

CHAPTER 1

Spirits of Ships

The Captain is fierce with bulk like a small bear. His skin is pallid, his beard grizzled, his teeth are tinged with alloys and gold. We pay great attention to whatever he says; we watch him as if he were famous. He feels our scrutiny as he hums and mutters. He talks to himself in company but not when he is alone. The crew have not known him long but they are already fond of him. You can hear it in the way they relish his title:

‘Yes, Captain!’

‘Good evening, Captain . . .’

We never say his name.

Crew and captain are in a relationship with the vessel, a total entwinement that exists only on ships. It is something like a bee marriage, in which there are only two states, work and rest, and only one place, the workplace, and where there are almost no choices. In this sleepless hive the crew are the steel queen’s workers, cleaning and tending to her, labouring in all her grim and dangerous places. High on the bridge above them, where the officers are suitors in order of rank, the Captain, the master, is the ship’s betrothed. She is a hard mistress, interminably demanding. When she baulks, fusses, fails or sounds an alarm they call the Captain: he will know what to do. If there is a problem with the engine they call the chief engineer, but the engine is not the ship.

The engine is like a gigantic mad animal, howling in a cathedral of its own. Its decibels are dangerous. In certain latitudes the engine

room is 80 per cent humidity, plus tropical heat, plus the fifty degrees radiating from the machinery. It swells this Hades pitches, rolls and rocks. There is no daylight, only constant vibration and the endless, terrifying roar. Four ladders up and two doors away from the noise you find the engine control room, a sickly yellow bunker lined with machines in cabinets and computer screens. Here are the chief engineer and his officers, coming and going on their sorties into the howling interior.

‘I like the engine room!’ Joel says, eyes shining.

Joel is the fourth engineer. He is small with a boy’s smile, quick as a Thai boxer.

‘I do – because I really like the engine.’

The ship is the limit of Joel’s world for months on end. It is his hardest taskmaster, a job which is never finished, a danger, in great and small ways, his safety (you take to the lifeboats only in drills and nightmares) and, strangely, because it is ruthless in taking the shortest routes, and arriving and leaving on schedule, the ship is something to him beyond life and work combined.

‘It’s freedom!’ Joel insists. ‘Yes. It is freedom. It is!’

Joel is unusual, even by the standards of unusual men.

We are out far in the blue when another ship prepares to cut across our course. She ought to pass behind us because we are on her starboard side, but though there are conventions at sea, traditions and international agreements, and there is good seamanship and poor, really there are only three determinants in this world: how the weather changes, what ships can manage and what captains decide to do. This is why the sea is still the place where strange and worse things happen. The radar tells us what is going to happen now and the chief officer mutters:

‘Where is she going?’

She is going to Long Beach, says the computer. Now she comes too close, too fast.

‘What is he doing?’ cries the chief, and curses, his irritation switching from the ship to her captain. Though there is little to choose between them – men and vessels being almost one out here – seafarers

are quicker to blame men than ships. Bad captains, lousy helms and poor pilots are all facts of life. A bad ship, on the other hand, is a nightmare.

Bad ships might be old and slow, or run by crooks, or cantankerous to handle, or battered by thrift, poor maintenance and hard driving. There are truly terrible ships out there, ships abandoned by their owners, their crews unpaid, rotting at anchor off shores where the authorities want nothing to do with them. There are ships at sea which have seen stowaways thrown overboard, cadets raped, ships which have known murders and hijacks. There are once-powerful ships out there now, being flogged too hard, their machinery straining and deteriorating; there are ships being beaten through endless nights by harsh captains and miserable, desperate crews. Seafarers believe there are cursed ships, too.

In 1895 Walter Macarthur produced 'The Red Record', a list of cruelties and abuses on American Cape Horners. Cape Horners worked between the West Coast, principally San Francisco, and ports on the Atlantic. These were the dusk days of sail and wood, the dawn of the iron and steam. Perhaps the worst reputation in the Cape Horn fleet belonged to a full-rigged sailer known as 'the bloody *Gatherer*':

'On one passage round the Horn to San Francisco two of her men were driven to suicide and a third was shot by the mate. This was too much even for San Francisco and the master, Sparks, had to relinquish the command while the mate, Watts, went to prison. The "bloody *Gatherer*" arrived in San Francisco after another of these hell-ship voyages and the mate had to be smuggled ashore to escape the consequences of having killed one of the crew . . .'

It is as though ships have spirits, good or ill, which are not merely the sum of their histories and the personalities of their crews. You feel that spirit late at night, when the corridors and the stairwell are silent but for the strum of the engine. You feel it in the deserted spaces of the poop, the low deck at the stern where the wake boils

up below you, thrashed to white fury by the propeller. You feel it on the fo'c'sle, the foremost point, the quietest part of the ship, where the bow is a spear driven on and on into the hissing sea. You are quite alone in these places. The ship is alive to the swells and the wind and the beat of its diesel heart. The refrigerated containers, the reefers, moan and whirr. Steel boxes grate together, screaming and wincing. There are bangings and knockings from places in the stacks, as though ghosts or stowaways are imprisoned in the towering boxes. High above it all the bridge screens gaze forward, unblinking eyes staring down at the sea roads of the world, at the thousands of nautical miles and storms and calms to come.

CHAPTER 2

Signing On

Felixstowe on a late August day offers fish and chips and a beach hut called Larfalot. In a mini amusement park a tiny train goes round a tiny track. A pub caters for Events, Weddings and Funerals. Thirty-five pounds buys a room with a sea view at the Grafton B&B, and being a seafarer knocks a fiver off, since you will be gone by nightfall.

‘Moving on, I at last came to a dim sort of out-hanging light not far from the docks, and heard a forlorn creaking in the air; and looking up, saw a swinging sign over the door with a white painting upon it, faintly representing a tall straight jet of misty spray, and these words underneath – “The Spouter-Inn: – Peter Coffin”.’

Ishmael met Queequeg in the Spouter-Inn; Queequeg with his unearthly tattooings, lofty bearing, ‘simple honest heart’ and tall harpoon. There is no Queequeg in the Grafton, only the proprietor, his wife and a low-voiced couple who might be having an affair. There is a picture of the frigate HMS *Grafton* in the hall. The proprietor wrote to her captain, asking him if he would like to visit.

‘He wrote back saying he couldn’t, but he sent us the picture and his condolences.’

You can see why the captain of such a fine fighting ship might send condolences to his land-stranded namesake but perhaps they were premature. The frigate now belongs to the Chilean navy,

according to the proprietor, along with twenty-five million pounds' worth of sonar gear.

'They'd only just fitted her with it!' he says, aggrieved.

The day you sign on to your first ship is special, one way or another. 'Signing on', British slang for receiving unemployment benefit, means the opposite at sea. The phrase descends from the beginning of the age of sail, through merchant ships, pirates, privateers and whalers, whose crews all signed contracts with their captains, known as the Ship's Articles, which specified shares of the profits of the voyage. Seafarers now enter into agreements with companies rather than captains, but when you sign on you still have your life in a bag and no idea of the friends or enemies you will make, no idea of the worlds you will see nor the adventures, and the boredoms, you will share. In Melville's time a whaling voyage could take three or four years, assuming you lived. Today the sentence is two or three months for a senior officer, who works half the year, and much longer as you go down the scale. For the poorest paid, often the youngest, signing on means nine months minimum, commonly a year and more. In all those months a man might reasonably expect to be off the ship a few times, for a few hours, but it may also be that he is not able to disembark at all. There is a tension between underpaid crewmen who beg for their contracts to be extended to thirteen months and beyond, and shipowners, who worry about the psychological costs of such endeavour, because of their effects on the men's efficiency.

So you say goodbye, hoist your bag and travel to the end of the land. This counts as an unusual departure not least because I am a Briton taking ship in a British port: most seafarers travel to work by aeroplane. A seaman from the Philippines, for example, commonly finds himself taking his first flight to his first foreign country in the days before he joins his first ship. By the time you reach your port of departure your ability to do anything about normal life has all but vanished, blocked out for months to come. You may be able to send

emails from the ship. You may be able to make one phone call a month. You find out when you board.

There seems more happening at sea than on land in Felixstowe. The horizon is busy with wind turbines, a lightship, buoys and towers – or are they ships? They look like broken blocks in loose clusters, sawn-off things, monster vessels belonging to the private Swiss company MSC and to COSCO, the Chinese government's shipping line. One in, one out all day, along a dog-leg channel which takes them to the north-east before they turn away. The sea is a mulling brown and the light changes towards teatime, grey showing it has as many shades as any other colour: black-grey, silver, blue-grey, white.

The *Gerd* comes in towards the beginning of evening. She moves quickly, her bow wave the only foam on all the sea. She is light: there are a couple of towers of containers but most of the deck bays are low or empty, revealing her lines. The *Gerd* looks like a ship that Hergé might have drawn for Captain Haddock, bonny in her red, yellow and blue, and a bit dirty, and very big. She does not seem to slow for the pilot boat which goes out to meet her. She turns in towards the cranes and the port, withdrawing around the corner behind the beach huts.

Graham, the agent, appears in a van. He wears an orange tabard and hard hat. We might be on our way to a building site.

'All right? It's been mad today. Hectic.' The agent is the ship's link to the port. He or she arranges crew accommodation, transfers, medical attention if necessary, the ship's mail and all the paperwork involved in arrival, departure, tugs and cargo. Graham casts an unimpressed eye over Felixstowe. 'It's all about the port,' he says. The port is divided into city blocks of containers. The cranes are gigantic; the new ones at the far end are the biggest in the world, ready for ever-larger Danish and Chinese ships. Seafarers say China owns Felixstowe. Hutchison Whampoa Limited owns it, along with forty other ports. HWL is controlled by Cheung Kong Holdings, a Hong Kong property developer, and you can see the connection. Felixstowe's Trinity Terminal is a little piece of Hong Kong on the Suffolk coast.

Along the quays the giant machines are moored, higher than castles, longer than villages. This close to them you cannot see any entire. Vast hulls loom like steel walls at the end of the world, their bows the axe-heads of titans. Mooring lines are tight and hard as beams. I crane my neck back to try to take them in, but there is no reducing ships like this to any kind of scale. No photographer could frame them. Way above, severe and straight-browed against the sky, are their bridges. The *Gerd Maersk* is just tying up. The ship is not officially here until her gangway touches the quay. The gangway is a sloping ladder running up, up – four – five storeys? My sense of scale is hopelessly overrun. The ladder bobs under me as I climb. Filipinos in hard hats and dark overalls smile uncertain welcome.

‘Not scared of heights, are you?’ Graham asks, at the top.

At first the ship is a cliff-edge of dark red steel. We hurry past stanchions, rails, up steel ladders, pass below a tremendous roaring from the engine air-intakes, step over sills through doors which wince behind us, sealing tight. Inside the passages are warm, yellowed by strip lighting. There is a smell of institutional cooking and diesel. Now we are in a steel lift. We rise eight floors to the Captain’s deck, and prepare ourselves to meet the Old Man, as Graham calls him, ‘But never to his face!’

What is the aura about a ship’s captain? The word comes from the Latin *caput*, head. Though it is the highest rank and title on a merchant ship, it is still a title; the real prize is master, from the Latin *magister*, ‘chief’ or ‘teacher’. This signifies a Master Mariner, a term dating from the 1200s in Britain, meaning someone as qualified and as expert as a seafarer can be. All captains must hold a ‘master’s ticket’. Should you receive a message from one, as I did, giving you permission to join his ship (no company, however large, can compel a captain to do this) he will not sign himself off ‘Captain’, but, in my case, ‘Brgds/master/ Henrik Larsen’. (I had not seen the ‘Brgds’ before, either, and knew I would never be the kind of man whose work would allow him to make such an elision of ‘Best regards’ without seeming foolish.)

The image of the true sea dog, the old salt, has something of the

ultimate man, the first and last about it – for man is or aspires to be a voyager, a returning Odysseus, though our Scyllas now come as monthly bills and Charybdis as traffic jams. We do not see sea captains these days, since the decline of the British merchant marine. He has become a story-book figure, the Old Man retired to land; pictured living like Captain Cat in a religiously ordered house where small trophies hold incommunicable memories and dreams of foreign shores drift like motes in the silence. You imagine he is much admired by his neighbours, who find him cheery and always immaculate, and mock him lightly for the way he walks.

You could not mock or mistake Captain Larsen. He is small and wide with narrow eyes, a short beard and thick grey-white hair. He would look like a child's idea of a sea captain if he were not wearing shorts, sandals and a sweatshirt of uncertain colour. He smokes Marlboro Reds and scratches eczema on his leg. The scars and marks on his large hands and arms are not from eczema.

His greeting is warm, fierce with humour and assessment. He and Graham snap through their drills, exchanging paperwork. He shows me my accommodation.

'Your cabin, Clare. Clare?'

'Horatio, Captain.'

'We will try to remember that.'

'You need gloves if you're going out on deck,' says Sorin, the chief officer. He is a tall, fair-haired Romanian, rangy-tough, with friendly and searching eyes behind rimless octagonal specs. 'It's dirty out there. But it's good! Operational dirt.'

In the days of sail the mate, now known as the chief officer, was his Captain's fists. The chief is still our Captain's hands: in an emergency the latter's place is on the bridge, while the mate deals with the problem. Sorin is all competence and strength; there is a compactness about his movements that makes you doubt he has ever dithered. It takes something to carry it off in a sky-blue overall like a romper suit, though his has three gold braids on each shoulder.

The Europeans look grey and tired. Their faces are pallid, their skin dry and flaked; everyone's eyes are reddened. Inside the ship

there is no sea air, only the dry air conditioning and the diesel seep of the engine. No one is saying why they are late. Graham, the agent, mentioned fog in Bremerhaven, their last port of call, but he sounded uncertain.

Everyone works now. Only fog thick enough to blind crane operators, winds above sixty knots and Christmas Day stop the work at Felixstowe. Every minute of every other day and night cranes lift and lower, trucks line up to receive or deliver containers, stevedores fix and loosen lashing rods, agents arrive and depart, seafarers sign on and off, cargo planners board and disembark, officers supervise, crews from fifty countries work, dockers take or cast off lines, pilots climb or descend gangways and the big ships come and go. Under arc light, in the small hours, in summer dawns and winter darkneses, this never stops.

We will leave at 6 a.m.

'Four on the gangway,' the Captain says, over the top of his glasses.

Departure times are subject to change; the first version is chalked on a board near the gangway. While we are alongside a constant watch is kept there by a seaman with a clipboard which visitors must sign. For most of the crew this is as much as they see of the nations of the world, very occasional shore leaves excepted. Container ports look broadly the same. The main differences are climate and the languages of stevedores.

In his strip-lit office, the Captain prods his keyboard, muttering. He might be in a small meeting room in some chain motel were it not for the view. Beyond the portholes is the extraordinary. The body of the ship is a space station under a sky like a wet blue cloth, through which containers swing and float and fly. The cranes' claws, the 'spreaders', are yellow, the ship's holds red and the vista is lit by orange-pink floodlights, studded with white lamps in the hold. You can pick out ladders made miniature by the scale of the ship. The cranes are four-legged monsters, their necks thrust over us. Far up in the crown of each is a tiny human in his dark cabin. The dipping and winching is nearly silent. Sometimes a container booms hollow as it settles. The holds are deep, deep, dropping

ten storeys down beneath hatch covers the size of barn ends. The hold looks like three demolished city blocks partitioned by giant circuit boards, gaunt and monumentally skeletal. When the holds are filled cargo is stacked another eight storeys high atop the hatches.

We are accustomed to miniaturised technology; to devices in the hand that talk to satellites. Seeing technology on this scale is hypnotic, awe-striking. This is how we will explore space and colonise planets, you realise, with giant machines operated by men made near-invisibly small by comparison. The eight winches stern and aft are three times the size of a car. They adjust automatically, tightening lines you would struggle to encircle with two hands. Every fifty seconds a container is deposited or removed by each of the four cranes working on the *Gerd*. A tug is pulling a huge COSCO ship out of her berth ahead of us. It seems impossible the little boat has any influence on the leviathan. Their relative sizes make it a match between a hedgehog and a horse.

Every passenger must have a tour. Prashant will conduct this one. He is a Dual Cadet, upright and alert in his immaculate overall. (The crew wear dark-blue overalls with reflective seams and MAERSK across the back; the officers have Sorin's light blue version with braid on the epaulettes and the Captain has an immaculate white shirt with full gold insignia on the shoulders, which he produces on entry into ports, complete with fold lines.) 'Dual' means Prashant is being trained both as an engineering officer and a deck officer, one of the elite. He is from New Delhi, twenty-two years old. He has done ten months at sea: in another year, when he has passed his exams, he will be a junior officer.

'My instructors are real sea dogs,' he grins. His friends were becoming seafarers, and making good money, so he did it.

'The engine is something else,' he says.

The Captain says it has a problem that we are going to address in Le Havre. He waves a finger at Prashant.

'Give him the tour!' he says. 'Not less than one and a half hours.'

Prashant did not know the Captain before the Old Man took over

the ship in Bremerhaven, but rank and procedure seem to simplify all relations. The Captain is the boss and uncle, Prashant the eager nephew.

We set off at a lick down the main deck, more than 360 metres of it. The *Gerd* is longer than the biggest US aircraft carrier. You cannot quite see the end of the deck, which is painted dark red and is almost flawless, with barely two spots of rust. Prashant points out hydrants for sea water and fresh water, ticks off their pressures (eight bar), lengths of containers (forty and twenty foot), the ship's capacity (she can carry the equivalent of nine thousand twenty-foot containers), and her deadweight tonnage, which is the total weight she can safely bear, including cargo, fuel, water, food and us: 115, 700 tonnes. He points out bay numbers (twenty-footers in the odd bays), lashing rods (adjustable iron stays which are fixed criss-cross to the ends of the first two layers of containers), hatch covers, winches and anchor chains, lifeboats and life rafts.

When we are done I sign something and Prashant returns the paper to the Captain. Correctly signed papers, piles of them at every stage of every journey, are the price of the Captain's power.

On a ship in the age of sail the Captain was among other things Master Sailmaker and ship's surgeon – 'the only such, in a dangerous life, too: her disciplinarian, accountant, keeper of the Official Log under the Merchant Shipping Act, magistrate, chief steward, legal guardian of his apprentices – not his but the ship's, which needed them: there were no extra hands – and instructor to them too, if anyone was. Above all he was the sailor, the driver, the squall-dodger, who made the best not only of fair winds but whatever winds might blow.'¹ With the exceptions of steward, sailmaker and surgeon, Captain Larsen is still all these.

The objective of the sailing ship's master was the same as Captain Larsen's: to bring cargo and crew safe to port in the minimum possible time. The sea cities of Britain then were twinned with the

¹ Preface by Allan Villiers to Captain George Clark, *Four Captains*, Brown, Son and Ferguson, Glasgow, 1975.

furthest reaches of the world. Swansea and Iquique were linked by copper ore, Liverpool was joined to San Francisco by gold and to Quebec by timber. Newcastle upon Tyne and Fremantle in Australia were brothers in coal. Famous runs were achieved, records set and broken. During the mass emigration of Portuguese to Hawaii in 1880 (11,000 made the journey) the British ship *Highflyer*, a former tea clipper, made the run from Portugal, around the Horn against the winds and up to the islands in ninety-nine days – no rival did it faster. Eight years later an iron sailing ship, *British Ambassador*, put up a record passage of twenty-nine days between San Francisco and Newcastle, New South Wales.

A fast ship, fair winds, good luck and a canny captain were all for nothing when you hit the doldrums or struck a patch of calms. One record from May 1897 describes fifty-four sailing ships becalmed in latitude 45 North, longitude 26 West, many short of food and water.

In his journals Coleridge records seeing such a ship becalmed at sunset in the Bristol Channel:

Idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean,

he rendered it, in his *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. But imagine fifty-four of them together! Thirsty ghosts on a breathless sea: a glimpse of the measure of the age of sail.

With the coming of steam the ports of the world filled with unemployed sailing ships, trapped by plunging freight rates, made obsolete by technology which did not need the wind. Photographs of the port of Calcutta in 1898 show a dead forest of tall ships' masts. They could not use the Suez Canal (which opened in 1869) for a voyage to the East because of unfavourable winds in the Red Sea. Any sailing ship coming to Calcutta from the Atlantic would have made the Indian Ocean via the Cape of Good Hope, adding at least three thousand miles to a voyage, half of which was against the South Atlantic's southerly trade winds: you had to sail most of the way to

Brazil, in a wide sidestep known as the volta, in order to circle back to Cape Town on the clockwise cyclonic winds. Steam changed captains' conceptions and maps of the oceans. Their world was still a bundled question of winds, currents and seasons, but the answers were far simpler calculations. The blue became inscribed with steamer tracks, the shortest safe passage between ports. We still use them. Voyage courses and times became predictable, more or less.

The *Gerd Maersk* is scheduled to cross the Channel tomorrow. She will leave Le Havre the day after that for Algeciras, the Suez Canal, Salalah in Oman, Tanjung Pelepas in Malaysia, Vung Tau in Vietnam, Nansha and Yantian in China, Hong Kong and finally Los Angeles. We have an arrival date in Los Angeles two months from now, 16 October, and a time: half past two in the afternoon.

The route we will travel is a main road on the map of a parallel world which sustains the one you inhabit. Rotterdam is the capital of Holland and of Europe. Antwerp is the first city of Belgium. Felixstowe rules Britannia. Hamburg is the capital of Germany and Bremen its second city. New York still counts, thanks to Newark, but while the sea makes a place for Savannah in Georgia, Washington, DC, is nothing. Shanghai is the world's first city; Beijing does not figure. San Francisco was long ago surpassed by Oakland, on the other side of the bay, and both are dwarfed by Long Beach. The great Mediterranean capitals are Valencia, Algeciras and the gangster feasting-ground of the port of Gioia Tauro, the buckle on Italy's shoe.

'Hello, Mr Pilot!'

They shake hands.

'Good morning, Captain.'

'A grey dawn on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking', John Masefield wrote, and it is running through my head not just because the view from the bridge is precisely that – a wash of non-colours between calm and dismal, and a rain falling which you would call dirty in a city – but because I am in a state of suppressed exultation. I had to recite 'Sea Fever' at school when I was ten and I longed to

do this then. Now, at last, I am on a great ship going down to the lonely sea and the sky.

‘Let go forward line,’ Captain Larsen says. Three hundred metres away in the bow is Chris, the second officer, who repeats the order back over the radio.

‘Let go forward spring lines . . . Let go aft line . . . Let go aft spring lines . . .’ The spring lines are the ropes which run from the bow and stern of the ship back towards her centre, balancing the pull of the main mooring lines.

‘There’s a problem with the aft spring line,’ says the radio.

‘Well, it’s quite urgent now,’ the Captain says calmly, ‘as we have left the berth.’

On the bridge are the Captain, humming to himself softly in between giving orders, Duncan, the pilot, who talks to the tug over his radio, and Sorin, checking the paper chart against the electronic chart, plotting, listening, double-checking, watching everything.

The Captain makes small adjustments to the little levers which control the bow and stern thrusters, then even smaller changes to the main engine telegraph. A long spear of green-brown water opens between us and the quay. The aft spring line rapidly behaves. Three men in the tug, six on the lines, and these three on the bridge – a dozen men are sending a giant machine, a chunk of steel cape, it seems, away to sea.

Now a helmsman appears and takes over the steering. The *Gerd’s* wheel is smaller than the kind which controls a Mini.

‘Starboard ten.’

‘Starboard ten!’

‘Steer one-oh-six,’ says Duncan.

‘One-oh-six!’ echoes the helmsman.

‘Six knots.’

‘Six knots,’ the Captain confirms.

The pilot and the Captain confer about the wind and the current and the dredger ahead of us in the channel. The exchanges are brief, not quite laconic. The Captain’s air is approving. Seafarers are quick judges of character and competence.

‘You look for someone serious,’ Sorin says.

As we move down the buoyed channel through rain nothing stirs in Felixstowe. The nape of a sullen night hunches away to the west as we turn northwards and increase speed.

‘You can come up to eleven knots, Captain.’

‘Eleven knots! Yes, yes . . . hum humm, di-dum dumm . . .’

With every yard we travel the atmosphere on the bridge lightens. Sea is safety, land is danger. Duncan readies himself for departure as the tiny pilot boat pitches towards us. Duncan will descend the gangway down our huge flank, transfer to a rope ladder, descend a few more metres almost to the water and step on to the little arrow-head of the pilot boat’s nose.

‘It’s quite exciting in a gale,’ he says mildly. ‘You can tell how the economy is going by the height of the ship in the water. Since 2008 it’s been a fair old climb . . . Oh aye it’s all changed – especially the drinking,’ he grins. ‘In the old days we wouldn’t have made it around the world unless we were half cut! That’s all gone now.’

‘There are many more *things* in the sea here,’ the Captain says.

‘Oh yes, the turbines, they’re putting more up there. The winds are getting stronger. We get much more strong wind now than we used to . . . Right, Captain, I’ll be off.’

‘What speed would you like, Mr Pilot?’

‘Ten knots should be fine.’

‘Ten knots. Starboard side?’

‘Starboard side. Thank you, Captain. Safe journey.’

‘Yes, yes! Thank you, Mr Pilot, thank you.’