

Dear

Plans are nice things if and when they are carried out. But I day dream a lot of things for tomorrow that never seem to get done. Like sitting down and writing about a lot of things I don't seem to have the thought of, or the need for, when I write my regular letters to you.

I don't think I ever told you about the most mournful thing in all the world; the long, solemn, 'Johnnie-one-note' the bugler blows just before the ship weighs anchor. With everything and everybody alive to the last minute rush, the Boat's gang pulling and yanking on lines and cables, tugs chugging, every free eye looking longingly at the beach and every heart pounding against the terrible depression of farewell, how come that long, cold, solemn note followed by the splintered-wood rudding you ever heard as the clumsy, big iron links of the anchor chain beat their way across the Fo'c'sle deck and fall headlong into the dark caverns of the chain locker. The first time I heard it I was afraid to look behind me because it all sounded so final that I just felt a s though there wasn't anything left. That sinking feeling you sometimes feel in a "tight spot," seemed to come over me as I looked and saw the lights of Brooklyn-town slowly moving away and I first realized that we were off, definitely out off from all ties and headed out to sea. I guess it's because of what it means that it sounds so eerie. It means, "Sailor, here you go again." It means, "Good-bye dear, your daddy's off to the great high seas. Ma, be I didn't know how to tell you, before, just how I felt. On the one hand this great steel monster was taking me away from you, much against my will; yet taking me out to sea and to a great adventure, which somehow much appealed to me. I wanted you; I wanted adventure; I love you, I am thrilled with the adventure. Feeling the way I did then as I stood on that deck I somehow began to realize that it took a monster as big as this twenty-seven thousand ton Flat-top to drag me away from you and into this.

For a lot of us this is THE great adventure of a lifetime. A lot of us had never been to sea, had never seen the ocean. This was the beginning of our FIRST look at the rolling swells of the "rolling main" our FIRST look at the cold, black Atlantic, and the royal blue Caribbean. It was the FIRST longing look back at the greatest country. The FIRST, the FIRST, the FIRST - so many "FIRSTS" I can't remember them. Yes, THE FIRST attack of mal de mer, as they say in polite places, but plain old fashioned seasickness to a sick sailor. A FIRST look at an endless expanse of sea and sky. Nothing gives the same sense of bigness or littleness as being on a ship in the middle of an endless sea and boundless sky. Infinity is easy to comprehend out here. All you have to do is stand alone on the deck and compare yourself with the endless expanse around you. A man might seem big on a street corner, in a shop, or in an office, even in a crowd - but out on the trackless wastes of an ocean it's a wonder even the all-seeing God can find him.

A lot of us chose the Navy and maybe we wondered why as we saw the land disappear and the great rolling swells of the depthless ocean lift and drop the bow of this great ship. If this was a good sailing day, and it did such strange things to your appetite and your feelings, what of the rough days to come when the sea would get angry and the winds would howl and the blackness of fear came upon us. Well, we could wait for the answer to that until that time came.

On the cold black, Atlantic, I don't want to talk. Oh, not in words and sentences, but the Atlantic seems to tell you to watch out. Oh, black words of a villain; a greedy, down. It's swells aren't long and graceful and disagreeable. It looks black and glows in nearness in it's swell.

The Caribbean is just the opposite. It seems to take your troubles away and make you happy. On the Atlantic, not so in the royal, Caribbean fills you with fun and happiness and makes you and just enjoy it's peaceful beauty. You don't worry, but they frolick all over the Caribbean, of joy - that you are alive, that you're at sea on the great ocean living a carefree life.