

SOUTH PACIFIC

The Story of the Play

The story opens at the home of a French planter, Emile de Becque, who has settled on an island in the South Pacific now occupied by the United States Navy in the war with Japan. Emile, who had left France 25 years earlier after killing a man, is entertaining Ensign Nellie Forbush whom he met at a dance at the Officers' Club on the island. Clearly they are falling in love.

Meanwhile Luther Billis, a G.I. marine always on the lookout for a chance to make a quick dollar, has learned from Bloody Mary, a native souvenir seller, of the charms of a nearby island paradise called Bali Ha'I. Although Bali Ha'I is out of bounds to G.I.s, Billis plans to get a boat over somehow.

Direct from the battle zone there arrives Lt. Joseph Cable, who has come to set up a coast watch on neighbouring Marie Louise Island. To do this he needs the help of a planter who really knows the region, Emile. Capt. Brackett and Cmdr. Harbison enlist the help of Nellie to find out more about Emile. At first Emile refuses to co-operate in the proposed dangerous mission because of his love for Nellie. This set-back to Capt. Brackett's plan allows time for Cable and Billis to cross by boat to Bali Ha'I, where Bloody Mary introduces Cable to her daughter Liat, a beautiful young Tonkinese girl. Cable and Liat fall in love.

At Emile's house Nellie discovers that he is the father of the two Polynesian children, Ngana and Jerome. Heartbroken, she applies unsuccessfully for a transfer to another island. Emile, in despair at the thought of having lost Nellie, agrees secretly to undertake the dangerous mission with Cable - to set up an observation post on the island behind the Jap lines and radio back information on Jap ship and plane movements, which changes the whole course of operations.

Later Nellie learns that the mysterious French voice on the radio is in fact Emile's, and she hears him reporting while his post is being bombed, that Cable has been killed. Nellie realises that Emile's past means nothing, and all that matters to her now is his safe return so that they can be together. The mission accomplished, Emile returns home to find Nellie with Ngana and Jerome, waiting for him as they watch the successful United States warships moving out from the islands.