

ACT II—SCENE 6

Connect Shack Speaker

*This is the communications office or radio room. The back wall is covered by a transmitting panel, two speakers and various lights and switches. R. there is a small receiving set complete with headphones and microphone, a field telephone. The Radio Operator (McCAFFREY) is seated at a chair in front of this receiving set with his earphones on, and operating the various dials. BRACKETT is seated U.C. on an upturned metal waste paper bin. On the top of the receiver are several beer cans. Set, by props, behind the upturned waste paper bins are two full bottles of coca-cola and one half-filled bottle. BRACKETT is listening avidly for any sound that may come from the loud-speaker. After a moment there is a crackle. (Static still coming through from previous scene.)*

*Music stops.*

BRACKETT [*Excitedly*]. What's that? What's that?

Cut sound on Speaker.

*McCAFFREY cannot hear him because of the earphones he is wearing. BRACKETT is suddenly aware of this. he pokes McCAFFREY in the back. McCAFFREY, controlling himself, turns and looks at Brackett as a nurse would look at an anxious and complaining patient. He removes the earphones.*

What was that?

McCAFFREY [*Quietly*]. That . . . was nothing sir.

*Puts earphones back on again and turns to his dials. BRACKETT isn't satisfied with this, he pokes McCAFFREY again. The man winces, then patiently takes the earphones away from his ear.*

BRACKETT. Sounded to me like someone trying to send a message . . . sounded like code.

McCAFFREY. That was not code, sir. That sound you just heard was the contraction of the tin roof. It's the metal, cooling off . . . at night.

BRACKETT. Oh.

McCAFFREY. Sir, if you'd like to go back to your office, I'll let you know as soon as . . .

BRACKETT. No, no. I don't want to add to your problems. I'll stay right here.

McCAFFREY [*Putting on headphones—returns to his dials*]. Yes sir.

*BRACKETT looks at his watch, rises and crosses D.S.R. He talks to McCAFFREY who cannot hear him, he paces back and forth.*

BRACKETT [*Crossing D.R.*]. We ought to be getting a message now. We ought to be getting a message, that's all. [*Crosses L.*] They'd have time to land and establish some sort of observation post by now. [*Crosses R.*] Don't you think so? [*He realises that McCAFFREY cannot hear him.*] Oh.

*HARBISON enters from door. He is very stern, more upset than we have ever seen him. He stands at door.*

HARBISON. Captain Brackett?

BRACKETT. Yeah, what is it? What is it? Don't interrupt me now, Bill. I'm very busy.

HARBISON. It's about this Seabee out here, sir. Billis. Commander Perkins over at operations estimates that Billis's act this morning cost the Navy over six hundred thousand dollars!

BRACKETT. Six Hundred—[Crosses U.L. to HARBISON.] By God, I'm going to chew that guy—send him in here!

HARBISON [Making his exit]. Yes sir.

BRACKETT goes over and taps MCCAFFREY on the shoulder. MCCAFFREY removes his earphones.

BRACKETT. Let me know the moment you get any word. No matter what I'm doing you just break right in.

MCCAFFREY. Yes sir.

He replaces earphones and goes back to work. BRACKETT crosses D.R. and we hear the voice of HARBISON. The door opens and we see BILLIS's head, then his body as he slowly walks on and takes up position standing at attention D.L. He is naked to the waist, he wears an old pair of begrimed blue dungarees, the boars tooth bracelet and a silver necklace. He is followed by ADAMS and HARBISON. HARBISON closes the door. ADAMS stands just to R. of it.

HARBISON [As he pushes BILLIS in]. Get in there! Captain Brackett, this is Lieutenant Buzz Adams who flew the mission.

ADAMS [Saluting]. Captain.

BRACKETT [Returning salute]. H'y'a Adams.

BRACKETT stands quite still for a moment, then slowly raises his L. hand and points at BILLIS. BILLIS looks to his L., knowing that BRACKETT is pointing at him, thinks better of it and crosses R. standing to attention on BRACKETT'S L. HARBISON drops D.L.

BRACKETT. One man like you in an outfit is like a rotten apple in a barrel. Just what did you feel like—sitting down there in that little rubber boat—in the middle of Empress Augusta Bay—with the whole damn Navy Air Force trying to rescue you? And how the hell can you fall out of a Catalina anyway?

BILLIS [Stiffly at attention, facing front]. Well sir, the Jap anti-aircraft, busted a hole in the side of the plane and I fell through . . . the wind just sucked me out.

BRACKETT [Pacing D.L.]. So I'm to understand that you deliberately hid in the baggage of a plane that you knew was taking off on a very dangerous mission. [Back in original position to R. of BILLIS.] You had nerve enough to do that all right. Then the moment an anti-aircraft gun hit the plane . . . you fell out. The wind just sucked you out . . . you and your little parachute. I don't think you fell out Billis, I think you jumped out. Which did you do.

BILLIS. Well sir . . . er . . . it was sort of half and half . . . if you get the picture.

BRACKETT [Turns D.R. away from BILLIS]. This is one of the most humiliating things that ever happened to me. Adams, when did you discover he was on the plane?

ADAMS [Crosses D. to D.L.C.]. Well, sir, we'd been out about an hour—it was still dark I know. Well we were flying across Marie Louise. The Jap anti-aircraft spotted us and made that hit. That's when Luther . . . er . . . this fellow here . . . that's when he . . . left the ship. I just circled once . . . time enough to drop him a rubber boat. Some New Zealanders in P-forty's spotted him though and kept circling around him while I flew across the island and landed alongside the sub, let Joe and the Frenchman off. By the time I got back to the other side of the island our Navy planes were flying around in the air above this guy like a thick swarm of bees. [He turns to HARBISON who gives him no sympathy, swallows then continues the narrative. During the above the dialogue is