There was no light in the compart-
ment, unless you want to count a dim
red night lamp at the base of a bulkhead
as light. For a moment the red glare
confused him, but when he rolled over,
a carbine butt struck his forehead and he
knew exactly where he was.

No one else seemed to be awake. He
 glanced across the aisle and he could just
make out the fellow on the next rack.
That would be Jimmy, “The Mad Finn.”
At the moment, “The Mad Finn” sounded
rather peaceful. Nothing but a soft snore.
He wanted to wake Jimmy up and talk
but decided against it. Every time he
talked to Jimmy the conversation always
got around to Jane. And right now he
didn’t want to think about Jane . . .

He jammed his field jacket under his
head and began to imagine where they
were going. A longshoreman had tried
to tell him it was the Philippines, but he
wasn’t buying any of that. Calcutta
 sounded like the best bet. He’d just about
decided that it would be Calcutta when
the quiet of the compartment was broken.
For a moment he wasn’t sure that he’d
heard anything. But there it was again
... a slow, steady, pulsing beat. The
engines had started.

He’d been fairly certain that they’d
sail that night, but now that they were
really moving he felt surprised. Behind
him the coast of California was slipping
over the horizon . . .

In a roadhouse in Asbury Park a
 corporal was ordering another beer and
listening to a negro band play “Rose
Room”; in Chicago a dime-store clerk was
leaving a movie and thinking immoral
thoughts about Cornel Wilde; on a lonely
road outside of Memphis a boy and a girl
sat in a car listening to a newscast; in
Seattle a tired merchant tossed the cat
out the kitchen door and turned out the
lights.

... and Marine Island was fading
away over the fan tail.

The compartment wasn’t quiet now.
They were out in the ground swell now,
and the canvas cots stretched and
squeaked. Jimmy was awake now. Jim-
my didn’t say anything. He just lay
there and stared up at the rack above
him.

He supposed that all the fellows who
were awake weren’t doing much talking.
Not much you could say. A neon light,
a soft laugh, snow falling at two in the
morning on a lonely street, a warm hand
in yours; how do you frame these things
in words?

“Aw, the hell with it,” he muttered
and proceeded to fall asleep.

And the snow and the laugh and the
warm hand slipped away over the
horizon . . .

A youth is to be regarded with
respect. How do you know his future
will not equal your present?

Confucius.