# Chapter 23, "Court-martial of Stilwell"

## Chapter 23, "Court-martial of Stilwell" Summary

Maryk shows Willie the Red Cross letter that states Stilwell's mother is not dying. Captain Queeg orders Stilwell court-martialed with Willie as court recorder. Keefer, Harding, and Paynter are the court. Queeg approves Willie's promotion. They discuss Stilwell's court martial. Willie's role is to get the whole thing typed in book form. Queeg wants Stilwell to get a bad-conduct discharge. Fraud like his calls for a stiff sentence. Queeg hands Willie poor Stilwell's written confession. Willie reads the confession. He tells Stilwell to plead not guilty. A court-martial on the ship cannot convict him. The Red Cross letter proves nothing. The court cannot make Stilwell testify against himself. Stilwell buys his own copy of *Courts and Boards*, reads it, and talks to men on the other ships. Willie tells Captain Queeg that Stilwell wants to plead not guilty and repudiate his confession because the Captain made him sign. Queeg keeps Stilwell in his quarters until he signs a statement that he did not confess under duress. Stilwell has given up.

Willie, Keefer, Maryk and Harding lie under palm trees on the beach and drink beer. Willie tells the others about Stilwell's not-guilty plea and the extorted confessions. Keefer takes a big drink of beer and asks Maryk if he ever thought Queeg insane. Keefer sees him as a psychopathic personality, paranoid, with an obsessive-compulsive syndrome. He thinks a clinical examination would back him up 100 per cent. Keefer realized Queeg was a psychopath a week after he came on board the *Caine* because of the shirt tail obsession, the little rolling balls, the inability to look you in the eye, the talking in secondhand phrases and slogans, the ice-cream mania, and the seclusion. Queeg is in the twilight zone between eccentricity and psychosis, and he is a coward. Maryk answers that Queeg may be strict but there are a thousand skippers like him. Keefer wants to know if Maryk believes a captain in his right mind would rig a court-martial. Maryk answers a summary court-martial on a ship is a farce. Keefer thinks rigging a trial to convict a man violates Navy principles. The enlisted man is God to the Navy, because his relatives back home pay the Navy's appropriations. They drink all afternoon.

Prior to the court-martial, Queeg sends for Harding, Paynter, and Keefer—polling for the verdict before the trial to eliminate any unpleasant surprises. Willie arranges the paperwork for the trial. Chief Bellison, master-at-arms, summons Willie to the court-martial in the wardroom, where the three officers are seated around the table. Stilwell enters, and the trial begins. Willie tries to follow the procedure set out in *Courts and Boards*. The trial ends. Stilwell makes a statement. The captain gave him six months' restriction for reading on watch. He got the phony wire sent so he could see his wife and save his marriage. He did not think that reading a comic book was enough reason to ruin his life. Everybody but the court leaves the room. Bellison recalls Willie and Stilwell to the wardroom. Keefer announces that the plea proved the charges, and Stilwell is given loss of six liberties. Willie records the verdict, a direct insult to Captain Queeg, since Stilwell is already confined for six months. The punishment is meaningless and



amounts to an acquittal. The officers of the court sign the verdict and send it to Queeg. Keefer says they have time for one more cup of coffee. The telephone buzzer rings, and Maryk answers. Queeg orders a meeting of all officers in the wardroom in five minutes.

Queeg enters, head down, shoulders hunched, face gray with rage. He has no loyal officers on board. There will be 5 points off a fitness rating for any mistake in a log, another 5 points off for every hour that a report or statement is overdue, and an automatic unsatisfactory fitness rating if any officer is caught sleeping after 8:00 or before 20:00, even if he has been on watch. Queeg slams the door behind him as he leaves.

Tom Keefer is sitting on his bed reading the poems of T. S. Eliot when Maryk enters. He wants to know what Queeg has against Stilwell. Tom replies that he hates Stilwell for being handsome, healthy, young, competent, and naturally popular and attractive - all the things Queeg is not. He suggests Maryk read Melville's *Billy Budd*. Keefer muses about Queeg's underlying sexual frustrations. Maryk hoists himself onto Keefer's bunk. Maryk believes Queeg is out to get Stilwell because he blames Stilwell for the cut towline. Queeg thinks Stilwell deliberately did not warn him. Queeg thinks all his trouble with ComServPac and with the *Caine's* officers and crew, stem from that incident. Maryk asks Tom to go with him to the medical officer of the *Pluto* in the morning to tell him what is going on. Keefer refuses. He does not want to get involved in any conspiracy to undermine authority. Keefer has not said that Queeg is crazy. He is teetering on the edge. It will take help from a state-side civilian shrink. Maryk jumps off the bunk and looks at Keefer. If he will not help, then he should shut up talking about Queeg being crazy. He will report further talk to the Captain. Maryk crawls upon his bunk and begins to read a red-bound volume called *Mental Disorders*, property of the *Pluto's* medical officer.

## Chapter 23, "Court-martial of Stilwell" Analysis

Captain Queeg goes to a lot of trouble to court martial Helmsman Stilwell for obtaining emergency leave by fraud. Willie urges him to plead not guilty because of lack of proof. Queeg interrogates Stilwell twice and extracts confessions from him, including a statement that he signed of his own will. He asks the court members about the verdict, since he wants Stilwell to receive a bad-conduct discharge. Instead, they find Stilwell guilty and deprive him of six liberties, a meaningless verdict but a direct slap at Captain Queeg. Queeg retaliates against the verdict with further sanctions against the officers.

Keefer, while drinking, further expounds on Queeg's being a psychopathic personality, paranoid, with an obsessive-compulsive syndrome. Later he states Queeg is sexually frustrated or inadequate. The reader will learn that Keefer is full of opinions but does not have the character to act upon them. He flatly refuses to get involved in any conspiracy against the Captain. Queeg is not quite crazy, and thus there is no reason for Keefer to act. Maryk begins keeping a diary of Queeg's actions.





# Chapter 24, "Maryk's Secret Log"

## Chapter 24, "Maryk's Secret Log" Summary

Maryk starts a secret, hidden Medical Log of Queeg's eccentricities and oppressions. It thickens as time passes in monotonous escort duty. The Seventh Fleet command uses the *Caine* and other obsolete destroyer-minesweepers to escort amphibious forces around the South Pacific. Days dissolve into weeks and months. Life becomes endless watches, paper work, hot nights and days, rain squalls, logs, monthly reports, and statements to audit. Captain Queeg becomes more irritable, secluded, and strange. He incarcerates sailors, cuts off water, cuts off coffee, and cuts off movies for the entire crew for six months. He makes endless demands for written reports and investigations. Once he keeps all officers in session for 48 hours to find out which mess boy burned a Silex. He announces a 20 point cut in everybody's fitness rating as punishment for not finding out. He habitually summons officers for middle of the night conferences.

In June, the *Caine* is assigned to the screen of the main body of attack transports for the invasion of Saipan. The crew all think it is better to be shot at than to rot. The first day, Maryk makes a brief but very important entry in his log involving Willie Keith. The *Caine* is sent to an anti-submarine patrol sector, where it steams endlessly in a figure-eight path several thousand yards long as do twelve other ships protecting transports anchored close to the beach. Willie sees Queeg shuttle from side to side of the bridge, always sheltered from gunfire on the beach. When a Navy Corsair sinks near the *Caine*, Queeg orders the *Caine* to close on where the plane crashed. "Bye-bye Corsair," says Queeg. Towers of white water grow out of the sea on both sides of the *Stanfield*, the ship next to the *Caine*, because a Japanese shore battery is shooting at it. The *Stanfield* turns, and its five inch guns blast the battery. The *Caine's* gun crews jump to their places. Queeg orders the *Caine* away from the shore battery. Willie requests permission to fire. Queeg never replies. The Officer of the Deck watches the *Stanfield* fire and its guns eliminate the shore battery. By now the *Caine* is too far away for Willie to be certain the shore battery is gone. Willie tells Maryk, stating, "Captain reversed course and left scene without firing a shot, though battery was well within our range and our guns were manned and ready." The *Caine* is detached from the fleet and ordered to escort a damaged battleship to Majuro.

There are no more grand incidents, and Maryk's log writing dwindles. Willie becomes the wardroom goat after the *Stanfield* incident, and Queeg's hounding shifts to Willie. Queeg complains to him about the slowness of decoding, the routing of the mail, correction of publications, the smell of coffee from the radio shack, and errors in copying a message. Willie begins to hate Queeg. His is a mature, solid hate, caused by an unbreakable tie to a loathsome person who gets pleasure from causing it. Willie achieves complete thoroughness and accuracy in his work, and mistakes are traced to his assistant communicator, Ducely. Willie tries to reform Ducely, who says he is no good and Willie should report him to Queeg for dismissal. Ducely receives an excellent fitness report, keeping him on the *Caine*.



The officers expect Queeg to be reassigned in September, but he is not. Eccentricities from loneliness and boredom flourish as the men grow queerly shaped beards and have their hair cut in the shapes of hearts, crosses, and stars. Paynter adopts a huge crab which he keeps in his room, walking it on a leash every evening like a dog. Paynter and Keefer have a fight when the crab escapes and nips a naked Keefer's toe with the big claw. Keefer dances shrieking into the wardroom and tries to kill the crab with the ship's cutlass. Paynter throw himself between the crab and the maddened, nude Keefer. They now hate each other. Ensign Ducely escapes reality by falling in love with a corset advertisement in the *New Yorker*. He languishes on his bunk, sighing over the corset ad day and night. Willie decides he wants a monogrammed coffee mug. He spends hours gouging WK into a crockery cup with a small file and fills the letters with a rich blue paint. The other crewmen make their own cups. Boatswain's mate Winston carries one etched with his insignia in Old English lettering with heraldic flourishes. Willie daydreams about May, staring at her pictures and re-reading her letters. She is his one link with his former life. He writes her long letters, never mentioning marriage. Neither does she.

## Chapter 24, "Maryk's Secret Log" Analysis

Queeg's obsessions and harassment of officers and crew continue. When the *Caine* is sent to protect transports during the invasion of Saipan, Captain Queeg always moves to the side of the ship away from the shooting, making his cowardice evident. When the Japanese shoot at the ship next to the *Caine*, Queeg orders the *Caine* back out to sea. Willie Keith becomes Queeg's target, since he notices Queeg's movements and stays on the side of the ship nearest the fighting. The two begin to hate each other. Willie now loathes Queeg, who nitpicks at Willie's work. The crew and officers become bored and adopt their own time-consuming eccentricities.



# Chapter 25, "A Medal for Roland Keefer",

## Chapter 25, "A Medal for Roland Keefer", Summary

Captain Queeg is still in command when the *Caine* steams into Ulithi Atoll, halfway between Guam and Palau. Keefer sees target sleds and goes to his room to kill himself. The *Caine* is again hauling targets for the fleet's gunnery practice. Captain Queeg's behavior worsens as the pilothouse echoes with his screeches and curses. He withdraws and gives the conn to Maryk. Queeg lies in his bunk, day and night, reading, playing with a jigsaw puzzle, or staring. Tom Keefer's brother Roland, now on the carrier *Montauk*, invites Tom and Willie over. Tom has put in 17 requests for transfer to a carrier, while his brother goes from one to another. Queeg denies permission to leave until a satisfactory registered publications inventory is submitted. Keefer tells Willie that Queeg is a classic psychotic. His analysis would supersede all the studies of the Jukes and the Kallikaks. Keefer rants for hours. When Keefer takes the inventory to Queeg, he gives Tom and Willie permission to visit the *Montauk*. The carriers are under way. The push is on towards the Philippines. They see Roland only through binoculars.

The carriers engage in the Battle of Leyte Gulf while the *Caine* remains in Ulithi. As Willie decodes dispatches, he learns a suicide plane hit the *Montauk*. Two days later, the carrier returns to Ulithi banged up. The *Montauk* signals that a boat will come to the *Caine*. A young ensign tells Keefer that his brother died of burns. They buried him at sea. The ensign explains that Roland Keefer will receive the Navy Cross for saving the *Montauk*. Admiral Sprague's escort-carrier force encountered the main battle line of the Japanese Navy off Samar, amid rainsqualls and smoke screens. The shells started fires aft. Roland Keefer was damage-control officer. A suicide plane, carrying a torpedo, smashed into the bridge. There was a terrific explosion and fire everywhere. With the bridge out, the ship steamed flank speed around in a circle. Roland took over and began conning and directing fire fighting. He went out on the catwalk where flaming wreckage fell on him. He was in bad shape, but he kept fire fighting and conning. A couple of sailors were holding him up, greasing him, bandaging him, and giving him morphine.

The air officer, Lieutenant Commander Volk, took over the conn. Roland passed out, and they took him to sick bay. The ensign stayed with Roland for hours as he gave him instructions on what to do when he took over his department. The doctor said Roland had a 50-50 chance of living until he got pneumonia. He was asleep and not in pain when he died. As Keefer walks the ensign to the gangway, Willie sits and relives the events. Tom says Rollo did pretty well. He rubs his eyes hard and goes to his room. Willie cannot fit the Roland he knew into this heroic role. Queeg awakens Willie just after midnight to decode a BuPers dispatch that detaches Ensign Ducely. Queeg does not leave his room for a week, and Steve Maryk runs the *Caine*.



## Chapter 25, "A Medal for Roland Keefer", Analysis

Keefer's reference to the Jukes and the Kallikaks is another obscurity, but one well-known during the 1950's when people believed in backwards evolution. The names are pseudonyms for two families used during the late 19th century and early 20th centuries as arguments for a genetic disposition towards mental illness or low intelligence. The reader sees the difference in character between Roland Keefer, who died saving the *Montauk*, and Tom Keefer, a loudmouth coward full of opinions. Captain Queeg appears to be sinking deeper into depression.



# Chapter 26, "A Gallon of Strawberries"

## Chapter 26, "A Gallon of Strawberries" Summary

Willie sings the "Yellowstain Blues" at the officers' bar on Mogmog Island. He, Keefer, Harding, Paynter, and Jorgenson are there, quite drunk. Another ship has frozen strawberries. They return to the *Caine* with a gallon. Queeg eats ice cream and strawberries until 2300 hours. At 0300 he calls an officers' meeting in the wardroom. Queeg sits slouched at the head of the table, staring at nothing, with his whole body bobbing rhythmically as he rolls the steel balls. Queeg keeps rolling the balls, saying nothing, until the door opens, and Whittaker, the chief officers' steward, enters with a gallon tin can full of sand he sets on the table. Queeg asks how many helpings of ice cream each officer had. Queeg measures and re-measures and determines that there is a missing quart of strawberries. He appoints the officers as a board of investigation, Maryk as chairman, to find out who ate them. They have until 0800, or Queeg will note for future fitness reports the failure of the board to carry out its assignment.

Maryk questions the stewards' mates. The three African-Americans stand side by side telling their stories. Maryk assumes they ate the strawberries. Keefer writes a report as the others return to bed. Queeg summons Maryk to his quarters at 0800. He now believes someone has a duplicate key to the icebox. Maryk should have investigated this. Maryk replies that there are only two keys. He has one and Whittaker has the other. Queeg asks if someone could have duplicated Whittaker's key. Queeg takes over the investigation and asks to see Whittaker. The steward's mates follow each other into the captain's quarters at one hour intervals.

Queeg scares the hell out of the African-Americans. Whittaker says he sleeps in his clothes, with the key, and he is a light sleeper. Queeg tells Maryk about when he was an ensign on a destroyer, the *Barzun*, in 1937, in charge of general mess. Five pounds of cheese vanished. While the exec pooh-poohed it, he asked and bribed the men for information. Queeg found out who had made himself a duplicate key. Queeg received a letter of commendation. They have to find out who made a duplicate key to the wardroom icebox. The crew members are to write a statements of their whereabouts between 1300 last night and 0300, name two men who can substantiate this, and swear to it. All statements will be on his desk by 1700 hours that day.

The *Caine* will leave Ulithi and escort the *Montauk*, the *Kalamazoo*, and two damaged destroyers to Guam. By 0900 the next morning, Queeg has decided who duplicated the key and ate the strawberries. The guilty party gave himself away in his statement and has until noon to turn himself in to the captain. Willie sees the barometer is falling. Keefer and Willie check the warnings in the chartroom and find no typhoons near them. Queeg sends for crew members singly and by two and threes and will approve Jellybelly's application for chief yeoman's school if he snitches. Queeg tells Maryk and Keefer to collect every key aboard ship, tagged with the owners' names, and search the ship and the crew. They will test the keys and find the one that fits. Keefer and Maryk



are dumbfounded. Keefer reminds Queeg he said he knew who stole the strawberries. Queeg needs evidence for his conviction. Maryk says there are thousands of keys on the ship. Keefer adds that he does not think it can hurt to try the captain's plan. Queeg giggles at the thought of strip searching the men. Maryk asks if it is worth doing all this for a quart of strawberries. When Keefer asks who the thief is, Queeg slyly replies that it is Urban.

When they return to their room, Maryk pulls the curtain. Keefer asks Maryk if he thinks the captain is a raving lunatic. This is over the line and is a systematized fantasy. Ducely's orders sent the captain into a spin, and he is trying to restore his shattered ego by re-enacting the cheese investigation on the *Barzun*. Queeg has invented the duplicate key because there has to be one. Tom Keefer wants Steve Maryk to take over the ship and relieve the captain from duty.

## Chapter 26, "A Gallon of Strawberries" Analysis

Captain Queeg immerses himself in the hopeless search for a missing quart of strawberry, obviously eaten by the mess boys, in hopes of making himself another hero as he did in the great cheese search on the *Barzun*. He persists in this even though the barometer is falling and the *Caine* is in rough weather. Keefer again says Queeg's conduct is over the line and that he thinks the man is a raving lunatic. Keefer wants Maryk to take over the ship while he writes.



## Chapter 27, "The Search"

### Chapter 27, "The Search" Summary

As the seas become rough and flat gray clouds close in, sailors collect keys, distribute tags, and curse. Willie interviews all the men in his department and takes a large cardboard carton with 400 tagged keys to the captain's cabin and dumps them on his bunk. Willie goes out on deck in the rough weather. The sea is Willie's constant, remaining larger than Queeg. It is still raining the next morning when the *Caine* reaches Guam and ties up next to the destroyer *Harte*. Queeg posts armed guards to prevent anybody from passing the key to a friend on the destroyer. He sends Jorgensen to the *Harte* and asks the chief censor to notify the captain if any keys appear in the *Harte's* mail. Willie helps Ducely pack to go to the beach with the *Harte's* boat at 1000. Ducely flees but first tells Willie that the mess boys ate the strawberries. Queeg calls another officers' meeting in the wardroom, where he rolls the balls, smokes, and studies several diagrams on the table. He plans to take the men topside and strip and search them by groups. Willie tells Maryk what Ducely said. Queeg does not believe Ducely or Willie.

Heavy swells roll in from the storm at sea. The *Caine* and the *Harte* are plunging and rubbing against each other, splintering their fenders. Willie relaxes in the captain's chair in the empty wheelhouse. Maryk enters the pilothouse and switches on the p.a. system to announce that all hands will go topside for personal searches under the tarpaulin on deck and in the crew's shower. Willie oversees the searches. Meatball is first, and he comments the captain is "Asiatic". Willie sees stripping the soldiers as a German rape of war on a crew with weakened spirit. Yeoman Jellybelly now reports to Queeg that the mess boys ate the strawberries. Chief Bellison saw them about 0100. Mess boys are always eating the leftovers.

Maryk finds the captain in his quarters, lying on his bunk in his underwear, staring at the ceiling and rolling the balls in his hands. He has a headache and wants to be left alone. Maryk will continue the search. When Maryk stops the search at 1300, he goes to the captain's quarters. The shades are drawn. Queeg is naked in his bunk, wide awake. The key is not found. Queeg orders the other keys returned. The *Harte's* crew watches in amazement and laughter. Maryk makes another entry in his medical log and asks Keefer to come to the room. Keefer reads the log and says Queeg is a clinical picture of a paranoid. Maryk wants Keefer to go with him to ComFifthFleet and turn in Queeg under Article 184. Their plan is briefly interrupted. All ships are to steam southward and maneuver to avoid typhoon Charlie approaching Guam.

### Chapter 27, "The Search" Analysis

The search for the key to the wardroom icebox continues as the weather becomes rougher. Captain Queeg's behavior become more erratic as he develops a headache and refuses to leave his room. The term "Asiatic" is not defined anywhere in the book.



## Chapter 28, "A Visit to Halsey"

### Chapter 28, "A Visit to Halsey" Summary

The sea subsides as the typhoon blows by to the north, and the *Caine* goes with a group of ships to Ulithi, sunny and green, its lagoon an azure mirror. Maryk tells Keefer that Admiral Halsey is there on the *New Jersey*. He can see a four-star flag. Keefer hesitates, since they are under Com Fifth and not Halsey's command. They should wait to return to Guam. Maryk wants to talk to Halsey, so the two officers go by gig. The immediate problem is that Queeg served fairly well during the typhoon. Keefer adds that paranoids cleverly walk the narrow dividing line between outright lunacy and acts that can be explained. Queeg's basic premise is that everyone on the *Caine* is a liar, a traitor, and a fuck-off, so that the ship can only function if he constantly nags and spies and threatens and screeches and punishes. How can they prove this premise is wrong? Maryk replies that everybody knows there is no ship with a thoroughly no-good complement.

They board the *New Jersey* and walk the side looking for the flag office. The *New Jersey* is very clean, well maintained, and awesome. They enter a room labeled *Flag Lieutenant*. There is nobody in the room but a lone sailor reading a comic who tells them the flag lieutenant is at chow. His room number is 384. Keefer wants to talk to Maryk on deck. They round a corner into a shaft of sunlight, and encounter a marine guarding Admiral Halsey's doorway. Maryk wants to barge in, but Keefer is getting cold feet. Keefer agrees Queeg is nuts but now thinks they do not have enough evidence. If they talk to Halsey, Maryk's Navy career will end and Queeg will still command the *Caine*. They are essentially committing mutiny. Keefer will not go in to see Halsey. Maryk confronts Keefer, since this was his idea. Keefer wants to back down when the going gets tough and have Maryk congratulate him for doing it.

### Chapter 28, "A Visit to Halsey" Analysis

The *Caine* is sent to Ulithi, where Admiral Halsey's ship, the *New Jersey*, is located. Keefer again talks at length about Queeg's paranoid personality and how the Captain believes everyone on the *Caine* is a liar, a traitor, and a fuck-off, thus forcing Queeg to spy, threaten, screech, and punish. Now both Keefer and Maryk go to the *New Jersey* to discuss this with Admiral Halsey. Again Keefer backs down and says they do not have enough evidence.





# Chapter 29, "The Typhoon"

## Chapter 29, "The Typhoon" Summary

The Third Fleet, the most formidable naval force ever assembled, is in Ulithi Lagoon for the assault on Luzon. Willie is thrilled at the array he sees from the forecandle of the runty, rusty *Caine* and is unaware of a nearby typhoon. Maryk is in the charthouse, plotting typhoon warnings from dispatches with latitudes and longitudes of storm centers. The next morning the big ships steam out to sea. The *Caine* tags along, for Fleet gunfire practice, and returns to Ulithi. Willie keeps up with Halsey's force through the dispatches. The *Caine* is to help tankers rendezvous with the Third Fleet for refueling at sea. The ocean is calm and the sky clear when ships leave Ulithi. The night of December 16th, the *Caine* begins to roll, and green white capped seas fill the view through Willie's windows. Queeg summons Willie to the charthouse.

Queeg asks why Willie left out typhoon warnings between the Philippines and Ulithi. Willie says there are none. Queeg blames Willie for losing the storm warning instead of decoding and plotting it on the chart. The barometer has dropped 14 points. The wind is shifting to the right and is force seven. He commands Willie to double check the decodes for the last forty-eight hours. All storm warnings will be broken instantly and brought to the captain. Maryk will keep the typhoon chart. Willie finds nothing in the radio shack and returns to his bunk. A radioman brings him a storm warning from CinPoa that Willie decodes and takes it to Queeg and Maryk in the chartroom. Willie says the message came in ten minutes ago. Queeg replies, "Just another one of those funny coincidences that dot your career, Willie, hey?" Maryk plots the typhoon as 370 miles east and south of them. CinPoa calls it a "mild circular disturbance".

Willie goes topside for fresh air as the ship rolls. The next morning Willie and Maryk are on deck, with the sea heaving and bubbling like black mud. They see nothing but ridges and valleys of water. From the top of a ridge, they see ships everywhere. The tankers are going to try to refuel the battleships anyway, with the barometer reading 29.42. Admiral Halsey is committed to an air strike in support of General MacArthur's Mindoro landing and has to fuel his ships or deprive the Army of air cover. At 1330 hours, the task force discontinues fueling and heads southwest out of the storm. Willie has the deck from 2000 to midnight. At 2330, a radioman brings Willie a storm warning. The typhoon is 150 miles away now, almost due east. Willie sleeps in his bunk with the aid of a Phenobarbital and is awakened by loud crashing, smashing sounds from the wardroom. He jumps to the deck, now slanting steeply to starboard, and cannot stand. The deck slowly levels. The ship continues to roll and right herself. Willie senses death working up momentum. He thinks it is still night, but it is 0700 hours. Willie crawls to the main deck, hangs onto the bridge ladder, and hears Queeg demand power on the starboard engine.

Willie asks Keefer, whose face is gray, what is happening. Admiral Halsey is trying to fuel in the center of a typhoon in waves tall as apartment houses. The *Caine* is rising



and falling on the jagged surface of the sea like a piece of garbage. The barometer is at 29.28. Willie wants to know why they are heading north. Queeg leaves the wheelhouse with his face gray and bloodshot eyes almost closed and demands to know why the engines did not respond. Paynter replies they did. Queeg relieves Paynter and sends him below to supervise the engines. The *Caine* rides better with her head to the wind. As the barometer falls to 29.19, it is clear the *Caine* is in the middle of a typhoon. Willie goes to the wardroom for coffee. When he returns to the pilothouse, the barometer is at 29.05.

## Chapter 29, "The Typhoon" Analysis

Admiral Halsey is refueling the fleet in the middle of a typhoon rather than deprive General MacArthur' Mindoro Army landing troops of air support. Even though the barometer and weather conditions indicate the fleet and the *Caine* are in the middle of a typhoon, the announcement is late in coming. The old, not maintained, minesweeper is having difficulty staying upright in the typhoon. Queeg does not know how to conn or steer the ship in a typhoon.



## Chapter 30, "The Mutiny"

### Chapter 30, "The Mutiny" Summary

The Navy recommends that in a typhoon, a ship turn into the wind and sea and ride out the storm. Queeg orders all engines ahead full, right standard rudder, and runs out of the wheelhouse. Stilwell spins the helm, but the rudder is out of the water. The *Caine* rises and falls on the waves, blown sidewise like flotsam. Radar goes out. Now the *Caine* is broadside to the wind. Maryk orders the rudder hard right and begins to manipulate the engines, swinging the ship's head slowly south instead of broadside to the wind.

Queeg returns to the wheelhouse and refuses to ballast the tanks. The barometer is now 28.94. Queeg demands to know why the rudder is at emergency right. Maryk replies because the ship is yawing to port and the "weather vane effect" is taking over. The rudder is not holding. The ship is skidding sideways with the wind and the rain. Queeg signals Flank Speed to one set of engines and Stop to the other to bring the *Caine* around. The ship continues to turn and tilts to starboard where she stays, wallowing under tons of water and not righting herself. The *Caine* comes halfway back to level and sags further to starboard. Willie's scared eyes are against the window. Water is inches from his eyes. Maryk tells Queeg they are broaching. The ship is broadside to the wind and about to capsize. Queeg should try backing the starboard engine. Queeg remains frozen to the telegraph stand. Urban falls to his knees and begins to wail and pray. Stilwell says the ship is coming right. Maryk tells him to ease rudder to standard. The *Caine* straightens slowly. Maryk asks Willie to look at the radar to see where they are in the formation. Willie inches to the radio shack and finds 20 sailors jammed in the tiny space, all in life jackets with waterproof searchlights and whistles. The shack is brightly lit. There is still nothing on the scopes but sea spray. There is no trace of other ships. Willie pulls himself to the pilothouse with his report. Queeg is still clinging to the telegraph stand. Maryk stands with both hands clamped to the captain's chair. Other officers enter the pilothouse.

Marks tells Queeg to ballast the stern tanks if they are going to steam before the wind. The Captain's face is screwed up as if looking at a bright light. Maryk again requests permission to ballast stern tanks. Queeg refuses. Now the ship is falling off to starboard. Maryk orders hard left rudder, stares at Queeg, and asks to head up into the wind. Queeg replies that fleet course is 180. Maryk says they have to maneuver for the ship's safety. Queeg has received no orders to maneuver at discretion. He continues looking straight ahead, clutching the telegraph stand. A huge wave looms high over the bridge and smashes down. Water pours into the wheelhouse. Maryk shrilly tells Queeg they have water on the bridge and they have to come around into the wind. Stilwell sobs that the *Caine* is not answering to the engines at all. The ship rolls almost completely over on its port side. The gyro goes out. Urban begins to wail and pray again.



Maryk orders Stilwell to reverse rudder hard right. He crawls across the deck, throws himself on the engine-room telegraph, wrestles the handles from Queeg's grip, and reverses the settings, trying to swing the ship northward into the wind and sea. The *Caine* continues coming around. Maryk tells Stilwell to ease the rudder to standard. The *Caine* is upright, rolling from one side to another. The Captain demands that they come left to 180. Maryk replies that they cannot ride stern to wind and save the ship. Queeg is still going with fleet course. His voice is faint, almost whispering, as he looks glassily ahead. Bad weather is no reason to disobey orders, and the Captain orders Stilwell to go left to 180. Maryk orders Stilwell to remain steady. He tells Willie to note the time. Maryk salutes Captain Queeg and temporarily relieves him as captain under Article 184 of *Navy Regulations*. Willie looks at the clock. What he sees happening between Maryk and Queeg is as incredible as his own death. Queeg issues more orders. Maryk says Queeg is on the sick list and has been relieved. Maryk has the conn now. Urban backs into a far corner. Stilwell stays on Maryk's course. Queeg orders the arrests of Maryk and Willie. Maryk orders that Paynter ballast all empty tanks and calls all officers to the bridge. The charthouse door opens. Harding, Keefer, and Jorgensen enter. Willie says Maryk relieved the captain and put him on the sick list. The barometer now reads 28.99.

All officers except Paynter are grouped against the bulkhead. Queeg is again hanging onto the telegraph stand. Maryk assumes all responsibility and orders the men to continue to treat Captain Queeg with utmost courtesy. Queeg says Keith supported him in his mutinous conduct from the start and he will pay as well. He wants his command back and he will overlook what happened. Maryk assumes all responsibility. The ship is on course. Stilwell shouts there is something ahead. Maryk orders hard right rudder, engines astern. They watch the bottom of a destroyer drift by, waves breaking over it in showers of foam, and look for survivors. Queeg adds Stilwell to his list of mutineers. The *Caine* circles the lost ship. The barometer is now 29.10. They see a raft on the starboard quarter with 3 men in it and two more bobbing in the water and pull the men aboard. Queeg tries to assume command. Maryk orders him to his cabin. Queeg remains on the bridge as the crew continues to look for survivors from the *George Black*.

## Chapter 30, "The Mutiny" Analysis

Maryk relieves the dysfunctional Queeg from command during the typhoon to save the *Caine* from capsizing. Queeg obviously does not know what to do since he is terrified and clings desperately to the telegraph stand. Maryk does not act scared, although he must be, and gives orders to get the ship moving properly and removes Queeg as captain under Article 184 of *Navy Regulations* and puts him on the sick list. If Queeg remains in command, the *Caine* will obviously capsize in the typhoon. If he relieves Queeg, the Captain will accuse him of mutiny. In reality, this is a small act of disrespect in a very large war.



# Chapter 31, "Counsel for the Defense"

## Chapter 31, "Counsel for the Defense" Summary

The district legal officer of ComTwelve in San Francisco, Captain Theodore Breakstone, USNR, is stuck with the *Caine's* file. Breakstone longs to go to sea but is trapped by his excellent civilian record as a lawyer. The papers include the botched inquiry report of the board of investigation into the unauthorized relief of Lieutenant Commander P. F. Queeg as commanding officer of the U.S.S. *Caine*. The recommendations are stupid and the facts are a tangled mess. Lieutenant Commander Challee, the prosecutor, has finally found potential defense counsel, Barney Greenwald, a Jewish lawyer and a fighter pilot from Albuquerque, there on sick leave. The case is such a hot potato the regular defense attorneys will not touch it.

Breakstone meets with Barney Greenwald, who does not want the case. The defendants are not underdogs and deserve to get slugged. Barney does think he can get the defendants acquitted. Breakstone, surprised, wants to know more. Barney replies that the charge is absurd. There was no mutiny. Maryk stayed on legal grounds. He misapplied Article 184 to commit a mutinous act, but the article is in the books. A lesser charge might stick. Breakstone's opinion of Barney Greenwald rises. Breakstone is preparing the formal charge. It will be, as Barney has said, "conduct to the prejudice of good order or discipline" and not mutiny. Breakstone tells Barney that defense is his duty. No other available attorney knows any law.

Challee enters, and Breakstone tells him that Barney Greenwald thinks the case is easy. Barney insists he does not want to defend the *Caine* mutineers. Queeg has been examined by a psychiatrist and is not crazy. Barney says that he is a good lawyer and a very expensive one and he does not want to volunteer his services to get the men acquitted. Now he has talked himself into taking the case. Breakstone says they will try Maryk first in a court-martial starting in two weeks. The *Caine* itself is in drydock at Hunters Point. Barney wants to talk to Maryk before he commits. Challee tells Breakstone that Barney will take the case but not get Maryk off.

Barney sees the *Caine* on blocks in a drydock, rusty and cluttered, and resembling a river boat. He asks for Lieutenant Maryk. Maryk is at the *Chrysanthemum* at Pier 6. He asks for the *Caine's* captain. The sailor replies that Captain White will be back at 1800 hours. The sailor's name is Urban and he knows nothing about any Captain Queeg. Barney goes to the *Chrysanthemum* to talk with Maryk. He is surprised to see a husky, bullet-headed, blunt-faced officer, who sits blinking amid tumbled bedclothes on the edge of his cot. This confuses Barney's entire preconception of the *Caine* affair. Steve tells Barney he will be buying himself a lot of trouble. He relieved Queeg because he thought he was nuts but is not so certain now. Barney asks where Steve learned all that stuff about paranoia he told the investigating officer. Steve read it in a book and never claimed to know much about it. The investigating officer cross-examined him for an hour about paranoia. They did not ask about what happened in the middle of a typhoon. Tom



Keefer enters, dressed in a fresh uniform, complete with all ribbons. He is taking the first half of his novel back East to sell.

Barney assures Steve he is a good lawyer. They eat lunch to a cafeteria at Pier 8. Barney tells Steve that if he wants to plead guilty, then they bargain with Challee, who might go easy to avoid trying a messy case. Steve does not want to plead guilty, since he was not trying to take over the ship but to save it. Barney nods and adds — no criminal intent. Barney says he will be Steve Maryk's defense counsel if he will have him. He adds that he was a red-hot lawyer in civilian life, making \$20,000 a year when he was out of school four years. His third year after law school he pried a hundred thousand dollars out of the government for Cherokees cheated out of their land forty years ago. Steve Maryk is either a mutineer or one of the dumbest goofs in the Navy and must tell Barney the whole story.

Steve admits Barney can call him dumb. If he had not relieved Queeg, the ship would have capsized in the typhoon. Three ships did go down. Barney adds that forty stayed afloat without the exec relieving the skipper. Steve is surprised because Barney uncovered his secret self-justifying thought. They return to the *Chrysanthemum* to talk. For an hour, Steve tells Barney what convinced him that Queeg was crazy until he runs out of words. Barney wants to know if he has read Keefer's novel. Keefer has never shown it to anybody. Barney tells Steve that his sensitive novelist friend is the true villain. Steve wants Tom left out. Barney comments that sounding off about "Old Yellowstain" - wonderful name, by the way - behind his back is one thing but Keefer will not back Maryk. Steve asks if Barney thinks Queeg is nuts. He does not.

Barney asks why they let him take the ship on to Lingayen Gulf. Steve replies the *Caine* could still sweep. At Ulithi, he reported to the commodore of ComServRon Five and told him what happened. They got Queeg on the beach that morning and had the head doctor go over him. The doctor said he did not think Queeg was crazy, just maybe a little fatigued, but would not clear him to resume duty. Queeg had been at sea four years, and the best thing to do was fly him to the States for a psychiatric checkup. The commodore was angry at Maryk because he had to pull the *Caine* out of line. Queeg told the commodore Maryk had been his exec for eleven months. After that much training Maryk could handle the ship even though he had been disloyal. Queeg recommended Maryk take the ship to Lingayen. Queeg is at his home in Phoenix, on temporary duty attached to Com Twelve waiting for the court-martial. Greenwald says he made a mistake recommending Maryk for Lingayen. They will plead not guilty.

## Chapter 31, "Counsel for the Defense" Analysis

Barney Greenwald is a very intelligent attorney, chosen to defend Maryk because he is on sick leave and no other attorney will touch the case. The action is much more dramatic in the novel than in this brief summary. Barney instinctively knows and has researched all of the persons involved in the little mutiny. He already knows their characters, testimonies, and what his defense will be. This is a sign of a very good criminal defense attorney who understands people. Barney knows Keefer will testify



against his friend Maryk, even though he instigated the change of command. Keefer is a coward interested in writing and selling his novel. Maryk's personality begins to emerge as more than just a competent executive officer on a run-down ship.



## Chapter 32, "Willie's Leave"

### Chapter 32, "Willie's Leave" Summary

Willie flies to New York to break up with May in person. He will never abandon his societal goals to marry her, and he wants to tell her before the court-martial changes his life. Willie dreams about the court-martial. He sees himself as an actor in a grand drama, explaining what really happened to President Roosevelt. Captain White, a handsome, regular Navy lieutenant, obviously a trouble shooter, commands the *Caine*. The officers perform their duties and speak cautiously. White is arid, cool, and efficient, acting as if Maryk's relief of Queeg never happened. He never thought the *Caine* mutiny would become just another legal problem. A little man in a little office conducts the investigation. Willie's stories of Queeg's insanity and incompetence sound lame. When he reads the final recommendation that he be court-martialed for mutiny, he feels as if he is reading a doctor's report that he is dying.

When Willie's plane lands in New York, the cold winter air chills him in his heavy bridge coat. His mother meets him. She has aged, her red hair dimmed to a nondescript grayish brown. Willie says she looks wonderful. To her, Willie has become a man. Willie has no war stories to tell her. Home is the same, lacking the smell of his dad's cigars. He reads of the war in the newspaper and luxuriates in a hot shower with a thick flow of adjustable water. His best clothes are loose on him. After dinner, he tells his mother about the mutiny. His mother agrees with him and thinks the court will acquit Maryk and not bother with Willie. She will talk to Uncle Lloyd, who knows what to do. Willie calls Marty Rubin, who wakes May, surprised by his visit. May has a cold and is running a fever, but she is cutting an audition record. They meet at the studio. May has quit school and is singing. Willie finds a fatter Marty Rubin and May at the microphone talking to two men. They go to a restaurant because May wants a drink and breakfast. May is singing at the Fifty-Second Street Club. Her father has been ill for half a year. Her mother manages the fruit store alone and is earning nothing. May is supporting the family. She rooms at a downtown hotel and does not sleep much. She can scratch out a living by singing. Her apartment is a wretched little room on a dark areaway without a bathroom, but it only costs \$3. Willie reads her scrapbook and offers to help her financially.

The next day they go to the Grotto Club, which used to be the Tahiti Club. May is fresh faced and radiant when sings. Willie listens to her for five hours. Earning a living in such a joint is worse than perpetual steaming on the *Caine*. They return to the squalid hotel room after midnight to lie on the bed and kiss. She says to Willie that they are all washed up. The answer is on Willie's miserable face. They are past history. She read it in his letters. May asks Willie what he will do after the war. She thinks he should teach at a university. He promises to call her before he leaves. Willie goes to a movie with his mother and visits Furnald Hall. Uncle Lloyd, a colonel in Army public information, joins them for dinner. He is upset about the mutiny. He had worse commanding officers in the artillery. Uncle Lloyd promises to talk to some of his Navy friends about the mess. If





Maryk is acquitted, that will be the end of it. Willie calls May and meets her at the Grotto. In her dressing room, Willie tells May about the mutiny. They laugh, filling Willie with hope. She gives him a long kiss to remember. Willie cannot recognize a husband's impulse to talk things over with his wife. He leaves in the morning.

## Chapter 32, "Willie's Leave" Analysis

The reader sees the situation from Willie's perspective again. The *Caine* mutiny was and is a big event in his life. Now it is just another legal case proceeding through channels. He wants reassurance and help, so he turns to his girl friend May, his mother, and his Uncle Lloyd. Uncle Lloyd intensifies Willie's anxieties with his stories of serving under worse commanders. Willie revisits his midshipmen's dorm and life as it was, when he was younger and not in such trouble. May has continued her life and her singing career without him. They interact as husband and wife without either of them recognizing this.



## Chapter 33, "The Court-Martial—First Day"

### Chapter 33, "The Court-Martial—First Day" Summary

*Naval Courts and Boards* lists details of all charges and specifications. No specific charge fits Lieutenant Maryk's actions. His invoking of Article 184 and relief of the captain does not fit the definition of mutiny. Maryk is charged with committing "Conduct to the Prejudice of Good Order and Discipline". Captain Breakstone carefully prepares the specification (indictment):

In that Lieutenant Stephen Maryk, USNR, on or about December 18, 1944, aboard the U.S.S. *Caine*, willfully, without proper authority, and without justifiable cause, did relieve from duty as commanding officer Lieutenant Commander Philip Francis Queeg, USN, the duly assigned commanding officer of said ship, who was then and there in lawful exercise of his command, the United States then being in a state of war.

Lieutenant Commander Challee, the Judge Advocate (prosecutor) expects to prove Maryk guilty.

Maryk signed logs describing the event. The key words are "without proper authority and without justifiable cause". Challee must prove Queeg was never crazy. He has the deposition of the doctor in Ulithi, who examined Queeg right after the mutiny, opinions from three Navy psychiatrists of the San Francisco hospital, who examined Queeg for weeks, and testimony from twenty crew members and officers of the *Caine* who never saw Queeg do anything questionable. Only Willie Keith and Helmsman Stilwell, parties to the mutiny, ever spoke unfavorably of the captain. Evidence otherwise is only Maryk's medical log. Challee knows every officer on the court has served under an oppressive, eccentric, commander. He knows Barney Greenwald has an attack on the question of criminal intent. He expects him to pound on Maryk's acting for the good of the service, however mistaken his diagnosis of Queeg. Challee counts on a quick, satisfying victory over Greenwald, but he errs in his guess of probable strategy.

Willie returns to the *Chrysanthemum* about 1100. He finds Keefer, tanned and thin, who says Stilwell has acute melancholia and is in the base hospital. Stilwell refused to leave his bunk for three days. Keefer adds that Stilwell is one of these tense, burning-up inside people. He has no education and a year of sailing with Queeg. They will use electric shock therapy to get him out of a vegetative state. Keefer thinks Chapman House, the first publisher he showed his novel to, bought it. He will get a small advance. Willie still wants the millionth copy, autographed.

The Court convenes. Seven officers stand behind a polished red bench as Challee intones the oath from a battered copy of *Courts and Boards*. The Court meets in a square gray room. Maryk can see the eucalyptus trees and the blue bay through the



windows. Captain Blakely, the toughest disciplinarian of ComTwelve, presides. Six of the officers are regular Navy and two are reserve doctors. Challee calls Queeg as his first witness.

Maryk remembers Queeg as a little stooped potbellied figure in a gray life jacket and wet khakis, clinging to the telegraph stand, his bristly face twisted with fear. The man before him is erect, confident, good looking, and youthful, despite a few blond strands over a pink scalp. Queeg takes a seat on a raised platform in the center of the room (witness chair) and never looks at Maryk. Challee takes him through the events of the mutiny. Queeg says he tried to hold fleet course and speed in worsening weather and did so until Maryk seized command. He remained on the bridge, suggesting maneuvers to bring the ship through the storm. Maryk despairs. Barney doodles little fat pink pigs on a legal pad. Queeg explains that Maryk was nervous and irritable all morning and panicked on the last bad roll. Maryk thought he alone could save the ship. The *Caine* was not in grave danger and was riding well in the typhoon. He protested the relief and tried to resume command. Willie Keith, Officer of the Deck, also panicked and consistently backed up Maryk. The rest of the officers were perplexed and submissive. Helmsman Stilwell, the worst troublemaker on the ship, was always unbalanced but very devoted to Lieutenant Keith. Stilwell is in the psychiatric ward diagnosed with acute melancholia. Queeg describes events as a freak accident. The other officers would have ignored Maryk. Another helmsman would have obeyed him. Maryk takes Greenwald's crayon and scribbles, "I can prove I wasn't panicky" on the pad. Greenwald writes, "Okay. May not be necessary". He draws a large pig around both statements. Queeg has been in the Navy for 14 years without an unsatisfactory fitness report or a reprimand. When he assumed command of an extremely disorganized and dirty ship, he took stern measures to bring the ship up to standard.

Barney rises to cross-examine. Has Queeg ever heard the expression, "Old Yellowstain"? No. He is not aware that all the *Caine's* officers habitually called him that? Challee objects. Barney responds that defense counsel must disprove the specification *-without authority and without justifiable cause*. Lieutenant Maryk's justifiable cause was the conduct, demeanor, and decisions of Commander Queeg during his command. The facts out of which that sobriquet (nickname) arose, are relevant. The President clears the courtroom so the board can consider the question.

In the hall, Barney lounges against the wall and tells Maryk that Captain Blakely does not like Jews. He has absolute pitch for intonations and harmonics on the name "Greenwald". This makes Maryk more miserable. Barney adds that he has always had a fair shake in the Navy and he will get it from Blakely too. Queeg is doing nobly. When they return to the courtroom, Blakely admonishes Barney for tarnishing Queeg's reputation and overrules the objection.

Barney asks about Queeg's fitness reports on Lieutenant Maryk. He wrote two, and in both he was outstanding. In the July 1st report, written after the "mutiny", Queeg stated Maryk was qualified for command. Barney stops, reserving the right to recall Queeg as a defense witness.



Challee's next witness is Lt. Thomas Keefer. Keefer marches in, his eyes looking blankly ahead. He crosses his long legs and his foot dances slightly during his testimony. Challee takes Keefer through the events of the mutiny. Keefer and other officers were in the bridge charthouse in terrible weather. He learned Queeg had been relieved when Maryk called all officers to the pilot house. Captain Queeg was there, wet, tired, and very tense-looking. He showed no signs of insanity. Everything was very confused. Maryk maneuvered to pick up survivors from the capsized ship. Keefer took no action to restore Queeg to his position. Queeg was not insane.

Challee calls Harding and Paynter that afternoon. Both are sullen witnesses who corroborate what Keefer said. Both obviously dislike Queeg. In cross, Barney brings out that Stilwell was restricted to ship for half a year for reading on watch, and the whole crew was docked five days' leave in the States because some sailors appeared at general quarters without life jackets. Paynter describes Stilwell's court-martial and admits Queeg directed him to find Stilwell guilty and give him a bad-conduct discharge. When the court did not do this, Queeg punished him by saying there would be no sleeping after 0800. Barney asks what the ship was doing at the time. Paynter says convoy duty. Keefer, Keith, and Harding were Officers of the Deck and department heads, standing watches four hours on and twelve off. They lost sleep due to the restriction.

Urban is next. He was the only other person present when Queeg was relieved. He kept the quartermaster's notebook. The ship was rolling very bad in a typhoon. He did not know why Queeg and Maryk disagreed about the ship's course. Neither the captain nor the exec acted crazy or scared. Challee tries to pry information out of Urban, who says the captain was the same as always. He does not remember much. Barney asks about when the *Caine* cut its own tow cable outside Pearl Harbor. When that happened, Queeg was bawling out Urban for having his shirt tail out of his pants. The rest of the afternoon, Challee calls chiefs and sailors of the *Caine*, who all testify that Queeg was not insane before, during, or after the typhoon. The court recesses, and Maryk takes Barney to dinner.

## Chapter 33, "The Court-Martial—First Day" Analysis

Military court procedures differ from those in state courts. The chief judge assigns the panel of officers serving as judges. The Judge Advocate, as prosecutor, must prove all of the elements of the specification, which is the indictment. The prosecution and defense sit at different tables, and the witness is in a chair on a raised platform in the middle of the room. There is no separate jury, because the officers on the court are the jury. There is no questioning of the jurors or disqualification for bias. These few paragraphs summarize the question and answer testimony much more graphically presented in the novel.

Barney expected Keefer and the others to deny everything. Keefer, the instigator of the mutiny, the person who coolly explained to his former friend Steve Maryk all about Captain Queeg's insanities and odd behavior, remembers none of that. Captain Queeg

was always perfectly sane to him. The other witnesses agree with Keefer. This is normal testimony in a criminal trial. If any of them back Maryk, they can be charged too. So nobody saw, said, or heard anything.



## Chapter 34, "The Court-Martial - Second Day, Morning"

### Chapter 34, "The Court-Martial - Second Day, Morning" Summary

Challee calls a scared Willie Keith to testify. Willie was officer of the deck on December 18th when Maryk relieved Queeg of command. Willie explains that the captain lost control of himself and the ship. They were in imminent danger of foundering. Challee contrasts Willie's service months in the Navy with Queeg's eight years and asks who would be better qualified to decide if a ship is foundering. Willie believes he would be, since he was thinking rationally and Queeg was not. Willie saw Queeg frozen to the wheelhouse telegraph stand. His face was green, showing his petrifying terror. His orders were sluggish, vague, and inappropriate. Willie thought the ship would sink, and Queeg's orders increased that danger. The *Caine* was broadside to the wind. Queeg refused to ballast and add water to the fuel tanks for stability.

Queeg remained in the wheelhouse and tried to resume command. He was never wild or raving. Although Queeg's orders were rational and in correct English, he showed no awareness of reality. Challee asks about the opinions of professional psychiatrists. Willie responds that none of them were on the bridge of the *Caine* during the typhoon. When asked about his loyalty to Queeg, Willie states that he was antagonistic to Captain Queeg at certain isolated times. Otherwise he was loyal and respectful. He did not like Queeg's mistreatment of the men. Queeg systematically persecuted Stilwell and restricted him to the ship for six months for reading on watch. He then refused to grant him leave in the States for a family crisis. Maryk gave Stilwell emergency leave, and Stilwell returned a few hours late. Queeg gave Stilwell a summary court for these incidents and for sending a fraudulent telegram. Willie thinks Stilwell's present mental collapse is due to Queeg's persecution.

Challee asks for other examples. Queeg cut off movies for six months because he was not invited to a showing by mistake. He cut off the water at the equator because he was annoyed by an officer's detachment to another ship. He called midnight conferences on insignificant details. He forbade sleeping by day when the department heads were standing a one-in-three-deck watch. Willie admits these may sound trivial now, but at the time they were serious. Although Queeg never tortured the men, he demonstrated how much can be done to oppress and maltreat within regulations. Lieutenant Maryk did not permit criticism of the captain in his presence. Every officer except Maryk uttered derogatory remarks about the captain in the wardroom. Challee asks Willie if he decided to obey Maryk on December 18th because Queeg was insane or because he did not like the Captain. Willie cannot answer because he believes what he says will destroy himself and Maryk. He says he cannot remember his state of mind that long ago. Willie is absolutely certain his testimony has convicted Maryk and himself. He is shaking with



rage and realizes he can never quite justify himself in the Navy's eyes. He obeyed Maryk for two reasons. He thought the exec was more likely to save the ship and he hated Queeg. He had never thought Queeg was crazy. He was stupid, mean, vicious, cowardly, and incompetent.

Barney asks for the rest of the reasons Willie disliked Queeg. Willie feels as if he is punching his fist through a glass door. His chief reason was cowardice in battle. He repeatedly ran from shore batteries. Challee objects that this is beyond the scope of direct. Barney responds that the witness' dislike of Queeg was the key fact brought out in direct. Blakely reads out loud from *Navy Regulations* that cowardice in battle may be punished by death. He asks Barney if he wants to withdraw his question and Willie if he wants to change his testimony. Neither do. Willie tells about Queeg running from the Saipan shore battery that fired on the *Stanfield*. He details what happened at Kwejalein that brought on Queeg's nickname of "Old Yellowstain". He watches the courts' facial expressions change. The seven officers of the court are listening intently to an amazing tale. "Old Yellowstain" referred to the yellow dye marker's remains.

In any combat situation, Queeg would be on the side of the bridge away from the firing.

He describes how Queeg extorted \$100 from him. Challee objects because the allegations are irrelevant. Since he has no other objection, he charges that Barney and the witness have colluded to recklessly smear Commander Queeg. Barney calmly responds there is no collusion. Facts are facts and all these bear directly on Queeg's mental fitness to command a naval vessel. They clarify Keith's dislike of his commanding officer. Willie tells of the loss of the crate of liquor in San Francisco Bay as Captain Blakely begins grimacing horribly. Queeg made Willie admit he was responsible for all acts of the working party, even though he, Queeg, had issued the orders. After he apologized to the captain for his stupidity and paid for the liquor, Queeg took his money and signed his leave papers. Challee cannot shake Willie's testimony.

Challee calls Captain Randolph P. Southard, a dapper, lean officer with three colorful rows of ribbons and medals. Southard commands Destroyer Squadron Eight and has commanded destroyers of several types, including World War I four-pipers, for ten years. He is Challee's expert witness on ship handling. Southard testifies that under typhoon conditions a destroyer rides as well going down-wind as up-wind. Because of a destroyer's high freeboard forward, it tends to back into the wind. Therefore it was more manageable with the wind astern. Queeg's effort to stay on the fleet's southerly course was the soundest possible procedure for getting out of the typhoon danger. Maryk's decision to turn north was a dubious and dangerous one that kept the ship in the direct path of the storm. Barney asks Southard if he ever conned a ship in the center of a typhoon. No, nor has he ever commanded a destroyer-minesweeper either. Barney asks if the rules of destroyer handling would hold for a DMS in the center of a typhoon. Southard admits there are no hard and fast rules for that. Too many strange things happen rapidly. What would Southard do if conning a destroyer in winds and seas worse than ever experienced with the ship is wallowing broadside and foundering? Would he bring the ship head into wind or stern to wing? Southard reluctantly admits he



would head into the wind. The engines and rudders would have the best purchase this way. It would be the last chance to control the ship.

## **Chapter 34, "The Court-Martial - Second Day, Morning"**

### **Analysis**

Again, the reader should remember that these few paragraphs summarize much riveting and important question and answer testimony. Willie Keith's testimony begins to get the court's attention. Transporting liquor on shipboard for one's personal use is against regulations. The officers are quite concerned about Queeg's apparent cowardice in battle. The expert testimony of Captain Southard is lame and not entirely on point. He does ultimately support Maryk's tactics to keep the *Caine* from capsizing.





# Chapter 35, "The Court-Martial—Second Day, Afternoon"

## Chapter 35, "The Court-Martial—Second Day, Afternoon" Summary

Challee calls Dr. Forrest Lundeen, Navy psychiatry chief at the hospital that examined Queeg. Three psychiatrists observed Queeg for three weeks and found no evidence of insanity. Queeg is a well-adjusted personality who could not have had a psychotic collapse three weeks prior.

Barney shuffles towards the witness platform while looking down at his feet, presenting a picture of flustered embarrassment. Since his is a legal background, he just wants to clarify those troublesome technical terms. What did Lundeen mean by saying Queeg, like all adults, has problems to which he is adjusted? Lundeen answers that Queeg's over-all problem is inferiority feelings generated by an unfavorable childhood and aggravated by adult experiences. What unfavorable childhood? He has a disturbed background with divorced parents, financial trouble, and schooling problems. What aggravating factors in adult life? Queeg is short. He had a low class standing. He was hazed at the Naval Academy. His naval officer identity is key to his personal security. He is excessively zealous about protecting his standing. He will not admit mistakes. He distorts and revises reality in his own mind and blames others for his mistakes. Queeg has a rigid personality and believes others hate him. He trusts nobody.

Barney switches from his fumbling manner to preciseness. "Doctor, you've testified that the following symptoms exist in the Commander's behavior — rigidity of personality, feelings of persecution, unreasonable suspicion, withdrawal from reality, perfectionist anxiety, an unreal basic premise, and an obsessive sense of self-righteousness". Dr. Lundeen, startled, says these are mild. Queeg has well compensated. Barney asks what this syndrome is called as a common psychiatric class. Lundeen admits it is a paranoid personality, not a disabling affliction. Challee slinks down in his seat. Barney slowly consults his notes, letting the word "paranoid" hang in the air. He asks Lundeen how a paranoid personality distinguishes between illness and adjustment. Lundeen replies it is a question of degree. Millions of people live normal lives with these compensated conditions. You have to look for the disabling factor. Can a man can have a paranoid personality that would not disable him for subordinate duties but which would disable him for command. Yes. The psychiatric board did not find Queeg disabled for command.

When does the paranoid personality becomes disabling? Lundeen answers — when the man loses control of himself and of the reality around him. Symptoms? Withdrawal into torpor, or frenzy, or nervous collapse, depending on circumstances. A psychiatrist can detect the disabling mechanisms. Barney asks why a lay person cannot see this. Lundeen sarcastically replies that the distinguishing mark of this neurosis is extreme



plausibility and a most convincing normal manner on the surface, particularly in self-justification.

Barney looks at the floor again. The court members now know to cringe. He describes some of Queeg's actions and asks if he is disabled for command. Lundeen answers that he would not be disabled but certainly not desirable. Should Commander Queeg be restored to command of a naval vessel? That is Personnel's decision. Queeg is not mentally ill but he would make his associates miserable. Captain Blakely asks if a captain could have a temporary disability under stress and not a full collapse. Yes.

Challee calls Dr. Bird, a second psychiatrist. Dr. Bird is a slender, handsome man with something of the fanatic in his look. He confirms everything Dr. Lundeen said, except he calls Queeg's problem an obsessive personality with paranoid features. Barney asks whether in the Freudian analysis there is such a thing as mental illness. Bird replies there are only disturbed people and adjusted people. Queeg had inferiority feelings for which he has well compensated. Greenwald asks the difference between *compensated* and *adjusted*. A person can compensate for problems but cannot adjust without psychoanalysis. Captain Queeg has not been psychoalyzed. He is a disturbed person but not a disabled person since he has compensated for his disturbance. Queeg believes he is disliked because he is wicked, stupid, and personally insignificant. The guilt and hostility trace back to infancy. He has compensated for the undesirable paranoid pattern through his naval career. So his naval career is a result of his disturbance? Bird answers that most military careers are.

Barney glances at Blakely before asking Bird to explain this. It represents an escape, a chance to return to the womb and be reborn with a synthetic, blameless self. Barney asks if Queeg had any peculiar habits with his hands. Rolling the marbles? Queeg told Bird about that. Bird told him to resume the habit if it made him more comfortable. The habit is an incessant rolling or rattling of two marbles in his hand. Queeg's hands tremble from his inner tensions.

Barney asks what this rolling of balls means in the Freudian analysis. It could be suppressed masturbation or fondling poisonous pellets of feces. Feces? In the infantile world, excrement is a deadly poison and therefore an instrument of vengeance. It would be an expression of rage and hostility against the world. The court members are both amused and horrified. Blakely sees Dr. Bird as an unbelievable freak. If Queeg is sick, how could the psychiatry board give him a clean bill of health? They found no disability. Dr. Bird has never been to sea or worked with any ships' captains before and can only guess at the stresses of command. Command of a ship does not require a highly gifted person. The abilities required are less than those for a psychiatrist. The Board members are now angry. Since Bird has admitted that Queeg is sick, the remaining question is *how* sick. The doctor does not think he is sick enough to be disabled for command. Challee tries to get Dr. Bird to withdraw the word "sick". The witness, now hostile, throws out clouds of confusing terminology.

Barney has two witnesses, Maryk and Commander Queeg. Maryk recounts the events of the mutiny, repeating Willie's version of events, and explains about his medical log on



the captain he began shortly after the Kwajalein invasion and the dropping of the yellow dye marker. He adds that Captain Queeg tried to regain command by proposing to Maryk he would forget the whole thing and never report it. They could redo the penciled, rough logs. It would not be the first time. When Maryk refused, Queeg began to plead and beg. He cried and became very angry. Maryk relieved Queeg during the typhoon because of the captain's mental breakdown when the ship was in extreme danger. He admits giving Stilwell a pass against the captain's intention. Maryk also heard other officers make sarcastic and insulting remarks about the captain and repeatedly warned them against doing that and he did not allow it in his presence.

## **Chapter 35, "The Court-Martial—Second Day, Afternoon" Analysis**

The testimony is much more vivid in the novel's question and answer format. Barney Greenwald's embarrassed, "Aw shucks, folks, I'm just a poor young, ignorant, country lawyer," affect catches the professional witnesses off guard as to his true intellect and knowledge. This is a common defense lawyer trick, especially when the witnesses know nothing about the lawyer. The Board is beginning to realize just how good Barney Greenwald is as a defense lawyer and how bad the case is against Queeg. Freudian analysis has been replaced by other forms of psychiatry. The psychiatrists admit that Queeg is sick and should not be in a command position. The explanation of why Queeg rolls the metal balls in his hands repulses the Board members.



# Chapter 36, "Queeg Versus Greenwald"

## Chapter 36, "Queeg Versus Greenwald" Summary

Barney calls Queeg to the stand. He is still debonair and self-assured. Barney asks about his interview with Maryk the day after the typhoon. Queeg never offered not to report what happened since it was in the logs. He admits recommending to the commodore at Ulithi that Maryk be allowed to take the *Caine* to Lingayen Gulf. Queeg relied more on Keefer to conn the ship than Maryk. He denies that the crate that sank was full of liquor. Barney offers to call the Carpenter's Mate who built the crate. Queeg recalls there were two crates, not just one. The one Keith lost did contain 31 bottles of liquor. Queeg admits he transported the liquor to the States on the *Caine* despite Navy regulations.

Queeg thinks Willie Keith hates him because of fancied injuries to his crony, Stilwell. They were mighty affectionate. "Every time Keith thought I looked cross-eyed at Stilwell there was all kinds of screeching and hollering from Keith as though I were picking on his wife or something." They were pretty sweet on each other and had a sort of understanding. Barney asks if he is suggesting they had an abnormal relationship. Queeg replies, with a sly grin on his face, that he is just explaining facts everybody saw.

Barney asks about the *Caine's* towing targets at Pearl Harbor and steaming over its own towline. He says that Stilwell, dreamy, unreliable and at the helm, failed to warn Queeg that they were coming around 360 degrees. When he saw what was happening, he instantly reversed course, but the line parted during the turn. He reported the defective line to ComServPac. Queeg reprimanded signalman Urban for having his shirt tail out. Queeg does not remember dropping a dye marker off Jacob Island, how close the *Caine* was to the shore, or how far behind the attack boats were he was supposed to be leading in. Maryk had the conn.

As they discuss the Saipan invasion when the *Stanfield* was fired on by a shore battery and the *Caine* sped out of range, Queeg becomes quite agitated. Challee asks for a recess. Queeg does not want one. Barney asks about the day of the typhoon. Queeg denies that the *Caine* was in danger of sinking. He had the ship under control. Queeg reaches into his coat pocket and brings out the two glistening steel balls. Barney asks for Queeg's comments on the episodes in Maryk's medical log. Queeg rambles on for a while about all the petty events and how he was betrayed and double crossed by Maryk and Keith. He jumps from strawberries to water conservation to coffee to strawberries and searching for the key and how he got stabbed in the back and then Stilwell's court-martial as a conspiracy of Keith and Maryk to discredit him. He goes on from subject to subject, hardly pausing to breathe. The narrative becomes less distinct as he talks and his jumps in time and place more sudden and harder to follow. Queeg talks on and on, rolling the balls, face glowing with satisfaction as he vindicates himself. Challee sinks down in his chair as Queeg's sentences become more lengthy. Barney shows Queeg copies of two fitness reports on Lieutenant Maryk. On July 1, after the "mutiny", Queeg



wrote: "This officer has if anything improved in his performance of duty since the last fitness report. He is consistently loyal, unflagging, thorough, courageous, and efficient... He cannot be too highly commended. He is recommended for transfer to the regular Navy." Challee cannot cross-examine. The court recesses until 13:00 for closing arguments.

## **Chapter 36, "Queeg Versus Greenwald" Analysis**

As Barney questions Captain Queeg, it becomes clear that he is not sane. His blaming of others for his mistakes becomes obvious. He admits transporting liquor against Naval regulations. He begins rolling the two steel balls and then loses his composure, launching into a stream of consciousness, jumbled thought pattern.



# Chapter 37, "The Verdict"

## Chapter 37, "The Verdict" Summary

Challee loudly argues at closing that Barney has twisted the proceedings so that the accused is Queeg and not Maryk. The court cannot endorse this conduct or it will destroy the chain of command. Commander Queeg was given an obsolete, decaying, run-down ship. He carried out assignments to his superiors' satisfactions. The specification has been proved by the facts. Barney's manner is soft, apologetic, and hesitant after Challee's passionate shouting. He admits he was reluctant to take the case because the defense was to show the mental incompetence of a Naval officer. No man who commands a naval ship can be a coward. Questionable acts must be explained in another way. He reviews all the damaging evidence against Queeg, stressing what seemed to impress Blakely. Both psychiatrists admitted Queeg was sick. It is up to the court to decide if that sickness had incapacitated Queeg. He says nothing about Maryk. The court debates for an hour and ten minutes before it acquits Maryk.

Maryk and Barney are surrounded on the sidewalk outside the building by a jubilant group of people. Maryk's mother clings to him. His father, a heavy, quiet, shabby man, pats her shoulder. All the *Caine's* officers are there. Keefer takes them to celebrate with dinner at the Fairmont. He received the contract on his novel in the mail plus a check for \$1000 from Chapman House. Barney goes back inside to make up with Challee and will join them later.

The table at the Fairmont holds a green-iced cake in the shape of a book. *Multitudes, Multitudes, a Novel by Thomas Keefer* is written on the top in yellow sugar letters. Willie is having a wonderful time, since he does not know what Keefer testified. They rise and toast Barney when he enters, obviously drunk. As everyone looks at him, he says he is drunker'n all of them - he has been drinking with Challee trying to get him to take back the dirty names he called him. They shook hands on the ninth whisky sour - maybe the tenth.

Barney sees the cake and book title from the Old Testament. Keefer admits the Navy would not clear the content. Barney says Naval officers are all stodgy, stupid Prussians. He grabs at a chair. Barney admits he is a Jew from way back, and Challee said he used smart "Jew-lawyer tactics". He took it back and apologized. If Barney wrote a book, he would make "Old Yellowstain" the hero because his mother resembles Mrs. Maryk. The Germans cooked the Jews down to soap in Europe. He had an aunt and uncle in Krakow who are soap. He is a Jew but he cannot read Hebrew. His audience is puzzled. He returns to "Old Yellowstain". While Barney was studying law and the rest were not in the Navy, the regulars in the Army and Navy were manning guns. "Old Yellowstain", for the sake of a paycheck, was standing guard on America. Only fools went into the armed service back then. When war started and the Germans decided to melt down old Mrs. Greenwald, who stopped them? Barney dropped his law books and



learned to fly. The Captain Queegs of the world were keeping Mama out of the soap dish.

Barney turns to Maryk. The dinner is phony. He is guilty. Now he has no chance of going to the regular Navy. He got Maryk off with legal tricks, by making clowns out of Queeg and a Freudian psychiatrist, like shooting fish in a barrel. His only problem was when Keefer testified and did not support Maryk. Keefer went after Queeg and got him but was never in the muck. He will be the next captain of the *Caine* and retire old and full of fat fitness reports. He will publish his novel showing how the Navy stinks, make a million dollars, and marry a movie star. He sank Queeg for them and now he is drunk. Queeg deserved better because he stopped Goering from washing his fat behind with Barney's mother. He toasts Keefer and throws his glass of wine in Keefer's face. Keefer stares dumbfounded at Barney, who says he will wait in the lobby for Keefer. They can go some place quiet to fight. Since they are both drunk, it will be a fair fight. Barney wobbles out of the room. The group eats quietly, and the party breaks up early.

## Chapter 37, "The Verdict" Analysis

The contrast in demeanors of the attorneys for their closing arguments is customary. Each wants the best parts of their cases to be remembered. Barney knows he has done well, discrediting each expert and making Captain Queeg break down on the stand. Later, he confronts all of the celebrants, including Keefer who started the mutiny and betrayed Maryk with his testimony. He is proud of the Queegs of the old Navy, who defended the country while he and the other celebrants were not even old enough to serve.



# Chapter 38, "The Kamikaze"

## Chapter 38, "The Kamikaze" Summary

A Kamikaze pilot sets the *Caine* on fire at Okinawa. Keefer is now captain. Willie is exec and a senior grade lieutenant. Captain White moves to a regular Navy ship. Personnel scattered the *Caine's* officers and crew to eradicate the bitterness of the Queeg days. Maryk commands an LCI, which is the end of his navy hopes. Nobody knows what happened to Queeg. Willie runs the ship as Keefer retires into isolation and works on his novel. Keefer is not able to wipe Barney's yellow stain from his face. The *Caine's* crew knows Keefer is untrustworthy and very queer. Keefer had the conn when the Kamikaze hits.

Urban yells about the attack. Keefer orders all guns fired. Willie is in the charthouse. Before the plane hits, Willie regrets not having married May. The plane hits and explodes. Tall orange flames leap mast-high behind the galley deckhouse, headed toward the bridge. There is an immense jagged hole in the deck over the aft fire room. The whole plane is inside the *Caine* and the ship is on fire. All water safety valves are opened. Keefer rescues his novel and jumps off the ship. When the ammunition blows up, the men start jumping off the ship. Willie stays aboard to get the fire under control. They lose Horrible. Willie maneuvers the ship among the swimmers and helps Keefer climb back aboard. Keefer recommends Willie for the Navy Cross. Everett Harold Black, water tender third class, a/k/a Horrible, dies. His body is in the gutted fire room. Willie looks and calls for volunteers. The search party is the African-American sailors, who also deal with the charred remains of the Japanese pilot.

A pale Keefer slouches in the captain's chair on the bridge and lets Willie bring the ship into the harbor. Willie goes below, discards his wet, filthy clothes in a pile in his room and showers. He dresses in his freshest khakis, draws his curtain, stretches out on the bunk, and begins to shake. Hot food helps. Willie finds the cigar Horrible gave him on his promotion, which was his death sentence. Horrible was transferred from the undamaged after engine room to the fire room, where he died. Willie writes Horrible's parents.

Willie finds Keefer on his bunk, resting, arm in a sling, drinking medicinal brandy. He asks if Willie has read *Lord Jim*. Keefer says it is appropriate for the day. He shows a dispatch to Willie. *CO Caine report Commodore Wharton aboard Pluto 1700*. Keefer wants to send Willie to explain what happened. Keefer admits that he has brains but no guts and expresses his sympathy for Queeg. Command is the loneliest, most oppressive job in the whole world. De Vriess was an ox who did not have the imagination to know that or be bothered. Queeg had no brains, but he had nerves and ambition. It is no wonder he went ga-ga. Keefer has done pretty well until today. He begins to cry and has another brandy. The Navy moves in mysterious ways. They put his brother Roland on a carrier and sentenced him to the *Caine*. They had the same test, a Kamikaze fire. Roland died saving his ship. Tom jumped off the *Caine*. Keefer





asks Willie if he knows how much he has changed in two years on the *Caine*. De Vriess always said Willie would be an outstanding officer. He wants to know if the other officers are calling him "Old Swandive". Keefer goes to meet with the commodore. He gives Willie a copy of the first 20 chapters of *Multitudes*. The rest are soggy.

## Chapter 38, "The Kamikaze" Analysis

The reader sees and contrasts the characters of Tom Keefer and Willie Keith under battle pressure. Ever the coward looking after his own best interests, when the *Caine* catches fire, Tom Keefer rescues his novel and jumps off the ship, leaving Willie to put out the fire and retrieve those who jumped ship from fear. Keefer acknowledges that Willie has matured during his two years of service on the *Caine*. The reader can also contract the courage under fire of both Tom and Roland Keefer.



# Chapter 39, "A Love Letter"

## Chapter 39, "A Love Letter" Summary

Long after midnight, Willie closes Keefer's manuscript, goes to the ship's office, bolts the door, and types a long letter to May again asking her to marry him. Willie admits he wants to go back to school and eventually teach. He talks about the mutiny, the typhoon, the contents of Keefer's novel, and his love for May. The *Pluto* patches up the deckhouse damage but cannot mend the boiler. The *Caine* is sent further into exile at an anchor berth far up the harbor. Two boilers still work and the old ship is still functional. A couple of days before the *Caine's* scheduled minesweeping operation, the *Moulton* comes alongside and Willie's old friend Keggs comes to the *Caine*. He is Captain Keggs now. Willie is merely Exec Keith. As they drink coffee, Keggs assures him he will be Captain of the *Caine* by December. Keggs wants to know all about the mutiny. Willie says that Maryk had a sensational defense lawyer.

Seventeen days before war's end, the *Caine* finally sweeps a mine. They are out in the China Sea in a double line of minesweepers stretching five miles across the water. Sweeping begins at sunrise. The mine, a big rusty ball knobbed with little horns, pops up in the *Caine's* wake and wallows low in the water. Keefer is excited and orders a dye marker dropped. A subchaser shoots it. All along the sweep formation mines begin to bob up. The sailors anxiously watch the water ahead and immediately see a mine. The *Caine's* guns shoot it and three more. The novelty wears off as they sweep seven mines and explode half a dozen.

Willie once decided it would be the fate of the *Caine* never to sweep a mine. His career ends when number one boiler quits and the ship cannot maneuver. The *Caine* is ordered back to Okinawa, setting off a couple of mines as they go. The *Caine* limps into Buckner Bay and requests repairs from the *Pluto*, which may get to the *Caine* in August. Keefer can make his own repairs with their materials. During the next six weeks, Willie writes May many letters and receives no reply. He does hear from now Lieutenant Ducely in Public Relations, where he belongs. "Old Yellowstain" is running a supply depot in Stuber Forks, Iowa. He is engaged to the girl in the corset ad and has seen May Wynn singing at a club. The mood of officers and crew changes with the bombing of Japan and Russia's declaring war on Japan. Everybody makes peacetime plans. Willie is reading when his radio music is interrupted with news of Japan's surrender. Fireworks begin all over the island and decks thunder with the dancing and jumping of sailors. Ships in the harbor begin firing their guns.

Willie worries about the decrepit *Caine*. The repair officer of the *Pluto* finally sends a couple of chief ship fitters for 72 hours, who fix the boiler pumps. All destroyer-minesweepers except the *Caine* are sent to Tokyo to sweep the harbor in advance of the victorious fleet. The officers and crew hear the surrender ceremonies on the radio. The exit schedule comes out early in September, releasing half the *Caine's* crew,



including the captain, immediately. Willie's date is the November 1. Willie will be the last captain. Keefer admits he always hated the ship.

## Chapter 39, "A Love Letter" Analysis

As World War II is ending, Willie thinks about his future. He is certain he wants to marry May, continue his education, and teach. The reader can tell that Willie's mood has changed dramatically from the eagerness with which he first approached his Naval service to concern for his future and a fitting end for the *Caine*, which has been in service for a long time and is now in very bad condition. Concern is a form of love, so in a sense Willie writes a love letter to May and expresses his love and appreciation for the old ship. Since Keefer's release date precedes Willie's, Willie will be the last captain of the *Caine*.



# Chapter 40, "The Last Captain of the Caine"

## Chapter 40, "The Last Captain of the Caine" Summary

Willie moves his belongings into Queeg's room and lies down on the bunk. It is a strange sensation. Queeg is now the grand historical figure in his life - not Hitler or Tojo, but Queeg. His mind is painfully divided between the thrill of command and the misery of May's lengthening silence. The *Caine* is a broken down hulk, a pitiful caricature of its past glories. He writes another letter to May from Okinawa. A typhoon brushes past Okinawa, and Willie is on the bridge for 30 hours, maneuvering the engines and rudder to keep the anchor from dragging. At dawn the crew sees a dozen ships stranded on beaches and reefs all around the bay, some high and dry, others on their sides in shallow water. Willie becomes a hero.

Typhoons are loose in the South Pacific, and two might actually hit Okinawa. Willie goes to the *Moulton* and bursts in on Keggs in his cabin. He wants Keggs' ship to escort the *Caine* to the States. The operations officer agrees since the *Caine* will be good scrap metal. If they send Keggs and the *Moulton* along, they won't break down. Both men are due for decommissioning. The two ships are ordered to New Jersey, via Pearl and the Panama Canal.

As Willie leaves Okinawa, he feels the end of the war. He left home three years ago and has come half around the globe to this strange, unknown place. Now he is going home. He calls the Candy Store in the Bronx, May's emergency telephone number, from Pearl. May moved away five months ago and left no forwarding address or number. His mail at the ship contains his citation signed by the Navy Secretary and a Bronze Star for heroism. He also receives a reprimand letter for his involvement in the mutiny. The acquittal has been disapproved as to him and Commander Queeg will be restored to duty.

On October 27th, Willie is in his cabin reading Pascal's *Pensees*. He is in his coat. The room is cold. The decommissioning ceremony is half an hour off. He finds words in the book that he underlines: "Life is a dream, a little more coherent than most."

In the weeks since leaving Pearl Harbor, he has been in a dream, making the transition from Naval Officer to a new Willie Keith. The exec summons him to the ceremony. He sees a familiar Budge, Urban, and Winston. The others are draftees, married men with kids, dragged from their homes in the war's last months. Willie reads the decommissioning order and folds it away. The flag is sent to Horrible's parents.

Willie walks down the gang plank and meets his mother at the gate. May has vanished from the world along with Marty Rubins. Mrs. Keith sees Willie has aged. The change is in his eyes, his gestures, his bearing, and his voice. He has gone from a ruddy careless



boy to an adult. He tells her that leaving the *Caine* is the happiest moment of his life. Willie notices his mother is now a fearful, gray-headed old lady. He thinks he will no longer be in a fog when he finds May.

Willie finally locates Marty Rubin. He says May is not married. Willie should come to his office in the Brill Building. May is now Marie Minotti, "Broadway's Beloved Bombshell" and living with her band leader, who is not divorced from his last wife. They go to the lounge where May is rehearsing. Willie is startled by her blond hair. At the rehearsal break, Willie asks her to marry him. May does not want to give up \$250 a week and have Willie's kids. He kisses her and gives her his Bronze Star. He tells her they will be happy together. Willie is determined to marry this woman. He leaves the lounge as brass band music fills the side streets. He watches the Navy's blue ranks march down Fifth Street. Confetti fills the air, and an occasional scrap drifts down and brushes the face of the last captain of the *Caine*.

## Chapter 40, "The Last Captain of the Caine" Analysis

The reader learns that the actual hero of the mutiny, the person who has shown the most perseverance and fortitude, is Willie Keith. He has grown from a piano playing college graduate, a rich kid frequenting the bars of New York City, to a mature man who thinks of others more than of himself. The reason for reprimanding Willie while restoring Queeg to Naval command is not given nor much understood except that Willie does not have a Naval career to pursue while Queeg still does. Willie's marriage to May is left as an open question in the novel.



# Characters

## Everett Harold Black

See Horrible

## Captain De Vriess

Captain De Vriess is the first commander of the USS *Caine*, which has seen constant action near the front and, therefore, appears rather bedraggled. His style of command disgusts Keith, who would prefer following Navy regulations, but that is because he is fresh to the war. Still, for all De Vriess' for him. They consistently out-drill all the other minesweepers in the fleet. Keith surprises himself when, late in the novel, he speaks of De Vriess with respect.

## Ducely

Ducely is Keith's assistant. Soon, however, his mother arranges for his transfer stateside.

## Walter Feather

Walter is May Wynn's new boyfriend. He is a great entertainer and has crafted her reputation as a "bombshell."

## Bill Gorton

When Keith arrives on the *Caine*, Bill Gorton is the Chief Executive Officer.

## Barney Greenwald

Barney Greenwald is the lawyer who defends Maryk at his court-martial trial. He accepts Maryk's case after meeting him and realizing that Maryk was duped by someone more intelligent: Keefer, the novelist. At Keefer's celebratory dinner, Barney makes a speech when, for the first time, the morality play of the novel is revealed. Barney hopes that his mother will not be a victim of Hitler's "final solution" because of military men like Queeg, though other relatives already have been. In this light, Barney admits he would rather not have seen Maryk acquitted and took the case only because he felt Keefer ought to have been the man on trial.



## Harding

Harding arrives aboard the USS *Caine* at the same time as Keith. At the end of the novel, Harding is Keith's executive officer.

## Horrible

Horrible becomes a casualty aboard the ship when he is killed during the kamikaze attack.

## Roland Keefer

See Rollo

## Tom Keefer

Tom Keefer is intelligent, a writer, and "queer as a three dollar bill" according to Rollo, his halfbrother. Keefer reminds Greenwald of his shifty roommate at college. While under the command of De Vriess, Keefer puts minimal effort into his duty but maximum effort into writing his novel. He regards the war as a silly distraction from his literary pursuits. Keefer reveals himself as a coward under pressure: he talks Maryk out of exposing Queeg; he fails to substantiate Keith's and Maryk's story; and he abandons the ship to Keith when they are hit with a kamikaze attack.

## Edwin Keggs

A schoolteacher named Keggs is Keith's roommate at midshipman school. He is assigned duty aboard the USS *Moulton*. His military experience is vastly different from life on the *Caine*.

## Dr. Keith

Dr. Keith is Willie's father. In declining health, he keeps this from his son but finally reveals it in a jarring letter that Keith promises to read only after he is aboard the ship. Due to a mishap, Keith reads it at Pearl Harbor but telegraphs home too late-his father is dead. The message of Dr. Keith's letter is that he is proud of Keith and hopes that, whatever else he does, he will not follow his father's path toward an easy, rich life. Instead, he hopes that Keith will pursue his dreams and the love of his choice.



## Mrs. Keith

Mrs. Keith is Willie's mother. She seems to be playing a game of appearances. The Keiths are not as wealthy as they appear to be, and it is only through her cunning that they are able to keep up with the house payments and other necessities. Keith does not know about his mother's work. For her sake, he will give up May Wynn because he suspects that she would not approve. But she surprises him with her response when he comes home and he tells her he wants May. "I wouldn't want to be shut out of your life, whatever you do," she says. And then, to reveal that she understands far more than Keith ever thought possible, she says, "I took her at the value you set on her."

## Willie Keith

The protagonist of the story is Willie Keith "because the event turned on his personality as the massive door of a vault turns on a small jewel bearing." That personality, at first, is arrogant and overbearing. The trait that sees Keith through the military is his honesty and his growing sense of patriotism. Keith has difficulty accepting subordinate positions to those persons who would not normally be his superiors in terms of economic class, intelligence, or social standing.

By the end of the novel, Keith has been humbled by the turn of events. He has risen to a position of authority and is a responsible and honorable soldier. He is able to reject the bourgeois standards of his family and hopes to form a meaningful relationship with May Wynn.

## Willis Seward Keith

See Willie Keith

## Steve Maryk

A native San Franciscan, Steve Maryk is a fisherman by trade and upbringing. As he tells Keefer, fishing is not bucolic: "It boils down to making a dollar the hardest way there is. □ It's a business for dumb foreigners. □ I'm dumb too, but I'm not a foreigner." Maryk, therefore, has both the incentives of a second-generation immigrant: to make it rich in America and to be patriotic. While not as educated as Keefer or Keith, Maryk is not dumb; as a result of his seaman's knowledge, Maryk is immediately recognized by his fellow crewmembers-as well as Captain De Vriess-as the best sailor among them. Consequently, he is relied upon to fulfill his natural leadership role. It is due to Maryk's expertise that the crew is able to set drilltime records that no other minesweeper can approach. Maryk tells Keefer, "I know seamanship, and I'd damn rather put in twenty years for the Navy and get a pension than get arthritis and a sprung back hauling fish out of the water."





After Gorton is transferred, Maryk becomes the USS *Caine*'s executive officer. Having decided that Queeg is not an able skipper, Maryk loses faith in him. At first, Maryk is not mutinous and keeps his distance from the crew when they disparage the Captain. Gradually, he is influenced by Keefer's psychological theories. He begins to keep a logbook on the captain's behavior. In the midst of a typhoon, he decides that the captain has lost his ability to command and assumes the role under Navy articles 184-186. He does save the ship.

The result of his mutiny is the end of a brilliant naval career. Maryk's fate is the most troubling of the book and it results from a false belief in intellectual superiority over skill. He is a tragic hero.

## Marie Minotti

See May Wynn

## Old Yellowstain

See Captain Queeg

## Paynter

Paynter is a V-7 engineer acting as a communications officer aboard the ship. It is Paynter who finds Keith. Paynter leaves soon after bringing his replacement aboard.

## Captain Queeg

Queeg replaces De Vriess as captain of the USS *Caine*. Queeg is a short man with an inferiority complex. He is not very smart but he winds up as captain of his own vessel. His crew finds many of his actions strange and even cowardly, such as the incident in which he dangerously stays ahead of the Marines he is escorting and then flees before bringing them to the appointed drop-off. The incident earns him the nickname "Old Yellowstain." He also refuses to return fire on behalf of an assaulted fellow vessel. Queeg tells his officers that he will run his ship according to Navy codes and regulations, but he fails to follow procedure when the typhoon hits, putting the ship and its men in danger.

## Rabbitt

Rabbitt is the OOD into whose arms Keith jumps when arriving on the USS *Caine*. He manages to get transferred to the USS *Oaks*.



## Rollo

Half-brother to Tom Keefer, he shares a room with Keith in midshipman's school. He is assigned to the *USS Montauk*, an aircraft carrier. After the executive officer is killed, Rollo takes command of the fire fighting and conning of the ship. He dies from the effort.

## Marty Rubin

Keith dislikes May Wynn's agent, Marty Rubin. Rubin, on the other hand, likes Keith and tries to help the young man. This becomes clear, even to Keith, when Rubin brings him to Wynn though she is trying to keep Keith away.

## Stilwell

The best steersman on the boat is Stilwell. Queeg blames him for the cut towline. Soon after this, he is court-martialed for reading a comic on duty. He is acquitted but restricted to the ship for six months. He concocts a scheme in order to see his wife and finds himself in more trouble. Due to Queeg's ensuing persecution, he has no qualms about following Maryk in mutiny.

A year of Queeg's persecution coupled with the dangerous typhoon are possible causes of Stilwell's growing mental illness. He soon begins to complain of headaches. Stilwell is unable to testify on Maryk's behalf because he is receiving shock therapy at a mental hospital.

## Urban

Urban has the misfortune of being the only other person besides Keith, Stilwell, and Maryk to witness the Captain's behavior during the typhoon. Urban is too terrified to grasp the ramifications of the situation and is unable to help Maryk's case.

## Whittaker

The master of the mess is a black man named Whittaker. He announces mealtime with, "Chadan, suh." As involved as he is with serving the officers, there is no interaction with the black sailor.

## May Wynn

May Wynn is Keith's love interest from the moment she hands him an arrangement of *The Marriage of Figaro* for her audition at Club Tahiti where Keith plays the piano. Keith's discovery that she is a poor Italian girl from the Bronx living among other poor immigrants disappoints him. They start working to get her and dating but Keith attempts



to keep a distance. The reason for the distance is that he wants to marry someone from the same class. During the war, they break up. Having matured by the end of the novel, Willie pursues her again.



# Themes

## Authority

As a moral tract for the 1950s, *The Caine Mutiny* suggests that a strong authority is all-important for safeguarding the nation. Keith, for both his father and himself, turns down his first vocation—a fun, independent life of playing the piano—to fight for his country. This enables him to become a man in his own mind. His training allows him to put aside his own fear and concerns to take command when Keefer places the ship and its men in danger.

The novel centers on Queeg's inability to embody authority or command respect. Queeg begs for it: "There is such a thing as loyalty upward, and such a thing as loyalty downward. I desire and expect to get absolute loyalty upward." Queeg quotes from the regulation book and constantly reminds his men that he is the author of their fitness reports. Further, he will resort to court-martialing them if he has to. Along with fitness reports, he pays too much attention to issues such as missing strawberries and fixing even the smallest assignments. "You never saw a more fearless wielder of a checklist than Old Yellowstain," says Keefer. The reaction of his crew is predictable. They doubt their Captain.

## Sex Roles

A subplot of the novel concerns the relationship between Wynn and Keith. Their courtship is wrought with all the societal tensions surrounding the roles of the sexes. One of these tensions is employment. At that time, society determined that women should stay at home to raise children into good citizens. But Wynn was forced to work for financial reasons. On top of this, but not touched on in the novel, women from all economic classes during World War II were encouraged through propaganda to work in the munitions factories. Later in the 1940s, as the men returned from the war, the roles reverted and women were encouraged to stay home again. Wouk reflects these attitudes when Keith fantasizes about saving Wynn and making her a properly domesticated woman. Keith's resolve to save her gets stronger when he sees her, ill, living in a seedy hotel, and trying hard to make it as "Broadway's Beloved Bombshell."

Wynn is a hardened, independent woman; she has had to be because of her background. She considers men like "hogs" at the trough. Yet she has romantic notions of Keith as a prince who will whisk her away to a suburban castle. However, Keith's "matter-of-fact courtship was no part of love and marriage as she had vaguely imagined it." She knows that his mother does not like her, and she is a proud woman. She tells him, "Let's get one thing straight. If you're starting a little home for fallen women, I'm not interested. I don't want you to marry me because you're sorry for me, or because you want to do the manly thing by me, or anything like that."



## Race and Class

Wouk summarizes American economic, racial, and social tensions during WWII. He also foreshadows the future; for example, at one point in the novel the lawyer Barney Greenwald states that Native American tribes are regaining their sovereignty in federal courts. Native Americans, for their part, were heavily involved in World War II. They thought that by fighting for the United States they could gain some respect from white Americans. Therefore, they were willing coding experts in the European theater as well as excellent soldiers. The same is true of African-American soldiers. They enlisted hoping that their contribution to the war effort would lessen racial barriers. Instead, in the novel, African Americans are depicted as the men who eat the last of the strawberries. Finally, Keith's hesitation to commit to May originates in his belief, fostered by his mother, that she is of a lower social and ethnic class than himself. By the end of the novel, he rejects the bourgeois standards of his family and hopes for a reunion with her, no matter the circumstances.

## Coming of Age

Willie Keith "had risen from his fumbling, incompetent beginnings as Midshipman Keith to the command of a United States warship." The boy who became Captain of the USS *Caine* is certainly different from the one who played "If you knew what the Gnu knew" and entered the wardroom with an "unfortunate sign of immaturity," sucking his thumb. From his attempt to leave his mother in the opening scene without looking back-"his old identity was hauled away to camphor balls"-to his return (after "a year in the wilderness") to his mother as a full-uniformed captain, the novel is a *bildungsroman*: the story of Keith's education in the ways of man.

# Style

## Narration

Wouk's narrative technique is perhaps the most interesting yet problematic aspect of the novel. There is evidence of almost every form of narration, although it remains third-person omniscient. It is full of overt fictional references as well as subtle allusions, especially to the classic American novel *Moby-Dick*. The constant reference to other works of fiction and near mimicry of famous tales makes the novel a self-conscious work.

The narration can also be suspected of being unreliable. Most commentators dismiss Barney's spin on events aboard the ship. However, if Barney's speech is accepted, then the entire narration is suspect of duplicity. This possibility makes the work even richer in its thematic import.

## Realism

Wouk considered himself a realist, like authors such as Theodore Dreiser and W. D. Howells who attempted objective positions, realistic descriptions, and accurate observation of human behavior. Realist writing is bereft of philosophy, judgment, or propaganda. Such writing by Wouk stands in marked contrast to John Steinbeck's overt socialism, Albert Camus' existentialism, and James Farrell's and Ralph Ellison's cynicism. Given these contemporaries and their rejection of the value system of Wouk's martial characters, it is little wonder that critics dismissed Wouk or that no person of American letters claims to have been influenced by him.

The elements of Wouk's novel that make it realistic cover everything from opening with the articles under which an officer can take over command of a vessel to the exact descriptions of the boat that only an experienced Navy officer could provide—including standing orders, course work, and drawings. The action of the book itself is rather routine—practice drills, sitting around waiting for orders, and the otherwise predictable life aboard a ship. This depiction of everyday life in the Navy is exciting in its minutiae, especially as it is being reflected in Maryk's log.

## Irony

Irony, a self-aware moment of incongruity, is an important part of Wouk's technique. Perhaps the greatest irony in the novel concerns the courtmartial of an executive officer aboard an old minesweeper while the grandest war ever fought on earth is mere background noise; "It amused Willie to consider, as he struggled to dress in his galloping room, that the issue of the morning had dwindled so quickly from life-or-death to a question of the wardroom's breakfast." In another instance, "There was an unsettling contrast between himself eating ice cream, and marines on Namur a few

thousand yards away, being blown up. He was not sufficiently unsettled to stop eating ice cream."



# Historical Context

## World War II-The South Pacific

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese plan to deliver a declaration of war to President Roosevelt just moments before a pre-dawn raid on America's naval base in Pearl Harbor. Instead, the message is an hour late and the act becomes "the day of infamy" which rouses America into the dominant military and industrial complex it remains today.

The Pacific fleet is not entirely destroyed and Japan hurries to gain advantage before America can build more ships. Along with industrial might, the crucial element of success in the war of the South Pacific is American interception of Japanese communications. The first such interception reveals that Japan is going to attack and remove Australia from the war. Australia and America meet Japan in the Coral Sea in the summer of 1942 at Port Moresby in New Guinea. Militarily, the battle is a draw, but the attack on Australia is checked.

Japan decides to attack Midway, an American base. America again intercepts communications and is ready. Japan overestimates the damage given to U.S. carriers and believes the USS *Yorktown* is out of commission. Japan expects an easy victory in June. Instead, the USS *Yorktown* is the only American carrier lost while Japan loses four of its eight carriers. From this point on, Japan retreats and the ferocious combat to take back each and every island is underway.

## Korea

The sudden Japanese surrender that ends World War II leaves Japanese troops in possession of Korea. The Soviet Union allows Japanese troops to leave Korea. Eventually, an American-supported state under Syngman Rhee exists in the south and a Soviet subsidized state under Kim Sung Il exists in the north. Both leaders dream of ruling a united Korea.

In order to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula as well as to focus on Europe, the Soviets and the Americans withdraw their armies. In January 1950, President Truman delivers a speech reassuring all involved that America has no imperial interest in the area or in aiding Chaing Kai Shek. Further, America will only safeguard the perimeter it freed from Japan -a line stretching from the Aleutians, around Japan, and to the Philippines-but no mention is made of Korea. In June, with a green light from the Soviet Union, North Korea attacks the south and pushes U.N. troops into a tiny perimeter at the southern tip of the peninsula, starting what is now known as the Korean War.





## Race Relations

The days of Jim Crow are numbered but the brightest of Americans, like James Baldwin and Richard Wright, refuse to wait. They find the atmosphere of America so oppressive that they prefer self-imposed exile in Paris. In Baldwin's case, he is young and still honing his talents. Richard Wright is haunted by his communist past. Meanwhile, the preeminent legal thinker of the day, Thurgood Marshall, brings important cases regarding civil rights before the Supreme Court—a distinguished court that he is soon to join.

While gathering evidence for his civil rights report on racial integration in the military, Marshall interviews General Douglas MacArthur. Marshall asks MacArthur why there is not one "Negro" on his entire headquarters staff or in his personal guard. MacArthur responds that there is not one qualified black man. Marshall tells him about one obvious legendary war hero. Then, Marshall asks why there is not one black in "that big beautiful band playing at the ceremony." And before the General can answer, Marshall says, "Now, General, just between you and me, goddammit, don't you tell me that there is no Negro that can play a horn."



## Critical Overview

Despite his status as a Pulitzer Prize winner and best-selling author, most literary critics do not like the work of Herman Wouk. As an anonymous reviewer in *Time* noted, Wouk "spearheads a mutiny against the literary stereotypes of rebellion- against three decades of U.S. fiction dominated by skeptical criticism, sexual emancipation, social protest, and psychoanalytic sermonizing." The Wouk hero is not the outlaw gunslinger of the dime-store novel, the migrant worker of Steinbeck, or the bongo-thumping poets of the gathering Beat Generation. Moreover, Wouk intentionally refuses to give in to pop-psychology, Freudianism, or the fascination with sociopaths. Instead he prefers to tell realistic tales in which the hero is a true patriot upholding American ideals. Such a story was considered anachronistic and derivative at the time.

Frederic I. Carpenter, in "Herman Wouk and the Wisdom of Disillusion," was very specific in his disfavor. Wouk, while engaging, is too moralistic, and the anagnorisis, or moment of character self-realization leading to self-growth, of his characters is too unbelievable. Carpenter says that *The Caine Mutiny* continues the attempt to tell a story in a "straightforward manner" that Wouk had begun in *Marjorie Morningstar*. Both novels used the "traditional techniques of allegorical implication and conversational realism." Both indict the "irresponsible romantic" (the Tom Keefer figure) as being culpable for the brief straying of the young and naive. Further, asserts Carpenter, Wouk's plot device has a continual failing, whether in *The Traitor* or *The Caine Mutiny*. That failing is evinced in Keith's ability to be a responsible captain simply by the assumption of authority, which is very difficult to believe. Still, says Carpenter, "*The Caine Mutiny* remains the best of Wouk's novels because it is the least moralistic."

Summing up the problem more than reflecting on the novel itself, Edmund Fuller wrote it this way in his *Man and Modern Fiction*, 1958: "It seems to me that Mr. Wouk has been the victim of an unusual amount of unfair criticism. I think much of this is due to [*Caine Mutiny's*] considerable contrast to the view of life and behavior reflected in [Norman Mailer's] *The Naked and the Dead* and *From Here to Eternity*, which have been accepted far too readily as valid or normative views of the behavior and attitudes of man particularly within the framework of the military experience. □"

But Fuller is rather exceptional in his charitable defense. In the same year, Maxwell Geismer judges Wouk, in *American Moderns: From Rebellion to Conformity*, saying, "The novels of Herman Wouk lie in a curious realm between art and entertainment." By the early 1960s, however, David Dempsey was able to admit that there was something else troubling people about Wouk. In "It Didn't Pay to Strike It Rich," Dempsey hints that there may be money involved in the negative reviews. Wouk, he says, is the "most commercially successful writer of his generation." Leslie A. Fiedler also noted the monetary connection, saying, in his *Love and Death in the American Novel*, that "writers like Dreiser, ironically enough, made it possible to write □ the pure bourgeois novel." Wouk's realism is a cover for the presentation of one class' moral myth: the rebellious youth who matures through war to want nothing more than a suburban tract house and a beautiful wife.



Although *The Caine Mutiny* remains his best work by critical consensus, Wouk did not fare any better over time. "Like Sinclair, he writes journalese, and he never rises far above that level. □ His characters are never living human beings," says Granville Hicks in a 1971 *New York Times Book Review*. In fact, Wouk's continued popularity and his continued use of anachronistic ideals led critics to charge him with pandering to the populace. As Pearl K. Bell states for a 1978 review in *Commentary*, Wouk is "an unembarrassed believer in such 'discredited' forms of commitment as valor, gallantry, leadership, patriotism." Be that as it may, Wouk remained on the bestseller charts with *The Caine Mutiny* and *The Winds of War* even during the Vietnam era.

In 1997, Chris Godat commented on Wouk's staying power in *Contemporary Popular Writers*. He said that Wouk had not sacrificed "his moral integrity. Wouk perceives himself as a realist in the tradition of Cooper, Howells, and Dreiser, and like his predecessors he addresses his fiction to a popular, rather than critical, audience."

Theater critics have been more forgiving and it is fair to notice the reserved praise bestowed on the stage adaptation of the novel. Eric Bentley, for example, in "Captain Bligh's Revenge," appreciates the novelist's "crisp dialogue." Further, says Bentley, Wouk "has an excellent story." That is until one realizes that Wouk's story is not a thriller but a "tract for the times" that says we should "respect authority: mutiny is unjustified." It is not as important to "save a particular ship but to preserve the authority of commanders; for they win wars while we sit reading Proust." Finally, Bentley asks a prescient question for the late 1990s: How mad would a commander have to be before he could be relieved according to Wouk? "The answer seems to be *plumb* crazy, raving, stark, staring mad."

# Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3



# Critical Essay #1

*Tabitha McIntosh-Byrd is a doctoral candidate at the University of Pennsylvania. In the following essay, she analyzes Herman Wouk's The Caine Mutiny as a 'hostile text'-a novel that resists critical and analytic interpretive strategies.*

*The Caine Mutiny* opens with a textual artifact- a page torn from the book of Navy Regulations which contains the articles relating to relief of a commanding officer. It closes with another- the "torn paper" of parade confetti which "brushed the face of the last captain of the Caine." Between these ripped paper bookends lies a densely intertextual work which is layered with deliberate echoes of a multitude of canonical texts-the most obvious being *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *Moby-Dick*, and the book of Genesis-and contains scattered references to dozens of others. Though this would seem, at first glance, to mark it as a novel that invites literary interpretation, nothing could be more wrong.

*The Caine Mutiny* is in fact a novel that is aware of interpretation and resists it-providing obvious entry points for literary critique only to turn them back on the reader and undermine the analytic process. The ways in which the author deflects interpretation and expectation are many. The book proclaims itself to be a novel about World War II, but the action almost exclusively concerns non-combat life. It performs a narrative about-face four-fifths of the way through, forcing an abrupt shift in sympathies for all of the characters involved. It is shot through with morally ambiguous characters who spot the literary and symbolic references just as the reader has begun to, and thus draw us into uneasy complicity with them, making us question the very validity of textual interpretation. In the final analysis, *The Caine Mutiny* is a novel about the ethics of reading, about the moral implications of overlaying reality with literary meaning. The torn paper of the novel's last line is both a summation of the plot's resolution and an explicit injunction to do likewise-to tear up textual meaning.

From the title of the novel onwards, an analytic reader is predisposed to perform certain kinds of interpretation. Caine, of course, would seem to refer to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel, the mutiny fitting in as an analog for the famous verse, "Cain rose up and slew his brother Abel." Analytic assumptions follow logically from this easy literary clue: that the ship and its crew will be outcasts, the mutiny will be couched in the language of family, honor and sin, and that the novel will conform to an easy series of symbolic devices. Several chapters into *The Caine Mutiny* however, this entire reading is defeated in a masterly sleight of hand. Not for the first or the last time, we as readers have been encouraged to congratulate ourselves on our reading skills, only to find that the narrative is quite aware of the interpretation that we have begun to give it. In a critical discussion during an Officers' meal, Tom Keefer-"the novelist"-tips our hand when he explains to the other officers the symbolic order that we too are using. As he says:

"This ship is an outcast, manned by outcasts, and named for the greatest outcast of mankind."



Their replies deflate both his reading and our own:

"That's the literary mind for you. I never thought of the Caine being a symbolic name-"  
"It seems to me, Mr. Keefer ... that you can twist any ship's name into a symbolic meaning...."

This latter comment is especially significant. As Keith says, Keefer is an "endless treasury of plays on words," and his identification of the *Caine* with Cain is just one instance of his intellectual games and-increasingly-his clear moral relativism. Wouk has deliberately staged his narrative to encourage us to make the exact identifications that Keefer does, and in debunking Keefer he debunks us too.

This way of reading-as a search for literary "clues" that can be made to form a coherent pattern- comes consistently under attack throughout the novel, first encouraged, then identified and finally exploded. To an astute reader on the lookout for such clues, the "rotting hull" of the *Caine* is a clear reference to *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and the water-ban episode reinforces the identification. Almost as if it is anticipating the comments that we are about to write in the margin, the narrative again forestalls us:

"The bodies stirred, and rose, and began to move through chores with leaden limbs, like the crew of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*."

In pointing out the connections we are in the process of making, we are yoked into the viewpoint of characters like Keith and Keefer, who "read" in exactly the same way that we do. Keefer's analysis of Queeg and his steel balls is as predictable as ours-"the man's a Freudian delight. He crawls with clues," while Keith's way of understanding the crew is entrenched in our shared comparative literary methods:

"They reminded him of incidents in novels about men on long sea voyages, and there was a not quite pleasant amusement in seeing the classic symptoms popping out...."

Nor is this all. The novel does not seek only to reflect our reading process back on itself; it also serves as a moral judgment on us. The identification of literary methods with morally ambiguous characters is the first way in which this begins. The "strawberry episode" reinforces it, with Queeg's insane search for clues and his obsessive gathering of keys being a clear analogy for critical analysis. However, it is after the mutiny that this theme becomes openly vicious-when Barney Greenwald, arguably the moral center of the novel, realizes that Tom Keefer's literary games lie at the heart of the whole affair. As he says to Maryk after hearing the narrative of events, "Your sensitive novelist is the villain of this foul-up."

The shared celebration for Maryk's victory and Keefer's literary contract underscore the insistent suggestion that there are two novels for which Keefer must take credit. Not only is his half-finished work *Multitudes*, *Multitudes* being published, but also his most triumphantly authored work, *The Caine Mutiny* itself. Even as we begin to recognize this parallel, however, Wouk outplays us again, taking the analysis from us and putting it in the mouth of Barney Greenwald. As the lawyer says of Keefer shortly before throwing a drink in his face, "He was the author of the *Caine* mutiny among his other works."



Through the drunken speeches of Greenwald, the fundamental truths of the war are elaborated for the first and only time in the novel, and act as a series of narrative aboutturns that utterly destabilize the reading of the situation that we have been encouraged to accept. To the shocked party-goers he elaborates that the war is about the Holocaust; that enlisted officers like Queeg have devoted their lives to standing between America and such horrors; that Maryk is indeed guilty of making a mutiny; and that the hero of the piece should have been Captain Queeg himself.

Accepting Greenwald's interpretation leads to a series of uneasy realizations about our own complicity in the case, the chief being that we, like the deluded crew, have accepted the romance of the tale and ignored the reality. Just as Keith "had whispered to himself, "'the *Caine* mutiny, the *Caine* mutiny,' savoring the ring of the phrase," so we have read the mutiny as an adventure tale, ignoring the narrative injunction at the novel's opening:

"It was not a mutiny in the old-time sense, of course, with flashings of cutlasses, a captain in chains, and desperate sailors turning outlaws."

This is, of course, precisely the way that the Mutiny section has been crafted, and the way in which it is interpreted by the novel's civilians, May Wynn and Keith's mother. The purpose of Wouk's layers of literary reference become clearer—they are there to show us that the reality of war is outside literary craft and that our understanding of it is immorally confused by our reading matter. If we are to disassociate ourselves from Keefer—the critic and coward who is "stained yellow" forever—we must reject criticism and interpretation. By the end of the novel Keefer has himself realized his own nature, and is still unable to extract it from literary conceit. His cowardice is linked in his mind with *Lord Jim* and he tells Willie that he will be "Lord Tom" from this point onwards. It is highly appropriate that he damns himself with reference to a seafaring novel, since he has begun the whole mutiny with his allusion to another. As he said to Maryk early in the escalating tension, "Ever read *Billy Budd*, by Melville? Read it. That's the whole story."

Of course this is *not* the whole story, and Maryk tells him so, relating the actual causes behind Queeg's dislike of Stilwell. He points out the real reasons for the hostility, and comments, "I don't have any theories. I'm a dumb comic-book reader." In fact, "dumb" comic-book reading, in which word and image have a direct and uncomplicated relationship, turns out to be the only kind of reading that doesn't morally incriminate the reader. In a truly shocking moment, the scenes at the celebration party have revealed to us that everything before them has been word-play—a literary game stylistically embodied by Keefer's favorite novel, *Finnegan's Wake*. The version of *The Caine Mutiny* that we have been reading is no more or less than Keefer's novel, wearily assessed by Greenwald as a book which:

"exposes this war in all its grim futility and waste, and shows up the military men for the stupid, Fascist-minded sadists they are."

If we accept Barney's insistence that this is not true, that it is Queeg who should have been the tragic hero of the tale, then the purpose of the torn page of regulations at the

frontispiece comes into retrospective focus. The articles contained therein are the facts-the elements by which we should have judged the action of the novel. It has, in fact, been a trial, and Barney Greenwald is telling us that we too have made a false judgment, and have been found wanting. We are just as gullible as Maryk and, like him, should have stuck to comic books.





## Critical Essay #2

*In the following excerpt, Quinones argues that *The Caine Mutiny* is "deeply flawed," but that this flaw lends literary interest to the work and also invites analysis of the story from a historical perspective.*

Herman Wouk's *The Caine Mutiny* [is] concerned with defining the nature of the American experience, wherein the character of Cain becomes something of a national type....

*The Caine Mutiny* has been a remarkably successful novel, with close to 250,000 volumes in thirteen printings in the first eight months of its publication. But our interest does not lie in the book's success, but rather in its failure. Deeply flawed, *The Caine Mutiny* is of great interest precisely because of that flaw. The fault line that runs through the work amounts to a recantation of the dynamic of the Sacred Executioner, the pattern of which in many of its variations we have been following. What Wouk has done is to return the story to the same moral sluggishness, the same undifferentiation from which it emerged when Byron first put his hand to the Cain theme. But in so doing he has given us an accurate barometer of the morale of a decade, of a postwar mentality that, although understandable in its causes, denied civilization itself the powers of rejuvenation.

*The Caine Mutiny* betrays a high degree of literary self-consciousness (and this might explain its later drastic and vengeful turnabout). The character who provides the higher consciousness, the literary *leit-motives*, is Tom Keefer, the author's needed mouthpiece. It is he who serves as double and perhaps even evil genius for Maryk, who himself becomes the Cain of the piece when he relieves Queeg of his command. Keefer first explains why the story is a Cain story:

"I've given up [putting in for transfer]. This ship is an outcast, manned by outcasts, and named for the greatest outcast of mankind. My destiny is the Caine. It's the purgatory for my sins...." The captain regarded Keefer admiringly. "That's the literary mind for you. I never thought of Caine being a symbolic name-" "The extra e threw you off, Captain. God always likes to veil his symbols a bit, being, among his other attributes, the perfect literary mind." (p. 90)

This is peculiar officers' mess banter. But the message of the cursed Cain is reinforced with greater ominousness when Maryk finds out that he is named executive officer of the *Caine*. On shore leave with Keefer in San Francisco, Maryk is in unaccountably low spirits. "Ever have one of those days, Tom, when you feel something bad is in the air-something bad's going to happen to you before the evening's out?" (p. 202). When they return to the boat Maryk learns of his new responsibilities, and Keefer learns that no order has come through for his transfer. "God damn the Caine," said Keefer, "and strike everyone aboard it, including me, with a curse." Maryk can only see his earlier premonitions confirmed. "'This is it,' he thought-but he could not have said what he meant by 'it'" (p. 206). Wouk utilizes the post-romantic dimensions of the theme: in place



of any insistence on human freedom, he endows his story with grim foreboding and with a sense of cursed destiny.

Obviously, in his reign of neurotic terror, Captain Queeg qualifies as a vindictive Cain, visiting all sorts of retaliatory punishments on the innocent seamen (in this regard, the repeated broadcast of the phrase, "condition Able," is eerie and ironic). But the point of the work, what makes it an extremely revealing document of the times, is the exchange of roles, the evident vindication of Queeg and the immolation of the cowardly intellectual, that is, the transformation-for which we are not unprepared-of the rebellious, malcontented Keefer into the malefactor Cain.

There are no brother murders in this work, but there is a brother death (significantly, the very early death of Willie Keith's father does seem to open the terrain of moral development, that is, leave it open for all the counterinfluences). Tom's brother, Roland (as his name indicates, he will hold heroically and fatally to his post), is an officer aboard the carrier *Montauk*. He sends a blinker message to his brother and their mutual friend, Willie, inviting them to visit him on the carrier. However, permission must first be gained from Captain Queeg. Keefer: "Guess I'll have to pay a visit to Grendel's cave.... Here's hoping he's not in a blood-drinking mood" (pp. 279-80). The request is of course denied. In a moving scene Roland tries to shout his farewells to the two by means of a megaphone: "They could see Roland laugh and nod. He was far ahead of them in a moment. He called back once more but nothing was distinguishable except the word '... brother....'"

In action at Leyte Gulf the carrier *Montauk*, under serious attack, is struck at its bridge by a Japanese suicide plane. Roland, engaged in heroic efforts to save the ship, is fatally burned. Anticipating his own later cowardice in a similar incident (for which he also provides the appropriate literary reference from *Lord Jim*), Tom is unsure how he would behave in similar circumstances, commenting, "Rollo had good instincts." The brothers had never been very close; Keefer confesses, "I'm afraid I thought he was too dumb." But then, in a nagging concession that is crucial for the purposes of the theme, Keefer admits that their father had always preferred Roland. "Maybe he knows something" (p. 286). Clearly preparations are being made for a turn against a complex consciousness on the basis of a defense of a simpler effectiveness.

Keefer is more important as the double-his name does suggest *Lucifer*, where the c would naturally have a hard sound. Typical of the double, he provides the guileless Maryk with arcane lore, now from the scientific field of psychology. Captain Queeg suffers from paranoia (of which Maryk admits he has never heard). Keefer further instructs his pupil in the fictionalized Articles 184, 185, and 186 of the Navy Regulations by which the captain may be relieved of his command. Not only does Keefer, as a kind of evil genius, provide the seeds of doubt, he even provides the literary text by which the captain's hatred of natural instincts may be understood. He specifically refers to *Billy Budd* and Claggart's envy of Billy (to which he adds his own sexual connotations):

"Okay. He hates Stilwell for being handsome, healthy, young, competent and naturally popular and attractive-all the things that Queeg is not. Ever read Billy Budd, by Melville?"



Read it. That's the whole story. Stilwell is a symbol of all the captain's frustrations, all the things he would like to smash because he can't have them.... Infantilism is very strong in our captain." (p. 268)

But when the simpler and more forthright Maryk, finally convinced that Keefer is right, wishes to present his log of Queeg's bizarre and pathetic actions to the fleet commander, Admiral Halsey, Keefer backs off at the last moment. Keefer admits that he is scared, but wishes to be credited for his honesty (p. 316). This dishonest honesty causes Maryk to compare Keefer with Queeg, and indeed the exchange of roles is complete.

In the extraordinarily compelling "Typhoon" chapter, Queeg's pathetic incompetence and stubborn pride are fully revealed. In order to save the ship-and the hull of the sunken ship that they pass would seem to indicate the reality of the danger- Maryk relieves the captain of his command. He is the Sacred Executioner, who undertakes a desperate and extraordinary action at a crucial moment. The emotionally paralyzed and incompetent Queeg abdicates, and Maryk assumes the burden of responsibility. In this change of command, in the midst of the defection of authority, an abler leader, a new order of humanity, emerges. The significance of this change is not lost on Willie, who is the first of the young officers to support Maryk's decisive actions. It takes forty minutes for the *Caine* to restore itself, maneuvering by the lost ship and taking an enormous beating from the waves: "Willie was scared each time. But he now knew the difference between honest fright and animal terror. One was bearable, human, not incapacitating; the other was moral castration. He was no longer terrorized, and felt he no longer could be, even if the ship went down, provided Maryk were in the water with him" (p. 342). The passage is undeniably clear: a new order of humankind, not without its doubts and fears, is able to enter into the perils of critical, even revolutionary change and emerge with the restoration of order. Human resourcefulness reasserts itself. Queeg, already associated with Grendel, has, in his own psychic terror, reduced life to the level of the bestial. In the more significant and broader restoration of the human image, an apparent illegitimate act has been legitimized, and humankind has escaped from animalistic undifferentiation.

Given all this-the clear and evident support for Maryk's actions and the slow build-up of evidence that Queeg is an emotional basket case-the conclusion of the book amounts to a recantation. Wouk offers a palinode to the act of legitimate revolution that the novel itself seems to endorse. This surprise reversal is, however, not as strange as the reasons given for it. And here we approach the fault line of the novel. After all, we have already been given ample clues as to Keefer's character, and his failure to support Maryk in the court-martial was not unexpected. He is the Luciferean evil genius who switches places with Queeg and becomes the Cainite fall guy. This is prepared and anticipated. What is unexpected-and, what is more important, unprepared-are the reasons given, the strange argumentative displacement that occurs. Not content with sacrificing Keefer, his own surrogate and artistic mouthpiece, Wouk, in the words of his new moral and legal mouthpiece, Greenwald, must also vindicate Queeg. Authority that had defected must now, in the pact of postwar reconciliation that follows, be restored.



Greenwald's defense of Queeg is so displaced and skewed as to be practically incredible. Rather than the issue being Queeg's base incompetence- for which there is ample evidence-the terms of the argument are shifted to those of regular navy versus wartime enlistees and draftees. Greenwald argues that if it had not been for the regular navy types like Queeg, Hitler would have triumphed and his Jewish mother would have been made into soap to wash Herman Goering's fat behind (pp. 447-48). Leaving aside the fact that Queeg was serving in the Pacific, the argument could more profitably go as follows: if the regular navy had been made up of any more Queegs what would there have been to prevent Goering from occupying Chicago? The argument has shifted from Queeg's evident manic incompetence to Keefer's guilt, and beyond Keefer's guilt to the general guilt of all those who "sat on the sidelines getting rich and pursuing their own careers, while the real grunts of the world were carrying out the necessary chores." The argument is actually that debased. Whenever the terms of the argument shift, or are displaced so radically, one must suspect a psychic fault line. The fault line is guilt (in this case, sadly, not transcended)-not Maryk's, not Keefer's, but Wouk's. Greenwald's argument is this: "See, while I was studying law 'n' old Keefer here was writing his play for the Theatre Guild, and Willie here was on the playing fields of Princeton, all that time these birds we call regulars-these stuffy, stupid Prussians, in the army and the navy-were manning the guns" (p. 446). The restoration of the regular army and navy-the people who hold the world together, Wouk might argue-could be valid but it certainly does not fit the book that Wouk has written up until this point. A different volition has overtaken the novel, an intrusive will that has a point to make against the would-be intellectual-and against himself. Like Keefer, Wouk wishes to have his cake and eat it too, to establish a literate *raisonneur* who will provide the mythic structure and literary resonances with which the work is somewhat encumbered, and then to disestablish him. It is like writing a book about the war in which the character who writes a book about the war is branded. The vindication of Cain in the works of Hesse and of Steinbeck requires some transcendence of guilt; this Wouk was unable to do. Unnaturally, given the circumstances of the work and its own inner coherence, Wouk could not overcome his sense of guilt, or those aspects of himself that he needed to condemn in the character of Keefer.

The importance of the intrusive retraction does not stop there. The hinge of the work, as Wouk describes it in his brief foreword, is the character of Willie Keith. In the absence of his father, Keith is open to the many influences present on the ship, and his developing character becomes something of a touchstone. Thus to Willie is left the final summing-up, a summation that he acknowledges is derived from Greenwald's own accusations in the bitter post-trial "victory" celebration, and that he sends in the form of a letter proposing marriage to May, the night-club singer with whom, he now recognizes, he is in love. In some ways the letter becomes the sad testament of a generation.

*The Caine Mutiny* is an important book, even a crucial book, and despite Wouk's obvious skills (the depiction of the V12 program at Columbia, the typhoon chapter, and the court-martial), it is more important for what it reveals unconsciously, almost against itself: the preparation of a generation for its descent into simple stagnation and moral sluggishness. Tired of war and trauma, suspicious of intellectuals, of ideology, and of animosities based upon ideas and issues, eager to get on with the business of living,



this generation settled down, seeking out common interests, emotional cohesion, and community. In the projection of these idyllic qualities (they are Abelite), it is little wonder that any possibility of a regenerate Cain should be prohibited.

In the letter to May, Willie identifies Keefer as the troublemaker, but then goes on to declare, in the wake of Greenwald's denunciation, "But I don't think Maryk had to relieve the captain." He then reaches a further conclusion: "The idea is, once you get an incompetent ass of a skipper-and it's a chance of war-there's nothing to do but to serve him as though he were the wisest and the best, cover his mistakes, keep the ship going, and bear up" (p. 468). But here again we must demur: obviously Queeg is more than an "incompetent ass"-that phrasing itself is part of the go-along-with-it, nothing- really-is-all-that-important ingratiating message of the letter. Queeg is shown to be dementedly dangerous, an emotional disaster, but his true sickness is covered in the general need for reinstatement. The father, who had been absent in several ways in the regeneration of Cain, is now returned to his former commanding status when Cain is condemned. In this sense, we see how the letter compounds the book's general retreat into the undifferentiated sentiment from which Byron first tried to extricate the Cain-Abel theme.

If the figure of authority is restored, then the virtues of Abel are validated. Queeg, a Cain, is now justified by being an Abel, that is, part of a general mess of undifferentiated feeling and, actually, the victim of a hostile, divisive Cain (Keefer). By jettisoning Keefer-Cain, Wouk demonstrates his own credentials for admission into the common purposes of American life. For comparisons we can think back to our prior discussion of *The Secret Sharer* and anticipate the coming section on *Billy Budd*. (Both works being part of the background of *The Caine Mutiny*, in some ways we can see that Wouk's work is a literary response to and comment not only on them, but on the development of regenerate Cain himself.) Finally, the promotion of Queeg has the moral equivalence of the vindication of the captain of the *Sephora*, and to blame Maryk would be the same as delivering up Leggatt to the authorities. But, even more dangerous, this particular justification of Queeg for his being "regular navy" echoes strangely the sense of things rendered by the naval chronicle relating-from a great distance-the events of Claggart's death and of Billy's punishment in Melville's work. It should be remembered that it is this report, "News from the Mediterranean," that Melville's own "inside narrative" is designed to correct. In fact, what Wouk has done is to discredit the inside narrative that he himself has given us and to reaffirm the public evaluation. In the report, Billy is degraded to a knife-wielding foreigner, whose "crime" is all the more heinous because directed against "a middle-aged man respectable and discreet, belonging to that minor official grade, the petty officers, upon whom, as none know better than the commissioned gentlemen knew, the efficiency of His Majesty's navy so largely depends" (p. 1433). Wouk's vindication of Queeg resorts to the same defense of his general function, and indulges in the same consolatory practice: just as the "commissioned gentlemen" must give the "petty officer" his due, so the hotshot, successful, and college-educated draftees are made to appreciate the regular Navy as well as the regular values of American democratic life. The generalized process of undifferentiation seems demeaning for all concerned.



In this becalmed world, all possibility of historical change is denied, and the Cain-Abel theme loses its modern meaning. An indication of this loss of the capacity for differentiation is the sloppiness of the letter. Lacking precise care and filled with disarming "I guesses," it suggests that all issues are really petty in nature and of no importance in the face of the larger vision of peace and the need for fusion. In the letter, eager intelligence and moral will are immobilized. When the only intellect conceivable is cowardly, then the modern Cain of consciousness is badly impaired. *The Caine Mutiny* remains one of the notable expressions of the regressive ethos of the 1950s, and of a generation that ratted on its diamond. In seeking to avoid the envy of the gods, in finding acceptance, it became the generation that the gods despised.



## Critical Essay #3

*In the following excerpt, Bierstedt faults "the conclusions to which the author of The Caine Mutiny felt constrained to come at the end of his book."*

*The Caine Mutiny* was published on March 19, 1951. After a somewhat sluggish start it found its way to the best-seller list of the *New York Times* and to the surprise of almost everyone, including a publisher who had rejected the manuscript, it remained there for one hundred twenty-three weeks. Domestic sales in various editions are well over the three million mark. It has been translated into sixteen foreign languages; it has been syndicated in forty-one American newspapers; it has been distributed by no less than four book clubs; and its author has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize. *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, a play prepared by the author himself, opened on Broadway in January of 1954 and is still [November, 1954] playing to capacity audiences. The movie opened at the Capitol Theater in New York on June 24, and by now it is impossible to estimate the number of millions of people who have joined the crew of the *Caine* and who have participated, however vicariously, in one of the best advertised "mutinies" in history.

We have here a phenomenon which has one set of implications for Madison Avenue, however, and quite another for this quiet seminary on Morningside Heights [The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, where the chapter was originally presented as a lecture]. For *The Caine Mutiny*, whatever one thinks of it as a publishing success, is a work of considerable literary merit. It is a book, moreover, which introduces an interesting moral issue. This, of course, is one of the functions of literature, and the greater the literature, as this entire series exemplifies, the more imposing the moral problem. Although the rank of the book as a work of art does not directly concern us, we should be disposed to argue that a moral flaw in its structure, if such it be, is relevant to an esthetic judgment. That the novel does contain a moral flaw is the case I want to propose and this in spite of a personal admiration for Herman Wouk which is both wholehearted and humble. The flaw is one which no amount of admiration can altogether subdue, no casuistry wholly conceal.

The extraordinary popularity of *The Caine Mutiny*, in book and play and movie, renders unnecessary a recapitulation of the plot. As an aid to recollection, however, we may reintroduce the cast of characters so that the problems they severally and individually confront can claim our attention. The protagonist of the novel is Willie Keith, a Princeton man and sometime singer in night clubs who aspires to a professorship in Romance languages. (It is, we are encouraged to believe, a genteel profession and one well suited to the otherwise idle rich.) In the course of his tour of naval duty Willie greatly matures and as we leave him at the book's end we suspect, with some apprehension, that he may turn out to be a professor after all. In the book, however, Willie serves an important purpose. It is his eyes through which we observe the mutiny on the *Caine* and further, as Wouk says, "the event turned on his personality as the massive door of a vault turns on a small jewel bearing." When, at the height of the storm, the two officers of the *Caine*, the captain and the executive officer, give contradictory orders to the helmsman, the latter, Stilwell, appeals in real fear to Willie, then on duty as Officer of the



Deck. It is apparent that if Willie, at this tense moment, had supported the captain instead of the executive officer, the latter's attempt to relieve his skipper would have failed. In this sense, the author is saying, Willie is essential to the plot; this is his *raison d'être*.

The importance of a single individual in the causation of a complex event in human affairs is always open to question, as Tolstoy has so supremely taught us. Given the circumstances, it may be argued that the result was inevitable and that Willie had no more to do with it-and no less-than any other member of the fated company. But historiography and fiction are two different enterprises. The novelist's art requires him to accept a theory which a sociologist is ordinarily tempted to reject, that is, the heroic (or diabolic) theory of history. We may readily concede to Wouk, therefore, that Willie was not only important but essential to the mutiny of the *Caine*. At the same time we ought to note, perhaps, that all of the officers of the *Caine* supported Maryk in his relief of Queeg, and this without further question or controversy.

The second officer to engage our attention is Philip Spencer Queeg, named no doubt after Midshipman Philip Spencer, one of three men actually hanged for mutiny in 1842, the only mutiny recorded in the naval history of the United States, and that, too, incidentally, a dubious one. Lieutenant Commander Queeg is the captain of the *Caine*. He is also "regular Navy" and the Articles for the Government of the Navy are his only Bible and his only Law. He is more than a disciplinarian; he is a martinet. He possesses that combination of qualities which usually makes for success in any bureaucracy and for failure everywhere else. While martinets and myrmidons may be conspicuous in military organizations, they can be found, of course, in all the organizations of society. Wouk need not apologize therefore to the Navy for drawing this kind of portrait of one of its officers, although his compunction to do so is unaccountably clear. The normal curve of probability has ends as well as a middle, and in any group as large as the Navy some persons will find their places at the extremities of the curve.

We learn very early that as a ship's handler Queeg is clumsy and inept. His seamanship is not only faulty; it is often dangerous. At the time of the typhoon it is clear, although Wouk later tries to compromise the picture, that he is doing everything wrong. His refusal to come into the wind, to ballast his tanks, and to turn the depth charges on "Safe" all increase the hazards to his ship. He fails to do what a reasonably prudent and capable seaman would do on the ground that standing orders are still standing and that not even a typhoon justifies the slightest departure, or exercise of initiative.

But Queeg is not, in other circumstances, a "book-officer" at all. He illegally transports back to the States a consignment of liquor for his own personal use and then extorts the cost of it from Willie when, because of his own mistakes, it is lost overboard. On several occasions he submits to his superiors reports which stray rather considerably from the truth in the direction of self-justification, and he offers, in the instance of the "mutiny" itself, to erase and rewrite the rough logs of the ship. This last, for obvious reasons, is an exceedingly serious offense against naval regulations.





The issue of cowardice as affecting Queeg is one which the author treats with insight and skill. The captain never stays on the exposed side of the bridge when the ship is under fire. In one case he fails to return enemy fire when he has an opportunity to do so, and instead moves the *Caine* out of range as rapidly as possible. In escorting assault boats to the beach at Kwajalein he runs far ahead of them, drops a dye-marker indicating the line of departure, and then hastily runs again for safety. This last incident wins him the name "Old Yellowstain" among his subordinate officers, and the "Yellow," of course, stands for more than the color of the dye. For the reader at least, Wouk clearly, steadily, and consistently establishes, beyond any lingering possibility of skepticism, that Queeg is a coward.

Queeg, however, is not on trial, and the charge of cowardice which Willie Keith's testimony so clearly implies has no legal stature. The defense attorney, Greenwald, denies that Queeg is guilty of cowardice, on the ground that no man certified by the Navy as qualified for command could possibly be guilty of so heinous a charge. On the contrary, if Queeg's actions seem to suggest cowardice, they must instead be attributed to a mental affliction. The testimony of three psychiatrists that Queeg's condition is not disabling suffers heavily under cross-examination and particularly when Greenwald maintains that the court is better qualified than a board of medical examiners to estimate the stresses of command.

Finally, of course, Queeg convicts himself by going to pieces on the witness stand, repeating tiresome trivialities over and over to the point of echolalia and clicking his little steel balls together as his case disintegrates. The captain and his creator together have convinced us all that the "mutiny" was justified and that Maryk, the executive officer, is innocent even of the lesser charge of "conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline." It is a dramatic, colorful, and exciting story, and at the climax, as throughout, only one conclusion is possible.

Lieutenant Stephen Maryk, who relieves Queeg and who thus becomes the defendant in the court-martial action, is not so fully rounded nor so richly detailed as the other officers. A fisherman before the war who now aspires to transfer to the Regular Navy, he is an extraordinarily able seaman. He is more than that. He is a decent, honest, and courageous citizen. As executive officer under Queeg he is caught between the parlous captain and the reluctant crew, and he performs the duties of this trying and essentially ambivalent position with distinction, retaining both the trust of his subordinates and the confidence of the skipper. As the situation is constructed this would seem to be an impossible task, but Maryk somehow manages to accomplish it. He relieves Queeg only after he is convinced that the ship is in its last extremity and that the captain, in panic, has lost touch with the reality of the raging seas.

Maryk is not stupid, however, and to suggest that he is the mere pawn of Keefer, cowed by Keefer's superior intellect and supposedly superior insight into the dark recesses of the human mind, is to do him a disservice. Maryk may not know the technical language of psychoanalysis, but he knows an incompetent mariner when he sees one, and Wouk leaves no doubt that he does see one on the bridge of the *Caine* at the height of the typhoon. Maryk acts throughout-and especially in the action for which he is court-



martialed-with vigor and decision. To suggest that he is at any time motivated by disloyalty, is to distort the image of a character which the author has carefully, if briefly, constructed.

Lieutenant Thomas Keefer, of course, is the Cassius of the *Caine*. An intellectual and a writer, Keefer induces Maryk to keep a medical log on the captain and explains the captain's symptoms as they appear. It is Keefer who is always somewhere else when unpleasant decisions have to be made; it is Keefer who displays both moral and physical cowardice; and it is Keefer finally who betrays his friend Maryk on the witness stand. Keefer is conscious of his weaknesses, however, and with a curious candor even confesses to them. At least one critic-Granville Hicks-has regarded Wouk's treatment of Keefer as an assault upon intellectuals and as one more indication of the anti-intellectualism of our time. This is a complaint which we shall consider in the sequel.

We come finally to Lieutenant Barney Greenwald, the only one of the five officers who was not a member of the *Caine*'s company and who serves instead as Maryk's counsel. He appears first as a quiet but arrogant individual who thinks, on the one hand, that Steve Maryk and Willie Keith "deserve to get slugged" and, on the other, that only a "halfway intelligent defense" will suffice to get them off. He hesitates at first to take the case and then expresses himself so dogmatically against his own prospective clients that one might question the wisdom of his superior in permitting him to do so. "I just don't want to defend these *Caine* people," he says. "Captain Queeg obviously is not crazy. The psychiatrist's report proves it. These fools find a paragraph in Navy Regs that gives them ideas, and they gang up on a skipper who's mean and stupid- as a lot of skippers are-and make jackasses of themselves, and put a ship out of action. I'm a damn good lawyer and a very expensive one, and I don't see contributing my services to get them acquitted."

This speech attracts our attention for several reasons. In the first place the reader by this time has thoroughly identified himself with the defendants and like them he is desperately in need of an adequate defense against the recommended charge of mutiny. It comes as a disappointment therefore that the attorney who will serve in this capacity has so enthusiastically prejudged the case. His prejudgment might possibly be excused on the ground that he is talking only to two other lawyers, but, on the other hand, one of them, Challee, is scheduled, as judge advocate, to be his opponent at the trial. But even worse, it is a prejudgment which stems from ignorance. When Greenwald makes this remark he knows nothing whatever about the events which occurred on the *Caine* and has no warrant for assuming that it is merely a case of discontented men "ganging up" on a "mean and stupid skipper."

Greenwald is also wrong in his anticipation of the character of Maryk. The person he expects to see is the college radical of the thirties-thin, dark, sensitive, *intellectual*, anti-military in general and anti-Navy in particular, possibly even a Communist. Maryk, of course, is none of these things, and so Greenwald receives his first surprise.

Finally we learn-in the book but not in the movie-that Greenwald is a Jew, and we are informed that he therefore has an especial reason to appreciate the United States Navy.



In the movie Greenwald is merely a loyal American who supports, as "intellectuals" apparently do not, the importance of the peacetime Navy.

This, then, is the cast of characters. To this cast we may now add Herman Wouk, the man who wrote the book. Wouk sees the action which occurred on the *Caine* as a rebellion against authority, a rebellion he first considers justified and then, inconsistently and unaccountably, unjustified. Mutiny, of course, is rebellion of a high order since it is a challenge to the authority of a captain of a ship at sea. We are prepared to concede that such authority is and must be almost absolute. Indeed, it has been remarked that a captain on his bridge is the closest a civilized society ever comes to an absolute monarch. It is a situation in which only monarchy can work. Obedience to such authority must be instantaneous and unquestioned; it is an authority recognized, protected, and supported both by naval law and by long maritime tradition. The perils of the sea require special vigilance, and special rules, in consequence, have arisen to cope with them.

Now as Wouk tells us himself, there was no genuine mutiny on the *Caine*. We have here no "flashing of cutlasses, no captain in chains," no criminal sailors seizing the ship in order to pursue their own designs. After Maryk relieves the captain the structure of authority remains precisely what it was before. The functions of the crew remain the same and so also does the mission of the ship. Particular individuals no longer occupy the same places in the structure, but the authority itself is both intact and unchallenged.

Nor is it a mutiny in another sense. As Greenwald immediately recognizes, "There's no question of force or violence or disrespect." Maryk even apologizes to Queeg at the moment of relief, using the following formula, "Captain, I'm sorry, sir, you're a sick man. I am temporarily relieving you of command of this ship, under Article 184 of Navy Regulations." Article 184 reads as follows:

It is conceivable that most unusual and extraordinary circumstances may arise in which the relief from duty of a commanding officer by a subordinate becomes necessary, either by placing him under arrest or on the sick list; but such action shall never be taken without the approval of the Navy Department or other appropriate higher authority, except when reference to such higher authority is undoubtedly impracticable because of the delay involved or for other clearly obvious reason. Such reference must set forth all facts in the case, and the reasons for the recommendation, with particular regard to the degree of urgency involved.

Article 185 says in addition, and in part:

In order that a subordinate officer, acting upon his own initiative, may be vindicated for relieving a commanding officer from duty, the situation must be obvious and clear, and must admit of the single conclusion that the retention of command by such commanding officer will seriously and irretrievably prejudice the public interests.

These passages indicate that the authority to relieve a commanding officer under certain conditions is clearly present in naval law and that Maryk's action is therefore no challenge to authority. Indeed, Maryk invokes the relevant authority at the moment of



relief. In all that has preceded, Wouk has demonstrated that the situation is "obvious and clear" and admits of the single conclusion "which a reasonable, prudent, and experienced officer would regard as a necessary consequence from the facts thus determined to exist." The notion that Maryk's action is somehow a rebellion against authority, is one which is susceptible to serious question. The action must, of course, be justified and this is the task to which Greenwald devotes himself, with the unwitting assistance of Queeg himself, in the famous trial scenes. We all rejoice therefore when a sensible verdict is sensibly reached. From the facts which the author has given us, not only in court but during the long cruise of the *Caine* itself, acquittal is the only possible conclusion.

So now the trial is over, the case concluded, the novel finished. Maryk's acquittal in the confusion and tumult of war is itself a potent compliment to the Navy. We can take pride in a military organization in which the exercise of authority is not unaccompanied by compassion. The Navy we see in Wouk's book is no Prussian organization, placing discipline above all other considerations, including the safety of its ships and the lives of its men. Our suspense during the trial is sustained by our suspicion of the Navy; now we discover with relief that the suspicion is unjustified, that the Navy, too, can take account of human frailty and human need. The dinner party to celebrate the verdict and to pay tribute to Greenwald for his defense of Maryk promises to be an anticlimax. For us, the readers, justice has triumphed-as we were afraid it would not-and right has prevailed.

But now something happens which alters the complexion of the book and reverses its thesis. The victory party does not finish the novel but instead destroys the consistency of the plot and mars the moral integrity of the author's achievement. Something happens which we are induced to call the tergiversation of Herman Wouk.

The scene is the victory dinner, called and paid for by Keefer as a double celebration, first for the acquittal and second for the acceptance of his novel by a publishing house. In the midst of the alcoholic gaiety Greenwald stumbles drunkenly into the room and, as the hero of the trial, is called upon to speak. In response he asks first about Keefer's book, a war novel, and then-incredibly-says, "It suddenly seems to me that if I wrote a war novel I'd try to make a hero out of Old Yellowstain." He is quite serious. To explain the reason for making Queeg a hero he invokes his little old Jewish mother. When the "Germans started running out of soap and figured, well it's time to come over and melt down old Mrs. Greenwald-who's gonna stop them? Not her boy Barney. Can't stop a Nazi with a law book. So I dropped the law books and ran to learn how to fly. Stout fellow. Meantime, and it took a year and a half before I was any good, who was keeping Mama out of the soap dish? Captain Queeg."

In this maudlin scene we are suddenly asked to believe that Queeg, in contrast to everything we have known of him before, is a hero; that Keefer, who gets the champagne in his face, is a villain; and that Maryk, in relieving the captain, has committed an unforgivable crime. Here is transvaluation with a vengeance! Why has Wouk done this? For many pages we have followed him in good faith, believing that Queeg was indeed afflicted with a mental aberration (remember, for example, the strawberry incident), believing that he was at bottom a coward who preferred not to face



the enemy, believing, finally, that he was wholly incapacitated by fear at the height of the typhoon and unable in consequence to save his ship. We believe that Maryk is the savior of the *Caine* and of the lives of the men, because Wouk, with a superior artistry, has convinced us that this is so. We have given him our total attention throughout and now, without warning, he is telling us that he has deceived us, that Maryk and the other officers are guilty, that Queeg is to be praised for having joined the peacetime Navy, and that authority ought to be upheld in any cause however ignoble and in any person however cowardly, crazy, or incompetent. The story for him has become as simple as the assertion in the Book of Luke (7:8), "For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another Come, and he cometh."

Wouk is telling us in addition that he is sorry he has written the story the way he has and that he, too, deserves an appropriate punishment. He will now do penance and write the remainder of his book from an opposite point of view. This opposition, amounting to a contradiction, is expressed in the words of the reviewing authority, which disapproves the acquittal of Maryk, which "believes the specification proved beyond a reasonable doubt," and which continues:

There is in this case a miscarriage of justice whereby an officer escapes punishment for a serious offense and a dangerous precedent has been established. The fact that the ship was in hazard does not mitigate, but rather intensifies the responsibility of the accused. It is at times of hazard most of all that the line of naval discipline should be held rigidly, especially by senior officers on a ship.... A ship can have only one commanding officer, appointed by the government, and to remove him in an irregular manner without referring the matter to the highest available authority is an act exceeding the powers of a second-in-command. This doctrine is emphasized, not weakened, by the description in Articles 184, 185, and 186 of the exceedingly rare circumstances in which exception may be made, and the intentions of the Navy Department to this effect are therein expressed with the utmost clarity and vigor.

Finally, Willie himself accepts the thesis that Maryk was acquitted by legal trickery. In a letter to May Wynn he accuses himself and Maryk of disloyalty and suggests that they transferred to Queeg the hatred they should have felt for Hitler and the Japanese. The reverse rationalization of the letter concludes with the following remarkable recommendation to serve authority with a blind obedience: "The idea is, once you get an incompetent ass of a skipper-and it's a chance of war-there's nothing to do but serve him as though he were the wisest and the best, cover his mistakes, keep the ship going, and bear up." And when he reads the words of the reviewing authority he says, "Well, I concur too. That makes it unanimous."

But Willie is wrong. The verdict is not unanimous. It is for us, the readers, to render judgment and most of us, I suspect, will support the court against the author's belated change of mind. We need no legal trickery, no courtroom prestidigitation, to show that the novelist has now done us- and himself-a disservice, and that his final philosophy of authority requires reexamination and rejection.



A number of reasons weigh in the balance and encourage this conclusion. The first of these is that not even so competent a writer as Herman Wouk is able to refute in roughly fifty pages a point of view he has taken four hundred and fifty pages to advance. What he has done he cannot now undo. Having convinced us at length that Queeg is guilty of both incompetence and cowardice, he cannot now convince us in so short a space that Queeg, on the contrary, is a hero who is motivated throughout only by his own conceptions of what is good for the Navy and that these conceptions are valid. Such a transformation does not square with the yellowstain incident, the extortion for the lost liquor, the case of the missing strawberries, or the captain's paralysis during the storm.

Similarly, Maryk, limned for us throughout as an able and decent citizen, stands now accused of stupidity and of conduct to the prejudice of good order and discipline. After observing him for many, many pages and many, many months at sea it is simply not possible to concur in this opinion. Our author, however, is adamant, and therefore has to punish Maryk. He may be only half-guilty, as Greenwald tells him in the climactic scene, but, on the other hand, he is only half-acquitted, too. His chances of transfer to the Regular Navy are now forfeit and he is in fact demoted to the command of an LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry). Willie, by the way, who is equally guilty, becomes the last captain of the *Caine*. The quick twist, in short, requires Wouk to punish Maryk and to reward Willie for what was roughly the same offense.

But even more serious is what the tergiversation does to Greenwald, whom Wouk has obviously chosen to represent his new point of view. Greenwald now assures us, in his party speech, that he got Maryk off by "phony legal tricks." Taking him at his word, is it proper for an attorney to resort to trickery in order to save a man who is at least "half guilty" and in the process destroy another man (Queeg) to whom he now says he owes a favor? Instead of a St. George in shining armor we now have an attorney who takes a case in which he does not believe and which he wins through conscious trickery rather than conviction. By his own admission he owes a favor to Queeg but he is nevertheless responsible for consigning Queeg to the oblivion of a naval supply depot in Stuber City, Iowa. Greenwald, whom we were prepared to acclaim not only as the savior of Maryk but also as a servant of justice, now convicts himself of hypocrisy, with only the thin excuse that the wrong man was on trial. His morbid speech robs us of our respect for him. If we still have sympathy it is because we see that he, like Queeg, has symptoms of a mental affliction. The notion that Queeg, because he joined the Navy in peacetime, somehow prevented Goering from making soap out of Greenwald's mother, is about as far out of touch with reality as Queeg's search for the nonexistent key in the strawberry incident. We regretfully conclude that Greenwald has his little steel balls, too, and that they are clicking around in his head as incessantly as Queeg's click in his hand.

Wouk's change of mind involves more than a transformation in his characters. It involves in addition an incomprehensible logic. The movie critic of the *New Yorker*, John McCarten, remarks impatiently about Wouk's "odd notion that it was somehow heroic to have joined the Navy in the nineteen-thirties, as the befuddled captain did, while civilians were out making fortunes on the W.P.A." But Queeg is more than befuddled; he is wholly bereft of ideas. There is no evidence that he has ever made a commitment to a



political or philosophical position. It is difficult to see him as a champion of democracy, or of any other political philosophy. It is all very well for Wouk to defend the importance of a peacetime Navy but it is a little extravagant to contend that those who manned it did so because they were opponents of totalitarianism or enemies of antisemitism. Indeed, men like Queeg are wholly innocent of political preferences and predilections. Wouk does not seem to have noticed that Queeg would have served equally well and with equal attention to discipline in the German Navy. His superior might as easily have been Admiral Doenitz as Admiral Halsey. Nothing matters to him except the shirttails of his sailors.

Our next charge against Wouk is that he does the United States Navy a disservice in implying now that it is an organization incapable of handling the extremities of the normal probability curve, that in personnel problems it can see only black and white and none of the shades between, that it is permanently and inflexibly an authoritarian organization. Articles 184, 185, and 186 are to be found in Navy Regulations and we may presume at least, Wouk now to the contrary notwithstanding, that they were put there for a purpose. What that purpose might be, Wouk himself devotes the greater part of his book to explaining. It is again incomprehensible therefore that he should turn his back upon his own explanation and imply that these articles ought not to be used, that it is somehow degrading to the Navy even to suggest that an occasion could arise on which they might properly be invoked. I should hazard the guess that most of us would rather serve in Maryk's Navy than in Greenwald's, in the Navy represented by the officers who acquitted Maryk than in the Navy whose officers disapproved the verdict.

A final question remains. As mentioned earlier, Granville Hicks in *The New Leader* has suggested that Wouk's treatment of Lieutenant Keefer is an assault upon intellectuals and must therefore be regarded as one more sign of the anti-intellectualism of the times. One would like to register a dissent from this view and to defend the author against the indictment. If intellectuals occasionally stray from the canons of a strict morality, this implies merely that they share the defects and imperfections of other men. Wouk may portray Keefer's perfidy, but there is no reason for supposing that it is the perfidy of a class. Nor does Wouk maintain that there is a higher incidence of dishonesty among intellectuals than in other groups. The villains of literature come in all colors and shapes and sizes, represent every nationality, religion, and vocation, and belong to every social group.

Unfortunately, however, Wouk cannot be so easily absolved. Upon further reflection it is clear that he is objecting to Keefer not because Keefer is perfidious but because he is thoughtful. He deprecates Keefer not because of his betrayal of Maryk but because of his inclination to think. There is the clear conclusion now that if no one had done any thinking the "mutiny" would never have occurred and that Keefer, as the leading thinker, is largely to blame for the unfortunate history of the *Caine*. Here is an author telling us that blind obedience to authority is preferable to its rational acceptance. And this, I submit, is dangerous doctrine. An obedience which is blind is an obedience ill-equipped to match the menaces of our century. This kind of obedience is the antithesis of responsible social action and ultimately the denial of an adult morality.



In these remarks I have been critical of the conclusions to which the author of *The Caine Mutiny* felt constrained to come at the end of his book. These criticisms, while relevant to both an esthetic and a moral judgment, do not detract from the esteem in which I hold both the author and his book. Nor do they reduce, in any respect but one, the distinction of Wouk's achievement. Criticism, after all, is easy, creation difficult. If my remarks are cogent they imply only that *The Caine Mutiny*, which is a very good book, could have been a much better one. They suggest that consistency is not only a canon of logic and a requirement of literature- it is also a moral virtue. And they assert without equivocation that authority differs from authoritarianism in that it always makes some attempt, however small, to satisfy the criterion of reason.



## Adaptations

Using the screenplay by (Seymour) Michael Blankfort, *The Caine Mutiny* was filmed by Columbia Pictures in 1954. Humphrey Bogart stars as Captain Queeg, Charles Nolte is Willis Keith, and May Wynn plays herself. The movie received seven Academy Award nominations including Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Screenplay.

Alvin Rakoff adapted Wouk's story for television as "The Caine Mutiny Court Martial," first broadcast by BBC-TV, June, 1958.

Herman Wouk adapted the novel into a staged version of the court-martial trial. Paul Gregory first produced the play in the Granada Theatre, Santa Barbara, California, on October 12, 1953. Several persons of note were in the production, including Henry Fonda as Lt. Barney Greenwald and Charles Nolte as Lt. Willis Seward Keith. In a later production of the play, James Garner made his acting debut.

## Topics for Further Study

Pick one of the novels referenced by Wouk in the story. Read that novel and compare it to *The Caine Mutiny*. How does the constant referencing of other novels enrich Wouk's work?

Given the environmental concerns of the late 1990s, reflect on the prescience of the following: "Willie thought it was curious that with the coming of the Americans, the once-charming tropical islands had taken on the look of vacant lots in Los Angeles."

There is a passing reference to Native American legal battles through the person of Barney Greenwald. Do some research on the legal battles of Indian tribes in America. What possible relevance does this have to the novel's theme of authority?

Discover what happened to Japanese-American citizens domestically. A good account of this experience is contained in Joy Kogawa's 1981 novel, *Obasan*. Why were the citizens of Japanese descent interred?



# Compare and Contrast

**WWII:** After Japan's surrender, America occupies Japan.

**1950s:** On September 8, 1951, the United States and Japan sign a security pact that permits U.S. troops to remain on Japanese soil while any other nation must have U.S. permission to enter Japan.

**Today:** In response to missile tests by North Korea, Japan and the United States invest in the deployment of Strategic Defense Initiatives, also known as Star Wars.

**WWII:** The United States is the first nation to use a nuclear bomb in war.

**1950s:** In 1951, the United States stages the first military maneuvers involving troops and nuclear bombs.

**Today:** The United States has been unwilling to deter the spread of nuclear weapons and has made it nearly impossible for Russia to ratify SALT II, a treaty that massively reduces the number of armed nuclear missiles.

**WWII:** America's productive capacity makes the United States the greatest military power in the world.

**1950s:** Truman's 1951 budget contains the largest military expenditure to date.

**Today:** President Clinton reverses the decline in military spending that began in 1985. Under his tenure, an eighth Nimitz-class carrier joins the fleet, the USS Harry S Truman. Also, America commits to deploying Star Wars by 2001.

**WWII:** At the war's end, America insists on a proactive United Nations where nations can peaceably resolve disputes.

**1950s:** America begins a tradition of using the United Nations as a cover for its foreign policies.

**Today:** The United States won't pay its United Nations dues. Though it retains its permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, the United States currently has no speaking rights and risks losing sitting rights in the U.N. General Assembly.

**WWII:** The United States and the Soviet Union are allies against Germany and Japan.

**1950s:** The two superpowers are immersed in a Cold War and support opposing sides in the Korean War.

**Today:** The de-militarized zone (DMZ) still exists at the 38th parallel. The United States is still unable to resolve the dispute.

## What Do I Read Next?

Herman Melville wrote a brilliantly and symbolically charged novella in 1797. It focuses on the experiences of a family member of Melville's who presided over the court-martial and execution of a sailor. Though written in 1891, *Billy Budd, Foretopman* or *Billy Budd, Sailor* was first published posthumously in 1924. Coincidentally, the English composer Edward Benjamin Britten, aided by E. M. Forster's libretto, made *Billy Budd* into an opera in 1951.

A romantic novel by Charles Nordhoff describes what has become the archetypal story of mutiny. His 1932 novel, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, is based on the actual mutiny aboard the HMS *Bounty* in 1789 as narrated by Roger Byam.

In the 1970s, Wouk returned to World War II as a setting for a novel with a two-volume historical novel *The Winds of War* (1971) and *War and Remembrance* (1978). The first novel tells of the heroic Lt. Henry and the plight of Jews in Poland. The second novel is the translations of a Nazis' private papers near the end of the war. Both novels have been praised for their historical

The other great American novel to come out of World War II in 1948 is Norman Mailer's first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*. The novel chronicles the experiences of a platoon on the Japanese-held island of Anopopei in the Pacific.

After the war was over, most just wanted to forget the horrors of the camps. Elie Wiesel, however, refused to let the experience be swept under the rug. He wrote a 1956 novel called *Night* that described some of his own experiences in concentration camps during World War II. Wiesel then began a lifelong quest to talk about the camps and do whatever he could to prevent them from ever happening again.



## Further Study

Samuel Beckett, *Watt*, Grove Press, 1970.

For a stark contrast to Wouk, there is this work of the Irishman who fought for the French resistance when Germany occupied France in World War II, Samuel Beckett. His absurdist novel of 1953 features a protagonist named Watt who wanders around searching for meaning.

Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, Everyman's Library, 1993.

Recounts Marlow's journey into the Congo to retrieve Mr. Kurtz.

Barbara Ehrenreich, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*, Doubleday, 1983.

Ehrenreich examines some of the reasons and motivations behind a male revolt against reverence for the nineteenth-century cult of motherhood. She draws her evidence from pop cultural developments ranging from the rise of Playboy to the gray flannel suit.

Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, Penguin, 1991.

This novel became the bible of a whole generation of disillusioned beatniks. His philosophy and images provide a vivid contrast to Wouk's.

Matthew Klam, "The Pilot's Tale: At Sea with 90,000 Tons of Diplomacy," in *Harpers*, February, 1999, pp. 33-48.

Describes the nuclear power of today's ships as well as the technical brilliance of their features and their planes.

Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*, Penguin, 1992.

Wouk's story contains many subtle references to this 1851 American classic. This is the original story of the mad captain and his obsession with the capture of a great white whale.

James A. Michener, *Tales of the South Pacific*, Fawcett Books, 1989.

Another great American novel of World War II, this novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1948 and became the material for the Rogers and Hammerstein musical. The novel is a romantic story of a Marine who falls in love with a Tonkinese girl.



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## **Introduction**

### **Purpose of the Book**

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels





frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

### Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

### How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

### Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

### Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

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