

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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LIFEBOAT (1944)

Alfred Hitchcock

OVERVIEW

Director Sir Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) is a household name and perhaps the best-known British filmmaker. With over 50 films to his credit, Hitchcock helped to shape the modern understanding of the thriller genre. His best-known films include *The Birds*, *Psycho*, *Vertigo*, and *Rear Window*, all of which have earned accolades, including preservation by the US Film Registry. In 1960, Hitchcock was inducted into the Hollywood Walk of Fame with two stars for his work in both film and television. He was also the first recipient of the BAFTA Academy Fellowship Award.

Film *Lifeboat* contains a number of 'firsts' and 'onlys' for the director. This was Hitchcock's first film to use a limited setting, to lack a musical score, and to feature the director's cameo in a fake advertisement; it is also his only film made for Century Fox and the only one based on the writing of John Steinbeck. The handling of some of Steinbeck's characters caused the famed author a headache so large that he essentially disowned the production and vowed never to let his work be used by those involved again. The film was set to be the first color film shot by Hitchcock, but budgetary restraints kept this from happening. The film's initial reception was mixed for many reasons, but modern critics have praised the film for its striking cinematography and creative storytelling.

Background This unique survival movie is based on a John Steinbeck story. While *Lifeboat* is frequently recognized as one of Hitchcock's 'hidden gems,' it generated significant controversies during the 1940s and 1950s, especially its portrayal of a German U-boat captain and also Canada Lee's Afro-American character (Joe Spencer), who was labeled as both insensitive and groundbreaking. While some critics found the moral tale of the film resoundingly pro-German, Hitchcock refuted this, saying, "I always respect my villain, build[ing] him into a redoubtable character that will make my hero or thesis more admirable in defeating him or it." Starlet Talulah Bankhead agreed with the director, commenting that Hitchcock "wanted to teach an important lesson. He wanted to say that you can't trust the enemy... in *Lifeboat* you see clearly that you can't trust a Nazi, no matter how nice he seems to be." While many had nothing but criticism for the character of Joe Spencer, the NAACP praised Canada Lee for his performance and the critical work that removed some of the more token racial elements from the script.

CINEMATIC NARRATION

As stated above, *Lifeboat* is the first Hitchcock's film to use a purposefully limited setting. The action takes place entirely on and around a lifeboat adrift at sea. Other notable films, including *Rope* and *Rear Window*, would follow a similar limitation. *Lifeboat* is also unusual in its lack of a musical score. All the music we hear is provided by the actors, mostly Joe's tin flute and Willi's singing. This is a major change for Hitchcock, as many of his previous films relied heavily on leitmotif to convey emotions. There are many impressive shots captured in this film. To do so, four separate lifeboat sets were made on the sound stage at Pico Boulevard (now the home of Century City, the former Century Fox headquarters). Three separate B-teams were assigned to record ocean and naval footage off the coasts of Miami, the Florida Keys, and San Miguel Island in California. It is astounding how much effort and how many teams were needed to create such a realistic portrayal of a lifeboat lost at sea. One problem with this film for modern viewers may be the lack of depth in the characters, which makes some moments overly melodramatic.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Constance "Connie" Porter – A globe-trotting journalist, one of the survivors

John Kovac – Another survivor, a ship's engineer who managed to escape the shipwreck

Gus Smith – Another survivor, an injured seaman who often talks of his girlfriend back home

Alice MacKenzie – Another survivor, an army corps nurse who treats Gus' injury

Charles J. "Ritt" Rittenhouse Jr. – A rich man whose penny-pinching landed him on the freighter

Stanley "Sparks" Garrett – The ship's mate

Joe Spencer – Another survivor, the ship's porter with a love of music

Mrs. Higley – Another survivor, a woman from England suffering from shell shock

Kapitan Willi – A German submariner who is saved by the survivors

SYNOPSIS

Somewhere far off the coast of Florida, a German U-boat strikes an American merchant mariner. The German victory is short-lived, as the ship's defenders manage to strike a fatal blow to the submarine before the boat sinks. Of all the ship and submarine's crews and passengers, there are only nine survivors; eight from the shipping vessel and one from the U-boat. The Americans and Britons share a distrust of the lone Nazi, but they decide to act democratically and show him mercy during their shared time of need. Soon after the death of her baby, a woman drowns herself in the ocean to escape the misery of her situation. After days at sea, a man's leg proves gangrenous and must be amputated by the German, a former surgeon. As rations dwindle and spirits dim, the German reveals himself to be the U-boat's captain and takes charge of the lifeboat's course. Under his command, he pushes a man into the sea, as the Nazi's beliefs lead him to view the act of murder as one of mercy. After the survivors lose their meager rations and sail during a strong storm, the German U-boat captain continues rowing as if powered by sheer will while the others begin to starve. When they find his hidden personal rations, the majority of the lifeboat's occupants fall on him, beating him to death and throwing him into the sea. After a day or so adrift, the lifeboat is spotted by a German supply ship. Before the hapless survivors can be taken prisoner, an American Coast Guard vessel begins shelling the German ship, sinking it. While awaiting rescue by the Americans, the survivors in the lifeboat encounter a young German sailor clinging to their boat. After being hoisted up into the lifeboat, he draws a gun but an American survivor knocks the weapon away, allowing everyone to be rescued by the Coast Guard.

THEMES

Justice The idea of justice comes up at several major junctions in *Lifeboat*. The theme first surfaces right after Willi boards the lifeboat. With a simple "thank you" in his native tongue, he sets himself apart as the outsider, the enemy. Kovac immediately suggests throwing the Nazi overboard, suspecting him of some plot and emphasizing that the man had just helped to sink their ship. The others defend the German, uttering a phrase that would become infamous in the coming years during the Nuremberg trials: "Just following orders." Rittenhouse defends the international justice system, saying prisoners of war are to be granted certain rights. While the survivors do enact this small justice, it comes back to bite them as Willi's true plan becomes clear. He is using them to get back to his supply ship. In his warped beliefs, their kindness is a display of weakness and should be exploited. Through the complexity of the interplay between the survivors from democratic nations and the Nazi captain, Hitchcock shows us how the Nazis specifically abused the international justice system to exert their will in Europe. In interviews, Hitchcock pointed out that many people thought the Nazis' fervor was for show when truly they valued military ruthlessness in a similar way that Americans value the idea of freedom. Mob justice erupts after Willi kills Gus. All but Joe rush the Nazi and bludgeon him to death. There is some arguing about whether that act is right, but they never really conclude their conversation. A very similar event to Willi's arrival happens when a teenage German sailor pulls himself into the lifeboat. Suddenly sharing Kovac's view from the beginning of the film, Rittenhouse has to be restrained to keep from throwing the German overboard. This reversal shows the complexity of weighing right and wrong in a survival situation.

Leadership/Authority Leadership and authority play an interesting role in this survival story. Our cultural awareness of survival stories often focuses on individuals such as *Castaway*, *Life of Pi*, and

Robinson Crusoe. Similar to works like *Lord of the Flies*, *Lifeboat* features a group of survivors who fight about who should be the leader. Each is an expert in some field—or at least the expert among them—and in several situations, the role of leader changes hands. Rittenhouse assumes the position early on to the amusement of some of the survivors. Unlike others, Rittenhouse happily steps down when he realizes his experience isn't useful after organizing the stores and the ship's positions. Kovac seizes the position after learning that the German is a captain since he refuses to be led by a Nazi. During Gus' amputation and the storm, Willi seizes charge, having been a surgeon before he was a U-boat captain. With no one to back him up, Kovac has no choice but to follow the Nazi despite his constant complaints. When Willi kills Gus, we see a full-blown mutiny occur. Even with the Code-era censorship, it seems quite a brutal death. This is to make Hitchcock's point that only a quick and brutal end would stop the advance of fascism as it breeds and grows, especially when people give it space through excuses. Many who criticized *Lifeboat* as pro-Nazi propaganda miss the point of this moral tale: The mistake of allowing the Nazi to live freely among them and eventually take control led to the survivors' greatest suffering.

Secrets/dishonesty These themes are shown almost entirely through Willi, but they are incredibly important to the plot and message of the film. Willi's dishonesty begins in his first moments on screen when he feigns the inability to speak English and claims to be an engineer instead of a captain. Despite being a Nazi from the U-boat that sank their ship, all but Kovac show some willingness to trust him. He deceives the other survivors further by concealing his compass, and then a secret store of water and survival rations. Although it takes him some time, he manages to control the situation until Gus' murder drives the others to mutiny. Through Willi's constant manipulation and secretive activities, Hitchcock hopes to show the typical *modus operandi* of the fascist. They approach with apparent logic and reason on their side, but once they're in charge they act only in their self-interest and enact their more secret plans. Willi's consolidation and hiding of resources mirrors the pre-war buildup of arms in Germany orchestrated by Hitler. His continued health and hydration while the others wither from thirst matters little when nearly all the survivors despite their political disagreements present a united front. This was a message the film was trying to send, one that mirrors the cooperation between Soviet Russia and the Allies from 1941 to 1945.

Values- A major theme in *Lifeboat* is the erosion of values and beliefs in a survival situation. Several characters are given distinct values and political inclinations as a way of examining the socio-political climate before and during the Second World War. Kovac represents labor and anti-fascism; Constance embodies the self-centered press; Rittenhouse symbolizes old-money industrialists; and Willi is the Nazi. Others in the group align themselves with these dominant voices, either swayed by persuasive arguments or driven by sheer desperation. In the beginning, the three other sailors who survive (Gus, Sparks, and, technically, Joe) unite whole-heartedly behind Kovac against Willi, unwilling to trust a Nazi. However, as their supplies of food and water dwindle, complacency sets in, and they allow Willi to have his way. Within the confined space of the lifeboat, tensions rise as characters clash over their deeply held beliefs. Notably, Nurse MacKenzie and Constance find themselves at odds in a somewhat unconventional portrayal, with a younger woman holding more conservative views on matters of sex and marriage than her older counterpart. Joe breaks a personal promise to never pickpocket again by stealing Willi's hidden compass. Through their poker game, Kovac and Rittenhouse symbolize the larger struggle between labor and factory owners in the buildup to war. When the cards blow away, Rittenhouse succumbs to madness and attempts to strangle Kovac, reflecting the senseless adversarial stance industrialists often took against laborers during strikes. When Gus is murdered by Willi, most of the group stages a mutiny against the Nazi, a stark shift from their initial reluctance to violence. A shorter version of the survivors' struggle with Willi unfolds when a young German sailor joins them after the coast guard sinks his ship. Nurse MacKenzie adheres to her training and values by treating the sailor for injuries, while Constance advocates for the young man, seemingly oblivious to previous lessons. After Joe disarms the German sailor, a surprising reversal occurs, with Rittenhouse needing to be restrained to prevent him from harming the young sailor. These and other moments highlight the characters' evolving dynamics in the confined lifeboat setting.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Constance "Connie" Porter

Constance is a wealthy travel writer. It's somewhat unclear exactly why she's on the merchant marine freighter as opposed to a passenger ship, but she's on her way to Europe to write about the war effort. Her knowledge of German allows Willi to communicate with the others when he pretends not to know English.

Headstrong Connie seems to always get her way. When she wants something, she'll stop at nothing to get it. We learn she came from the same working-class neighborhood in Chicago as Kovac, and that she saw a way out in a rich man who wanted to marry her. Her diamond bracelet serves as a reminder of what she's wanted, a good luck charm she refuses to remove. Starting with her motion picture camera, the luxurious belongings she managed to get into the lifeboat are taken from her one by one. Each time she complains loudly and at length about the losses: she's angry the others didn't do more to protect her property. But it's her headstrong attitude that brings the survivors back together with a common goal after Gus' death and the murderous mutiny of Willi. She pushes them all into an attempt at fishing, offering up her bracelet as bait so they know that she's serious. Her headstrong attitude also leads her to take an opposing view to Kovac's. While it's clear she values universal human rights, the argument itself seems to be what she's more concerned about. Connie likes to win, to be correct.

Independent Constance seems independent to the extreme. While independence is a fine trait to possess, she attempts to push her worldview onto others. This shows mostly in her late-night conversation with Nurse MacKenzie where she insults the younger woman for having more conservative morals surrounding love and marriage. Nurse MacKenzie feels conflicted about having a relationship with a married man but finds herself paralyzed when thinking about cutting it off, especially since she hadn't known he was married before they started seeing each other. Constance gives a somewhat incoherent reply before falling asleep, but she seems to be chastizing Nurse MacKenzie for even loving a man. Despite all her independent qualities, she seems to rely on others for a lot of little things, from Joe helping her into the lifeboat before the freighter sank to every one of the men trying to mend her bracelet at some point. This shows how wealthy people like she and Rittenhouse often tout their independence while paradoxically relying on all manner of servants to go about their daily lives.

John Kovac

Kovac was an engine-room worker on the merchant marine freighter. He seems to be an experienced sailor judging by his take-charge attitude and numerous tattoos usually received before or after a sea voyage. He stands steadfast against Willi's leadership, but the others become less interested in the ideological resistance the thirstier they get.

Headstrong Much like Constance, Kovac is incredibly headstrong. He shows this early on when he suggests throwing the German back overboard when it's clear he came from the U-boat. He then pushes his way into the position of captain when Constance reveals that the German is a captain. He refuses to be led by a Nazi, and for a time his comrades agree. The other sailors from the freighter back him up although they don't share his pushy attitude. When the others are too tired to resist Willi or back Kovac, Kovac remains steadfast in his beliefs. The entire situation is so frustrating to him that he begins laughing about Willi's control over their fate. While the others are content to sit by and let a Nazi make their decisions for them, Kovac continues to harbor resentment for the ideology that opposes his.

Political Playing into his headstrong trait, Kovac is the most political of the survivors. He openly states some of his views which include supporting workers co-ops, unions and other socialist organizations. These statements solidify why he was so willing to throw the German back overboard: unlike the others, he has some skin in this game. His European compatriots were being rounded up in Nazi-held territory as political prisoners. For that reason, he is the first to mention concentration camps when Willi takes control of the lifeboat. His political mind makes him a fairly good politician. He's able to seize the position of captain when the other sailors openly support him. Like any politician, he can only hold the office as long

as he has support. As the others grow more desperate, Willi takes command. The conflict between Kovac's and Willi's politics creates a lot of tension that drives the main plot and message forward.

Charles J. "Ritt" Rittenhouse Jr.

Mr. Rittenhouse is a wealthy industry magnate on his way to secure business deals in the UK when the freighter is sunk. He and Kovac bond despite their wildly different life experiences and political beliefs. He is intelligent and creative but often cannot comprehend the small details of a situation, preferring to focus on the big picture.

Impulsive Despite his wealth and business acumen, Rittenhouse seems quite impulsive. He's only on the lifeboat because he impulsively uses his influence to board the merchant marine freighter since it was leaving first. Trusting his gut seems to be one of his greatest business tools, as he is the first to call Willi by his name, accompanying his captor with Joe's tin flute and asking for praise. Despite trusting his gut instincts, he is led astray by Willi's manipulations. His impulsive nature becomes clearer when Kovac creates a handmade deck of cards. Despite doubting Kovac's craftsmanship and accusing him of marking cards at several points, Rittenhouse seems compelled to gamble away what little money he has with him. At one point, Kovac ups the ante of their games, and after losing a hand at \$100 a chip, Rittenhouse ups the ante once more to \$1,000. The experience of surviving on the lifeboat seems to bring out the impulsive side of him even more. He has to be restrained after the young German sailor is disarmed by Joe, wanting to throw the young man back into the sea.

Complainer While he often hides his complaints behind wishes, Rittenhouse's desires for food, water, and luxury often get on the others' nerves. Most famously, his discussion of ritzy seafood with Kovac earns him Constance's rage when he won't stop listing menu items from his favorite restaurant. Similarly, he drives some of the occupants mad talking about all the luxurious drinks he wishes he could have instead of water. His last cigar, too, serves as a complaint. He chews it down to a nub, clinging to this last symbol of his status in the world outside of the lifeboat. Despite his cheery appearance, he is frustrated by the disaster of the U-boat's attack and fears losing his authority since he no longer has his wealth to back it up.

Gus Smith

Gus is a German-American sailor and Willi sometimes attempts to appeal to his German heritage. He is injured while manning the helm during the U-boat attack. Because of the attack, he loses his leg to gangrene. He suffers greatly after his amputation, unable to assist the others as he heals and slowly succumbs to thirst.

Imaginative Gus' imagination is powerful. His imagined heartbreak at losing his girlfriend makes him decline treatment for his gangrene: he's more afraid of her imagined rejection than he is dying of sepsis. Constance and the others play off of his imagination, reminding him what a good woman Rosie is and that she'll keep choosing to give him his love. After his amputation and subsequent loss of the lifeboat's fresh water, Gus seems to give into delirium easier than the others. One of his longest scenes is him babbling to himself about water and having an imaginary conversation with Rosie. His desire to see Rosie is so great, he even forgets his thirst when he sees that Willi has water: instead of demanding a drink, he asks for relationship advice from the Nazi. While this decline is explained in part by his consumption of seawater, it is also his imaginative nature and almost habitual need to avoid the situation at hand that makes him so completely lost in his delusions.

Undisciplined Although he's a trustworthy guy with a heart of gold, Gus is utterly undisciplined. He shows this first when he makes a pass at Nurse MacKenzie as she's giving him first aid. We soon learn he's deeply in love with another woman back home. This small infidelity shows just how little restraint the man has. Similarly, he drinks so much brandy that he passes out before his amputation. This was the goal in giving him the liquor in the first place, but the fact that he never so much as makes a face while downing the bottle shows his penchant for overindulging in drink. Similarly, when the water runs out and the others simply, Gus speeds up the process of dehydration by drinking seawater despite being warned

because he needs the sensation of quenching his thirst. Perhaps Gus would have made it home if his lack of discipline hadn't led him to such delirium.

Kapitan Willi

Willi is a Nazi U-boat captain who pretends to be a simple submariner. When the survivors believe his ruse, he spies on them, keeping his secret stash of supplies and a compass to himself. His ultimate plan comes to fruition when he takes control of the boat and its course after the storm and the other survivors begin succumbing to thirst.

Planner Kapitan Willi is quite conniving. Even before boarding the lifeboat, he seems to have a plan to manipulate the Americans. He keeps his knowledge of other languages secret. He says that he did this to see if he could trust them, but given what a manipulator he is, he probably did this just to keep his enemy off balance. Instead of pressing the issue when it's revealed that he is a captain and therefore the most experienced seaman aboard, he bides his time and allows the conflicts and disagreements between the other survivors to grow. He takes his chance when the storm strikes and all semblance of organization is gone. The experienced skipper then utilizes his private store of water and emergency rations to keep his strength up as the others begin to weaken. His plan has one weak point, however: it hinges on keeping his enemies fighting among themselves. When they band together, they quickly overpower and kill him.

SCENES

Alone at sea- Dramatic music plays as a ship's smokestack and whistle take the screen. The whistle blows, howling like a wounded animal as the ship sinks beneath the waves. The only evidence that remains are floating bits of cargo, corpses, and a single lifeboat. A well-dressed woman sits in the boat, seemingly at ease with the situation in her mannerisms. She puffs on a cigarette, mourning a run in her stockings. "Ahoy there!" cries a man. The figure of a man in a life vest slowly emerges from the fog. Instead of rushing to help, the woman grabs a portable film camera and begins recording. He scrambles into the lifeboat and collapses, the woman looking on with disgust as she realizes he's coated in fuel oil. She asks after Joe, the porter who helped her into the lifeboat, and then asks the man where he worked on the ship. "Engine room," he replies breathlessly before describing his escape from the bowels of the torpedo-stricken ship.



Constance Porter- After pulling some objects that seem useful from the water, the engineer begins to panic: What if the U-boat that sank the ship comes back to sink any survivors? “She won’t surface,” says the woman. “One of our shells got her.” “You’ve seen it?” he asks and she pats her camera in reply: “It’s all in here.” The man recognizes the woman, calling her ‘Constance Porter.’ Constance smiles and gushes about the ‘priceless’ pictures she got of the disaster from people struggling with lifeboats to the ship going down itself. “Look!” she cries, readying her camera as a baby’s bottle floats past. “That’s a perfect shot!” The engineer strikes the bottle with a tennis racket, breaking it, and chastising the reporter for her lack of empathy and seriousness.



More survivors- “Help!” a man cries from the water. The engineer cries “gangway” before knocking Constance over while scrambling to secure a rope. She tumbles and her camera goes flying into the ocean. Constance whines about the loss (and most importantly the film) as the engineer helps another man into the boat. They seem to know each other. “Sparks,” says the engineer, “did you have time to send out an SOS?” Sparks replies that the U-boat’s first strike hit the radio room. “Keep going, Kovac,” Sparks says to the engineer. “There’s more people out there.” Sparks notices the Nurses’ Corp cap that Kovac pulled from the ocean and begins calling for “Miss MacKenzie!”



First aid- Sparks pulls a whistle from around his neck and begins blowing. “STAN-LY,” comes a sing-song reply. Kovac begins rowing the boat towards the woman’s voice in the fog. The figures of a woman and two other people resting on a large piece of flotsam come into view. “We’ve got a wounded man!” the woman cries as the lifeboat draws nearer. The wounded man knows Kovac, and the woman with him is a Nurse, the Miss MacKenzie Sparks was looking for. The other man boards the boat with a smile. “Ritt, you old rat!” says Constance as she greets her old friend, a rich industrialist from Britain. They strike up a conversation as the boat bobs away, bringing the wounded man and those treating him into the foreground. The three ship’s crew discuss the fate of others while Nurse MacKenzie treats the man’s wounded leg as best she can.



Three more- Upon hearing that Mr. Rittenhouse's money was "swallowed by Davy Jones," Kovac attempts to return to him some of the money he'd scooped up on his way to the lifeboat. Rittenhouse insists that Kovac keep the "legitimate salvage," refusing to take the money. The wounded man, Gus Smith, complains about the number of times the boats he's shipped out on have sunk as Nurse MacKenzie pulls a piece of shrapnel from his leg. Gus is worried about the bleeding, but Sparks assures his crewmate it "won't interfere with [his] jitterbugging." A man cries out for help through the fog. The steward, Joe, is barely holding a woman and her baby above the waves as he desperately paddles toward the lifeboat. They help the three people into the boat, Joe explaining that the woman was "fighting [him] all the time in the water." She wanted to drown. Rittenhouse tries to comfort the woman as she comes to: "You're safe. The baby's safe. Everything is alright now." Constance looks from the baby in her arms to the others on the lifeboat. She shakes her head. The baby is dead.



"Another customer"- The woman realizes someone else has her baby and snatches it back. "Best let her have it," Nurse MacKenzie whispers, saying they'll take it from her and bury it at sea once she's asleep. Sparks identifies the woman as Mrs. Higley, a civilian shell-shock case from Britain who was seeking specialized treatment in the US. Gus notices a hand clinging to the lifeboat. "Hey look," Gus says, pointing. "Another customer." They rush over to help the survivor in, who looks around the boat before saying, "Danke schön."



He's German Luckily, Constance speaks German fluently and helps Kovac to interrogate the man. The German says he was an engineer and that he regrets the shelling of their ship, saying the targeting of the other lifeboats was the captain's order. The occupants of the lifeboat argue about what to do with the Nazi. Kovac says to throw him overboard, as their survival situation is lawless. The others say that they should treat him with kindness, and the majority rules.



Burial- “Does anyone know the service for a burial at sea?” Sparks asks a small group of the survivors looking over the bow of the ship. “I suppose any old prayer will do,” says Rittenhouse before beginning to recite a psalm: “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.” When the industrialist stumbles in his recitation, Joe takes over, completing it in a somber baritone that brings a tear to the others’ eyes. Mrs. Higley sleeps in the salvaged wicker chair, smiling.



Mink coat- The temperature plummets as the sun sinks. Several men work in the foreground as the camera zooms in on Mrs. Higley’s empty hands laid upon her lap. Mr. Rittenhouse’s loud musings about the day’s repairs and plans for tomorrow rouse the sleeping woman. The two other women ask her how she feels and try to distract her from the fact that her baby is missing. Mrs. Higley fawns over Mrs. Porter’s mink coat, saying she’d never felt the real thing before and hadn’t expected it to be so soft. The distraction only lasts so long: “Where’s Johnnie?” Mrs. Higley asks. She quickly becomes accusatory when no one speaks: “What have you done with him?” She realizes they must have thrown the corpse overboard and begins looking around wildly. She becomes frantic and tries to throw herself into the sea. Kovac and several others tie Mrs. Higley to the wicker chair to keep her from throwing herself overboard as the German watches, a strange, placid boredom on his face.



“43 Days”- Mr. Rittenhouse leans against the tiller, fast asleep. All the others sleep as well. Sparks is the first to wake and it takes him a few moments to realize that Rittenhouse has fallen asleep on watch. Mr. Rittenhouse wakes at Sparks’ words and jokes about his upcoming court marshal. They talk for a moment about sea anchors and their course. Sparks says he’s been torpedoed twice before and the longest he was adrift in a lifeboat was 43 days before rescue. Rittenhouse inquires if they can make it 43 days on the current supplies, and Sparks says it’s unlikely. Their stores were damaged during the U-boat attack. Worse still, they’ve got no compass. Mrs. Porter wakes up, complaining about her lack of sleep. She notices that Mrs. Higley is missing, a taut rope stretching from the chair over the side of the boat. Kovac unceremoniously cuts the line, allowing Mrs. Higley to join her baby in their watery grave.



Duties- The scene opens on a small compass held in someone's hand. The camera pulls back and shows the German stowing the compass in his shirt pocket as Mr. Rittenhouse tallies up the stores and distributes rations. The industrialist asks Kovac, "How's the sail coming along?" "Coming along," Kovac replies. Rittenhouse then says that, based on their supplies, there's no sense in waiting around for rescue and assigns the survivors to various jobs. Sparks is the navigator, Joe is the commissary, Constance will keep the ship's log, Nurse MacKenzie is in charge of sick bay, and Rittenhouse -according to Sparks' disdainful whispers- is the skipper. The assignment of duties is interrupted by Gus' long-winded story about how he used to dance with his girlfriend before the war.



Mrs. Porter's writing- After several of the survivors hoist and secure a makeshift mast, Constance asks Kovac if he can repair the ornate bracelet that hangs from her wrist. He agrees to try. Kovac talks about having read her work before. "Wanna know what's wrong with it?" he asks. "You've been all over the world. You've met all kinds of people. But you never write about them, you only write about yourself." Constance's comeback is interrupted by the hoisting of the sail. Joe takes the tiller as the more experienced sailors tend to the rigging. Rittenhouse rubs his hands together, gnawing on his cigar. "We're underway."



"Where to?"- As Rittenhouse celebrates, the others look concerned. "Where to?" Kovac asks. Rittenhouse responds with confusion. Sparks mentions that the First Operator aboard the ship said their destination was Bermuda. Gus recalls that the heading on the tiller before the attack was East-Southeast. Rittenhouse says they should follow that course, but the problem is no one is sure where the direction is. Sparks thinks it's in one direction, but the German insists they should head on a different course. Kovac is unwilling to trust the man, but the others agree to accept his heading when he states (as translated by Constance) that he'd rather be a prisoner of war in Bermuda than adrift at sea.



Who's Captain?- The topic then shifts to who should be the captain when even Rittenhouse agrees that he isn't suited to the position. The choices are listed, but Constance says they should just utilize the captain already aboard. He addresses a captain in German, and the German answers, "Ja?" Kovac refuses to hear the suggestion. He forces a vote in which Kovac is elected captain. When Sparks moves to take the tiller, Mrs. Porter's typewriter is knocked into the ocean.



Life on deck- Joe plays a tin flute while the lifeboat's other occupants chat to pass the time. Constance complains loudly about the loss of her typewriter. "Little by little," she says, "I'm being stripped of all my earthly possessions." Mr. Rittenhouse interrupts her, gleefully discussing the post-war boom that's sure to happen and the money he'll make during it. Kovac turns around, shuffling a homemade deck of cards. He challenges Rittenhouse to a game of draw poker, and the industrialist accepts. All the while, the German captain scoots closer and closer to the others. The camera zooms in on Sparks and Nurse MacKenzie. They discuss their stumbling into the service, finding they have a lot in common in that regard. Nurse MacKenzie shocks the others when she says she's glad the ship was torpedoed.



Gangrene- Gus fiddles with his bandages. Nurse MacKenzie rushes over to him. She helps him undo the bandage and everyone looks at his leg in shock. "Looks like a leg of lamb, doesn't it?" Gus jokes. The German speaks in his native tongue. Even though they can't understand what he says, they understand his tone. Constance's translation is that Gus has gangrene and the only way to save him is to amputate the leg immediately. Nurse MacKenzie looks frightened: "I've never assisted in an amputation." The German suggests he perform the operation as he was a surgeon in civilian life. Gus refuses the operation.



Rosie's heart- "Darling," Constance says to Gus, "You want to live, don't you?" "Not with one leg," he replies emphatically. Kovac reminds Gus of Rosie, his girlfriend back home. Gus retorts that if he loses his leg, he'll lose his girl. "She loves to dance," he says. "It's her hobby. It's her whole life." Gus and Kovac start to argue when Kovac tries to make several unkind comments about Rosie's character, but Constance breaks them up. "I don't know Rosie, but I know women," Constance says, trying to comfort Gus. She reminds Gus that Rosie is an independent woman who chooses to share her 'heart of gold' with him freely. Hearing this, Gus changes his mind about the amputation. He wants to live and love Rosie.



Scrubbing down- Nurse MacKenzie jumps into action. Through Constance's translations, she assists the German in prepping for surgery. They work quickly to sterilize the German's hands, the knife, and Gus's leg. "Brandy's better than nothing," Constance translates for the German as he cleans his hands. "Did I hear brandy?" Gus asks excitedly. The German says that Gus should try to finish the bottle. Gus obliges, becoming increasingly intoxicated as the others continue prepping a surface for surgery and gathering the required tools and supplies from the sparse stores. Gus drunkenly confronts Kovac about what he was saying about Rosie, and Kovac apologizes, calming Gus as best he can. Gus begins talking to himself, regretting turning down a defense plant job. He then asks Constance for a kiss for luck. She obliges happily. Gus then asks Joe to play something jazzy, and the porter begins playing a solo rendition of "Under the Apple Tree." Soon, Gus passes out from drunkenness and the others jump into action.



Steady as she goes- "Look alive now, Sparks," Kovac says as he and the others hold Gus down. The German works diligently as the lifeboat rocks between the waves. "We need more bandages," Nurse MacKenzie says to Constance. When she turns back from retrieving the bandages, she looks down at the surgery and nearly passes out. Kovac helps to support her, still holding Gus steady as well. Rittenhouse, too, has issues, growing ill as the surgery continues and the sea and wind roar. Joe helps the industrialist lean over the side of the lifeboat in the rough sea. A particularly large swell forces the tiny boat to practically jump in the water. "Keep her steady, you fool!" Kovac shouts over the wind. Sparks looks annoyed but keeps his mouth shut. Kovac takes Gus' boot and tosses it out of the way. The camera rests on the boot as the sea sprays across the lifeboat's railing as if it's crying for the man's loss.



Favoring breeze- Gus sleeps soundly after his amputation, watched over by Nurse MacKenzie. The German takes a moment while everyone is distracted to look at his hidden compass. He speaks up after hiding it again, telling Constance that they've hit a favorable ocean current and it's carrying them faster than they were going before. "We've got a favoring breeze, too," Sparks chimes in. "Then we ought to be in Bermuda in no time," Rittenhouse says joyfully. The German begins sowing doubt that they're on the right course, reminding them of their lack of a compass. Kovac believes the German to be lying to them about their heading, but the others have just enough doubt in Kovac and trust in the enemy captain to believe they're not heading for Bermuda.



Last cigarette- Gus stirs, and the occupants of the lifeboat rush to greet him. "How do you feel now?" Rittenhouse asks. "In the pink," Gus replies, groggily signing 'okay' with one hand. "Right now, I'd give the other leg for a cigarette," he says. Constance approaches with her cigarette case in hand. She's frustrated that it contains only one cigarette, but she quickly gives it to Gus. After a couple of puffs, Gus thanks the German and asks Kovac how long until they reach Bermuda. "Pretty soon," Kovac grins. "We've got a good breeze and a favoring current." His smile fades as he admits to being unsure of their course. The only thing he's sure of is that he doesn't trust the Nazi in their midst: He could be leading them to another U-boat or a German supply ship. The others, driven by worry for Gus, refuse to let politics drive their decisions any longer. They adjust their heading while the German privately glances at his compass once more.



"Genus homo, male"- In the dark of the night, Nurse MacKenzie whispers to Constance, "I was, uh, admiring your bracelet." Constance says it was a gift from her first husband. Nurse MacKenzie reiterates that she's glad the ship was torpedoed, and Constance asks her why. Nurse MacKenzie admits that it's stupid, but she was dreading meeting someone in England, speaking vaguely as if she's uncomfortable with the topic. "I know, I know," says Constance. "Genus homo, male." Nurse MacKenzie says the trouble comes from a married man, one who isn't married to her. Constance mocks Nurse MacKenzie for her old-time morals before falling asleep once more. Still unable to sleep, Nurse MacKenzie joins Sparks by the tiller.



Heading for Venus- “Don’t let her scare you,” Sparks says. Nurse MacKenzie says she didn’t mind Constance’s prying, it just made her nervous because she’d never told anyone before that she was involved in an affair. Sparks lends a listening ear as Nurse MacKenzie tells him about her lover, Stephen, a doctor she once worked under. The act of adultery makes the relationship untenable for her. Sparks sympathizes, saying the heart wants what the heart wants. He strikes up a different conversation about the stars when something dawns on him. On the ship, a crewmate had pointed out that their heading followed Mars in the night sky. At present, though, the lifeboat is headed toward Venus. “We’re not heading for Bermuda,” he says with conviction. “We’re heading to miss Bermuda.”



“A watch of his own”- The lifeboat occupants huddle toward the rear muttering among themselves. Constance speaks up in defense of the German, saying he didn’t want to commit to the course, but Spark’s accusations need to be investigated. Rittenhouse pushes for Constance to interrogate the German. Kovac and Rittenhouse begin to argue about the concept of justice when Nurse MacKenzie interrupts them, asking if the German had asked Mrs. Porter for the time the other day. Constance says she did and Nurse MacKenzie finds that strange. “He had a watch of his own,” she explains. After a bit of bickering between those who suspect the German and those who don’t, Kovac decides to check the time on the German’s watch. Joe shamefully agrees to practice his old pickpocketing skills and retrieves the watch, which Joe reveals to the others to be a compass.



Man overboard- A storm begins blowing as the occupants of the lifeboat argue about what to do with the German once they realize he’s been hiding his compass. Kovac and some others want to imprison or kill him, others speak in his defense. The storm grows worse until Joe shouts that Sparks has gone flying overboard. It takes a sustained effort to retrieve the radioman from the sea, a chance the German takes to grab the tiller. Once Sparks is back aboard, the German begins barking orders in English: “You fools! Stop thinking about yourselves! Think of the boat!” “Well, what do you know?” Gus says, now tied to the mast, “We’ve got a Fuhrer.” The storm continues to grow, eventually ripping the mast from the lifeboat.



Rowing- The boat gently glides across the surprisingly still ocean as the tin flute accompanies a man singing a simple German tune. The camera settles on the singing German as he rows the lifeboat. The camera passes each of the lifeboat's occupants. They all seem to be succumbing to the boredom of being stranded at sea. Rittenhouse stops playing the flute and asks 'Willi', the German, how his accompaniment has been. "Fine, Ritt," Willi says, smiling. "You're a born accompanist." Kovac begins laughing madly. "How'd I do, Willi?" he mocks in a silly voice, unable to contain his laughter. "Now we're his prisoners, and he's Gauleiter [commander] of the boat, singing German lullabies to us, while he rows us to his supply ship... and a concentration camp. Go ahead, Willi! Tell 'em how funny it is!" "It isn't funny," says Willi, "It's logical."



Drying out- Willi says they're more likely to find the German supply ship than stumble upon Bermuda, making it their surest chance of survival since they lost their stores and fresh water during the storm. Several speak up, saying they'll take a turn on the oars, but Willi denies them, saying he can find the strength to keep going. Willi then asks Gus (calling him 'Schmidt' to the sailor's chagrin) how he's feeling. "Same as yesterday," Gus replies groggily. "Thirsty." The lifeboat's occupants start talking about baseball and other topics, trying to pass the time. Rittenhouse asks Willi to sing another song and accompanies him on the tin flute. Gus, desperate for a drink, lowers a mug into the ocean on a shoestring. Nurse MacKenzie stops him, saying it will only make him more thirsty.



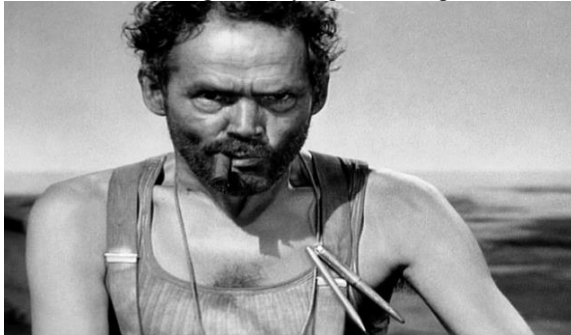
"The handcuff"- Constance lays her head in Kovac's lap, chuckling flirtatiously about the game of footsie they were playing shortly before. She asks him about the tattoo in the center of his chest, "B.M.... Her initials are larger than the others. Was she the last, or the first?" Kovac's reply is icy, "Where'd you get the handcuff, Mrs. Porter?" She asks him to call her 'Connie' like he did when the storm nearly swallowed the lifeboat. Kovac asks about the bracelet again, speaking flirtatiously about the kiss they'd shared during the storm. "Quit slumming," Kovac chastizes her, but she continues, saying she's "from the same gutter." They bond momentarily, realizing they both grew up in the same Chicago neighborhood. They kiss again, but Kovac pushes Constance away after a moment. "Quit slumming!" he says again before inviting Ritt to play a game of cards.



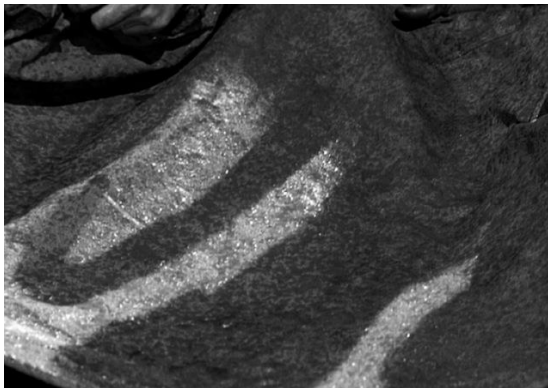
Hungry- Constance asks Willi to help her repair her bracelet. He comments that they should get rid of it since it won't aid in their survival, but still stops rowing to fiddle with the broken clasp. As they shuffle and deal cards nearby, Rittenhouse begins speaking loudly about luxury foods. Constance can't stand to hear them talk about food and confronts Rittenhouse, saying the loss of their food is his fault. They argue about blame for a while before Kovac steps in. In her rage, Constance slaps Kovac, and the others move to restrain her. "Why don't you kill Willi!?" she snarls at Kovac. "I'll tell you why. You're not strong enough!" Willi watches the others fight with a pleased smile, still rowing. While everyone is distracted, Gus guzzles down a mug of seawater.



Poker- Everyone calms down finally. Rittenhouse and Kovac finally begin their poker game. Kovac asks Ritt how much money he really has. "Enough to buy and sell you a million times," he replies. Kovac ups the ante to \$100 and Rittenhouse agrees. Kovac muses that by the time they make it home, he might own one of Rittenhouse's factories. When they show their hands, Kovac wins and scrapes up the pot. Rittenhouse gives the sailor a suspicious look: "It's mighty funny how you keep winning all the pots." Despite not trusting Kovac or the cards, Rittenhouse ups the ante to \$1000. The pot is at an all-time high when the wind picks up the cards and scatters them into the ocean. Rittenhouse is enraged, accusing Kovac of cheating and trying to strangle him.



Rain- "It's raining!" cries Gus. "It's raining!" The occupants of the lifeboat scamper to the remains of the sail and spread it out, hoping to catch the downpour. Before the canvas can collect more than a few drops, the rain stops. The sun begins beating down again. Everyone looks skyward in disappointment. The camera glances past them at Gus, who uses his mug and shoestring to fish out another mug of seawater.



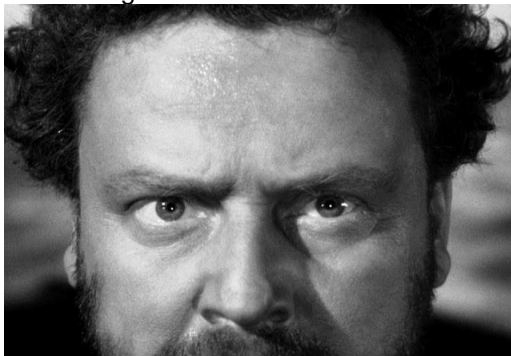
“Hey, Joe?”- The scene opens on Willi rowing as before. He looks unaffected by the passage of time. The camera moves as Gus babbles about his last watch aboard the ship before the torpedoes, talking to everyone and no one. He is sunburnt and his lips are covered with flaking skin. “Hey, Joe?” Gus asks, rolling to look at the man. “What’s the matter? Why did you stop playing?” Joe is either sleeping or ignoring him. Gus starts speaking to Rosie, dreaming of cold, clear water. Willi is annoyed by the man’s incessant yammering about water which makes him thirsty. After glancing around, Willi takes the brandy bottle from inside his shirt and takes a stealthy drink. The bottle is filled with water. Gus takes notice and he shakes Sparks to tell him. Sparks assumes Gus is just delirious.



“Better hurry, Gus”- Gus awkwardly shuffles toward Willi, asking where he got the water. Willi shushes him, telling him not to wake the others. The delirium takes Gus over once more. He asks Willi if he should write to Rosie about his missing leg or wait to see her in person. Willi tells him to wait. Gus shakes Willi’s hand and tells him goodbye. Willi smiles and says, “You’d better hurry, Gus. She’s waiting.” Gus remembers why he moved closer to the German and demands water. Willi urges him to be quiet and tells him to “go after Rosie,” before shoving Gus overboard. Hearing his cries, Sparks awakes, but it’s too late. Gus couldn’t keep his head above water with only one leg, especially while so dehydrated.



Sweat- Everyone wakes up, outraged to hear that Gus has gone over and Willi did nothing to help him. In his defense, Willi says he couldn’t stand to watch Gus suffer any longer, arguing that letting him drown was a mercy. Sparks recalls that Gus was trying to tell him something about water. Nurse MacKenzie speaks about being unable to cry from dehydration as the camera settles on Willi’s forehead. Specks of sweat begin to form and Constance takes notice. Sparks remembers what Gus had been trying to tell him: Willi had water. “Yeah,” says Joe, pulling the bottle away from Willi, “right under his shirt!” The bottle shatters against the deck when Willi tries to pull it back.



Mutiny- Everyone faces Willi down. He admits to stealing the water for himself and having a small stock of survival rations and even some medicine that he refused to share. He admits to having used them all along and assumes that they will still be too weak to refuse his orders. Nurse MacKenzie leads the charge with a shriek. All but Joe rush Willi and pummel him with fists and feet. Sparks picks up a shattered piece of the mast and begins beating Willi over the head. As the German weakens, the others push him overboard and hold him there, beating him still. Rittenhouse retrieves Gus' boot and delivers the final blows with it over the side of the boat. Everything becomes hauntingly still as the survivors lay against the side of the boat, looking at the former U-boat captain off-screen.



Curling up and dying- Morale is at an all-time low. It seems everyone is ready to give up and die, all but Constance, that is. Rittenhouse regrets that he joined the others in killing Willi, calling them a mob. "Baloney," Constance says. "We weren't a mob when we killed him. We were a mob when we sat around, prisoners of a man we saved. Kowtowing to him, obeying him." She continues to chastise everyone for letting the Nazi do their rowing and their thinking for them. Constance takes charge, saying they have to do something and offering up her bracelet as fish bait. With a common cause once more, the survivors hop to and rig up a fishing line.



Fishing- Everyone is excited, helping to ready the makeshift fishing line. They clamor around the side of the lifeboat as Kovac tosses the bait overboard. They watch in silence as the shimmering jewels disappear into the ocean. The sea laps at the side of the lifeboat as it drifts aimlessly. A fish inspects the bait beneath the waves. The survivors stare into the water, watching intently as the fish swims back and forth beneath them. When it bites, Kovac jerks on the line and hooks it. Everyone shouts in victory, helping to pull the line from the water and the fish with it. Everyone but Joe who looks off into the distance.



A ship- The fish is pulled from the water when Joe says, "There's a ship." Kovac and Rittenhouse drop the fish line in surprise, rushing to the other end of the lifeboat. "Gangway!" someone cries, knocking Constance over. She watches as the fishline disappears over the edge of the boat, taking the fish and her bracelet with it. She looks like she's about to cry for a moment when she begins cackling madly. The celebration comes to a quick end when they hear German being shouted at them: This is Willi's supply ship.



Naval battle- Rittenhouse dreams of his coveted luxuries while the others cower, dreading the coming concentration camps. The German rowboat draws closer when a lamp begins flashing them a signal. The survivors in the lifeboat are confused when the rowboat turns around. Their confusion ends when a shell hits the water off the German supply ship's bow. Another strikes the German rowboat, blowing it to smithereens. The German ship then begins moving towards the lifeboat, full speed ahead. The survivors cower inside of the lifeboat when they realize they won't be able to get out of the way, but they barely bump the ship's hull as it passes. It doesn't take many more shots from the nearby coast guard to sink the German supply ship. The occupants of the lifeboat rest easy knowing that help is on the horizon.



Survivor- The celebrations come to an end when a young German sailor pulls himself onto the lifeboat. Constance and Nurse MacKenzie move to help him, but the men hold back. "Have you forgotten about Willi already," Rittenhouse scolds. The others try to argue about human rights when the young sailor draws a pistol. Joe jumps forward and knocks the gun from the boy's hand. "Aren't you going to kill me?" he asks in German when the others don't react further than having to restrain Rittenhouse. The survivors take some solace that they'll be able to hand this Nazi over to the authorities. Nurse MacKenzie remembers Mrs. Higley and her baby, and Gus, saying they might be able to answer the question of what to do with people like Willi and the boy.

