The Gulls

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IN BETWEEN the potatoes he studied the gulls who nonchalantly rode the wind like unconcerned children on a merry-go-round. He never could quite understand why so many gulls came out on Sunday mornings. It was almost as if they put on their best feathers and flew the currents hour on hour to impress each other and the world with their laziness.

PROBABLY JUST FOLLOWING THE DUMP BARGE OUT AGAIN. THEY SEEM SO DIGNIFIED—IT'S A WONDER THEY'D EVEN THINK OF EATING NEAR A GARBAGE CAN, MUCH LESS EAT THE TRASH ITSELF. STUPID GULLS.

"Get outa here ya hypocrites! You don't impress me one bit!"

FUNNY HOW THEY CAN GO SO FAR WITH SO LITTLE EFFORT. DAMN, WISH I HAD THE WINGS TO FLY OFFA THIS RUSTED TUB. IT'S TOO GOOD A DAY TO BE TAKING THE CLOTHES OFF THESE POTATOES. NOW THAT CHICK BACK IN FRISCO...

"Hey, you damn bird, you do that once more and today will be the last day you show off! Crazy gulls."

POTATOES, GULLS; GULLS, POTATOES; GOD!
WHAT A COMBINATION! THESE SPUDS LAUGH AT ME BY THEIR VERY NUMBERS AND THOSE GULLS BY THEIR DAMN ACROBATICS. POTATOES DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT GETTING PLASTERED AND TAKING A POKE AT SOME SWEET SHORE PATROL—THEY JUST WONDER IF SOME DUNCE LIKE ME WILL TAKE TOO MUCH MEAT WITH THE SKIN. BIG DEAL.

"And as for you, gulls—you sons-of-... Good morning sir!"

"At ease, sailor. It is a fine morning, isn't it."

"Yes, sir!"

"Well, carry on."

YEH, THOSE BIRDS HAVE IT MADE. THEIR ONLY SWEAT IS GETTING SHOT AT—WITH OUR GUNNERY CREW EVEN THAT'S TAKEN CARE OF. THEY AIN'T GOT OILY SMELLS, NO BRASS TO SHINE, NO DECKS TO SCRUB, NO SIDING TO SCRAPE, NO BIG-MOUTH ENSIGN TO YES-SIR, NO-SIR. YEH, THOSE BIRDS HAVE REDUCED LIFE'S GRIPES TO A MINIMUM: NO SWEAT, NO EFFORT, NO K.P. DUTY, NO STEEL-HAP'D BUNKS, NO WOMEN WAITING ON THE COAST—NOW THERE WOULD BE A DRAWBACK... AND AS FOR YOU, POTATO, TAKE THAT!

"Ouch!" I'LL PROBABLY GET CONFINED TO QUARTERS FOR GETTING BLOOD ON THE POTATOES NOW...

Out of the corner of his eye, the sailor noticed another gull coming over the top of the hill that guarded one side of the harbor. He was quite surprised when a high scream split the air. The sun dimmed a moment in the wake of a second source of energy. The young man briefly jerked forward, choked on something in his throat, and fell across the raw potatoes. His lifeless eyes stared at the sack beside him which said in block letters:

"LUNCH CONSIGNMENT—POTATOES
U.S.S. ARIZONA."