

Chapter II

Rendezvous In New York

October 19, 1945 – October 27, 1945

On Friday afternoon, the 19th, Sheffield called for a taxi to pick him up pier side and drive him to Grand Central Station. He retained the cabbie to wait for him on Vanderbilt Avenue while he went in to meet Ramona. The Capitol Limited from Washington was due to arrive on Track #29 at 5:17. As trains are, it was right on time. He scanned the cars as they disgorged their passengers. He didn't see Ramona until she was almost right in front of him as she was obscured by the sea of people. It's not easy to stand out in a crowd when you're only five foot two.

They stood as if a statue frozen in time as they held each other tightly. No one gave a second thought the Admiral kissing the commander, both in their dress blues. The rush of people receded, leaving them piratically alone in the cavernous Main Concourse with its arched ceiling.

When they finally broke their embrace, the first thing Ramona said was, "I *have* got to find the ladies room."

"I think its past the ticket windows and to your right. Here, let me show you the way."

She picked up her small bag and took Sheffield by the left hand as he took her into the waiting area. "Oh I see it, its right over there. Will you hold my bag for me?"

"Sure. I'll be right here when you get back. Take your time."

A few minutes later she was walking back toward him. "There, I fell much better now." She said. Taking him by the arm, he led her back into the main concourse to pickup the rest of her luggage. A porter took her other bag as well and followed them up the steps and through the doors to the waiting cab.

She had managed to arrange for herself to represent the Navy Nurses Corps at the week long Navy Day celebration in New York so she wouldn't have to cut into her leave time. Not only that, but the Navy was footing the bill for her transportation and hotel suite. Despite the fact that they had only seen each other four weeks earlier in Hawaii, it was joyous reunion. After all, they had been a part for a year and one week wasn't enough to make up for all of that time.

The cabbie saw them coming and got out to open the trunk. He took the bags from the porter and placed them in the trunk and closed it. Sheffield opened the back door for Ramona and she got in and slid across the seat, making room for him. Having already been given their destination, the cabbie drove off.

It was a short ride, only a half a mile, and the cab pulled up in front of the hotel at 301 Park Avenue in Manhattan. Sheffield got out first and helped Ramona out. Holding Sheffield's arm, she gazed up in amazement at the forty seven story twin towers of the Waldorf=Astoria. "This is just amazing." she exclaimed. "It is just



like I imagined it to be. I can't believe we actually get to stay here.”

The magnificent mixed style of artistic architectural design was awe inspiring. The base of the hotel had a granite facing while the upper facade was clad in brick and limestone. The main building was twenty stories high with the two towers soaring to forty seven stories. Six hundred twenty five feet above the street, bronze-clad domed cupolas topped each tower

The cabbie had removed their luggage from the trunk and Sheffield paid the fair, which was fairly hefty as the meter was running all the while he waited for them at the station. He gave the cabbie a generous tip for his patience. Meanwhile, the bellhop already had it placed on the cart and was wheeling it through the door. Sheffield and Ramona followed.



The main lobby was decorated with intricate murals and mosaics but it was the exquisite clock in the center of the lobby that caught their attention. On top of it was a miniature Statue of Liberty surrounded by eagles perched on an octagonal base made from marble and mahogany, with four clocks, one facing each direction. Just then, it was three quarters past the hour, the Westminster Chimes sounded three times, once for each quarter hour that had passed.

The clock sat on a octagonal base with the likenesses of Presidents Cleveland, Harrison, Washington, Grant, Lincoln, and Jackson, Benjamin Franklin, and Queen Victoria set in intricate carvings. Beneath them were bronze plaques depicting various sports . At the top of each corner were small carved busts of various animals. All of this sat on an octagon table.

Sheffield and Ramona stopped to admire it. “Look,” Sheffield remarked, “Here’s a plaque that tells about.”

“What does it say?”

“It says. “The Waldorf=Astoria Clock was executed by the Goldsmith Company of London for exhibition at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893. It was purchased by the Waldorf=Astoria and was the focal point outside the Rose Room of the original hotel at Fifth Avenue and 34th Street. This clock weighs approximately two tons and stands nine feet tall.’

Sheffield and Ramona gazed around the lobby in disbelief and awe. Finally Ramona said, “I feel like I have just stepped into the world of the rich and famous.”

“In a way, I think we have.”

“I’ve been in a lot of nice places, but this has got to top them all.” Ramona gasped.

“I guess we’d better go and check in.” Sheffield reminded her.

The bellhop waited patiently as they took it all in.

At the window, Sheffield said to the desk clerk, "We have a reservation."

"What is your name sir?"

"Sheffield Brason."

The desk clerk stepped away and looked through the reservation register behind the desk. "Ah, here it is. Admiral Sheffield Brason. It was registered by an Ensign Morris Gover. Does that sound right?"

"Yes. He is my personal aid."

He returned to the window and said, "It says that you will be accompanied by Commander Ramona Brason." Looking at Ramona, he winked, "Is this your daughter?"

She was holding his hand and could feel him tense up. He always hated it when anyone said that. "No, I'm the lucky woman who happens to be be his wife." she answered. She always took it as a compliment to the fact that she looked ten years younger than her age.

The desk clerk continued, "We have you in a one bedroom suite on the fifteenth floor in fifteen oh nine. Could I get you sign here, please."

Sheffield signed his name

"And write your address here, please."

Sheffield wrote the address of their townhouse in Washington.

"And finally sir, indicate here who you represent, The Navy I presume."

"That's right." Sheffield said as he wrote "US Navy" on the form.

"Are you here for the big Navy Day celebration?"

"Thats right, again."

"I plan on touring as many of the ships as I can. My son is still in the Pacific on a cruiser. So, which ship is yours?"

"I brought in the four carriers that arrived the other morning. The Reprisal is my flagship. She's tied up just up the street at Pier 90."

"I'll make it a point then to visit the Reprisal. Now' you'll find a complete list of amenities in your room. If you need anything at all, just ring the switchboard, anytime of the day or night. The hotel porter will show you to your room. And do enjoy your stay."

Even the elevator that took them up to the fifteenth floor was opulent, with plush carpet and and ornate carvings. When they got off, their room was just a few steps away. The porter opened the door and wheeled in the cart with their luggage. Sheffield handed him a tip and he left. The curtains were open and the view is what first caught their attention.

Three blocks away, the thin, seventy story RCA Building towered above them. To either side, they

could look over the tops of or around buildings and see a good portion of the Hudson River. To their right they could see the skyline of Lower Manhattan, presided over by the Empire State Building. To their left, they could see over and around buildings and look down on Central Park nine or ten blocks away.

After taking in the view from their window, they turned their attention to their suite. The living room featured a couch and two high back wing chairs surrounding a coffee table on three sides. A crystal chandelier was suspended above the coffee table. A sterling silver vase sat on a lace doily. The windows were dressed with heavy drapes that arched above the window and came down to the floor. A beautiful rug covered the center of the the hard wood floor. The walls were adorned with artwork and large rectangular mirror with brass corners. Reproductions of famous artwork graced the wallpapered walls with a white corrugated wood wainscot. All of the wood trim was also in white.

Off to one side was a table with two chairs. Next to the table was hidden a nook with a small two burner stove and small oven, a small refrigerator and a sink. The cupboards contained a four piece set of china and crystal glassware. In the drawer was a four piece set of polished silverware.

Off to the other side of the room was the door to the bedroom. It was as large as the living room and featured a large four post bed covered with pillows. To one side was a dresser and mirror, to the other was a large walk in closet. Next to the closet was a dressing table and dressing screen. Off to the corner were two more wingback chairs that matched the ones in the living room. At the foot of the bed was a white fleece rug.

A door opened into a spacious bathroom with a freestanding claw foot bathtub. Fluffy towels hung on the brass towel racks next to the tub. In the closet were more towels and a host of toiletries, including bubble bath and bath oils. There were two sinks with brass fixtures and a mirror above them. The toilet was hidden away in a privacy closet. A second door opened into the living room.

Their inspection found everything to be five star and first class. With their tour of the suite complete, they set about putting their clothes away. Ramona took a moment to straiten her uniform and her hair. By then they were both very hungry. Together they rode the elevator door to the first floor. Choosing from the menu was more difficult than choosing a restaurant had been. After a satisfying meal, they decided to step out for some fresh air and walk around the block before going back to their suite.

Now fully dark, a stunning view presented itself right outside their window. The RCA building was all lit up as were all of the others. The streets below were like ribbons of light stretching all the way to the Hudson River. The river shore on the New Jersey side was outlined with light.

It had been a long day for Ramona after working a half a day and the trip to New York. She just wanted to get undressed and get ready for bed.



The RCA Building as seen from the Waldorf=Astoria in 1945

Sheffield decided that he didn't have anything better to do, so he joined her.

The next morning, Sheffield was up and dressed before Ramona stirred. He was in the living room reading the complimentary copy of the New York Times when Ramona stumbled out. "Good morning, sleepy head." He said.

Yawning, she shuffled over where he was sitting and ungraciously pulled the newspaper from his hands and tossed it down on the coffee table. Then she plopped herself down on his lap. "Good morning, Babe." she said as she placed her arms around his neck. Then she kissed him. "Isn't this incredible? This is more than I ever imagined it would be. All of my life I have heard of New York City. I conjured up an image of a magical fantasy kingdom in my mind. Come to find out its true."

"I've only been here once or twice, myself. There is more to see and do here than one person could possibly manage in a lifetime."

"Well I have a list of a few things I'd like to see and do. My first wish was to stay here. That one has already come true."

"What else would you like to do?"

"I want to attend a Broadway musical. I want to see Times Square, the Empire State Building, Radio City Music Hall, and the Statue of Liberty. Oh and don't forget Central Park. I really want to see Central Park."

"Since I'm supposedly here on 'official business', I need to go over to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital and the St. Albans Naval Hospital in Queens."

"You can do that while I go back to the ship and take care of some business that needs my attention. This isn't a vacation you know."

"I keep forgetting. It sure seems like one. And this function we have tonight, do you call dinner and dancing work?"

"We do have to sit through some speeches. I guess that counts as work. Oh by the way, I was looking through the list of amenities and they have a beauty parlor that offers the works. I took the liberty to call and make an appointment for you. They had an opening at ten, so I booked it for you."

"Are you saying I'm ugly and need help being beautiful and attractive?" she laughed.

"Well, have you looked in the mirror yet this morning?"

She stood up and looked at herself in the mirror above the couch. "I see what you mean. But give me some credit, I just got out of bed. I'll tell you what. You read your paper and I'll go have a nice bath. Then what do you say we go down stairs for breakfast?"

"That sounds good to me." He pulled her back down onto his lap and into his arms for a good long kiss.

By the time she was dressed and ready, he had long finished with the paper. Together, he in uniform

and she in a casual green paint suit with long selves and flair legs and matching high heels, they rode the elevator down to the main floor and had breakfast.

By the time they were finished, it was about nine thirty. Rather than go back up to their suite, Ramona decided to browse though the shops. Sheffield bid her goodbye and went out onto the street and hailed a cab and had it take him to the pier.

When he went aboard the Reprisal, scores of people, old and young alike, had come aboard to take a look around. He decided to mingle and visit with the visitors and went up to the flight deck. They had questions about the ship and what she had been engaged in during the war. He was able to give them first hand accounts of everything except for D-Day and the invasion of the South of France. Even then, he was able to tell the story. To one group he told the story of Salerno and how he ended up using a cane. Eventually he made his way below to his office on the galley deck where he had some unfinished items of business that he was working on before leaving to meet Ramona at the train station.

With his work done, Sheffield mingled with the visitors some more before leaving the ship. There were more civilians aboard than sailors as most of the crew were in the city on liberty for the weekend.

He got back to the hotel to an empty suite. Ramona had either been back and left again, or hadn't been back at all. However, he didn't have to wait long for her. When she came through the door, his eyes about popped out of his head. "Wow! Who are you?"

"Do you like it?" she asked.

"Boy do I ever." Sheffield exclaimed as he got up out of his chair and came across the room toward her.

She slowly turned around so he could get a good look.

"I'd hug you, but I don't want to mess anything up. What all did you do?"

"Well, for starters, They gave me a facial treatment. Then they worked over my eyebrows and eye lashes. I really wanted to get my hair cut. It was starting to get longer than I like it. Its just long enough to not make me look like boy. What do you think?"

"I think its terrific."

"Oh and look at this." she said excitedly as she held out her hands. "I got a manicure and my nails polished. I've never done that before. For a girl born on the reservation in the boondocks of Oklahoma, that was royal treatment."

"I've always loved your dainty hands, they look so elegant. You've always looked ten years younger that you are. They managed to take off another five years. You look more like twenty seven, not forty two."

"Thanks, thats quite a compliment. Do you really think so?"

"Absolutely. Now me, the war has taken a toll on me. With this bum leg and all, I look ten years older

than I am. Now people are really going to think that I'm your father."

"No you don't, Babe. Where'd you get that notion? I think you look rather distinguished and very handsome. You have a very commanding appearance about you. Who cares what others think anyway?"

"Now you're just trying to make me feel good. Say, Whats the story behind the clothes?"



"When I was finished, I came back up here and you hadn't come back yet. I was looking myself over in the mirror, feeling like a movie star of something. So I decided to go shopping. I took a cab down to lower Manhattan mainly just to look. Then I saw this." Again she turned around to show it off.

It was a deep aqua blue and green paisley print on soft cozy wool flannel. The bodice featured a boat neck in front and an open back that plunged to the waist, with three quarter length push-up sleeves. The cummerbund waist cinched in to give her the illusion of shapeliness. The long pencil skirt, with a slight flare at the



hem, fell straight from her hips to just above her ankles. The dress was fully lined and closed at the side with a metal zipper.

"And I got these shoes to go with them. Aren't they just drop-dead gorgeous?" She held out one foot so he could see. They were high heel sandals with ankle straps, open toes, four inch heels finished with a black velvety suede-like material with tiny tiny brass studs.

"Pretty fancy, huh?"

"I'd say. I don't see how do walk in high heels."

"I need all the boost in height that I can get. I learned how to walk in them years ago. Its just too bad that I can't wear this tonight."

Oh we'll find something for you to wear it too. Perhaps that Broadway musical you want to see. Oh that reminds me. How would you like a front row seat for a performance of the Rockettes?"

"Really? At Radio City Music Hall?"

"No, actually on the flight deck of the Reprisal. I was talking to Hank Terry today. Their manager contacted him about putting on a show to pay tribute to the Navy and asked about using the ship. There will be two performances on Wednesday afternoon. They felt it would be too cold to do an evening show."

“Yeah, I'd love to. But I guess I'd better start getting ready for tonight.”

Sheffield followed her into the bedroom and sat on the bed and talked to her as she got undressed.

“I guess I'd better get undressed too and get ready for tonight as well.”

“Well, since we're both getting undressed,” Ramona suggested, “why don't we make the most of it?”

Dressed in his formal dinner uniform and she in her dress blues, they made a handsome couple as they emerged from the elevator into the lobby and out onto the street. They visited and took in the sights as they walked from the Waldorf=Astoria to the Roosevelt Hotel, which only took seven minutes.

As they approached the front door, Sheffield teased, “I doubt they'll let you in.”

“And why not?”

“Because you voted for Roosevelt.”

“What's that got to do with anything?”

“From what I understand, Thomas Dewey has a residence here.”

“Oh pooh-pooh. If any one asks, I'll just tell them I'm with my father.”

“I find it a little ironic that he ran against Roosevelt, but lives at the Roosevelt Hotel.”

The lobby of the Roosevelt was full of men in uniform, mostly captains and admirals with a few commanders; many of them accompanied by women. The event was sponsored by Rear Admiral Monroe Kelly, the commander of the Third Naval District, which was headquartered in New York City. It was the unofficial kick off for the week long Navy Day celebration that would culminate with the fleet review the following Saturday.

While others were still arriving, Sheffield and Ramona were ushered into the banquet hall and seated with another couple who looked to be in their early sixties. The man, wearing the stripes of a Rear Admiral introduced himself and his wife. “Hello. I'm Kent Melhorn and this is my wife Jeanne. How do you do?”

In response, Sheffield introduced himself and Ramona. “Fine thank you. I'm Sheffield Brason and this is my wife, Ramona.”

“We're pleased to meet you.” Admiral Melhorn responded. “So Commander Brason, I see that you're in the Navy Nurses Corps.”

“Yes, that's right. I am the head of nursing and training and Bethesda Naval Medical Center.”

“That's very interesting. I'm the commander of the Naval Medical Supply Depot in Brooklyn.”

“Really.” Ramona replied. “That's where all of our medical supplies come from.” From there the two of them became engrossed in conversation, leaving Sheffield to visit with Mrs. Melhorn.

“So, how long have the two of you been married?” she asked.

That led them into a conversation of their own as she listened and asked questions about them. She was fascinated with their story, especially the way in which Ramona and Geannie were connected.

Their conversations lasted all through dinner. When Mrs. Melhorn learned that he was the commander of a carrier division, she told him all about their son who was the commander of torpedo squadron assigned to the Cowpens.

She asked him how he came to use a cane, and listened with interest to that story. All the while, Ramona was engrossed in conversation with Admiral Melhorn, himself a doctor. He paused to listen to Sheffield describe the nature of his injury at Salerno and permanent nerve damage that it caused and the resulting numbness. Ramona found that she and Doctor Melhorn knew a lot of people in common. By the time dinner was over, she had an invitation to visit the Medical Supply Depot and Sheffield had invited them to be guests aboard the Reprisal during the fleet review.

After dinner, Admiral Kelly's public relations officer explained the schedule of events for the coming week, including the Rockettes performance aboard the Reprisal, the parade, and the fleet review. Following his remarks, the guests were dismissed to the Grand Ballroom. Traditionally, Guy Lombardo and his orchestra played at the Roosevelt. At the time, his show on the road, and an unknown startup orchestra led by Lawrence Welk was performing.

Sheffield left his cane lying across their table and led Ramona out onto the dance floor. The fast numbers were too much for him, but he managed alright with the slow dances. They changed partners from time to time as mixers were announced and they traded off with the Melhorns for a couple of numbers. After a while, they retired to their table and just listened to the orchestra. Eventually, they called it good and took a cab back to the Waldorf=Astoria.

Sunday was always a day to attend church services, when possible. Sheffield inquired around and learned about the Church of Saint Paul and Saint Andrew United Methodist church located on West 86th Street. They took a taxi to the location and found the unique church with two towers, one being a tall octagonal bell tower and the other a shorter square tower set at an angle. The main entrance was split into three parts by tall arches. Inside, the large sanctuary was flanked by galleries on three sides, and large windows that flooded the interior with natural light.

They found the people to be friendly and receptive. The sermon that day was taken from Matthew chapter five, the Beatitudes. The pastor had an interesting perspective of the beatitudes being a progression from one attribute to a higher attribute. After the service, many in the congregation introduced themselves to the couple wearing naval officer uniforms.

Being such a beautiful autumn day with the temperature being about sixty degrees with the sun shining brightly, they decided to walk the four blocks to Central Park. On the way, they stopped off for lunch

at a coffee shop on the corner of 86th and Columbus

The park was ablaze with golds and reds. The fall leaves had peaked and about a fourth of the leaves already lay on the ground, or were gently spiraling down. Yet the trees still offered a breathtaking view.

Upon entering the park, they happened upon a horse drawn carriage waiting for its next passengers. This particular type of carriages was named for Queen Victoria. It was white with a forward facing seat for two passengers in the rear with the top folded down and a raised driver's seat drawn by a team of dapple gray mares.

Sheffield approached the driver to inquire as to the rates. He thought it was a little pricey. He negotiated with Cedric, the driver, to take them on a loop through the park and drop them off at the south east corner. Cedric was dressed in tuxedo complete with tails and a top hat.

"What are the horses' names?" Ramona wanted to know.

"This is Nickels on the right and that's Dimes on the left."

"How do you tell them apart?" she asked further.

"Well ma'am, that's easy. Nickels has the bigger spots and Dimes has smaller ones."

"Oh, I get it." Ramona said.

"Have you been around horses much, Ma'am?"

"Yeah when I was a child. But I never rode in a carriage as nice as this. I remember going into town in my father's buckboard."

"I guarantee you this will be a much smoother ride."

"I like their headdresses." Sheffield commented gesturing to the white plumes they wore on their heads. "You, the carriage, and the team all look like you stepped out of a Charles Dickens novel."

"Thanks. That's exactly how I want folks to feel."

Cedric took them through the center of the park along the Central Park Reservoir, with flotillas of mallard ducks and Canadian geese on patrol. They followed it around the bend and up into the more wooded portion of the park. Cedric was friendly and talkative and pointed out various things along the way. At the bend, he called their attention to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, explaining that it would take a full day just to see a portion of the exhibits.

As they rode along he told them all about Nickels and Dimes. They were actually sisters who were born a couple of years apart. After looping around the top as they were making their way back down from the northeast corner, Cedric stopped the carriage and in a hushed voice pointed out some whitetail deer in a stand of trees. There was a five point buck, three does and four nearly grown fawns.

Coming down the east side of the park, Cedric didn't have much to say. With Ramona snuggled up

next to Sheffield, they took in the sights and talked between themselves. After a while, they ended up in the the far corner of the park. Sheffield helped Ramona out of the carriage and paid the fare plus a tip for Cedric.

Cedric handed the tip back explaining, "I've got more money than I know what to do with, I don't need yours. You see, by day I'm an investment banker on Wall Street. I live alone and I do this in the evenings and on weekends so I can stay in touch with the things that matter most."

At the explanation, Sheffield accepted it back.

"Now you folks enjoy the rest of the day and your stay here in our fair city." At that he drove off looking for his next ride.

There was still plenty of afternoon left. Since the Conservatory Garden and zoo were nearby, they decided to investigate. Sheffield told Ramona how as a young academy cadet, he had visited the zoo during his twelve hour leave. He told her all about Hattie, the elephant and how she was the smartest elephant in the world. Hattie was now long gone. Since then the zoo had been vastly improved with all new exhibits. They took their time as they strolled hand in hand through the six and half acre zoo. After a couple of hours they had seen everything the zoo had to offer. They even found a place to sit and talk for while watching the sea lions.

As the sun began setting lower in the sky, the temperature began to drop and it was time to head back to the hotel. There just happed to be an empty cab passing by that Sheffield flagged down. Taxi cabs were everywhere to be found. If you missed one, there would be another in a minute or two. Back at the hotel, they decided to have dinner before going up to their room, where they spent the evening.

On Monday, Sheffield and Ramona went their separate ways. She went to spend the day at the Medical Supply depot and he went to the ship. Most of the crew were back from their weekend liberty and Commander Terry had them marching twelve abreast up and down the flight deck, turning in precision when they reached the end. Out in front were were two flag bearers and two men holding up a banner with the ship's name on it. The first few rows consisted of officers followed by the enlisted men. He wanted them whipped into shape for the Navy Day Parade down Broadway on Saturday. He had scheduled one hour march drills each morning during the week.

Sheffield had Ensign Morris call a staff meeting in the flag ready room for nine o'clock. He didn't really have any business, but he wanted to know if there were any loose ends any of them were working on. In the end, the meeting turned out to be more of social gathering over coffee and donuts.

Later, Sheffield went to his office to take care of some correspondence. Mid morning, Ensign Gover brought him a manila envelope that had just been delivered. It was from the Navy Department. He wondered

if it was his new orders and quickly opened it.

The dispatch said that Carrier Division Seven was being dissolved effective October 27th. The Reprisal was to enter the Brooklyn Navy Yard for overhaul. The other three were to report for duty with Operation Magic Carpet to transport servicemen home from Europe.

Further more, Sheffield had orders to report to Rear Admiral Harold B. Sallada by October 29th for duty with the Bureau of Aeronautics once again. "That will make Ramona happy." he thought out loud. "I wonder what they'll have me doing this time?"

He picked up the phone and called the Navy Administration building and asked to be put through to Admiral Sallada who had replaced Admiral Ramesy back in June. He learned that his assignment was to document the operations of the night air groups, a job estimated to take about nine months. When Sheffield asked about his staff, he was told that he could have anyone he wanted, within reason.

Sheffield had Ensign Gover come to his office and asked him to call another meeting of the staff for one o'clock. "What are your immediate plans, Morris?" he asked.

"I'll be up for discharge in January. I suppose I'll go home and enroll in school for next fall."

"Would you consider staying on through the end of May?"

"I'd have to think about it. Why May?"

"That packet you brought me this morning has my new orders. I'm going back to Washington for an assignment that is expected to take nine months and be finished at that time. I'll tell you what. I'll sweeten the deal for you. What would you say if I make you a Lieutenant junior grade? It will look good on your discharge."

"It has been a privilege and honor serving you. We've been together for so long now that I don't see where another five months will hurt. I can still be out in time to go to school next fall."

"Good I was hoping you'd say that. I'll put you in for that promotion immediately, before you can change your mind."

"Thank you sir. You have been more than good to me. Because of you, my time in the navy has been one of the best times of my life. It ranks right up there with the my time in Brazil as missionary."

"I thank you, Morris. I couldn't have done what I have without you, I want you to know that. Now, get the staff back together, and I'll go over the details pertaining to our orders as far as the division is concerned.

In the meantime, it gave him time to think. He had often discussed with Ramona the idea of retiring at the end of twenty five years. That would be the first of June, about the same time this assignment would conclude. The possibility really excited him, but he didn't want to say or do anything about it until he talked it over with Ramona.

He thought about what he would do. He longed to get back in the air and had often thought he'd like to fly for one of the airlines. He would be forty seven on his next birthday, young enough to have a second career. Airline pilots had the luxury of living where they wanted and commuting. Both he and Ramona had talked of retiring to Roanoke.

No one was surprised that Carrier Division Seven was being dissolved. Now the war was over, everyone was considering their options. Some would naturally want to go home, others would want to continue their naval careers. Mace already had his orders. He was returning to his roots in the patrol squadrons as he was going to Japan to commission a new air station for patrol bombers that he would be in command of.

At the conclusion of the meeting, he met individually with Lieutenant Artell Flynn, Yeoman 3rd Class Kelly Williams, and Seaman 2nd Class Clark Carlburg and asked them what their plans were and if any of them would consider returning to Washington with him, as they had worked with him on his previous assignment there. Lieutenant Flynn opted for returning to civilian life, but Yeoman Williams and Seaman Carlburg consented since they both still had a year or more left of their enlistments. As with Morris, Admiral Brason recommended each of them for promotion.

Lastly, he called for Petty Officer 1st Class Reggie Jackson and asked him, "What are your plans, Reggie?"

"Well, Admal sir, I'm eligible for discharge and I'd like to return home to civilian life."

"I don't blame you at all. I'll tell you what I'm going to do for you." Sheffield pulled a sheet of paper out of his drawer and began writing. When he was finished, he folded it and put it into an envelope and handed it to his faithful steward. "Here is a personal recommendation for you. Use it wherever you need it, whether it be for a job or to get into school. Feel free to use me as a reference and I'd be more than happy to put in a good word for you."

"Thank you, Admal sir. I appreciate this very much."

"Its the least I can do for you. I want you to know how much I appreciate all that you have done for me. I really mean that. Good luck to you."

Sheffield figured he could accomplish his new assignment help with a staff of three and filed his request with Admiral Sallada that they be transferred with him. His request was approved on the spot. If he needed any further assistance, he could always ask for additional personnel later.

With his business for the day completed, he left the ship and returned to the hotel. Ramona was already back from her business when he got there. First he asked her about her day and listened intently as she told him all about it.

When finished, she asked, "And how was your day, Babe?"

"I received my new orders for my next assignment. You'll never guess what it is."

"I'm afraid to."

"Do you remember that cushy job in Washington that we talked about? Well I got it."

"Really. That's just perfect. We can be together again for the next little while, at least."

He went on to explain what he knew of the assignment and that he already had his staff selected and who they would be. Then he asked, "You know how I have mentioned the possibility of retiring at twenty five years. This assignment will be wrapped up about then. What do you think about that?"

"I think it is a great idea. In fact I have been wondering about my own future. I've gone about as far as a girl can go in this man's navy. Besides I really miss just being a nurse like you miss being a pilot. I could retire at the same time. That would make twenty years for me."

"What do you want to do?"

"I want to settle in Roanoke."

"That's exactly what I want to do, too." Sheffield concurred

They began to discuss what they might want to do. They hadn't gotten very far when there was knock at the door. Ramona answered to find an attractive young woman and a man with a camera.

"Hi, I'm Stephanie Hyres from Life Magazine. Is Admiral Brason in?"

"Yes. Just a moment." She turned away from the door and called, "Sheffield, there is someone at the door for you."

As he came to the door, Ramona stepped aside and Miss Hyers said, "Hello, Admiral Brason. Stephanie Hyres from Life Magazine. Do you remember me?"

"Yes, of course. Because of you, I couldn't go anywhere for a while without people knowing who I was and all about me. What can I do for you?"

"My editor had me do a follow up story on the Reprisal as part of our coverage of Navy Day. The story about you was so successful last time, I wanted to do follow up story on you as well. May we come in?"

Sheffield looked at Ramona with a big question mark on his face.

Ramona said, "I thought that was a great story. I don't see why not."

"I suppose it would be alright, just as long as you don't put me on the cover again."

"Thank you Admiral. I promise to be brief."

"Won't you sit down?" Ramona asked, gesturing to the couch.

"Thank you. I just left the Reprisal and Commander Terry told me I could find you here. He gave me the information I was looking for about the ship. You certainly got around. He told me all about what happened at Salerno."

"It sounds like you pretty much got the story from him."

“What I'm really interested in from you is the personal side. When we last talked you were still getting over the loss of your family. I want to know how you managed to work through that. I understand you have since remarried.”

“Yes. This is my wife Ramona. We were married a year ago last January.”

“So if you don't mind, tell me how you met.”

For the next hour and half, Miss Hyers listened and asked questions as she gathered the fascinating story of their relationship and how intertwined with his late wife.

“At the conclusion of the interview, she said, “I think I have plenty to do the story. Do you mind if my photographer snapped a couple of quick pictures and we'll be on our way?”

After a few pictures, Miss Hyers and her photographer left.

“That was interesting.” Ramona said. “I wonder how it will turn out?”

“I sometimes wish I hadn't agreed to the first interview. Now here we go again.”

“Oh don't worry about it so much. People will read it and find it interesting and forget about it. I have always enjoyed reading those kinds of articles, they put a face and a human touch to the war that people can relate to.”

“I suppose you're right.”

“Aren't I always?”

“Now that that's over, it's been a long day. Why don't we go down and get something to eat and talk about our plans.”

“That, or” Ramona suggested “we order in and get comfortable and spend a quiet evening here, alone and...”

“And what?”

“Who knows. Why don't we find out.”

“Again, I suppose you're right.”

“As always. Now shut up and kiss me.”

On Tuesday, Ramona had an afternoon appointment at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. With their morning free, they set out to see the Statue of Liberty and Times Square. They came back to the hotel for lunch. After being seated, Sheffield asked, “What are you hungry for?”

“I've been dying to try the Waldorf salad.”

“Really. What's it got?”

“It says here that it's made of fresh apples, celery and walnuts, dressed in mayonnaise, and served on a bed of lettuce as an appetizer or a light meal.”

"I don't think I'd like it." Sheffield scowled. "I want something with some substance, I think I'll have the french dip sandwich and the red velvet cake for desert."

"Oooo. I think I'll have some cake too." Ramona added.

After lunch, they went their separate ways for the afternoon. While she was visiting the hospital, Sheffield returned to the ship to take care of some business.

Sheffield got back a little ahead of Ramona. After staying in the evening before, they wanted to get out. The Empire State Building was their destination.

On Wednesday neither of them had anything work related on the schedule. This day was strictly a day of cultural events. During the morning they took a tour of Radio City Music Hall at the Rockefeller Center, followed by a performance of the Rockettes aboard the Reprisal.

The show had been moved from the flight deck to the hangar deck. A platform had been built especially for the two performances by the ship's carpenters. Sailors came from all the ships just to see the show. Sheffield and Ramona had a front row seat at the first performance. The show paid tribute to the Navy in a way only the Rockettes could. Their costumes, which had been used on USO tours, resembled sailor uniforms without pants, revealing their long legs. To be a Rockette, in addition to being between five foot five and five foot eight, a girl had to be pretty and shapely and most importantly, be able to kick at least six inches above their heads. They had to have a personality that shone out from the stage as well as blending with those of the other dancers. Their precision steps and high kicks were mesmerizing, bringing cheers and hoots from the thousands of sailors in attendance. Their grand finale was to the music of Anchors Aweigh.

After the show, the audience had to be cleared out so the next group could come aboard. Once everyone who could be accommodated were aboard, there were so many more wanting to see the show that a third performance was agreed upon.

Sheffield and Ramona went back to the Waldorf=Astoria to get ready for their evening out. Earlier in the Week, Ensign Gover had secured two tickets to the Broadway musical "Carousel" at the Majestic Theatre. Ramona changed into the new dress that she had bought. She looked absolutely sensational. After dinner, they took a taxi to the Majestic Theater at 245 West 44th Street. The theater, which opened in 1927, seated just over sixteen hundred people. The theater architecture was a "modern Spanish" style, complete with an earthenware base and Spanish brick-wall ornamentation, and arched windows. The interior was characterized by clarity of form, subtle detailing, and unified color schemes. Their seat were in the large balcony spanned the auditorium.

Carousel, which opened in April, was a Rogers and Hammerstein production adapted from a 1909 play titled "Liliom". The setting was the Coast of Maine rather than Budapest as in the original. The story revolved around carousel barker Billy Bigelow, whose romance with mill worker Julie Jordan came at the

price of both their jobs. In desperation, he attempted a robbery to provide for Julie and their unborn child but things went terribly wrong. In the end, he got the chance to make things right. The show included the songs "If I Loved You", "June Is Bustin' Out All Over" and "You'll Never Walk Alone".

Ramona was thrilled to have one of her life long dreams come true and attend a Broadway musical, dressed in a elegant gown. After the show, she had to buy the record so she could enjoy the music over and over. It was an experience that would be hard to top.

On Thursday Ramona visited the St. Albans Naval Hospital in Queens while Sheffield attended to his business. That evening and all day Friday, they explored more the attractions that New Your City had to offer.

Saturday was day that the whole week led up to. During the morning, there was the parade down Broadway that the crew of the Reprisal had practiced for each morning all week. The day was filled with many important activities. President Truman was in town for the festivities, which culminated in the fleet review.

Beginning Friday afternoon, the ships left their piers and took their places lined up at anchor in the Hudson River. That night, every ship in the river turned on their search lights and put on a dazzling thirty minute light show as lights swept across the sky.

On Saturday morning a launch picked up Admiral Brason and Commander Brason and took them out to the ship where they attended an luncheon hosted by Captain Callister. Up until just before the review was to begin, launches shuttled back and forth bringing the invited guests. There was a cool breeze blowing and the sky was overcast enough for the sun to disappear from time to time. It was definitely a day for a jacket.

At three thirty, President Truman left the Missouri and boarded a destroyer and began his two-hour inspection of the fleet amid salvos of twenty-one gun salutes from the ships at anchor. Twelve hundred aircraft, including those from the Reprisal flew continuously overhead. They were joined by an number of blimps from their base in New Jersey. Radioman Tim Brason was in one of them.

Somewhere between four and six million people observed the day's festivities, which concluded after dark by a fly over of the night air groups from the Reprisal and Enterprise. The planes, with their lights on, formed a large V formation signifying victory and flew over the ships in the river. That was followed by



another light show.

At the end of the celebration, Sheffield left the Reprisal for the last time and his two star flag was brought down. He brought with him whatever he had remaining in his stateroom and office. It was a bitter sweet moment for him. He thought that he had left the ship that he loved for the last time once before, only to return. This time it was unlikely, except for maybe a visit.

The Brasons were taken ashore by the Admiral's launch and then by taxi to the Waldorf=Astoria where they attended a dinner hosted by the Navy League featuring the Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, as the speaker.

After a full day, Sheffield and Ramona were tired and simply had to take the elevator up to their suite. As they got undressed and ready for bed, they were glad that the week, as wonderful as it had been, had come to an end. They were ready to go home, especially Sheffield. It had been a very long week to close out a very long year.

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The Waldorf=Astoria is hyphenated with an equal sign because the hotel was branded as The Waldorf=Astoria, with a double hyphen. The equal sign was chosen to signify the equality between the Waldorf and Astor families.

The dress and shoes that Ramona bought were described on a website that sells 1940s vintage clothes, complete with pictures.

Rear Admiral Monroe Kelly was the commander of the Third Naval District in 1945. The district, headquartered at New York, consisted Connecticut, New York, the northern part of New Jersey, and the Nantucket Shoals Lightship.

Rear Admiral Kent C. Melhorn was the commander of Naval Medical Supply Depot in Brooklyn. His wife's name was Jean and their son, Lieutenant Charles M. Melhorn was the commander of Torpedo Squadron Fifty aboard the light carrier Cowpens in 1945.

Guy Lombardo performed at Roosevelt Hotel from 1929 to 1959. During the 1940s Lawrence Welk began his career at the Roosevelt Hotel in the summers while Lombardo took his music to Long Island.

Rear Admiral Harold B. Sallada was the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics from June 1, 1945 to May 1, 1947.

The events of Navy Day are from "The USS Enterprise (CV-6) the Most Decorated ship of World War II by Steve Ewing and newspaper articles from the New York Times posted at CV6.org.