

THE RAFT

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REALITY STREET

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The front cover shows a detail from *The Raft of the Medusa* by Géricault
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for A.H.
in memory of Berlin

Note:

The Raft attempts a 'translation' of Schönberg's twelve-tone theory of musical composition. In that technique the guiding principle is not a key or a mode but a series containing all twelve tones of the octave (rather than, say, the seven of the major scale). The result is a new, democratic harmony: each tone is given equal importance. The task of *The Raft* is to translate (however impossibly) the twelve tones of the musical octave poetically. Interpreting tone as voice, *The Raft* serialises and permutes twelve voices or tones over twelve moments, in order to imagine a poetic/prosaic form that is not simply lyrical, epical, or dramatic, but tonal—a raft of voices, each with their own 'pitch', and each sounding off in accordance with the rules of the twelve-tone method, for the duration of the work. The work is also scored across the line to sets of twelve syllables, including spaces, which are also accorded a syllabic value.

The narrative retells the famous story of 'The Raft of the Medusa', in which over one hundred people perished off the coast of Senegal in 1816. *The Raft* begins as the unlucky ship passengers (those with little money or education) find themselves consigned to a raft built from the remains of the sinking Medusa. Their provisions are running out and their chance of survival has just been cut.

ὥς κε νέηται
οὔτε θεῶν πομπῇ οὔτε θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων:
ἀλλ' ὅ γ' ἐπὶ σχεδίου πολυδέσμου πῆματα πάσχων

...the exile must return. But not in the convoy of the
gods or mortal men. No, on a lashed, makeshift raft and
rung with pains.

Homer, *Odyssey* 5:33.

'I think you are rafted, and not yourself,' he continued. 'Do
go back and make up your mind to put up with a few whims.'

Hardy, *Jude* iv. 290.

Aron: *Wie immer: ich hörte die Stimme in mir.*

Moses: *Ich habe nicht gesprochen.*

Aron: *Aber ich habe dennoch verstanden.*

Aron: As always: I heard the voice in me.

Moses: I did not speak.

Aron: But nevertheless I understood.

Schoenberg, *Moses und Aron*, Act 2, Scene 5

Characters

Lope.....The ship's Doctor
Sol.....Army Sergeant
Rope Boy.....Sailor and deck-hand
Ern.....Carpenter, Raft Leader
Ratchett.....Foot soldier
Boyle.....Foot soldier
Wills.....Orphan boy
Norma.....Singer, wife of Chippie
Chippie.....Husband of Norma
Jin.....A young woman
Mon Suet.....Cook
Dog.....The ship's dog

The First Day

Sol

Lope, him with one sandal and one puffed-up foot, I saw him today an omen of something I thinks, of something *not right* get me? I want
 offering I want out. I'm being stung by that old ship-doctor's rattling tote of tinctures and death needles, I'm sworn on his swag of tricks.
 I'm always around, his shadow doing the rounds him poking about a busted brain, a body, a bit of flesh turned to deck-slop—
 for medical reasons, he whispers, *they might not be* *dead.* I
 know what's dead... they're dead, or soon enough. No-one clocks it..... the gangrenous ones
 go green like earth Rope Boy sees islets when they're slipped overboard..... I don't know....but
 I know what's what: All's booty to him with the right trade and tools. No
 oath can hold out here. No oath. The laws of the sea drawn up in
 drawing rooms before tea. Game is charades. Four words. Second word. First
 letter— *stinks* *like Hell.* Nothing applies when there's nothing but dogs.....
 Fr instance, them tow boats that left us left fast. I saw the rope
 being snapped by the ship's cook, name of *Mon Suet* —fatso to you—
 crawling – over the Captain and a box of sweet cakes... so
 desperate to slice us apart. His steel glinting, the real worm in the fruit....
 Then nothing. Us men ratted over each other. The raft sinking
 deep at the edges, feared us right into the middle..... We're suitors,
 I said, not marines. Our betrayal is wetter than a kiss.....
 I suit the streets fistie fights, small crimes. Norma stops— at my one-colour
 tattoos, always a sign. *What's on yer mind, son, but rank, who won,*
them pictures of painted ladies yell never know? *Numbers.....* I say
 1. I'm one hundred strong, 2. my men outnumber the rest. 3. It's that simple. Here's the fight of the army all surge and
 ratting and wild, faint giddy with sea I say *don't fall off the*
sides love, mind your step, mind your feet, mind the logs, mind the gap, mind
your ankles don't snap off, Norma love..... Why no-one thinks to scream
 fire. The rope nooses the sea. Old Gunsmoke is shading my mind get me, I can't see. Only that hulk is flipping its
 head its tail. *Come in spinner....* Bet on both: that's Betrayal. We just
 lost their back- water, slowly. Then silence, then. Out, out
 near the edge of the sea, the Captain's boats formed a V; the last
 letter I ever saw. The sound of them gone.... was waves lapping and
 suckling. Lope says he heard wolves licking their paws clean.....Righto. But then
 the Doctor's a little strange, see. Over there.... that's the smoking one
 we came from: the fit hissing *Medusa,* death frigate. Some boys
 didn't get off. She looks better than us.... and loot in her yet the Ropes....
and Rum.... Now look back! The shining reef like a pearl necklace, wound around

Look back! I can't. Now stop it— I see her flash and burn
 and burn I change my tune. Her mast is bald, she smarts up planks, then
 barrels windows sets fire to the sea..... My eyes burn
 orange. Ratchett and Boyle are holding their sides as if... they was
 splintering. Leaning into me. Fire rashing around, opening our mouths, Oink Oink, I wheeze. Only listen
 now, listen. The rope flayed about like a tongue loosened from the
 asp heads of the Medusa No-one could hack it fraying
 and wiggling a single cut can stop reason. All of us saw
 that von Hundert... with his switch back bending down never seen him bend
 for anything, but a coin or a pistol. Course, we were
 monitoring this one that is— the dog, the boy, the moaning Norma and her Chippie, the brawny soldiers in singlets, the cook, the
 sailors, the rope boy, the one given to theatre— all of us
 had the fixed gaze of dreams.... There's something sharp about madness. von Hundert's
 black hair curtained over his work what a worker Chippie said
 Norma moaned one flash of silver brings to mind a photograph
 the insistent moon... but see, I peered into the black sea no
 light no record no deed— The betrayal was the word

followed by the rope.

Ha ha, von Hundert said, We have abandoned them!

quickening the winds. *Men, we have abandoned them!* Flagging the other boats; the life boats, *ha ba,* his Münstered hands
 while our hastily hewn raft drags ahead and behind in
 circles, our rope head writhes And we seek to shut our eyes against... the
 mirror of the sea. This is some soppy note someone wrote.

Norma

Norma, purse your lips now that's nice now— wring your hands— consider your
 deportment... straighten back, deep breath, then a shallow breath, okay
 now stand like a lady that's nice pose for a second okay, now pat your bosom, your flowering belly *poom*
poom... Now, okay now look out! Motion to this one, and that one
 with your little pinkie, work the crowd. They're roaring, Norma! Dab your eyelids.....
 Blow a little kiss. Aw. Feel your dress, it's sopping wet sticking to
 your legs. Now, don't panic: Aw. Un-paste it! Go on! Aw.
 But it sticks to your fingers it's like like like aw scales
 of blue-green taffeta. The audience waves. Don't grimace, now
 be nice— *Chippie bolts out his hand.* *Norma scrunches up her face.*
Smacks at her legs. *Chippie removes his hand.* Aw. Chippie? *No response...*

Chippie? I can't be like this. Chippie, I can't. Where's my hem, Chippie,
 help me.... I can't find where it ends. Chippie, help, help. Dumb waves keep
 getting in the way. Chippie? Chippie? I can't be like this.....
 I can't. You know they can't see me like this. Chippie? *No response.*
 Norma now try to unfix your grimace. *Nothing.* Aw. Now
 put your fingers on your mouth. Okay now move your lips real
 slow Aw. Now you've got a smirk. It's like clay your face Chippie?
 Chip? Chippie? *No response...* *None.* Chippie? Chippie? Chippie?
 dancing to the rope at six o'clock.... *No response.* Chippie, it's okay, I know you seen her, the one
 do my moves.... Go on, look at her sticking out her ham bones like she was ...
 being plated. Go on, I know you seen her winding-up ...
 the soldyars.... fanning them with her can-can, can't-can't legs Chippie?
 Don't leave me hem running, you saw her, didn't yar? Eh.
 Chippie? didn't yar? Chippie? Chippie? Chippie? Chips?

Chippie

Chippie closes his eyes. Appears unconscious. Norma waits. *Chippie*
lies still for some minutes. *Norma waits. Chippie breathes in deeply.*
Norma waits. Chippie breathes out. *Norma waits. Chippie murmurs:*
Nothing. Louder. You mean *Norma waits.* You mean that Jin.

Rope Boy

What is there? One barrel of food no anchor..... One flask of wine no
 water no water. One rope, dangling..... and.... No water
 I am forced to piss into my hands. Next to me face of old Boyle.
 Retch The steam pisses yellow.... Retch. Mouth of Boyle gurgling water. I'm
 legless somehow damp hands slip I'm down worming on my stomach
 but the waves don't stop slapping me. What? I recall it:
 Where's my dog? I say it: Where's my dog? Again. Where's my dog? I scream
 it. I think the sound I hear nothing, the waves are
 pummeling me numb. Beating me up. How long have I been here?
 I whistle into the planks. There's pain all over punch and slap

one time or another time I recall Johnny the name of...
that bully *you're not...you're not normal*, he minced. *You're eff eff* *feminy.....*
 spitting gob in my eye. Laughter. Crowd swell. The Master watches
on dry lips head pounding already feeling the hit stop
stop stop Laughter. Hand of Boyle on my mouth. Retch. He takes
it off. I recall it. Where's my dog? I whine it. Dog? Tears
 stuck like gob —*Shut it Sailor....* *Ken Oath.* *Look around ya—* *where's*
anyone? *Where's the effing* *rope-cutter?* The waves punch and slap
He snorts *Mon flaming Suet.* *Eff you and yer* *effing* *dog...*

Lope

Crawling to the middle going outback. The lapping in my ears hard to hear, check my tinctures clink, my bottles of snuff.
The rope will be used. I suggest we build a sail. Rope Boy and Ernest reel it in. No room to move but I must. To order. To order.
That Orphan— boy taps my heel, my name is wrong, it's wrong. His little body lathering-up years— eleven or ten— *Wills Wills*, he cries,
his voice rings high Wills, is that right? Or wrong? His tongue bells no catches
in his throat. I loosen his hold. *There's a good* — I mutter. A flurry of men to his side: The business is clearly not rope,
but hands, fists, thighs. The soldier hams his finger up, *Death!* *Offing!*
Off you all! I pile the corpses at the edge. The sea blows them into balloons blue jelly fish. I tip them away with
 my shoe blubbery dead weight. We must stay light. The waves appear
to be cutting into our flesh, sores river out of legs. We must stay dry. I shovel my hands into the pile... Mon Suet
assists while that soldier snarls by. *My men in the pile, my men*, he furrows, he staggers, he snarls. The dead men stone overboard, no one
cries *Give him wine*, I yell, pointing at the snarl. Someone moves. *For Sol?* I check.....
 Yes. I check, my coat is white. They call me Doctor. Despite the lope.

Mon Suet

I cannot do anything. There is no food. And the soldier is spreading lies about me. That I cut the rope. That I hide the food.
That I am a pork barrel. A worm in the fruit. A piggie. A pudding head. But I am here. Not there. How can I be
 there and here? How can I cut the rope? This knife is up my sleeve against troubles. But anyway, it is a no boner, it is made
to pare bulbs and soft fruits, but not Anyway, I keep busy. Though I have no food, no pots, no pans, no food, no fire, no fancy plates.
But I must keep très-très busy. That Soldier and his lies, I must stay alert, no, no, awake.... The rope boy is asking about his
dog. *No, I have not your dog.* Please. Here is what passed: first the men threw the sacks.....
the women... they took off the clothes...and trinkets, all the things went crash down
her sides. I would not believe so many things are
 making such rackets and blasts. Second, I hear a little boy
blow on a horn. This boy was not very good, he is English... Bon! So then I threw ten barrels over, each weighing a lot
 a tonne or so, to be exact. Flour. Potatoes. Sugars. Biscuits. Wine. Rum. They clanked and butted in my ear chop chop am

I too fast, too slow? I look at this tonneau, and I ask how do you meet the sea? I try to think, but these gaps in my head
 open like planks. What passes right under my nose.... I am smelling it: six tow boats are circling the barrels like little sharks.
 All that wet powder stink that waistcoat oil, indicating pilfer oh my sweet flour, my demure sugars, finger potatoes,
 dry biscuits, wine, rum. Each barrel hogged up *make way for the barrels ladies*, each boat loaded with fat barrels and I see
 them pitch toward seabed, the ladies covering their eyes but
 they could not cover up their ears, their skin the waves.... were sort of tickling
 their waists..... Then shriek sounds the women clutching their children and men...
 I saw luggage thrown overboard. Bags curdling in water.
 Bien sûr. The barrels got chucked..... And slowly, slowly, the boats rose
 up to the sun... like day flowers, knowing nothing of night... The men
 still choose men... The rope boy is finding his dog. Wet mangle of fur
 and bone legs. I slow roast the dog in my mind, a bed of fingerlings or butternut a reduction of Madeira Malmsey
 But after... the rope got cut, we buoyed and spun. I saw some silver
 fish thinner than sardines I saw ribbons of seaweed... I saw immense quantities of sea salt. Then we pass my flagon of wine, my
 barrels of biscuits. I screech but two men I have not seen are
 spearing them like piglets... they flood we must patch them now I am the keeper I tie the barrels to the corners of the raft, buoys
 belly up. At some time, I pass out... crumbs and drips.... biscuits soaked in
 wine. I drift and chop about, I must remember.... I must get with it. On the *Medusa*, I served brisket and boiled bits... yes, to
 soldiers and sailors infernal mash and stink, below my calling, but still they begged more, more...I was under order to ration for
 the Captain must have his table. Bon! I made a new menu each night. Ten courses, twelve. Chef's choice. I julienned carrots, I frenched courgettes, I
 deflowered lettuces, destoned fruits, I roasted nuts, I hocked ham, I extracted the dew from currants, dunked honey in mint I crumbled
 Roquefort, crêmed Brûlée battered ox tongue butterflyed a frog, not
 to mention how I poached all those pommes. All this I did, all this. ...Pourquoi?
 The Soldiers only smeared their lips with juice and slop. They Charged the deck.
 Hooting and wheeling... my linens in their pants and their napkins
 Turnered brown destruction I got no thanks. Obviously. What about the prix-fixe? The tiny fire drinks? A brisket in the fist?
 What? What? Non, I never once hammed him. This soldier is spreading it thick.....
 Who here would I touch? His pile of men were already gone. I only kick what's already kicked in: drunks paralytics
 and dims driven into the sea by their noses... Those kind.
 The soldier still has his ears and eyes, how he watches me... while
 his men stand at the edges spinning their carbines, winking
 at that Ratchett and Boyle all glittering teeth and tats. To me
 they are Rattus rats..... infesting the rest I spit what scum.
 In my mind, I am poaching their peepers I am deep-frying
 their bleepers mais oui I am chucking them to the sharks.

The Second Day

Dog

Sea breath, wheeze wheeze log holes lead to paw slip tin tin tin tin heart smell
Rope whimper stop watch watch, *objects may be closer than they appear*frame frame
frame the vista is blurring at the edge seeing smells off..... Leg. Leg.
Leg. Wet Stuff. Ea Ea. Smell Rope, whimper. Stop. Dirt. Sugary licks.
Pump pump. Dizzy..... ing whimper. Black. Legs bar up... the scene no vista. Skin
stinking fur... *Back off* come slurp the sea shell ears will cup the
in-sounds *Little Dog!* *Little Dog!* Smell Rope, whimper. Stop.
GO GO GO. Pads are sticky with wood bits splinters in paw patter on stilts.
Tip tip tip tip. Flag over. Furring hard. Sea breath, wheeze wheeze. Smell Rope,
whimper stop. Ears are caves. Rope's there. Paw surfing, tail-up, grin. No legs.
Bodge whisker, bodge nose. No faces.... *Little Dog! Little Dog!*
Rope! Rope! It's Dirt. It's sugary licks pissy hands... flint breath.... the cave talks....
round.....and wet....

Ern

What a beauty....She holds, thanks to that rotten tow rope. I'm glad to be of help. Useful. I've always been considered... useful. Lope looks to me
for a lot of jobs. He could pick others, but he doesn't. I'm more educated in certain ways. But practical. Keep my head on.
Always know how to get out of a tightie. Or how to draw a crowd whiles I hew, saw and whittle. I'm not military but I
get on with blades, lancets, bayonets. I know the meaning of tools. Not what they're for. Only how they suggest things in yer hands. I'm centre
when I work. Well, I won't go on. Still, it hasn't passed my notice that Rope Boy, Dog, Sol, his sidekicks, even the boy, whatsit, no he told me
his name, it's— it's— still, the mast and the sail get some teary, get some thinking of the old lady the Medusa while Mon Suet
rabbls on about sail boats some picnic. True, a mast brings to mind certain fancies. The west wind when it comes upon her, she looks all
willowy like that yung lass, when the east wind comes upon her she
whips out her veil, a shook of white hair. Such fancies while I work.
Right below her what tumbling skirts. Lope plans a little mount, a
soap box in the wastes, he has plans for it to appear quite religious he wants, he says, a little high country in the plains. I
never thought of the raft like that. Just planks, I thought, and poor handiwork.
But a mountain, that might get us off. True, the elevation would make a quite good vantage point, a place to meet or dry off
but I'm not so keen on hosting any sermons not with that lot— of
ragged sore eyes ripping up their linen and denting their chests.
Or that Norma and her droning on over some lady of Laux...
Had quite enough of the touched ones in my time. What saves is silence,
learning not to speak. Fact is madness is always a bit

too loud. But Lope, he's a mate I'll give him his mount, in fact,
 I'll rig it up now... a copy of the holy mount of
 Moses and Aaron as depicted in my own little
 humble mind... we'll all have something to do then, especially Lope I
 expect the mount will be a good place for his commandments a
 leader like that it's only right he gets a bit of..... height

Jin

Wills, Wills, where is your? Have you no-one? Wills gives me his biscuit he goes looking I gobble it up. I lick each finger off the milky
 paste in my hair sticks and anyway, who cares about his Da, Ma, or Sissy where is where. My skirt is full of it I
 find a tree log that fits me and drain to damp. Wills is still
 looking, he is calling Da I huddle into my cornered
 spine, my driftwood legs log-pillowed. I make a pouch of my hands they
 leather the waves, they are turning and turning me to night, black leather
 of night where I'm lost —simply unaccounted for— As sky
 gets to dimming, I'm in my tree the six pointed star, I am
 waiting for but Wills comes back: *Where is my? Where is my?* His voice
 bell-birding up and up *All Gone.* I say. *No-one is here*
for you. The boy is sobbing, dirt cakes down his pink face. *Listen,*
Listen, Listen. He is shaking his pelican legs.... *Ma*
Ma. The sun's slipping under. *I'm not your ugly Ma.* *Go*
on, Get. Shoo. Shoo. Shoo. I'm screeching, who can help him. Wills is
 elbows first. Then booting over legs and arms.... his wail boy high over
 the groans ...wait, I'm waiting for something, wait it's that boy..... *Listen.*
Listen. Listen. I won't. He is willing us under.

Ratchett

The sun stews itself out I reckon right about now the *Medusa's* lower parts are wetting to sink in private with her crew
 of death maidens, them boys who lie rocking in the damp skirts of her hulk, holding their milky elbows to ribs, like angels on the fly
 to God, or Allah Yhvh they're up there, beyond sense
the return it happens to pious men, says Chippie while
 eyeing off Jin. Like shit this rotter of a raft returns us to nothing but the could or the might—we're men for now, like I said,
 but I reckon we're baring some other life. Why that dog won't go near
 me all hackles and low growls, what have I done, Boyle? Tell me I won't bite. Just tell me what kind of man is dirt for a dog?

Boyle

Ratshit, Ratshit, all of it. Dog is a bag of blood. A bag of stuff. Sees what we're up to. Jigging our sabres, our carbines, our flip knives
our rocks. Dog is onto us. Dog rod-eyes our plans. Dog is Ratshit, look how I get to pacing in time with the light. I get to seeing
candles out here, sun on sun off, see how my feet turn it on turn it off. They're all sea mash and salting to burn. I threw out me boots.
Recommend it, I do. Dog don't sleep now. There's no reason to
believe anyone will return. Did ya hear Lope preaching
about rescue and what not? Get a Rat: I'm out facing nowhere, swaggering for my shadows' tip and turn so, so, so I know
where I am on this friggin' float. Leg over hand over breast over Lilith. No boats. Someone ropes me, Rats
into the raft for the night. Calls it safety. Friggin' con.
Ratshit? Positions keep me sane. Like, I'm for land & offing. I'm against: the sea, the sun, the wind, the night, the starry night and
the importents, the whole bloody lot, but in particular, the lousy no-hopers, the sirens of death, them poets of
the bleeding useless, the genius for one, and that Lope with his sandal coming off. I want offing, but I'll off them first. I
get to pacing. The candle's still flickering its unstill friggin' light. Ratshit? Oi, Ratshit, ya great piece of rat-shit

No response.

—Not that I want to start anything, but like, it should be
said that us boys, some of us, is boiling for it. Those faggettes, those sea boys in uniform, those profs and stinkfops, they're more suited for courtship, or
dance. Ratshit! they're starting to work me, they're picking me scabs..... Did ya
see them fillin' our tin cups to the brim, chin-chin *skaal skaal drink up* And all that. Ratshit, I reckon they're lambing us down!
I know we're drunks, but who's pouring? It's like this. Tomorrow, ten of
us little soldiers will be let loose on loose planks, loosening the strings. Whadaya reckon, are you in are you? Ratshit, there's men, I can't
recall the names of the whole bloody rollick, but there's red head, there's brawn, there's
portly, there's stooping, toothless, there's tall, there's ideas out there. Dog ones.
We'll run cunning, old boy. We'll get the yooof to mow em down. Then, listen,
we'll scissor the whole bleedin' raft. Ssshhhh! I'm not the one who spilt all
this but. The splinters, the rivets, the holes, the wet. Don't forget. Look
on another topic how I'm getting to pacing, pacing light to my fate. Awright, I'm no poet, no genius, I'm not one of
them. Let them bully-loud voices pipe the wind, but Ratshit, the mast is rotten and our officers is dead. We have no orders, the
soldier's right come to fink of it, the raft is a raft. Ratshit?
Hear that? Cracked as glass, a loon yell. Look, it's up. The mast and its rat tail...
they're up they're up themselves gawking at that rag blow wind blow
our raft the yacht spend a good weekend driftin' Rats? Wanna bet
against the bet our ship's come in. Master up. Let rip.
What's the bet? Rats? I said Rats, I said what's the friggin' bet

[Chorus] On Leadership and Raft Etiquette

Lope. Here Here, after a vote taken at noon, we are proud to announce that Ern—

Rope Boy. What vote.....?>

Chippie. Whatsat? Whatsat? Who's Ern-? Eh? I can't seem to Whatsat? Whatsat?

Ern (*appears*). As Lope was... (*wave*) just about to say Let's cut to it then... I'm your new

Sol. Traitor!Traitor!Traitor!Traitor! **Boyle.** Faggot bag! Frotsky—! The whole F

'n' lottaya! Ern's dead... **Ratchett** (*waves fist*). *Vive le Roi! Vive le Roi! Vive le...*

Mon Suet (*copies*). *Vive le Roi!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

Norma (*to Wills*). Long live the King! The King is Dead! As they say. Pet? What's up little man?

Wills. I don't understand... How can King live if he's dead? 'n' 'n' who's Ern?

Dog. (*barks*).....

Jin (*points to 'the mount'*). Ern's Ern

Wills. Scuse me but is Ern the King? **Boyle.** He is not our King. (*spits*)

The soldiers racket in a huddle.

Lope. Order. Order. Ern is

our Raft leader It is done. Now, some of you may have

noticed that Ern looks a bit lame. Not so! (*Pause*) His left

leg may be dead, it may look 'off', but the rest of him is tip top. In the last (*wave*) he has shown us all the qualities

of a leader—mark his impressive stature, his overcoming of 'the dead leg', his near enviable command of tools.

Qualities like these can't be snuffed at or bought in a shop. I'd like

to hand you over to your new Raft leader, Ern, who will now present the rules of conduct aboard the raft.

Rope Boy. Is this a raft or a bleedin' Republic? **Mon Suet.** Is this a raft, or a—

Ratchett. Off with his head! Where's me hatchett? **Sol.** It's pointless. &etc.

Chippie (*taps ear*). Whatsat???

Norma (*to Wills*). It's a Kingdom. A floating kingdom. **Wills.** Is it our very own Kingdom?

Ern. Quiet! please. Er—Hi— just a few points. I made a list

(*searches his pockets pulls out a train ticket*) No. Mind. Got

it written up here (*taps head*) Do not drink the sea water.

Do not use weapons on any person. Do not jump

off the raft. Do not steal food or wine. Do not lie down.

Do not stand in your neighbour's spot. Do not cut the ropes

binding the raft to its aft as it were. Do not fall

into dream. Do not ignore the cries from your neighbour.

Do not throw anyone overboard. (*pause*) Looks like that's it

Dog.

Sol. Ey 'scuse me King. What about the spread of dirty rumours

Boyle. Lies? Miscorrections? Imputations? **Ratchett.** Bobbins! Flaffers!! Faggot-bags!!!

Norma. What?

Chippie. They're on about that genius on board— decked out he is, in a pure white

Ern. Boy, where's my log? I don't believe he's in the book yet. Who?

Rope Boy. Some artiste... Using scrap from this sinker to build a new raft.....

Lope. Fabrication— your only charge that this unknown flapdoodle mightmake things?

Jin. Sounds like a plot. A figment of somebody's— **Wills.** Is someone making a new raft???????????

Dog.

Mon Suet. Nonsense! This cannot be true. This is an absolute porky pie.

Sol. Fact. Right out of this one. So I've heard. **Ratchett.** The little birdie told him.

Boyle. Who got it from the worm, who got it from the Cook— **Ern.** Well then. Why don't you send this genius to me, I'd like to say g'day, that is, if he exists...

Chippie. Too right.....

Norma. I've never like met a genius. *(Runs her hands over her matted hair...)*

Jin. That won't help.....

Rope Boy. Only a genius can know a genius. **Wills.** My mummy says I'm a genius.....

Dog *(sighs).*

Lope. Excellent! Let Wills be our judge! **Mon Suet.** Let brains be our stew!Or a Szechuan style hot pot

Boyle. Hear that? Hear that? A bloody Szechuan style hot pot—? Bloody bags of blood!

Ratchett. I did hear that, Boyle. Bloody bags of Blood Murder and.... Offing!

Ern. Stop, stop—he must have a fair trial. Fair go for all— **Sol.** 'Scuse me King.... Urgent message

from Mon Suet: Quote. *I need protection.* *(The soldiers snigger)*

Chippie. Too right.....

Norma. Be nice. Frenchy can't help being a foreigner. **Rope Boy.** Shut it Shut it Shut—

Dog. *(barks)*.....

Wills. But he cut it! He cut it! Mon Stew it showed me his big knife

Mon Suet. The boy is clearly mad. His mind is... now jumping with the rabbits

Lope. To order! To order! Ern saw the culprit with his own eyes— Von Hundert!

The tanned rogue from Münster. Owns a pepper business... Married up... Their first trip

and Frau Schick loses her Mutti's necklace in the sea.

The Medusa filled with water. She was screaming. How it spontaneously unclasped. The whole lot of them screaming. Their ankles wet

How they all wished the raft would just sink, they never wanted to tow

us to shore, they felt obliged. Von Hundert was in pain, Ern said you could see his tears glinting from here. I remember treating him for a

boil, von Hundert squinted into the sun squinted into the squinting eyes of his wife. The Rogue. We were weighing them down, that was the

message. And soon the women and the women's women were screaming,
 We'll all die, if you don't cut the rope we'll all die, our children too
 What about the children? And they began to drape their children over the side, to threaten, but lightly, so that only their socks got wet.
 They were careless. Greedy. Von Hundert did the rest. So don't blame
 our chef whose crime is roasting out here like the rest of us—
Jin. Still someone should collect the knives. It's just not safe on the boards at night.....

Ratchett. Message from Rope Boy: My dog is tasty on a spit, in a blanket, as a casual brisket— **Rope Boy.** I never wrote that. Dog's not on the menu!!!!

Sol. 'Rules on animal sacrifice, blood-letting, dogs etc. established in Leviticus.....?'. **Boyle.** Hear that? The bloody word of God. See, we're all for reading, here. (*The soldiers snigger*). **Jin.** Shut up. I'm going to be... (*wave*)

Norma. I feel a bit retchid, after that. I'll just shut my eyes for two bits. That's better. Now, what about if someone gets in my spot?

Ern. From now on, everyone must stay in the middle anyone who chooses to stay on the outskirts where the water breaks over ripping and breaking and ravaging does so..... at his or her own risk.....

Mon Suet. What about this genius? Why cannot I for example... meet him?

Chippie. Whatsat? Eh? Eh? What genius? **Lope.** Can anybody fish? ...Anybody?

Wills (*sobs*). I hate fish. I won't have fish. Mon Stew it said I could have dog wellington.....

Dog.

Boyle. Letter in from Chippie: Norma's a drag. Suggestion to King: Off her!!!!!!!!!

Ratchett. Confession from Lope: I cut the rope.....Okay Okay, A serious letter from Jin: Wills is irrefutably dull. Suggestion to King: Off him—.....

Ern. There will be no offing. The boy is under my protection. Keep away is the new policy. Keep your hands to yourselves or there'll be consequences... **Chippie.** Whatsat? Eh? Eh? Whatsat Ernest?

Rope Boy. piss off. Ern's personal message to Chippie..... **Norma.** He's deaf, lovey... doesn't know what you said. You'll have to speak up **Mon Suet.** This is true-true excrement

Lope. Ern, If I may be so bold to step in, is just trying to say that our form of justice is based on preventing justice from becoming an issue. Just keep away from each other, practice avoidance. Don't tip the wink. You'll all get access to protection ... at the discretion of the living— (*The soldiers roar...*)

To order, To order!

The Raft is not merry England

Jin. Who will protect us? Who? Him? Her? Dog? Who's going to collect the knives?

Dog (*exits*).

Wills. It's not fun. I want to go home. **Sol.** Message to Jin: Shut your face, dolls

Wills

Ma, it's dark 'n' I can't find my things 'n' the lady over there doesn't stop 'n' I'm lost I didn't mean to be Ma 'n'
 dirty the waves got me 'n' that man next to the lady hit me he hit me 'n' I was only patting Dog look he got me

'n' look it's scabbed up already I told him I was just touching the fur 'n' he grabbed my shirt tail 'n' pulled me in 'n' smacked me one.. two ... three times 'n' his belt burned 'n' burned 'n' 'n' *am I whopping you good?* he said to me 'n' his breath smelt of mackerel tin 'n' my skin burned 'n' burned. *Are you a good boy now?* he said to me, yes, I said, I am Ma, aren't I Ma, I'm scared like, like Sissy when you lost her in the park 'n' .. she spun around 'n' around until the trees started to grab her so she swore it to me 'n' she began banging into fatties 'n' thinnuns...'n' the grass got her laces twisted up 'n' then a man came up to enquire 'n' jammed his fingers in her mouth to stop her blub-blub..... blub... blubbling that's what he said remember? Her handkerchief was bloody 'n' you washed it 'n' no-one saw remember? Ma, I wrote you a letter do you remember? Every day from the Medusa ship 'n' now I can't find my pen the raft bobs about so much... can't think to stay onboard 'n' remember to say hello to Sissy. Ma, it's almost dark I don't know where you are you said you would send help when I was in trouble remember? You promised. I'm cold so cold 'n' when are you coming ma, please? A foreign lady is screeching in the corner... 'n' everyone knows that's the wrong place because the corners sink into the sea so deep she must be mad sitting there 'n' she's always half wet 'n' like..... dangling her dark hair this way 'n' that 'n' the waves push me to her 'n' her eyes are big dark blue blobs of ink she never blinks must be an owl or, or something from the bottom of the garden she doesn't stop 'n' I asked her if she was a foreigner 'n' she didn't answer—.... so...so she must be 'n' I can't remember anything of the animals the numbers all the things you taught me. Ma, they float around 'n' around 'n' you said they would stay but like they don't 'n' besides I didn't learn for long enough 'member? Da wants me to go to sea-blue lands 'n' you said I would learn knots 'n' winds 'n' hard work put into going somewhere 'n' now the letters keep moving 'n' remember I wrote them to you in a letter? Ma, I'm writing them with my fingers right here on the plank 'n' an arm 'n' a half away is the owl owl lady so you know where I am, remember ma: A is for Ape, B is for Britannia. C is for Charms. D is for Dog. E is for

It's for Ever. G is for Good. H is for Hogs. I is for I. J is for Jaunt. K is for Kingly..... L is for Lots. M is for.....

More..... N is for Nibbles. O is for Offing. P is for Pudding. Q is for Quashing. R is for Rules. S is for Sissy. 'n' 'n'

T is for The. U is for Ugly. V is for Vanishing. W is for Waves. X is for X-d, Y is for Yachting, Z

'n' 'n' Z is for *Zwecklosigkeit*. Only I can't think how to sign my name Ma it's hard Ma cause the water keeps taking Wills away.....