**The Caine Mutiny, Court-Martial**

**By Herman Wouk**

The action takes place in The General Court-Martial Room of the Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco and in the banquet room of the Fairmont Hotel, San Francisco in February, 1945.

Act 1: The Prosecution

Lieutenant Stephen Maryk of the United States Naval Reserve is on trial for mutiny, because he relieved Lt. Commander Philip Francis Queeg of duty as captain of the U.S.S. Caine during a typhoon on December 18, 1944. Maryk insists that Queeg had gone over the edge mentally, and that his paranoid delusions were putting the ship in danger. Maryk took command, applying Article 184 of Navy Regulations, and steered the Caine directly INTO the storm—the opposite of what Queeg had wanted. The Caine and her entire crew survived, which Maryk thinks is proof that he acted appropriately.

Maryk's lawyer, Lt. Barney Greenwald, indicates that he thinks Maryk, whom he would much rather have prosecuted in the court-martial, was guilty. But he is determined to offer a strong defense nonetheless.

Philip Francis Queeg is the first witness for the prosecution, being conducted by Lt. Commander John Challee. Queeg states that, while the Caine was going through a typhoon, Steve Maryk, a disloyal and digruntled officer, rebelled against him and relieved him of command without justification.

At this stage of the court-martial, Queeg seems like a typical tough military disciplinarian—perhaps a bit too tough, but giving no good reason to believe he has psychological problems. He is confident and articulate, and seems to be in full possession of his faculties.

A young signalman, Junius Urban, who was present on the bridge at the time Maryk took control, is called to testify about what happened. Urban provides a measure of comic relief, as he is poorly educated, extremely nervous, and confused about exactly what happened. His testimony tells the jury very little, but on cross-examination he lets slip that Queeg was "a nut" on numerous small matters of discipline and tidiness.

Captain Randolph Southard, an experienced naval officer called as an expert on destroyer ship-handling, testifies that, under the weather circumstances described on the night of the mutiny, Queeg took all the proper measures, and did exactly what a commanding officer should have done. Thus, in Southard's view, Maryk's actions were completely unjustified. However, under cross examination from Greenwald, Southard concedes that there are rare, extreme circumstances under which sailing directly into the storm would be the only way to avoid sinking.

Two psychiatrists who have examined Queeg, Dr. Forrest Lundeen and Dr. Allen Bird, testify that, while Queeg is far from being an ideal officer, in that he can be arrogant, overly defensive, nervous, and a bit of a bully, he is not mentally ill. Under cross-examination from Greenwald, however, each of them, Dr. Lundeen in particular, acknowledges that some of Queeg's traits do come close to the textbook definition of paranoia.

Willis Keith, a friend of Maryk's, testifies as to the events leading to the mutiny. Keith says that Queeg was a coward, that he was giving panicky, conflicting orders during the typhoon, requiring Maryk to take action. During cross-examination, Greenwald gets Keith to tell numerous stories of Queeg's ineptitude, vanity, dishonesty, pettiness and seeming cowardice; indeed, one such incident led the Caine's officers to give Queeg the nickname "Old Yellowstain."

Lt. Thomas Keefer, another friend of Maryk's, is a much less helpful witness from the defense standpoint. Keefer, an intellectual who was a writer in civilian life, having published some of his short stories in national magazines, indicates that Queeg was not insane, and that Maryk was ill-advised to relieve him of command. Maryk is stunned by Keefer's betrayal, since to a large extent, Keefer was the one who convinced Maryk that Queeg might be insane in the first place, and Maryk wants Greenwald to cross-examine him vigorously. Instead, Greenwald has no questions for Keefer, explaining to Maryk, "Implicating Keefer harms you." He wants one hero, not two mutineers.

As the trial adjourns for the day, Maryk expresses dissatisfaction with Greenwald's defense. Greenwald explains that he has good reasons for not asking Keefer any questions, and states once again that he thinks Maryk is guilty. Even if Queeg was far from an ideal officer, Greenwald believes, Maryk's first duty was to carry on fighting the war, and doing his best to keep the Caine in action. All authority figures tend to look like irrational tyrants to their subordinates, Greenwald says, whether they are or not.

Act 2: The Defense

Scene 1

As Greenwald begins his defense the following morning, he calls Steve Maryk as the first of his two witnesses.

Maryk explains in great detail what a petty, vindictive, isolated and paranoid commanding officer Queeg was. In particular, Maryk dwells on "The Strawberry Incident," which convinced much of the crew that Queeg was insane. Shortly after the Caine received a shipment of strawberries from another ship, a large portion went missing. Because the circumstances were superficially similar to another incident that occurred during peacetime under Queeg's command, he drew the same conclusion: someone must have stolen them from the locked cabinets using a copy of the original key. Queeg's steadfast belief that this was a repeat of the same MO as the first thief led him to divert extraordinary amounts of manpower to search the ship for copy of the locked cabinet key. When several of the enlisted men confessed to Maryk that they simply stole it from the cabinets when they were unlocked and that no duplicate key existed, Queeg's refusal to accept their confession and dedication to proving his theory convinces the officers that Queeg is trying to reenact the circumstances of his prior success against all evidence to the contrary. Finally, Maryk describes the events of the night of the mutiny itself. Maryk says the Caine was foundering, on the verge of sinking, and that Queeg was too frightened and paranoid to take the proper steps to save the ship. Only at this most desperate moment did Maryk see fit to take command. After the ship was out of danger, Maryk wrote a full account of his actions in the ship's log. He claims that Queeg came to him and proposed erasing this embarrassing incident from the log—a serious breach of Naval ethics. Maryk refused to do so, electing instead to take full responsibility for his actions.

The prosecuting attorney, John Challee, asks Maryk about his background. Maryk answers that he is a fisherman's son, and has been around boats his whole life. However, Maryk confesses that he was only an average student in high school and a poor student in college. It becomes clear in Challee's cross-examination that, while Maryk uses words like "paranoid," he really knows little about psychology, and was not truly qualified to judge anyone's mental health.

At this point, Greenwald calls Queeg as his second and final defense witness. Under intense cross-examination, Queeg is asked to justify each and every one of his questionable actions as commanding officer of the Caine. He becomes nervous and testy, and starts playing with a pair of steel balls that he uses to control his nerves. He tells a few small lies to cover up petty offenses. When his lies are revealed, his demeanor changes, and he becomes angry and combative. When asked about Maryk's charge that Queeg had wanted to alter the ship's log, an enraged Queeg rants that he was surrounded by disloyal officers, and looks exactly like the panicky paranoid that Maryk had described.

When the defense rests, Queeg is a broken man, and everyone else present knows that Maryk will be acquitted. Maryk is relieved if not totally ecstatic, and invites Greenwald to a celebration party that Tom Keefer is hosting later that evening. (Keefer has written a novel about the war, titled Multitudes, Multitudes, and even though it is still not finished, he has received an advance of one thousand dollars from a publisher.) Greenwald looks dejected and far from triumphant, but he reluctantly agrees to attend the party.

Scene 2[edit]

At the party, Keefer, Keith, Maryk and their friends are celebrating both Maryk's acquittal and the large advance that Keefer has received on Multitudes, Multitudes, when Greenwald walks in, heavily intoxicated from a number of drinks he and Challee had shared before he showed up to the party, over which they had discussed details Greenwald had left out of the case at the end of the trial. (The two men had been law-school classmates, and good friends, before both had enlisted. Challee had accused Greenwald, during the trial, of "shyster tactics," and Greenwald had invited Challee for drinks after the trial to smooth things over and to provide such details. These had resulted in Challee understanding the reasons for Greenwald's trial strategy, and the two had once again parted as friends.) Greenwald proposes a toast to "Old Yellowstain." Unlike the Caine's junior officers, Greenwald feels deep regret over what he did to Queeg on the witness stand. To Greenwald, though Phil Queeg was a weak man, perhaps he was still an admirable one, and Queeg and career military men like him are actually heroic figures, since they were the ones putting their lives on the line to defend America - something none of the others were doing because they knew they could never truly enrich themselves financially in the armed forces. Greenwald, who is Jewish, understands what the consequences would have been had the Axis won World War II. He refers to Nazi atrocities, declaring, at one point, that it is men like Queeg who have saved his own mother, Mrs. Greenwald, from having been "melted down to a bar of soap." He points out to Maryk, "Steve, this dinner's a phony. You're guilty. 'Course you're only half guilty. There's another guy who's stayed very neatly out of the picture."

Greenwald feels sorry for Queeg, because he sees that Queeg was not wrong about being surrounded by disloyal officers. Greenwald believes that Tom Keefer is the guiltiest party in the whole affair. Maryk, after all, really knew very little about psychology or psychiatry, so where would he have obtained any of his half-formed ideas about paranoia and mental illness, if not from Keefer?

Greenwald had defended Maryk to the best of his abilities, which had led him to destroy Queeg on the witness stand, because he had seen that Maryk was essentially a decent man trying to do the right thing. He views Keefer, on the other hand, as an upper-class intellectual snob who had regarded himself as superior to Queeg, the career military man, and had helped turn Maryk and the rest of the crew against him. Greenwald suggests that Maryk could even have reasoned with Queeg during the typhoon had Keefer not poisoned the atmosphere in the first place.

Greenwald denounces Keefer, and throws a glassful of yellow wine into his face (echoing the insulting nickname of "Old Yellowstain" the crew members had given to Queeg), before walking out of the party, an act which ruins it.