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# Passage to Marseille

By Casey Robinson

Navigator to pilot.

Five minutes to target area.

Bombs away, sir.

There's another load, you...

- Bombs all away, sir.

- Good work, men. Let's get out of here.

Matrac, we are approaching  
the town of Romilly.

Thank you.

- Mama?

- Yes, darling.

- Is it Dad?

- I'm not sure. You be quiet, darling.

- Mother will be right back.

- All right.

Pilot to bombardier.

Open bomb bay doors.

Oh, Jean, darling. Till we meet again.

You were to have gone  
with the Wing Commander, Mr. Manning,  
but I happen to be rejoining my outfit  
not far from your own destination,  
so they asked me  
to bring you down from London.

- And what is my...

- Your what, sir?

Oh, nothing, I was about to ask  
what is my destination.

- A military secret, no doubt.

- Sorry, sir.

I'm lost, and I admit it.

Haven't the slightest idea where we are.

Not a signpost, not a marked road.

We're somewhere near the Channel,  
unless I miss my guess.

Even for a war correspondent,  
this is pretty darned mysterious.

Interesting, though.

- Here we are, sir.

- Really?

- Yes, sir.

- We're at an airdrome?

Yes, sir,

the base of the famous squad Victoire.

I can't believe it.

Where are the barracks,  
the wind sleeves, the tarmac runs?

How do they operate here?

Surprising, isn't it?

The French make out quite nicely.

They're an intensely practical people, sir.

- Will you get out, sir?

- Right.

- This is headquarters.

- I'll stow your bag, sir.

- Thank you. Do you mind if I take a look?

- Not at all, sir.

Well, I must say I'm surprised.

This is something new  
in my experience of military airdromes.  
To think that all these incredible bombings  
come from a quiet place like this.

I suppose  
those cows are squadron mascots.

Yes, sir.

They've brought us any amount of luck.

They're English, of course,  
merely on loan to the Frenchmen,  
as they couldn't very well bring  
their own cows with them.

Jerseys, sir.

The milk is excellent, if you care for milk.

It seems a strange environment for one  
of the deadliest squadrons in the service.

- The quiet, you mean?

- Yeah.

Oh, the French don't mind it.

As a matter of fact, they rather enjoy it.

It has a way of livening up a bit  
from time to time.

And now, if I may, sir,

I'll take you to the liaison officer  
between the Free French squadron  
and our own Captain Freycinet.

Come in.

- Glad to see you, Hastings.

- I've brought Mr. Manning.

Mr. Manning, Captain Freycinet.

- You're very welcome, Mr. Manning.

- Thank you.

Well, I'll leave you  
in each other's good hands.

What? You must stay to dinner.

There's a place laid for you.

Sorry, sir. Have to push on. Orders.

Well, goodbye, sir.

I'll have your bag put in your bunk.

- Thank you. Good night.

- Thank you, Hastings.

- Au revoir, Captain.

- Good luck to you.

- Would you like to take your coat off?

- I would, thanks.

Apritifs will be in.

- Or would you prefer a cocktail?

- Oh, no, that's all right. Thanks.

- Sit down.

- Thank you.

Captain Freycinet,

the purpose of my visit here...

Oh, I know the purpose of your visit.

Word came this afternoon  
from the Air Ministry.

You've come to see some French traitors,  
as Monsieur Laval would call us.

No, Captain,

I've come to see some Free Frenchmen.

To get to know them and to write  
about them for my news syndicate.

I think we can do with all  
the understanding we can scrape together  
in these touchy times.

Well, you can see a few of us here.

As for anything more...

Thank you.

Do you think that

Marshal Ptain considers you as traitors,  
as well as Pierre Laval?

Evidently.

And yet I try to be charitable  
in my judgments, Mr. Manning.

I try to remember that

Marshal Ptain is an old man now  
and in the hands of the barbarians.

votre sant.

- You've seen him these late years?

- No, but I did once.

Years ago, during the Battle of Verdun.  
He visited our squadron, which was then  
at Senard, at the foot of the Argonne.  
You were flying in the last war?

Yes, I was a pilot

in the Escadrille Lafayette.

The Escadrille Lafayette?

Why, you must have done your training  
with us, Mr. Manning.

Why, we're old comrades.

Here, come and have some dinner.

I, too, was a pilote de chasse  
in Squad 26 of the Cigognes Group.

You know, many times did I see  
the Indian-head insignia  
of your squadron on patrol.

Now we meet for the first time.

Had I known

you were an old pilote of our service,  
we would have messed with the squadron.

Oh, that's all right.

Perhaps I can see them later.

Why, of course. They're in that room.

Have you noticed? Not a sound from them.

Remember the old days?

The laughter, the gay talk in every mess?

Phonograph going full tilt.

Now, poor devils.

We're all like that, Free Frenchmen.

We find it hard to be merry.

- I understand they're bombers.

- American Flying Fortresses.

Although, we did begin here three years  
ago with a few of our own Farmans.

They crossed the Channel as a unit  
the day the armistice was signed.

And you came with them?

My dear Mr. Manning, you flatter me.

I'm getting along, and I'm blind in one eye.

No, no, I'm nothing but a liaison officer,  
and I reached England by another route.  
They're going out now.  
Just to remind the Boche of our existence.  
As soon as we finish, I'll take you down  
to the hangars if you like.  
Thanks, I'd like to very much.  
Mind the step.  
Just over the rise and you can see them.  
Great heavens. What is this?  
Planes being pulled out of barns?  
A haystack for a control tower?  
Is this the same place I saw  
when I came in?  
Do you doubt it?  
Well, the hedges are gone, the trees are  
gone and the fields have become runways.  
I don't doubt that.  
That's simple. It's just magic.  
- But there's one thing I can't understand.  
- What's that?  
- Where are the cows?  
- Well, they're taking them in the hangars.  
They lead the cows in  
and lead the planes out. Come on.  
They go in as the spearhead  
of the attack tonight.  
They go in to light up the target  
for the others.  
Do they know it? That they'll take  
the murderous part of the pounding?  
They'll give some in their turn.  
When I think of what they have to meet  
in the air and from the ground, Captain,  
we can be glad  
we were flying 20-odd years ago.  
Yeah.  
- Will you excuse me a moment, please?  
- Of course.  
Again?  
Yes, tonight's a special occasion.  
Sort of an anniversary.  
I understand. You have my permission.  
- Good luck.

- Thank you, sir.  
All aircraft, proceed to takeoff positions.  
All aircraft, proceed to takeoff positions.  
Over.  
V for Victor. Clear. You may take off.  
Vfor Victor. Clear. You may take off.  
N for Norman, take off. Good hunting.  
Now we can breathe easy for a few hours,  
have a smoke. As for them...  
What's the destination tonight?  
Or is that a military secret?  
Well, now they're in the air, it's not.  
- Berlin again.  
- Good. How many?  
There'll be 2,000 bombers  
over the target tonight.  
- Two thousand? Great heavens.  
- Matrac will like that.  
I've been thinking about those men,  
those grim determined faces.  
Especially that gunner, the man  
you spoke to just before the takeoff.  
I can't get him out of my mind.  
I feel I've seen him somewhere before.  
Matrac. He impressed you?  
I've never seen a stronger face  
or a stranger one.  
Not a fellow to take liberties with,  
I should say.  
No.  
I could tell you a story about him.  
I've never told anyone.  
- Would you care to hear it?  
- By all means, Captain.  
For the moment, I'll have to ask you  
to keep it off the record,  
as you journalists say.  
It's for your private ear.  
Later, I think it might be told.  
This is the story of a little group  
of whom Matrac was one.  
For many years, they suffered every pain,  
humiliation and indignity  
that men can have heaped upon them.

I chanced to meet these...  
Well, but let that come in its place.  
To begin,  
I'll have to take you far away from here.  
The outbreak of the war brought orders  
for my return to France  
from service in New Caledonia.  
I was forced to take passage  
on the Ville de Nancy,  
bound for Marseille  
with a cargo of nickel ore.  
The Ville de Nancy was  
one of those venerable tramps,  
which wallow across the backwaters  
of the world year after year.  
She wore the customary coat  
of rust-streaked black paint.  
We had a good Breton skipper,  
Captain Malo,  
who knew his way around the seven seas  
as a blind man knows his own room.  
Also, two decent mates  
who idolized their captain.  
The companionship of such men did much  
to keep the tedium of the long,  
slow voyage from being too oppressive.  
And sometimes there were songs of home  
from the fo'c'sle.  
Our crew was made up of hardbitten,  
salty old-timers,  
who may have been  
no better than they should be,  
but were French to a man.  
For stokers and coal passers,  
we had the scum of the Earth,  
mongrel dregs  
from every port in the tropics,  
dominated by a chief engineer  
cut to the same pattern.  
As there were but three cabin passengers,  
we all messed at the Captain's table.  
The seat of honor was filled very amply  
by a Major Duval  
of the Infanterie Coloniale.

He was a dominating,  
narrow-minded martinet,  
who had proved his courage  
in the last war  
and had learned nothing since.  
With him was his aide, Lieutenant Lenoir.  
He hung on Duval's every word,  
a typical yes man.  
These, the first and second mates  
and the chief engineer,  
made up our official family.  
Oh, yes, there was one other.  
A treacherous youth, Jourdain by name,  
who proved to be the wireless officer.  
Latest bulletin, sir.  
"A day of comparative quiet was enjoyed  
on the Maginot Line.  
"From the German fortification  
across the river,  
"the Nazi radio broadcast an appeal  
to the French soldiers  
"to lay down their arms  
and refuse to spill their blood  
"in a useless fight  
for the decadent democracies.  
"Some martial music was also broadcast  
by the Nazis  
"and the loyal French soldiers  
are understood to have booed."  
What kind of a war is this?  
Soldiers say boo? Soldiers of France?  
I am a soldier. I fight you. I say boo?  
And listening to music. Is this war?  
- I can...  
- Or is it a band concert?  
- Kindly allow the Commandant to speak.  
- I beg your pardon.  
I can tell you what kind of a war.  
The Germans are afraid.  
- They're afraid of our Maginot Line.  
- Brilliant, mon Commandant.  
- The whole truth in a nutshell.  
- That's right.  
They know that no power on Earth

can break through it.  
What are we going to do,  
sit there indefinitely?  
Yes, we'll sit there indefinitely  
and even longer if that is necessary.  
That is what soldiers are for,  
to hold the line.  
I say the Maginot Line is invincible.  
I say the Siegfried Line is invincible.  
And what is that but stalemate?  
Where does it get us?  
Freycinet, I think I'm going to like you.  
Victory comes with endurance.  
It came the last time,  
and it'll come again  
to the army that outlasts its opponent,  
the army that holds its lines  
five minutes longer.  
And that army will be the French Army,  
because its officers will make it hold,  
because they'll hold their men in place  
by means of cast-iron discipline.  
And what if  
the Maginot Line is outflanked?  
Forgive me, sir, but I've always  
understood that in a democracy,  
even a soldier has the right to think.  
Discipline is more essential  
than thought to a combat officer.  
An army is not a debating society.  
Its thinking is done for them by experts.  
I trust the Captain does not  
believe himself wiser  
than Marshal Ptain and the general staff.  
The British have a general staff,  
and it seems to feel as I do.  
Our allies have no such blind faith  
in the Maginot Line.  
That is because they did not build it.  
They're jealous of French genius.  
A nation of shopkeepers.  
They wanted to sell us the cement.  
Very well said, mon Commandant.  
No, do not mention the British.

The word offends me.  
The British will fight.  
Oh, yes. To the last drop of French blood.  
Only last week the Commandant said  
exactly the same thing.  
Only last month  
the same words were invented  
in the office of Herr Doktor Goebbels  
in Berlin.

- Are you accusing me of disloyalty?  
- Or is it me you accuse, sir?  
Please, let's not accuse anyone,  
neither our traveling companions,  
nor our allies.  
Very well, I accept your apology.  
You ask for my opinions, mark my words,  
time always proves I'm right.  
This was the atmosphere  
in which I was destined  
to make a voyage  
halfway around the globe.  
By the time we'd reached Panama,  
the world we'd known was falling apart.  
The Maginot Line was outflanked.  
The invincible French Army  
was on the run.  
Events were happening  
with alarming swiftness.  
"Maginot line flanked."  
Fault of our allies, sir.  
British, the Belgians.  
What did I tell you?  
They let our line get flanked.  
France can curse the day she let herself  
get mixed up with foreign alliances.

- Sir?  
- No.

Passing through the Panama Canal,  
the Ville de Nancy set her helm  
for Marseille.  
Two days out of Coln,  
the wireless buzzed continuously.  
The air was full of the news  
of torpedoings and hostile raiders.

Ahoy, the bridge. Submarine!

- Where away?

- Thirty degrees starboard, sir.

Sound the alarm.

- What do you see?

- Some sort of suspicious craft.

Can't be sure.

- Man the guns.

- Aye, sir.

- Hold the fire.

- Aye, sir.

We'll have a torpedo

in our belly any minute.

- Hold your fire.

- Hold your fire.

Well, it's no sub.

It's a craft of some sort, isn't it?

- A boat?

- Or a canoe.

See there.

That's a man.

He's alive.

Probably survivors

from some torpedoed ship.

Hard starboard.

- Hard starboard.

- Hard starboard.

Slowly.

Stop. Lower a boat.

Let go of the grapple lashings.

Hurry.

Faster, faster.

Hurry.

Easy with them, men.

Pretty far gone.

I needed that.

We've been without food for 20 days.

Without water for five.

Then I won't plague you

with questions right now.

Put these men in the aft house.

- Set up the extra cots.

- Aye, sir.

- Open up that door.

- Come on. Easy now.  
Tell Cook to bring them some broth.  
Then let them sleep.  
And you might ask the men  
if they can spare them some clothes.  
Aye, sir.  
Captain Malo, what is your opinion  
of these fellows? Are they French?  
One of them is, at least. But what would  
they be doing in an Indian canoe?  
They are not seamen, that's plain.  
If we're off the African coast,  
I'd wager 10-to-1 that they were deserters  
from one of our disciplinary battalions.  
Don't you say so, Major?  
No, I do not.  
Since we're not off the African coast,  
your reasoning lacks something  
of being brilliant.  
Learn to examine the facts, man.  
Use your eyes.  
Captain Freycinet,  
perhaps you can do better.  
If you want the facts, you'd better let  
the men explain for themselves.  
I will, and hear a pack of lies.  
You condemn them without a hearing?  
Isn't that unfair?  
No, it is not unfair,  
because I know who they are.  
- You mean you've seen them before?  
- No, I never saw them before this morning.  
But that is immaterial, since I have  
certain modest deductive powers.  
Lenoir was on the right track, though he  
lacked the logic to carry it through.  
These fellows have  
the convict look about them.  
Some of them may have served in the  
disciplinary battalions, but not recently.  
Gentlemen, beyond a shadow of a doubt,  
they are fugitives from Devil's Island.  
From Cayenne? Impossible.  
We are at least 1,500 miles from Cayenne.

Do you mean to tell me they have made  
such a voyage in that small open canoe?

You don't know these fellows, Malo.

The type, I mean.

I was stationed in Cayenne  
a dozen years ago.

I learned the smell of the convict.

A more depraved and desperate set  
of scoundrels cannot be found.

No matter what your opinion,

I suggest we hear

what they have to say for themselves.

As you wish.

I shall be amused at their lies  
and by exposing them.

- We'll see, gentlemen.

- Thank you.

- Good evening.

- Good evening, sir.

Come to attention, you men.

You, too.

Haven't you been taught to stand  
in the presence of officials?

No.

Never mind. This is a free ship  
and not an armored compound.

I think we can all be seated.

Thank you, sir.

Well, you men seem

to be a long way from home.

- You're French? The lot of you?

- Yes, sir.

What's your name?

Renault.

Perhaps these men will now tell us  
who they are and where they come from.

Willingly, sir.

They are gold miners from Venezuela.

Three of us, though born in France,  
are naturalized Venezuelans.

The other two were born in Venezuela  
of French parentage.

I see. Where?

Well, we were working a placer claim

300 miles up a branch of the Orinoco.  
Doubtless, you've never been there, sir.  
It's deep in the jungle.  
You reach it only by canoe.  
We heard of the war only two months ago.  
- It must be a wilderness, that place.  
- Oh, yes, sir. It's terrible.  
There's no radio, no settlement,  
no civilization within 100 miles.  
- How did the news reach you?  
- Just by chance, Captain.  
You see, there are Indian rubber gatherers  
in that region.  
Three of them, just coming in  
from the coast, stopped at our camp.  
Remember?  
Well, so we bought a few supplies  
from them,  
among other things, an axe wrapped in  
a Caracas newspaper many months old.  
- What paper was that?  
- The Caracas Diario.  
I even remember the date. November 3.  
The first news of the war we heard  
told us of a raid  
from the Maginot Line in Alsace.  
Very odd.  
- And you were interested?  
- Naturally, sir.  
We are Frenchmen, just like yourselves.  
- We wanted to go home and... To fight.  
- Likely.  
- You. What's your name?  
- Matrac.  
Obviously, you are the leader.  
Suppose you tell us?  
- I'll speak for my friend.  
- Speak when you're spoken to.  
Sit down, sit down.  
Well? Go on.  
We have no leader. We're all equal.  
We're a group of free men.  
- You. You who wished to speak just now.  
- Thank you, sir.

You were incredulous over our attempt to return to France, and I don't wonder. Because it was an adventure that only the deepest feelings of patriotism could inspire.

All we had, sir, was our little canoe, together with 200 ounces of gold dust.

Our plan was to sail westward to where we could catch a boat for Panama and from there to France.

But we were upset by a huge swell, and the iron box that contained the gold and our passports were lost.

We righted the boat and went on, nevertheless.

From then on, we were lost.

Helpless. No mast, sail gone, and, mon Commandant, on my word of honor, all this happened three weeks before you sighted us.

You're one of the naturalized Venezuelans?

- Yes, sir.

- Where was your home there?

- Ciudad Bolvar.

- You at the back there.

So? You didn't catch him.

His accent is perfect.

And you have no papers of any sort?

No proof of identity?

No, sir.

As Marius so truthfully told, they're all at the bottom of the Orinoco.

I see.

All at the bottom of the Orinoco River.

- Yes.

- Very good. Very convenient.

Or is it? We shall see.

Do you have any further questions, Captain Malo?

No, Commandant. You've asked quite enough questions for all of us.

Yes, I think I've been thorough.

- Have everything you need here?

- Thank you, Captain.

Yes, Captain.

You've been more than good to us.

Fine.

Well, Commandant,

I'm afraid they spoiled your evening.

Their story seemed perfectly plausible and straightforward to me.

Plausible, sir? It was a structure of transparent falsehoods.

I always trust my instinct, sir, never what men tell me, especially convicts. All convicts are liars.

The Commandant has said it.

I don't believe a word of their story.

Captain Malo, I've come to a decision regarding those rogues.

- You have?

- Yes, in the first place, you allow too much freedom.

- What do you propose I should do?

Turn them over to the police, of course, the moment we arrive in Marseille.

If they are honest men, as you so naively suppose,

- they've nothing to fear.

- Anything else?

In the meantime, they're to be locked up in the brig.

Captain Malo, as the ranking representative of the Army of France, I demand it.

I'm glad you remembered to call me Captain.

No one will be locked up on my ship while I command.

Man's becoming insufferable.

Fortunately, his word will not be the final one when we get to Marseille.

You're absolutely right, mon Commandant. The man's insufferable.

- What's our speed?

- Ten-and-a-half knots. 180 revolutions, sir.

- Full speed and 195 revolutions.

- Aye, aye, sir.

I want to reach the danger zone  
by nightfall.

Full speed. 195 revolutions.

- Good evening.

- Good evening.

Fine day.

Any day that takes us closer  
to France is a fine day.

I wonder. On your account, I mean.

I was coming in to tell you,  
to warn your men of something.

Commandant Duval is of the opinion  
that you and your friends have escaped  
from Cayenne.

Some of the others, too.

And I wouldn't be fair if I didn't tell you  
that I've come

to the same conclusion myself.

Will you wait here a moment, please?

Will you come in, please?

Sit down.

Thank you.

Captain, Renault's told us what you said,  
and we've been talking here together.

There's nothing to do. It's true.

We're convicts escaped from Cayenne.

We're Frenchmen.

Convicts or not, we can kill Germans.

- What is more important than that?

- Shut up. What do you know about it?

We're as good Frenchmen as a lot  
who have never been sent to Cayenne.

We are not soft, us convicts.

We can kill Germans.

Keep out of this, Petit.

- Why have you told us this, Captain?

- To put you on your guard.

You're for us, then?

Yes. France needs men.

You see? I told you he would be for us.

- Even if we are convicts?

- What does that matter?

I guess it's time you heard our story.  
Tell him, Renault.  
Yes, but what shall I begin with?  
With whom shall I begin?  
Now there is Petit.  
He is from Provence.  
What caused him to become a convict?  
- It was the love of a farmer for his land.  
- You are right.  
I farmed the land my father farmed  
and his father before him.  
My wife and I planted  
as the seasons went by.  
And then the government came,  
and they built a dam.  
They flooded all my land.  
I guess I went kind of crazy.  
He ran to the control station  
and attempted to smash the machinery.  
When the employees tried to seize him,  
he maimed several and killed one.  
The government let me off easy.  
Instead of being guillotined,  
I was transported for life to Guiana.  
Do you know French Guiana?  
It is the most corrupt  
and neglected of all our colonies.  
There in the steaming equatorial climate,  
there're 5,000 or 6,000 men just like us,  
struggling against the heavy undergrowth  
in the very depths of the jungle.  
Slaves half-naked in the forests,  
tortured by heat and humidity,  
mosquitoes, fever, rotten food.  
Men die or else go insane.  
Here you might have found Petit laboring  
to build a road.  
I will tell you about this road.  
The convicts call it Route Zero,  
because it will never exist.  
Already it has been under construction  
for more than half a century,  
and for that,  
there is exactly 16 miles to show.

And for those 16 miles,  
there is one dead convict for every yard.  
Not far from where Petit worked,  
you might have run across Garou  
working in a mahogany camp at Charven.  
Formerly a mechanic  
and a professional racer of motorcars,  
he had killed his sweetheart  
during a lover's quarrel.  
In certain circles, it was considered crude  
of him to accomplish this end with an axe.  
Well, of course,  
since then Garou has reformed.  
He's learned discipline. Haven't you?  
Cayenne is a very good school for that.  
And now, as a pleasant diversion,  
may I please introduce myself?  
As you may already have discovered,  
mon Capitaine, I'm a very clever man.  
And sensitive.  
Sensitive down to my fingertips.  
In fact, these fingers made me  
the best safecracker in Paris  
and a virtuoso among the pickpockets.  
Oh, they had such a delicate touch,  
and from the purses of the rich  
they brought forth brilliant symphonies  
as from a piano.  
Your story is a delightful diversion,  
my friend.  
But one doesn't tell a glib story  
with a dry tongue.  
You will find a bottle of cognac  
in my cabin.  
- Thank you. What else might I find?  
- I'll take a chance.  
Now tell me about yourself.  
I'm a deserter of the Army of France.  
In the last war, at the age of 16, I enlisted.  
Three months later, I ran away.  
I discovered a terrible thing about myself.  
I was a coward.  
Later I went to Morocco  
to enlist in the Foreign Legion

in an effort to redeem myself,  
but I got arrested.  
You see, even a deserter  
and convict can love his country, Captain.  
Can you imagine, then, my feelings,  
when during the long years  
of my imprisonment,  
I had to watch every morning  
the tricolor being raised?  
Soon I discovered that there was another  
who every morning looked at the flag,  
the sight of which seemed to him  
like a benediction, like a sacrament.  
I came to feel a strange kinship  
with this man,  
because every morning  
we did the same thing at the same time.  
The convicts, we called him Grandpre.  
He was a librs, a free man.  
That is, he had served his sentence,  
but was not permitted to leave the colony.  
Since Cayenne offers no employment  
for free men,  
the lot of these librs was hopeless.  
But Grandpre was more resourceful  
than most.  
He became a catcher of butterflies,  
for which the Guianas are famous.  
The goods he made from these,  
he sold to the tourists,  
and the butterflies themselves  
to collectors.  
Thus, franc by franc and sou by sou,  
Grandpre was able  
to put together a little sum.  
For Grandpre had a plan and a hope.  
The same plan and hope of all of us.  
Escape.  
Hold it, you. This is a closed road.  
We're not guarding butterflies.  
I heard  
there was a special big kind up here.  
- I forgot it was a toll road.  
- These are cheap cigarettes.

They won't be  
when you sell them to the convicts.

Hi, Grandpre.

- How is it with you and your butterflies?

- How is with you and your mosquitoes?

I wish they were pigs of Germans.

- What did you say?

- Just what I said.

The old man asked you a simple question,  
Petit.

I said I wish I was in France killing pigs  
of Germans instead of mosquitoes.

You mean that you'd fight for our country  
if you were free?

Sooner than most, I swear it.

Not sooner than me.

There is only one thing I hate  
more than a guard, and that's a Nazi.

How about you?

What are you, a recruiting officer?

Or is this a cross-examination?

I'm just asking him. Well?

I'm a patriot, to answer your question.

And my friend over there, Marius,  
he's a patriot, too.

You see over there by the guard?

He is very clever. Everything there is  
to know about bribery, Marius knows.

He would be a very useful man  
if one were planning an escape.

Maybe.

- There is no escape. Don't talk about it.

- We are silly to even listen.

Old man just play games with our mind,  
that's all.

But I have heard he has money, lots of it.

Well, that's different.

That's something else again, eh, Marius?

Yeah, that would be different.

You there.

This fellow got lost in the swamp.

I told him

he could spend the night with you.

What's this, a hotel?

We're crowded already.  
Thank you. Thank you, my friends.  
What are you doing here?  
I paid the Sergeant for your company.  
And I brought you a present.  
- What is all this talk about being lost?  
- There had to be an excuse.  
You said you would fight for France.  
So she must mean something to you,  
in spite of you being here.  
I thought it would be nice  
to drink together and talk about home.  
- Oh, that's a crazy idea.  
- I think about my home all the time.  
- My farm and my old woman.  
- Yes, a farm is good.  
There is nothing better  
than the good French soil.  
No, I'll take Paris any day.  
Montmartre and Moulin Rouge,  
Bal Tabarin and the women. The women.  
Paris isn't France. I like the open country.  
Long white roads and green trees.  
The most beautiful place in the world.  
Lorraine.  
For me,  
France will always be the great tradition.  
Versailles, Joan of Arc,  
statues and monuments.  
Napoleon sleeping in greatness  
in the Invalides.  
Place Vendôme.  
Tradition that was too big for a boy of 16,  
who was ashamed  
to find himself a coward.  
If it were to cost my life, I...  
It would be a small price to pay  
to redeem myself.  
I would fight and die gladly  
to make France free.  
Who wouldn't?  
I am past 65.  
But if we can make sure  
that here are four Frenchmen at least

who feel as I do about our country,  
who, if they had the chance,  
would fight for France.

If I can convince myself to believe you,  
I might...

- You might what?

- I might,

even though I'm an old man,  
still find a way to serve my country.

- But, tell me again, if you were in France...

- We would fight.

But what kind of talk is this?

We're not in France.

We're in this stinking hole.

What do we do? Grow wings to fly with?

- Or do we walk across the Atlantic?

- A canoe might be bought.

A canoe might float

down the river to the sea.

A ship might be boarded.

- Listen, old man, if you're joking with us...

- I'm not joking.

I want to be sure that you are the men.

How many I've talked to before.

Can I take a chance on you?

Are you lying to me?

Have you the courage

to beat the river and the sea?

Well, if we haven't, I know one who has.

And if he would be with us...

You know him.

- His name is Matrac.

- Can he get us through the swamp?

- That is the main thing.

- I know the swamp like my own hand.

- But the river and the sea?

- Matrac knows the ocean.

He escaped once in a canoe to Venezuela,  
but they sent him back.

- Is this man a patriot?

- Yes, he is a patriot.

A greater patriot

than any of us can ever hope to be.

I swear it, he fought the Nazis

long before there was a war.  
It was in 1938, during the Munich Crisis.  
Daladier has just returned  
by plane from Munich  
where he, a Frenchman,  
betrayed France to the enemy.  
That's fantastic enough in all conscience,  
but an even more fantastic thing  
has just happened right here  
at the airport. You getting that?  
Go ahead.  
Instead of being torn to pieces  
by an outraged mob,  
the mob welcomed him home a hero.  
It's unbelievable.  
From where I'm phoning, I can see  
the litter of flowers on the runway  
where the crowd pelted him not  
with stones, mind you, but with flowers.  
It's incredible, unbelievable.  
Raoul? Can you print that?  
Jean, please get out.  
Jean! Jean!  
Jean, it's no use!  
Everything I've worked for  
smashed to bits.  
Did you see the them, the police?  
The dirty Fascist flunkies.  
Jean, it may be hard right now,  
but you must remember  
that they are still Frenchmen  
who believe in the things we believe in.  
They stood there,  
just stood there watching,  
just to make sure a good job was done.  
Darling, you've been driving yourself  
too hard. You need some rest.  
I know the place, Jean. Romilly. You said  
you wanted to go back there someday.  
- Romilly?  
- Yes. Remember?  
Remember where it was we first met?  
Right over there, beyond that bend.  
This is the very spot.

You were wearing one of those big floppy  
yellow hats and a basket on your arm.  
Is that all? Must have been a warm day.  
How long has it been, Jean?  
Oh, when I think of what's happened,  
it seems like a century.  
Well, don't think about it.  
You know, you're a lot prettier now  
than you were then.  
Really?  
Wonder why  
we never thought of getting married.  
Oh, I've thought of it, Jean, very often.  
But I had a rival.  
France.  
That's ancient history.  
Think it's too late?  
How's the knee these days, Jacques?  
a va, Monsieur le Maire,  
if you do not complain about it.  
Now his two sons, both soldiers.  
- Monsieur thinks there'll be another war?  
- Will be?  
We've already lost the first three battles,  
the Rhineland, Vienna and Munich.  
- But in a military way?  
- Jean, no politics.  
Madame is right.  
No politics tonight, of all nights.  
I guess I can still bend my knees.  
They won't crack.  
Happy?  
- To us.  
- Together always.  
It's funny how much more you can say  
with a few bars of music  
than a basketful of words.  
Jean?  
- Let's go.  
- Why? What's the matter?  
- Nothing.  
- You look as if you'd seen a ghost.  
- Oh, I'm just a little tired from shopping.  
- All right.

You know, you're a funny girl.  
We just about get unpacked  
and settle down,  
and you wanna pack up  
and run away again.  
I'm going to get my wedding trip in  
while I can.  
Jean?  
Remember the boat trip  
we said we'd take someday?  
You wanted to do a series of stories  
on South America.  
Yes. Guatemala, Peru.  
- Seems like a long time ago.  
- You know, we could still do it.  
We could get visas in Marseille  
for Portugal and sail from...  
- What's the matter?  
- Nothing.  
Crazy kids.  
- Oh, I can't...  
- Look now. You can look now. Come on.  
They missed us by that much.  
- I can't go on any longer.  
- Oh, come on, Paula.  
I tell you it's all over. Nobody got hurt.  
It's not that, Jean.  
What are you talking about?  
Darling, you've got to get away.  
They're looking for you.  
Who's looking for me?  
What are you talking about?  
The police.  
You're wanted, Jean, for murder.  
Yes.  
There.  
I'm not gonna run away.  
There still must be some justice left  
in France.  
But, Jean, don't you see that the same  
people who can pay for riots and killing  
can hire courts, judges and juries?  
They can't get away with it,  
the dirty, murdering...

Please, darling, if you love me.  
There's still room for the truth.  
But you can't print the truth  
on a smashed press.  
No, but I can still talk.  
I'm going back and stand trial. I've got to.  
But you won't prove anything.  
You'll get yourself killed.  
I want you to fight, Jean, not be a martyr.  
It's not just us, our lives,  
it's the life of our country.  
If we get away,  
go to America or somewhere,  
we can do something about it.  
We can shout the truth  
and tell people what's going on.  
Jean, please.  
All right, we'll go.  
Jean?  
Jean? Are you awake?  
- Jean!  
- Here I am. Out here.  
Oh, darling. I was so frightened.  
I couldn't sleep. I tried not to wake you.  
- Monsieur Matrac?  
- Yes.  
You're under arrest.  
"For the crime of inciting a riot  
and for complicity in the events  
"which led to the death  
of one Raoul Dulaine  
"and for other traitorous acts  
against the Republic of France,  
"I sentence you to 15 years  
- "in the penal colony of Guiana."  
- Oh, Jean!  
I'll be waiting. I'll be waiting.  
Can you doubt that this man is a patriot?  
No. He is a great patriot.  
He's the man to lead us.  
But where is he? Where can we find him?  
He's in solitary.  
He will be there for another two months.  
What was his offence?

Well, there was a letter  
from someone very dear to him at home.  
One of the guards made a dirty joke  
and dropped the letter in the mud,  
so Matrac knifed him.  
Two months?  
Men have gone mad in the chteau  
in two days.  
Not Matrac.  
Marius could get word to him of our plans.  
Sure, and he would be worth waiting for,  
even it were two years.  
Here on St. Joseph's Isle, there's  
a building like nothing else in the world.  
One can go mad in these pits.  
Nothing to see except blank walls.  
Nothing to think about except escape.  
No sound  
except the beat of one's own pulse.  
Slowly one's mind,  
like one's body and soul, gives way.  
Then, when this happens,  
one is put on the mad side of the barracks.  
Until this happens, one may remain  
in the cells of the other half,  
where men are not mad,  
but only going mad.  
Here for long months had been Matrac,  
the man I had sworn was a patriot.  
Because of his intense and fiery nature,  
imprisonment was especially bitter  
to Matrac.  
But somehow, slowly and bitterly,  
the days of his solitary confinement  
went by.  
French justice.  
Beautiful, decadent France.  
A country that gives birth  
to a bunch of rotten Fascist panderers.  
I hate France.  
He's talking to himself all the time now.  
He'll soon be crazy like the rest of them.  
Not me, my friend.  
You will pay special attention

to Monsieur Matrac.  
He's a famous person, friend of politicians.  
He has influence, as you see.  
You're as rotten  
as the France that pays you.  
If any letters come for Monsieur Matrac,  
you will see  
that they are delivered at once.  
Monsieur Matrac does not like  
to be kept waiting.  
Now you'll get it.  
Incorrigible.  
Matrac? Marius.

- Hey! What are you doing there?

- Nothing.

This, then, was the man we had selected  
to lead us.

By the time he returned from the rock,  
everything was in readiness.

Clever Marius had even gotten himself  
assigned keeper of our barracks.

Grandpre was waiting for us with a canoe  
in the swamps of the Maroni.

This was the night.

Everything was in readiness.

With any luck at all...

Tonight before 10:00.

I'm going, too.

- Where?

- With you.

- There's no room.

- Unless I go, I squeal.

All right, Bijou, you go.

We waited in the semi-darkness.

**9:**

**9:**

Five minutes to 10:00.

One minute to 10:00.

Bijou.

- Where is Bijou? I don't see him.

- He changed his mind.

- Hi, Grandpre.

- Grandpre.  
You made it.  
No, we didn't.  
We are still back in the barracks.  
Save your jokes.  
- So you're Grandpre?  
- And you're Matrac.  
I'm glad you're going to lead us back  
to fight for our country.  
Well, we better shove off.  
Hey, be careful with that paddle.  
Each time you splash, we ship water.  
I can't help it. The boat is overloaded.  
If we have to bail now,  
what's going to happen  
when we hit the rough water of the ocean?  
We'll be swamped.  
Stop yapping.  
We'll have to take that chance.  
It's getting light.  
We'll get off the river  
and hide out on that sand spit.  
Put out to sea tonight.  
Four.  
Five.  
- We are one too many.  
- Yes.  
If Bijou had come onboard, we would  
all be at the bottom of the river by now.  
I know what the rest of you are thinking.  
- I am the heaviest.  
- That's right.  
Well, it's hard luck, Petit,  
but you are elected, isn't he, Matrac?  
What, leave Petit  
when we're going home to kill Germans?  
What do you say to that, Grandpre?  
Whoever stays, it can't be him.  
- But he weighs more than any of us.  
- So he does.  
Well, speak up, Grandpre. It's your canoe.  
That's right. If it wasn't for Grandpre,  
none of us would be going.  
And who did he speak to first?

Not to you. You weren't even there.  
What's that got to do with it?  
I'm smaller than any of you.  
Even Garou weighs  
a good 10 pounds more than I do.  
You weigh enough  
to lighten the canoe all that's needed.  
- Yeah? And who got the word to Matrac?  
- Shut up, the bunch of you.  
You...  
Well, Grandpre?  
Lads, Petit is going  
and the rest of you with him.  
It's me that stays.  
- No. You? Never.  
- Let him finish.  
- What's the idea?  
- Well, you see, lads, it's this way.  
For 35 years, I thought that the one hope  
of my life was to escape.  
Yeah, that's what I've thought.  
And when this came,  
it looked like my last chance.  
I'd never have another.  
But, when it gets right down to it,  
I suddenly find that I'm afraid of the sea.  
Yeah, and I'm scared.  
That's the plain truth.  
I thought I'd have enough courage  
to make this voyage,  
but I see now I haven't.  
You lie, Grandpre.  
You, a coward?  
I would swap my guts for yours any day.  
All right, all right, maybe I could stand  
the voyage if it came right down to it.  
But the fact is, I've changed my mind.  
I don't want to go.  
This place is kind of a home to me now.  
I'd miss it.  
You lie, Grandpre.  
Listen to me. You, too, Matrac.  
It's my canoe.  
Who goes in my canoe is up to me to say.

And I say it's you that goes  
and me that stays.  
I'm past 65.  
I'm too old to fight.  
That was the idea of getting away,  
wasn't it?  
Or was it?  
I've got your promise on that.  
I think I'd like to have it again,  
kind of formal.  
Not just nods, but words,  
like you would speak in church, maybe.  
- You want us to say our beads?  
- Shut up, Marius.  
What words?  
I don't exactly know  
when it comes down to it.  
I'll have to make them up as I go along.  
First, get up, all of you.  
Raise your right hand.  
That's to begin with.  
This is between you and me.  
Now first you say "I," and then your name.  
I...  
Promise that I will do everything  
in my power...  
"Promise that I will do everything  
in my power."  
...to reach France, our country...  
"To reach France, our country."  
...our mother country we love  
in fair weather or foul.  
"Our mother country we love  
in fair weather or foul."  
I promise to fight for her...  
"I promise to fight for her."  
...to the last drop of my blood.  
"To the last drop of my blood."  
I guess that's all,  
except to get in the boat  
and not waste any more of this good wind.  
Good luck.  
Good luck.  
Good luck.

So you see we have gone through quite something to get this far, Captain, and nobody is going to make us turn back now, if only for the little old man who didn't get to come with us. Yes, Grandpre is the real hero of our story.

I agree with you.

That was a good oath you swore with the old man.

- I wouldn't want to be the one to break it.

- It will not be broken.

We trust each other.

Well, we've talked all night.

- You men should get some sleep.

- Now, wait.

- Are you going to help us?

- Yes. I'll speak to Captain Malo.

He agrees with me

that no soldier is unwelcome to France.

All hands on deck. All hands on deck.

All hands on deck. All hands on deck.

Men,

I have just received a wireless message which is of concern to all of us.

"June 23.

"France,

under the leadership of Marshal Ptain,

"has signed an armistice with Germany.

"According to reports, an emergency

government has been set up in Vichy,

"and is negotiating with the Germans.

"It is agreed

that the Nazis will occupy the capital

"and that Hitler will make

a triumphant entry into Paris."

I will not try to express

the common feelings of all of us

on this blackest day

in the history of our motherland.

As further details are received,

they will be posted on the bulletin board.

You will now carry on with your duties.

- Take the altitude.

- Yes, sir.

Well?

I'm worried, Captain Freycinet.

I want your advice.

About what?

If I follow my orders and go to Marseille,  
you'll see what will happen.

My ship and her cargo will fall  
into hands that are friendly to Berlin.

You can imagine

how delighted the Germans would be

- with a gift of 6,000 tons of nickel ore.

- Yeah.

Well, they're not going to get it  
or the Ville de Nancy, either.

When the watch changes,  
I'm altering our course for England.

Fine.

What about Duval?

He is to know nothing about it.

The new course will be kept a secret.

My mates will know, naturally.

They'll be as pleased as yourself.

I can count on every one of the seamen,  
but the engine room,

they're not to be trusted,

least of all, the Chief.

You know how he hates the English.

What's your opinion of the convicts?

In the event of trouble,

will they be with us?

- To a man, I think.

- To a man, except Matrac.

And where he leads, they follow.

Did you see him when we got the news?

I'm not too sure of him.

I'd stake my life on him.

I don't know why,

but I feel I know my man.

At heart, he's a Frenchman,

more than any of them.

More than any of us, perhaps.

- I'll have to take your word for it.

- I think you can.

Captain Freycinet?

- May I ask you something, sir?

- What is it?

Can you persuade Captain Malo  
to reach Marseille at night?

Marseille? Why do you ask?

So I can swim ashore.

I don't trust this Major Duval.

- Yes? Why not?

- He'll radio the police.

I've been fighting his kind all my life.

I know what to expect.

There are many ways

to serve your country, Matrac.

What if you didn't reach Marseille?

I've got to reach Marseille.

I don't care about my country.

The France you and I loved is dead,  
Captain.

She's been dying for a long time.

I saw her die

in the Rhineland and in Munich.

Now that her death is complete,

I can stop lying and tell the truth.

I'm trying to get back to a woman.

I never intended to fight.

I know about Paula

and all that you've suffered.

But the France that you and I love, Matrac,  
is at war.

If you won't fight,

why should we help you escape?

I'll leave that to your conscience.

Your wife is waiting

for the man who went away,

the man who loved his country,

the patriot.

Would you betray such a woman?

I leave that to your conscience.

Imperceptibly, we swung northward,

marking a course that would take

the Ville de Nancy to England.

But could the secret be kept?

On the morning of June the 26th,  
I was awakened by the profound silence  
which had settled over the ship.  
I attributed this to the old cause, engine  
trouble, and thought no more about it,  
except to wonder  
how long we'd be adrift this time.  
Fortunately, the sea was calm.  
I rang for the mess boy.  
As yet, I had no suspicion  
that anything was wrong.  
Then I noticed that my pistol was missing  
from its holster.  
What the devil do you mean?  
Open this door.  
What's the meaning of this?  
Who locked my door?  
- I did, sir.  
- For what reason?  
Commandant Duval's orders.  
You're to come with me.  
- Where's Captain Malo?  
- You'll see him, sir.  
Go on.  
Come on!  
What the devil is the meaning of this?  
Captain Malo,  
I understand our course has been changed.  
- Have you received new orders?  
- That's my business, sir.  
I've studied your chart.  
We're no longer heading for Marseille.  
- Correct, sir.  
- For what reason?  
On our present course,  
we run the greatest risk  
of being picked up by a British destroyer.  
Would you consider that such a calamity?  
I would consider it  
a great misfortune, certainly.  
France has no ships to spare for England.  
You'd prefer the Germans  
to have her, perhaps?  
I prefer to be a realist. We've argued

these matters before, Captain Malo.  
Now we'll settle them with the only  
argument that means anything. Force!  
Take him down with the rest.  
Men, a new order has been born in Europe.  
France has been given the privilege  
of becoming a part of it.  
The watchword  
of this new order is discipline.  
From now on, you will navigate  
this ship under my command  
until we reach Marseille.  
- This is piracy, Duval.  
- And your action is treason.  
I'm willing to let both questions  
be decided by the authorities at home.  
But I'm a reasonable man.  
If I give you your liberty,  
will you give me your word of honor  
- to take this ship back to Marseille?  
- Certainly not.  
You may control the ship,  
but you'll never bring her into port.  
No decent seaman would serve you.  
The men will do well to consider.  
Those who cooperate will be given  
rewards and security in the new France.  
I speak especially to you convicts.  
To every man  
who helps bring this ship to Marseille,  
I promise a full pardon  
and favor of the Vichy government.  
Don't move! Hold it, men! Hold it!  
Take your stations  
and prepare to get underway.  
Confine the engine-room crew  
below decks,  
- and see that they do their work.  
- Aye, aye, sir.  
And no more nonsense.  
Lead them below! Lively, men!  
- Get going!  
- Move on.  
Get below.

Get down.

- Good work, men.

- It was a pleasure, mon Commandant.

- Are there any killed?

- No, sir.

Good.

Obviously,

some skulls are too thick to damage.

Have Duval and his yes man locked  
in a cabin for the rest of the voyage.

Aye, aye, sir. You two, up on the B Deck.

Thank you, Matrac.

Clear the deck. Hook up the boom, guys.

Lend a hand, men.

All right, grab ahold.

You'll regret this, Malo. The day will come  
when you'll bitterly regret it.

Quiet, men. Quiet.

The dirty rat is giving our position.

Commandant, let me have him.

Carry out the orders.

- Turn to.

- Turn to.

- Motors.

- A plane.

I can't see it.

- Man the guns.

- Man the guns there.

Man the aft guns.

You men, take cover.

Hurry up, you men, take cover!

Look, they're still alive.

Matrac, what are you doing?

Stop it! Stop it, Matrac!

What are you doing?

You cannot assassinate helpless men!

Look around you, Captain,  
and see who are the assassins.

We finished them.

We've shown the dirty Germans.

It was great, what you did.

We all did it.

I just happened to get to the gun.

We'll destroy them all, won't we?

Just like we got this plane.  
Drive them out of France.  
Of course we will.  
Well, we got the ore to England,  
and very glad they were to get it.  
- Got the men there, too.  
- They weren't interned?  
Oh, no. We all stuck with the story they  
were survivors from a torpedoed ship.  
I remember this Matrac now.  
His paper was small, but every journalist  
in Europe admired the fight he put up  
against appeasement  
in the Munich sellout.  
He still fights.  
The bombs they're dropping tonight are  
editorials the Germans will understand.  
There are so many questions  
on the tip of my tongue.  
Has Paula rejoined her husband?  
Did he ever see his son?  
- Never, but he visits them often.  
- But how, if he's never seen them?  
Well, he visits them in a strange way.  
Often when he's on a bombing mission,  
he drops them a letter  
in a weighted steel tube.  
When you saw him tonight,  
he was asking permission  
to turn 92 degrees south to Romilly  
to drop such a letter.  
So, you see,  
they're not actually separated.  
I beg your pardon, Captain.  
The reports are beginning to come in now.  
- Flights returning.  
- Thank you, Sergeant.  
Would you care to walk down  
to the hangar?  
Why, yes, of course.  
Tell me, Captain,  
what happened to the other men?  
I know Matrac's here, but where are  
the others? Where's Captain Malo?

He's in command of a minesweeper  
manned by French seamen.  
They work in the Channel. Often,  
I suppose, in sight of their homeland.  
- And Garou?  
- Oh, you'll see him.  
Step down, Garou.  
Manning, this is Corporal Garou.  
How are you, Corporal?  
He's the best mechanic in Great Britain,  
French or English.  
Give him some scrap iron, a bit of wires,  
some old aluminum pots and pans,  
and he'll make you a plane in three hours.  
You exaggerate, mon Capitaine.  
It would take me four hours at least.  
And what of Petit?  
He's a tireless member of our ground  
crew, often working 18 hours a day.  
There he is now, over there by the crane.  
Well, Manning,  
I think that accounts for the lot.  
All but one. What happened to Renault?  
Not a sign of the old fear.  
He's the pilot of the plane  
in which Matrac is flying tonight.  
They're coming, mon Capitaine.  
C for Charles, landed 04:17.  
C for Charles, landed 04:17.  
F for Freddie, landed 04:23.  
F for Freddie, landed 04:23. Over.  
N for Norman, landed 04:36.  
N for Norman, landed 04:36.  
Who got the big oil tank?  
Was it you, Rocroi?  
Of course, who else?  
Many thanks for the lights.  
We made good use of it.  
- Heil Hitler.  
- We gave him heil tonight.  
Mr. Manning,  
this is Squadron Leader Dompierre.  
Hi there, Mr. Manning.  
- How about a smoke?

- Yes, please.  
- Where is Renault?  
- Oh, he'll be along.  
Why don't you turn in, Dompierre?  
I'll let you know as soon as they've landed.  
No, I'm fussy as an old hen  
with one chick missing.  
V for Victor, come in.  
V for Victor, come in. Over to you.  
- There is no reply, sir.  
- Keep trying.  
V for Victor, come in.  
Vfor Victor, come in. Over to you.  
V for Victor, come in.  
All planes accounted for except Renault's.  
You gave him permission  
to leave the formation.  
- His plane took a lot of punishment.  
- Yeah.  
I'm afraid, Matrac, we can't make Romilly.  
We have to turn back to the base.  
Sorry, Matrac.  
Now you make your wish  
and blow out your candles.  
All right.  
Is it bad to make a bad wish?  
Yes, Jean.  
Even if it is about Hitler?  
Well, it's better if you make a good wish.  
All right, then.  
I'll make a wish about Daddy. I wish...  
Oh, you mustn't tell me your wish,  
or it won't come true.  
I'll know what it is, anyway.  
Now come on closer,  
and blow them as hard as you can.  
All right.  
- There.  
- I did it!  
Now I'll really grow up to be like Daddy.  
I'm not supposed to say.  
Oh, well, that's all right, darling.  
You've got your wish already, anyway.  
You're like him in many ways.

You have his eyes.  
You have his nice hands.  
I hope you have his heart.  
Was it the best heart in the world?  
I'll bet it was.  
Oh, it is a very good heart, Jean.  
A tender heart  
to be in such a rugged body.  
You know, you can thank God  
if you grow up to be like him.  
Can I eat my cake now?  
Put your napkin on like a good boy. There.  
- Daddy?  
- Maybe. Let's look.  
Come on, darling.  
- Is it Daddy? Are you sure it's him?  
- It may be.  
- I think it is.  
- But he wouldn't miss today, would he?  
- Does he know it's my birthday?  
- Yes, dear, he knows.  
But they've gone past, Mama.  
- I don't see anything. Do you?  
- No, dear.  
He didn't fly over.  
Perhaps it wasn't him.  
Ears like a dog.  
Vfor Victor to Fox. We're coming in.  
Two motors gone.  
Limited control. Casualty.  
Victor in trouble.  
Stand by, ambulance and crash truck.  
- Stretcher-bearers.  
- Who?  
Beaumont is hit.  
Hurry, he's bleeding all over the place.  
- Anyone else?  
- Yeah, Matrac.  
He got two Messerschmitts.  
He didn't get the third one.  
It was for his kid's birthday.  
We couldn't make it.  
My comrades,  
I can think of no more fitting last words

for our friend  
than those which he himself wrote  
as his last words  
and wasn't able to deliver.  
"My dear son,  
"today you are 5 years old,  
and your father has never seen you.  
"But someday, in a better world, he will.  
I write to you of that day.  
"Together we walk, hand in hand.  
We walk and we look.  
"And some of the things we see  
are wonderful,  
"and some are terrible.  
"On a green stretch of ground  
are 10,000 graves,  
"and you feel hatred welling up  
in your heart.  
"This was, but it will never be again.  
"The world has been cured  
since your father treated  
"that terrible abscess on its body  
with iron and fire.  
"And there were millions of healers  
who worked with him  
"and made sure  
there would be no recurrence.  
"Their deadly conflict was waged  
to decide your future.  
"Your friends did not spare themselves  
and were ruthless to your foes.  
"You are the heir  
"of what your father and your friends won  
for you with their blood.  
"From their hands, you have received  
the flag of happiness and freedom.  
"My son, be the standard-bearer  
of the great age they have made possible.  
"It would be too tragic  
if the men of goodwill  
"should ever be lax  
or fail again to build a world  
"where youth may love without fear,  
"and where parents may grow old

with their children,  
"and where men will be worthy  
of each other's faith.  
"Take care of your mother, Jean.  
"I hold you in my arms. I kiss you both.  
"May God keep you and love you as I do.  
"Good night and au revoir  
till our work is finished.  
"And until I see you, remember this.  
"France lives. Vive la France."  
That letter will be delivered.