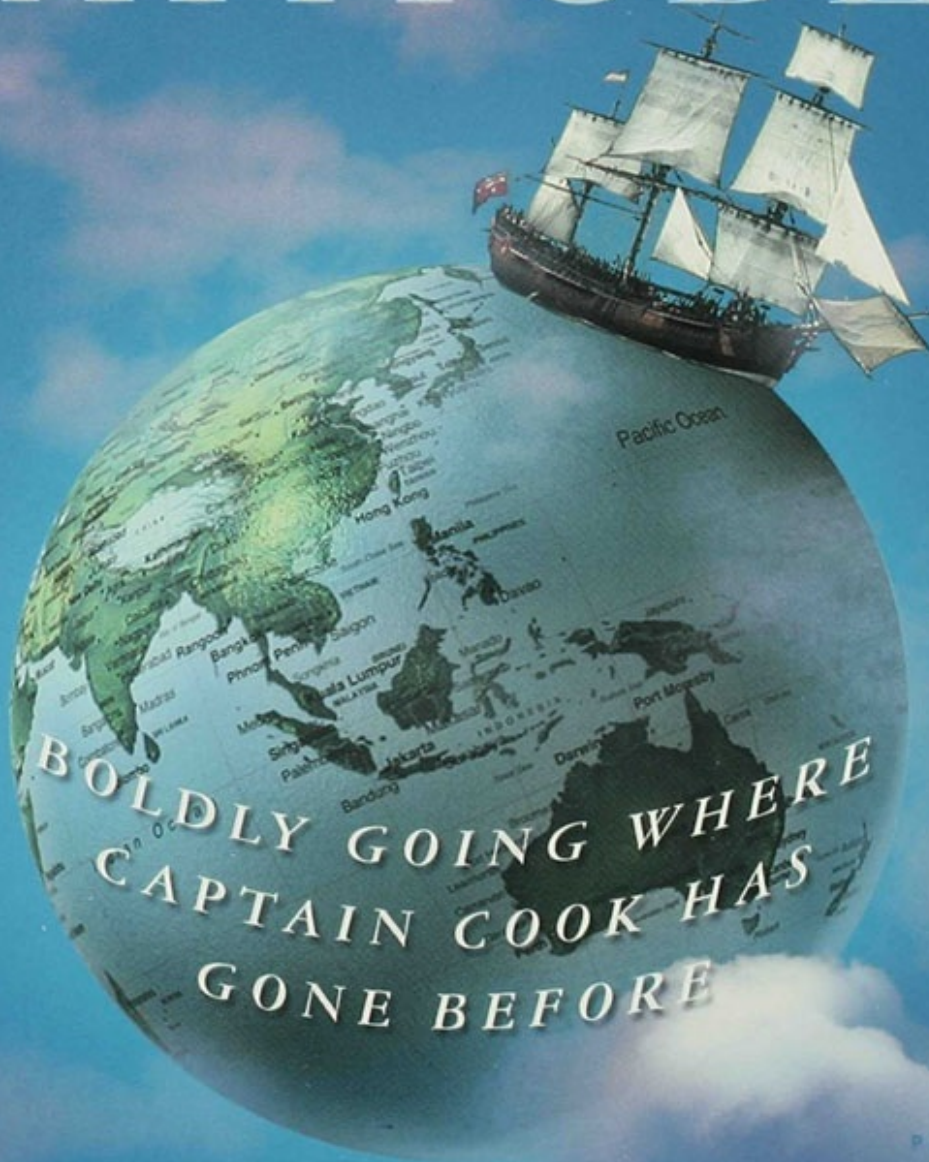


A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

BLUE LATITUDES



PICADOR

Tony Horwitz

AUTHOR OF *CONFEDERATES IN THE ATTIC*

Praise for *Blue Latitudes*

“Hilarious, brainy, and balanced . . . A trip with Horwitz is as good as it gets.”

—*The Charlotte Observer*

“Horwitz’s adventures pay illuminating tribute to the great navigator—to Captain Cook himself and his intrepid eighteenth-century colleagues, including the improbably attractive Sir Joseph Banks. But most of all *Blue Latitudes* offers clear-eyed, vivid, and highly entertaining reassurance that there are still outlandish worlds to be discovered.”

—Caroline Alexander, author of *The Endurance: Shackleton’s Legendary Antarctic Expedition*

“*Blue Latitudes* is a rollicking read that is also a sneaky work of scholarship, providing new and unexpected insights into the man who out-discovered Columbus. A terrific book—I inhaled it in one weekend.”

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“One of the best . . . full of humor . . . It is with people that Horwitz excels. As he demonstrated in *Confederates in the Attic*, he has a gift for getting them to open up. A terrific reporter, Horwitz investigates how the places he visits have changed . . . What he also does, and what makes this book so absorbing, is intersperse among all the details of life today in these far-flung places an elegant running account of Cook’s exploits.”

—*The New York Times Book Review* (cover)

“Compelling . . . Horwitz is particularly convincing when he’s establishing just how harsh a sailor’s life could be in the 1700s, why most of them were drunk so much of the time, and why today’s mariners have it relatively easy . . . Remarkable.”

—*The Oregonian* (Portland)

“A rewarding and—trust me on this—witty tale of a remarkable explorer who now occupies a controversial place in history because of disease, greed, thievery, and prostitution that followed in his wake . . . Perhaps the highest praise of any book is that it takes you somewhere. Horwitz manages to do this on two levels, mingling history with a humorous travelogue.”

—*The Mercury News* (San Jose)

“A swashbuckling history.”

—*Newsday*

“An entertaining and rewarding read. Horwitz remains an intriguing sketcher of characters, and there are plenty of aging hippies, burnt-out colonials, and out-and-out oddballs in his path. He’s still the master of the targeted anecdote or factoid . . . Charming . . . *Blue Latitudes* stretches from Easter Island to Alaska, from Cape Horn to Indonesia. In Mr. Horwitz’s company, it seems all too short a trip.”

—*Sunday Star-News*

“Delightful . . . [Horwitz] is an observant traveler, with an eye for both the oddball and the salient. He also has the good sense to enlist the services of a madcap Aussie traveling companion, who is det

mined to make certain that any journey, to be worth its salt, must include plenty of misadventures.”

—*Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

“At once well-researched, gripping, and peppered with humorous pas sages . . . The book’s literary magic comes from mixing information from Horwitz’s observations with observations written by Cook himself . . . *Blue Latitudes* ought to appeal to diverse audiences—those who devour travel books, those who care about the mixed legacy of famous dead white males, and those who treasure memorable writing whatever the subject matter.” —*St. Louis Post-Dispatch*

“Thanks to Horwitz’s thorough research—he seems to have read all of Cook’s journals, previous biographies, and anthropological studies of the Pacific—naval life and island life come brilliantly alive . . . Paul Theroux travels the world and finds disappointment; Tony Horwitz finds a cast of colorful characters and history embedded in the land.”

—*The Providence Journal*

“A compelling account.” —*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“[Horwitz] weaves his own experiences with those gleaned from Cook’s own writings and those of his crew into a fabric dense with the delicious details that keep readers turning pages long past bedtime.”

—*Chicago Tribune*

“Filled with history and alive with contrasts.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“A staggering blend of historical research, character study, sociological analysis, and intriguing tales of travel.” —*The Boston Globe*

“This alternately hilarious, poignant, and insightful book is history for people who don’t like history and a travelogue full of wonder and smart observation, not jaded cynicism . . . Horwitz succeeds brilliantly in turning the English from stiff icons to flesh-and-blood human beings. The book’s constant humor, honesty, and judgment recall his own *Confederates in the Attic* or Bill Bryson’s *Walk in the Woods* . . . This book will keep you enthralled.”

—*The Seattle Times*

“Tony Horwitz has done it again . . . [With] keen insight, open-mindedness and laugh-out-loud humor, he . . . travel[s] across the globe in search of the memory of Capt. James Cook.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Horwitz has a self-deprecating wit that translates well into print, making him an eloquent Everyman in whatever exotic setting he enters. He is a meticulous observer, a preternaturally gifted student of human nature.” —*The Atlanta-Journal Constitution*

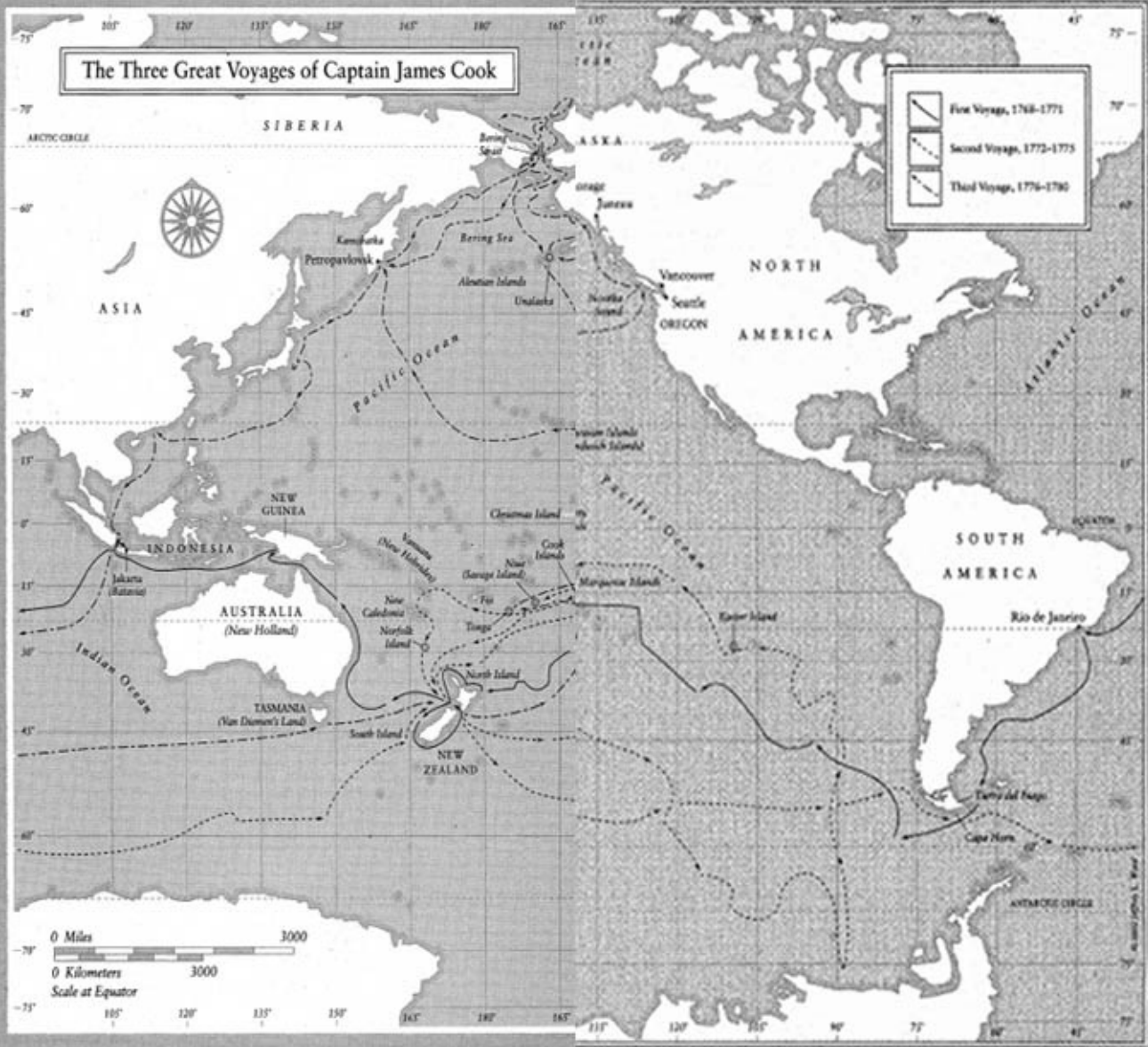
“With prodigious research and a willingness to raise the subject of Captain Cook with anyone, including a drunk, a king, and a girl in a wet T-shirt, Horwitz has managed to muscle a big, sloppy idea into something coherent and fun to read . . . Horwitz reveals the most about Cook by acting like Cook, exploring each place with the same energy and relentless curiosity as the man himself . . . He one-upped Cook and made it home in one piece.” —*Forbes FYI*

“Horwitz offers an affectionate but convincing defense of the captain as a man driven by a ‘stubborn Enlightenment faith in firsthand observation,’ and conjures the hero’s primal encounters by getting off the beaten path himself.” —*Outside*

“[An] engaging outing . . . Horwitz seamlessly weaves humorous anecdotes from Cook’s journals with his own peripatetic observations—and without succumbing to hero worship, he conveys Cook

lifelong romance with traveling to the far reaches of the then-unknown world.” —*Entertainment Weekly*

The Three Great Voyages of Captain James Cook



ALSO BY TONY HORWITZ

Confederates in the Attic
Baghdad Without a Map
One for the Road



PICADOR
HENRY HOLT AND COMPANY
NEW YORK

Blue Latitudes

Boldly Going Where

Captain Cook

Has Gone Before

Tony Horwitz

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For Natty, an adventurer at five

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Blue Latitudes

PROLOGUE:

The Distance Traveled

Ambition leads me not only farther than any other man has been before me, but as far as I think it possible for man to go. —THE JOURNAL OF CAPTAIN JAMES COOK

Just after dark on February 16, 1779, a *kahuna*, or holy man, rode a canoe to His Majesty's Slope. The *Resolution*, anchored off the coast of Hawaii. The *kahuna* came aboard with a bundle under his arm. Charles Clerke, the ship's commander, unwrapped the parcel in the presence of his officers. He found "a large piece of Flesh which we soon saw to be Human," Clerke wrote in his journal. "It was clearly a part of the Thigh about 6 or 8 pounds without any bone at all."

Two days before, islanders had killed five of the ship's men on the lava shoreline of Kealahou Bay, and carried off the bodies. Nothing had been seen of the corpses since. Unsure what to make of the *kahuna's* grisly offering, Clerke and his men asked whether the rest of the body had been eaten. The Hawaiian seemed appalled by this question. Did Englishmen eat *their* foes?

Hawaiians weren't cannibals, the *kahuna* said. They cut up and cooked the bodies of high chiefs to extract certain bones that possessed godly power. Islanders distributed these remains among their leaders and discarded the flesh. Hence the *kahuna's* return of the deboned thigh, "which," Clerke wrote, "he gave us to understand was part of our late unfortunate Captain."

James Cook, the *Resolution's* captain, was one of the five men who had died on shore. There was no way of knowing for certain if this pungent thigh belonged to him. But several days later, the Hawaiians delivered another package, bundled in a feathered cloak. This one contained scorched limbs, a scalp with the ears attached and hair cut short, and two hands that had been scored and salted apparently to preserve them. Fifteen years earlier, a powder horn had exploded in Cook's right hand, leaving an ugly gash. This "remarkable Cut," one of his lieutenants wrote, remained clearly visible on the severed right hand delivered to the ship.

While the Hawaiians were parceling out Cook's bones among their leaders, the English performed a parallel ritual aboard the *Resolution*. Officers and "gentlemen" divided and sold the captain's clothing and other effects, in accordance with shipboard custom. Two and a half years out from home, in waters no other Europeans had sailed before, the English needed the useful items in the dead captain's

kit.

On the evening of February 21, the English put their flags at half-mast, crossed the ship's yard, tolled bells, and fired a ten-gun salute. "I had the remains of Capt Cook committed to the deep," Charles Clerke wrote, "with all the attention and honour we could possibly pay it in this part of the World."

The thirty-seven-year-old Clerke, who had inherited command of the *Resolution* following Cook's death, was himself dying, from tuberculosis. As the ship weighed anchor, he retired to his cabin, turning the quarterdeck over to Lieutenant James King and to the ship's brilliant but testy young master, William Bligh.

"Thus we left Karacacooa bay," King wrote, "a place become too remarkably famous for the very unfortunate & Tragical death of one of the greatest Navigators our Nation or any Nation ever had."

HALF A WORLD away from Kealakekua Bay, in a sodden Yorkshire churchyard, a single headstone honors the family into which James Cook was born. "To Ye Memory of Mary and Mary, Jane and William," the inscription reads, listing siblings who perished by the age of five. The stone also mentions James's older brother, John, who died at the age of twenty-three. A second epitaph commemorates the mother and father of this short-lived brood: "James and Grace Cook were the parents of the celebrated circumnavigator Captain James Cook who was born at Marton Oct. 27th 1728," the inscription says, "and killed at Owhyhee Dec. 14th, 1779."

The latter date is incorrect; Cook died in Hawaii on February 14. But this simple gravestone speaks more eloquently to the distance Cook had traveled than any of the grand monuments erected in his name. Cook was born just a few miles from his family's grave plot, in a mud-and-thatch hovel: a building type known in the North Riding of Yorkshire as a biggin. Farm animals wandered in and out of the hut's two small rooms. Sacking and meadowsweet, spread on the dirt floor, kept down the damp and odor.

Cook's father worked as a day laborer, close to the bottom of Britain's stratified society. The prospects for a day laborer's son were bleak, even if he survived the harsh conditions that killed most of Cook's siblings in early childhood. Public education didn't exist. There was very little mobility, social or geographic. The world of the rural poor remained what it had been for generations: a day's walk in radius, a tight, well-trod loop between home, field, church, and, finally, a crowded family grave plot.

James Cook didn't just break this cycle; he exploded it. Escaping to sea as a teenager, he became a coal-ship apprentice and joined the Royal Navy as a lowly "able seaman." From there, he worked his way to the upper reaches of the naval hierarchy and won election to the Royal Society, the pinnacle of London's intellectual establishment. Cook's greatest feat, though, was the three epic voyages of discovery he made in his forties—midlife today, closer to the grave in the eighteenth century.

In 1768, when Cook embarked on the first, roughly a third of the world's map remained blank, filled with fantasies: sea monsters, Patagonian giants, imaginary continents. Cook sailed into this void in a small wooden ship and returned, three years later, with charts so accurate that some of them stayed in use until the 1990s.

On his two later voyages, Cook explored from the Arctic to the Antarctic, from Tasmania to Tierra del Fuego, from the northwest shore of America to the far northeast coast of Siberia. By the time he died, still on the job, Cook had sailed over 200,000 miles in the course of his career—roughly equivalent to circling the equator eight times, or voyaging to the moon. "Owhyhee," a sun-struck paradise unknown to the West before Cook arrived, was as far as a man could go from the drear-

Yorkshire churchyard he seemed destined at birth to occupy.

Cook not only redrew the map of the world, creating a picture of the globe much like the one we know today; he also transformed the West's image of nature and man. His initial Pacific sail, on a ship called *Endeavour*, was the first of its kind in Britain—a voyage of scientific discovery, carrying trained observers: artists, astronomers, naturalists. The ship's botanists collected so much exotic flora that they expanded the number of known plant species in the West by a quarter. This seeded the modern notion of biodiversity and made possible the discoveries of men such as Charles Darwin, who followed in the *Endeavour's* path aboard the *Beagle*.

Similarly, the art and writing of Cook and his men, and the native objects they collected, called "artificial curiosities," transfixed the West with images of unfamiliar peoples: erotic Tahitian dancers, Maori cannibals, clay-painted Aborigines. Sailors adopted the Polynesian adornment called tattoo, and words such as "taboo" entered the Western lexicon. A London brothel keeper offered a special night to her clients, featuring "a dozen beautiful Nymphs" performing the ritualized sex Cook had witnessed in Tahiti. Poets and philosophers seized on the South Seas as a liberating counterpoint to Europe. On the other side of the Atlantic, Benjamin Franklin issued an extraordinary order, in the midst of the Revolutionary War, commanding American naval officers to treat Cook and his men as friends rather than foes.

For the lands and peoples Cook encountered, the impact of his voyages was just as profound, and far more destructive. His decade of discovery occurred on the cusp of the Industrial Revolution. The steam engine and spinning jenny emerged as Cook set off on his first Pacific tour; Adam Smith published *The Wealth of Nations* in 1776, as Cook embarked on his last. His explorations opened vast new territories to the West's burgeoning economies and empires, and all that came with them: whalers, missionaries, manufactured goods, literacy, rum, guns, syphilis, smallpox.

Cook, in sum, pioneered the voyage we are still on, for good and ill. "More than any other person," writes the historian Bernard Smith, "he helped to make the world one." LIKE MOST AMERICANS I grew up knowing almost nothing of Captain Cook, except what I learned in fifth-grade geography class. Though I didn't realize it at the time, I also absorbed his adventures through episodes of *Star Trek*. A suburban kid, growing up in a decade when even the moon had been conquered, I never ceased to feel a thrill at the TV show's opening words: "These are the voyages of the Star-ship *Enterprise*. In its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before!"

It wasn't until years later that I realized how much *Star Trek* echoed a true story. Captain James Cook; Captain James Kirk. The *Endeavour*, the *Enterprise*. Cook, the Yorkshire farm boy, writing in his journal that he'd sailed "farther than any other man has been before." Kirk, the Iowa farm boy, keeping his own log about boldly going "where no man has gone before!" Cook rowed jolly boats ashore, accompanied by his naturalist, his surgeon, and musket-toting, red-jacketed marines. Kirk "beamed down" to planets with the science officer Mr. Spock, Dr. McCoy, and phaser-wielding, red-jerseyed "expendables." Both captains also set out—at least in theory—to discover and describe new lands, rather than to conquer or convert.

In my twenties, I fell in love with an Australian and followed her to Sydney. Geraldine and I found a house just a few miles from the beach where Cook and his men, landing in 1770, became the first Europeans to visit the east coast of Australia. My new surrounds seemed wondrous but disorienting: the sun blazing in the northern sky, scribbly gums that shed bark instead of leaves, fruit bats squeaking at night in the fig trees. One day at an antiquarian bookshop, I found a copy of Cook's journals and read his own impressions of this strange land over two centuries before me.

“It was of a light Mouse colour and the full size of a grey hound and shaped in every respect like one,” Cook wrote of a creature he saw fleetingly near shore. “I would have taken it for a wild dog, but for its walking or running in which it jumped like a Hare or a deer.” Unsure what to call this odd beast, Cook referred to it simply as “the animal.” Later, he inserted the native word, which he rendered as “kanguru.” The *Endeavour* carried home a skull and skin, the first kangaroo specimen in the West. It resided in a London museum until destroyed in the Blitz during World War II.

Even stranger to Cook and his men were Aborigines, who possessed almost nothing—not even clothing—yet showed a complete disdain for European goods. To well-born gentlemen aboard the *Endeavour*, this was evidence of native brutishness. Cook took a much more thoughtful and human view. “Being wholly unacquainted not only with the superfluous but the necessary conveniences sought after in Europe, they are happy not knowing the use of them,” he wrote. “They live in Tranquility which is not disturb’d by the Inequality of Condition.”

I returned to these words years later, while reading on the back porch of my house in America. After a decade of circumnavigating the globe as foreign correspondents, Geraldine and I had settled down, bought an old house, planted a garden, had a child. At forty, I’d tired of travel, of dislocation. Part of me wanted to rot, like my porch in Virginia. Then, one lazy summer’s day, I picked up my neglected copy of Cook’s journals. In Australia, I’d only scanned them. This time I read for days: about human sacrifice and orgiastic sex in Tahiti, charmed arrows and poison fish in Vanuatu, sailors driven mad off Antarctica by “the Melancholy Croaking of Innumerable Penguins.” And, at the center of it all, a man my own age, coolly navigating his ship through the most extraordinary perils imaginable.

“One is carried away with the general, grand, and indistinct notion of A VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD,” James Boswell confided to Samuel Johnson after dining with Cook in London. Perched in a chair on my back porch in Virginia, lawn mowers murmuring in the distance, I felt the same impulse. Apart from the coast near Sydney, I’d seen none of the territory Cook explored: Bora-Bora, the Bering Sea, the Great Barrier Reef, Tonga, Kealakekua Bay—the list of alluring destinations seemed endless.

I wondered what these places were like today, if any trace of Cook’s boot prints remained. I also wanted to turn the spyglass around. Cook and his men were as exotic to islanders as natives seemed to the English. What had Pacific peoples made of pale strangers appearing from the sea, and how do their descendants remember Cook now?

I wanted to probe Cook, as well. His journals recorded every detail of where he went, and what he did. They rarely revealed why. Perhaps, following in Cook’s wake, I could fathom the biggin-born farm boy whose ambition drove him farther than any man, until it killed him on a faraway shore called Owhyhee.

Chapter 1

PACIFIC NORTHWEST:

One Week Before the Mast

Those who would go to sea for pleasure would go to hell for pastime. —EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY APHORISM

When I was thirteen, my parents bought a used sailboat, a ten-foot wooden dory that I christened *Wet Dream*. For several summers, I tacked around the waters off Cape Cod, imagining myself one of the whalers who plied Nantucket Sound in the nineteenth century. I read *Moby-Dick*, tied a bandana around my head, even tried my hand at scrimshaw. This fantasy life offered escape from the fact that I could barely sail—or caulk, or knot anything except a shoelace. One day, bailing frantically with a sawed-off milk jug after gashing the *Wet Dream* against a rock, I found my whaling dream had become real. I was Ishmael, the *Pequod* sinking beneath me.

This hapless memory returned to me as I studied an application for a berth on His Majesty's Barque *Endeavour*. An Australian foundation had built a museum-quality replica of Cook's first vessel and dispatched it around the globe in the navigator's path. At each port, the ship's professional crew took on volunteers to help sail the next leg and experience life as eighteenth-century sailors. This seemed the obvious place to start; if I was going to understand Cook's travels, I first had to understand *how* he traveled.

The application form asked about my "qualifications and experience," with boxes beside each question, marked yes or no.

Have you had any blue water ocean sailing experience?

Can you swim 50 meters fully clothed?

You will be required to work aloft, sometimes at night in heavy weather. Are you confident of being able to do this?

I wasn't sure what was meant by "blue water ocean." Did it come in other colors? I'd never swum fully clothed, except once, after falling off the *Wet Dream*. As for working aloft, I'd climbed ladders to scoop leaves from my gutter in Virginia. I checked "yes" next to each question. But the last question

gave me pause: .“Do you suffer from sea sickness?”

Only when I went to sea. I opted for the box marked .“moderate,” rather than the .“chronic” box, fearing I’d otherwise be judged unfit.

A week later, I received a terse note confirming a berth in early autumn from Gig Harbor, Washington, to Vancouver, British Columbia. The letter came with a .“Safety and Training Manual.” A page headed .“Abandon Ship” offered this helpful tip: .“Stay together in waters—**stay calm.**” Other pages dealt with .“burns and scalds,” .“sudden serious injury,” drowning, and seasickness: .“You may feel like you’re dying but you will survive.” In case you didn’t, there was a liability waiver to sign (. . . understand and expressly assume these risks and dangers, including death, illness, disease . . .”).

The safety tips, at least, were stated in plain English. The training section read like a home appliance manual, badly translated from Korean, with “some assembly required.” A typical diagram showed intersecting arrows and loops, allegedly explaining the layout of .“Bits & Fife Rail to Fwd. Mainmast Looking from Starboard Side.”

I quickly gave up and spent the weeks until my voyage studying history books instead. Among other things, I learned that the original *Endeavour* was a mirror of the man who commanded it: plain, utilitarian, indomitable. Like Cook, the ship began its career in the coal trade, shuttling between the mine country of the north of England and the docks of east London. Bluff-bowed and wide-beamed, the ninety-seven-foot-long ship was built for bulk and endurance rather than speed or comfort. .“A cross between a Dutch clog and a coffin,” was how one historian described it.

The tallest of the *Endeavour*’s three masts teetered a vertiginous 127 feet. Belowdecks, the headroom clearance stooped to four foot six. The *Endeavour*’s flat bottom and very shallow keel—designed so the collier could float ashore with the tide to load and unload coal—made the ship exceptionally .“tender,” meaning it tended to roll from side to side. .“Found the ship to be but a heavy sailer,” wrote the ship’s botanist, Joseph Banks, .“more calculated for stowage, than for sailing.” He wrote this in calm seas, two days after leaving England. When the going turned rough, Banks retreated to his cabin: .“ill with sickness at stomach and most violent headach.”

Duly warned, I sampled a seasickness pill on the flight to Seattle. It made me so listless and wobbly that I almost fell down in the aisle. This seemed a bad state in which to work aloft, at night in heavy seas. I flushed the rest of the pills down the airplane toilet.

The pier at Gig Harbor, an hour south of Seattle, teemed with gleaming new yachts. In this sea of sleek fiberglass, the replica *Endeavour* was easy to spot. The original ship had been made almost entirely from grasses and trees—hemp, flax, elm, oak, pine tar—with bits of iron and brass thrown in. The replica appeared much the same. With its sails furled and its masts poking skeletally into the damp air, the vessel looked boxy and brittle, a boat built from matchsticks. At a hundred feet long, it wasn’t much bigger than many of the nearby yachts.

A dozen sailors, mostly tanned young Australians in navy-colored work clothes, stood coiling rope on the dock and bantering in the matey, mocking fashion I knew well from my years in Sydney. .“Press-ganged men over there,” one sailor said, pointing me to a waterside park. My fellow recruits numbered forty, mostly Americans and Canadians, including six women. Chatting nervously, I was relieved to discover that some of them had little more sailing experience than I did.

Then again, they seemed a fit lot, accustomed to hard labor, or at least hard exercise: construction workers, military veterans, sinewy joggers. .“This’ll be like a week at a dude ranch,” a broad-shouldered carpenter assured me.

A trim, brisk figure strode over from the ship and barked, .“Listen up!” This was our captain, Chris Blake, a mild-featured man much shorter than Cook but no less commanding in manner. .“We’ll go

on with a very fast learning curve,” he said, handing us over to the ship’s first mate, a gruff Englishman named Geoff.

“This will be like going back into the Army, if you’ve ever been there, with a lot less sleep,” Geoff began. “Your straight eight, you’re not going to get it on this ship, so when you have a chance to put your head down, do it.” He also told us where to put our heads when seasick. “Make friends with one of our plastic buckets and make sure you chuck it over the lee side so you’re not wearing your pizze. And no throwing up belowdecks, because you’ll have every other person throwing up beside you.”

A safety officer followed with a brief talk about abandoning ship. “Hold your nostrils when you jump overboard because it’s a long fall and can break your nose,” he said. “Blokes, keep your legs crossed when you go over, same reason. Also, try to huddle together in the water. It’s not going to save you, but it might give you a few more minutes.” Then he warned us about the “gasp reflex.” As he explained it: “The water’s so cold that you gasp and suck a lot in.”

After this orientation, we split into three “watches,” each one assigned to a mast and a captain-of-the-tops, our drill sergeant for the week ahead. My watch was mainmast, by far the tallest of the three, commanded by Todd, a raffishly handsome Australian with a ponytail, earrings, and a red bandanna wrapped round his unshaven neck. “Okay, you scurvy dogs and wenches,” he said, “let’s start with the slops.”

“Slops” was the eighteenth-century term for naval gear. Sailors on the original *Endeavour* wore no prescribed uniform, nor would we dress in period costume. Todd tossed us each a set of brown oilskin pants and jacket. “In Australia they’re called Driza-Bone, but we call them Wet-as-a-Bastard. As soon as they get wet they stay that way.” He also issued us orange night vests, and safety harnesses that looked like mountain-climbing belts.

Then Todd led us across the ship’s deck and down a ladder, or companionway, which plunged to a dark chamber called the mess deck. We squinted at tables roped to the ceiling, as well as vinegar kegs, a huge iron stove, and sea chests that doubled as benches—all packed into a room the size of a suburban den. This cramped cavern would somehow accommodate thirty of us, with the other ten recruits in a small adjoining space.

Todd tossed us canvas hammocks and showed how to lash them to the beams above the tables. With only four feet were allotted just fourteen inches’ width of airspace per sling, the Navy’s prescribed sleeping area in the eighteenth century. “If you don’t know knots, tie lots,” Todd said, as I struggled to complete a simple hitch. He also showed us how to stow the hammocks, snug and tightly roped, in a netted hold.

Stumbling around the dark deck, colliding with tables and people, and bending almost double when the head clearance plunged to dwarf height, I tried to imagine spending three years in this claustrophobic hole, as Cook’s men had. Incredibly, the original *Endeavour* left port with forty more people than we had on board—accompanied by seventeen sheep, several dozen ducks and chickens, four pigs, three cats (to catch rats), and a milk goat that had circled the globe once before. “Being in a ship is being in a jail,” Samuel Johnson sagely observed, “with the chance of being drowned.”

THE *ENDEAVOURS* MISSION was as daunting as the conditions on the ship. Though Ferdinand Magellan had first crossed the Pacific two and a half centuries before, the ocean—covering an area greater than all the world’s landmasses combined—remained so mysterious that mapmakers labeled vast stretches of the Pacific *nondum cognita* (not yet known). Cartographers knew so little of the land within the Pacific that they simply guessed at the contours of coasts: a French chart from 1753, fifteen years before the *Endeavour*’s departure, shows dotted shorelines accompanied by the words “suppose.”

One reason for this ignorance was that most of the ships sailing after Magellan followed the same relatively narrow band of ocean, channeled by prevailing winds and currents, and constrained by poor navigational tools. Also, geography in the early modern era was regarded as proprietary information; navies kept explorers' charts and journals under wraps, lest competing nations use them to expand their own empires.

Not that these reports were very reliable. Magellan's pilot miscalculated the longitude of the Philippines by 53 degrees, an error akin to planting Bolivia in central Africa. When another Spanish expedition stumbled on an island chain in the western Pacific in 1567, the captain believed he'd found the biblical land of Ophir, from which King Solomon shipped gold, sandalwood, and precious stones. Spanish charts, and the navigational skills of those who followed, were so faulty that Europeans failed to find the Solomon Islands again for two centuries. No gold and not much of economic value was ever discovered there.

Pacific adventurers also showed an unfortunate tendency toward abbreviated careers. Vasco Núñez de Balboa, the first European to sight the ocean, in 1513, was beheaded for treason. Magellan set off in 1519 with five ships and 237 men; only one ship and eighteen men made it home three years later, and Magellan was not present, having been speared in the Philippines. Francis Drake, the first English circumnavigator, died at sea of dysentery. Vitus Bering, sailing for the czar, perished from exposure after shipwrecking near the frigid sea now named for him; at the last, Bering lay half-buried in sand to keep warm, while Arctic foxes gnawed at his sick and dying men.

Other explorers simply vanished. Or went mad. In 1606, the navigator Fernandes de Queiroz told his pilot, "Put the ships' heads where they like, for God will guide them as may be right." When God delivered the Spanish ships to the shore of what became the New Hebrides, Fernandes de Queiroz founded a city called New Jerusalem and anointed his sailors "Knights of the Holy Ghost."

But the most persistent and alluring mirage of Pacific exploration was *terra australis incognita*, a unknown "south land," first conjured into being by the wonderfully named Roman mapmaker Pomponius Mela. He, like Ptolemy, believed that the continents of the northern hemisphere must be balanced by an equally large landmass at the bottom of the globe. Otherwise, the world would tip. This appealingly symmetrical notion was embellished by Marco Polo, who claimed he'd seen a southern land called Locac, filled with gold and game and elephants and idolaters, "a very wild region, visited by few people." Renaissance mapmakers took the Venetian's vague coordinates and placed Locac—also known as Lucach, Maletur, and Beach—far to the south, part of the fabled *terra australis*. The discovery of America only heightened Europeans' conviction that another vast continent, rich in resources, remained to be found.

So things stood in 1768, when London's august scientific group, the Royal Society, petitioned King George III to send a ship to the South Pacific. A rare astronomical event, the transit of Venus across the sun, was due to occur on June 3, 1769, and not again for 105 years. The society hoped that an accurate observation of the transit, from disparate points on the globe, would enable astronomers to calculate the earth's distance from the sun, part of the complex task of mapping the solar system. Half a century after Isaac Newton and almost three centuries after Christopher Columbus, basic questions of where things were—in the sky, as well as on earth—remained unresolved.

The king accepted the society's request, and ordered the Admiralty to fit out an appropriate ship. As commander, the Royal Society recommended Alexander Dalrymple, a distinguished theorist and cartographer who had sailed to the East Indies, and who believed so firmly in the southern continent that he put its breadth at exactly 5,323 miles and its population at fifty million. The Admiralty instead selected James Cook, a Navy officer whose oceangoing experience was limited to the North Atlantic.

On the face of it, this seemed an unlikely choice—and, among some in the establishment, it was unpopular. Cook was a virtual unknown outside Navy circles and a curiosity within. He had spent the previous decade charting the coast of Canada, a task at which he displayed exceptional talent. One admiral, noting “Mr. Cook’s Genius and Capacity,” observed of his charts: “They may be the means of directing many in the right way, but cannot mislead any.” But Cook’s rank remained that of second lieutenant, and, as an ill-educated man of low birth, married to the daughter of a dockside tavernkeeper, he didn’t fit the mold of the scientific and naval elite.

Cook’s bearing was as plain as his background. Though very tall for his day, at several inches over six feet, he was rawboned and narrow. The few surviving portraits show a commanding but austere figure: long straight nose, thin lips, high cheekbones, deep-set brown eyes. James Boswell described Cook as “a grave, steady man,” who possessed “a ballance in his mind for truth as nice as scales for weighing a guinea.”

This guarded, meticulous Yorkshireman also faced a mission much more daring than the astronomical voyage requested by the Royal Society. The Lords of the Admiralty dispatched Cook with two sets of orders. One instructed him to proceed to a recently discovered South Pacific island named for King George, to observe the transit of Venus and survey harbors and bays. “When the Service is perform’d,” the orders concluded, “you are to put to Sea without Loss of Time, and carry into execution the Additional Instructions contained in the inclosed Sealed Packet.”

These orders, labeled “secret,” laid out an ambitious plan for “making Discoverys of Countries hitherto unknown.” In particular, Cook was to search unexplored latitudes for the fabled continent of Pomponius Mela and Marco Polo. “Whereas there is reason to imagine that a Continent or Land of great extent, may be found,” the orders commanded, “You are to proceed to the southward in order to make discovery of the Continent abovementioned.”

In other words, Cook and his men were to voyage to the edge of the known world, then leap off and sail into the blue.

ON MY FIRST night aboard the replica *Endeavour*, I sat down with my watchmates to a dinner advertised on the galley blackboard as “gruel.” This turned out to be a tasty stew, with pie and fruit to follow. It was also a marked improvement on the fare aboard the original *Endeavour*. Before leaving port, Cook complained to the Navy Board that the cook assigned his ship was “a lame infirm man and incapable of doing his Duty.” The board granted his request for a replacement, sending John Thompson, who had lost his right hand. Cook’s request for still another man was denied. The Navy gave preference to “cripples and maimed persons” in its appointment of cooks, a fair indicator of its regard for sailors’ palates.

“Victualled.” for twelve months, the *Endeavour* toted thousands of pounds of ship’s biscuits (hardtack), salt beef, and salt pork: the sailors’ staples. On alternate days, the crew ate oatmeal and cheese instead of meat. Though hearty—a daily ration packed 4,500 calories—the sailors’ diet was as foul as it was monotonous. “Our bread indeed is but indifferent,” the *Endeavour*’s botanist, Joseph Banks, observed, “occasioned by the quantity of Vermin that are in it. I have often seen hundreds and thousands shaken out of a single bisket.” Banks catalogued five types of insect and noted the mustardy and “very disagreeable” flavor, which he likened to a medicinal tonic made from stag horns.

On the replica, we also enjoyed a considerable luxury denied Cook’s men: marine toilets and showers tucked discreetly in the forward hold. Up on the main deck, Todd showed us what the original sailors used: holed planks extending from the bow, utterly exposed in every sense. These were called

heads, or seats of ease. On Cook's second voyage, an unfortunate sailor was last seen using the head from which he fell and drowned.

Once we'd eaten and showered, Todd recommended we head straight for our hammocks. "Call a hands" was scheduled for six A.M., and many of us would have to rise before then for a shift on deck. This was also our last night in port. "Once the rocking and rolling starts," Todd warned, "you may not get much rest."

I hoisted myself into the hammock—and promptly tumbled out the other side. On the second try I managed a mummylike posture, arms folded tightly across my chest. At least I couldn't toss and turn as I normally do in bed. "I feel like a bat," moaned Chris, the crewman a few inches to my left, his nose almost brushing the ceiling.

To my right, lying with his feet past my head, swung Michael, a man built like Samson. As soon as he fell asleep, his massive limbs spilled out of his hammock and into mine. My face pressed against his thigh; a loglike arm weighed on my ankles. Then a storm came up and the ship started swaying. Michael's oxlike torso thudded against me, knocking my hammock against Chris's and back into Samson's. I felt like a carcass in a meat locker. The ship's timbers also creaked and groaned, adding to the snores and curses of my cabin mates.

At midnight, the watches changed. Crewmen thudded down the companionway and roused the new shift from their hammocks. Then a woman began sneezing and hacking. "I'm allergic to something down here," she moaned, having woken most of us up, "and I didn't bring any medicine."

I'd just managed a fitful doze when someone poked me hard in the ribs: four A.M. watch. Groggily pulling on my gear, I mustered on deck with several others. We were still near shore and had little to do except make sure that the anchor line didn't tangle. Loitering about the dark, empty ship, I felt oddly like a night guard at a museum.

This gave me a chance to become acquainted with my watch mates. Chris, my hammock neighbor, was a bespectacled psychology professor. Samsonesque Michael worked as a tugboat captain. The fourth member of our night watch, Charlie, had just retired after thirty-two years as a firefighter. "I guess I still need excitement," he said, when I asked why he'd signed on. "So I decided to try adventure travel."

"Adventure torture's more like it," Chris said. "I was lying there all night thinking, 'I volunteered for this? To be straitjacketed?'"

At seven A.M., we were called below for the last sitting of breakfast: porridge and toast with Vegemite, the bitter Australian spread that looks like creosote. "On deck in five minutes!" Todd shouted as soon as we'd sat down. We bolted our food and rushed to stow our hammocks. I'd already forgotten Todd's instructions: roped up, my sling looked bloated and uneven, like a strangled sausage. I crammed it as best I could into the stow hold and lunged up the companionway, thudding my head so hard I almost fell back down the steps.

"Okay," Todd said, clapping his hands. "Now that you're rested and fed, it's time for some hard labor." As far as I could gather, this meant yanking and tying down ropes. "It's Newton's third law: every action has an equal reaction," Todd explained. "You've got to ease on one side of the ship so you can haul on the other. Haul or ease away, either way the order is 'Haul away!' Take the line down the left side of the cleat, then do a figure eight with three turns and run it round the back and loop it. That's called a tugboat hitch." He paused for breath. "Everything clear?"

There were twelve of us on mainmast. I reckoned I could lose myself in the mob, or latch on to someone who knew what he or she was doing. "Stand by for cannon!" shouted a longhaired gunner wearing earmuffs. "Fire in the hole!" He lowered a blowtorch to a small pan of black powder, the

stepped away as the cannon expelled a cloud of smoke and wadded newspaper into the damp, foggy air.

The first mate shouted, "Haul away!" and I joined the others in tugging at the thick, heavy rope. Todd urged us on with an antique guncrew command: "Two-six heave! Put your back into it! For queen and country!" We yanked another rope, and then another, maneuvering some small part of the impossibly complex rigging. The horizontal yards shifted along the masts, like rotating crucifixes. The first of the ship's twenty-eight sails fluttered from the bowsprit. Rope rained down all around us, twenty miles of rope in all. After an hour of grabbing and tugging, I felt as though I'd been put to the rack.

Four older men wandered up from below, looking rested and relaxed. These were the ship's passengers, who paid a fat sum to occupy private cabins. Like almost everything else on the replica *Endeavour*, their presence hewed to the original. A month before the ship's departure, the Admiralty informed Cook that "Joseph Banks Esq.," a member of the Royal Society and "a Gentleman of Large Fortune, well versed in Natural History," would be accompanying the voyage, along with "his Suite consisting of eight Persons and their Baggage."

Though only twenty-five years old, Banks had inherited a vast estate and paid some £10,000—more than twice what the king contributed to the voyage, and roughly equivalent to a million dollars today—to join the expedition. His entourage on the *Endeavour* included two Swedish naturalists, two artists, two footmen, and two black servants, as well as Banks's greyhound and spaniel. Known collectively as supernumeraries, or the "gentlemen," Banks and his retinue had their own quarters and dined with Cook in the stern's airy "great cabin," far removed from the teeming mess deck.

The supernumeraries on the replica enjoyed similar privileges, including tea served to them in bone china cups. On deck, they could join in the work if they felt like it. At the moment, none did. "We're just deadweight," joked a burly man who occupied the cabin of the *Endeavour*'s astronomer Charles Green. "Look it up in the dictionary. 'Deadweight: a vessel's lading when it consists of heavy goods.'" He laughed. "Plus I croak from dysentery during the voyage—Charles Green, I mean."

Eavesdropping on the supernumeraries' banter, I felt a sullen solidarity with my sweating, grunting workmates. Even more than most blue-collar jobs, ours demanded teamwork. If we didn't clutch and release ropes at exactly the same moment, we were quickly pancaked, like losers at a tug-of-war match. Accustomed to spending my workdays alone, a man and his desk, I found it refreshing to labor in a group, in the open air, at hard physical toil.

Then again, we'd only just started. And the task I'd been dreading—going aloft—was about to commence. Todd jumped atop the rail and grabbed the shrouds, vertical lines leading to the mastheads that had smaller ropes, called ratlines, strung horizontally between them to create a rope ladder alongside the mast. "Try to keep three points of contact at all times with your feet and hands," Todd said, "and always go up the windward side of the mast so if there's a roll or blow you'll fall onto the deck rather than in the drink."

At first the climbing seemed easy. Freshly tarred, the shrouds were firm and sticky, easy to grasp. After a few minutes, we reached the underside of a platform called the fighting top. To surmount this we grasped cables called futtock shrouds and did a short but unnerving climb while dangling backward at a 45-degree angle. Then, clutching a bar at the rim of the platform, we hoisted ourselves up and onto the fighting top. A chill wind blew across the platform, making the temperature feel ten degrees cooler than on deck. It was a late September morning in the Pacific Northwest, balmy compared to many of the places Cook went. And we weren't even halfway up the mast. We also had something Cook's men lacked: our safety harnesses, which we attached to a secure line before the next maneuver.

called stepping onto the yard.

"Stepping" was a misnomer; we had to tiptoe sideways along a narrow, drooping foot line strung beneath the yard, which ran perpendicular to the mast. Each time a new person stepped on, the line quivered and bounced. I crab-walked to the end, perched over the water. This was the yardarm, from which men sentenced to death at sea were hanged. Just standing on the tightropelike line, leaning my belly against the yard, was unsettling enough. Then came actual labor. Bending awkwardly over the yard, as if flung across a gymnastic beam, we reached down to untie thick knots around the sails. Fumbling with the rope, I tried to focus tightly on my hands rather than let my gaze drift to the blurry water below. At one point I glanced straight ahead at the foremast watch, performing the same task. Six protruding rumps, legs dancing spastically on the foot line, arms and torsos lost in a tangle of ropes and sail.

When the job was done, we scuttled back to the fighting top, grinning at one another with nervous relief. My hands were shaking from adrenaline or cold, probably both. Dangling backward over the fighting top, I felt with my feet for the futtock shrouds and scrambled down to the deck as quickly as I could. For the first time all day I had a moment to rest, so I settled atop a life raft.

"No sitting on the boats!" a crewman barked. I headed toward the stern and tripped over the ankle-high tiller line, barking my shin and flopping onto the quarterdeck. I'd just got upright when another crewman said, "Mate, I wouldn't stand on that coiled line, unless you want to be hanging up in the rigging by your foot."

Finally finding a safe perch, I slumped on the deck, tired but exhilarated. A hard morning's work completed, a fear partly overcome. (The topmost yard, perched at twice the height of the one we'd just visited, remained to be conquered.) I was hungry and ready for a nap. I glanced at my watch. Only ten o'clock. "Mainmast to cleaning stations!" Todd yelled.

Dispatched below to scrub the galley, I swept the floor, wiped tables, washed dishes. This, at least, I knew, how to do. Leaning on my broom, I asked the cook, a New Zealander named Joanna, what was on the lunch menu.

"Food," she replied.

I glanced at the stove. "Gingerbread men?"

"I use a lot of ginger, calms the stomach," she said. "I don't use many other spices. You don't want foods with strong odors, in case they don't stay down."

The first mate charged down the stairs. Trailing his finger under the table I'd just wiped, Geoff barked, "What's all this rubbish here?" I followed him with a cloth. "And what's this, a bloody duddle ball?" I swept the floor again. Finishing the inspection, he frowned and said, "I rate this a pass. I expect better next time." As soon as he'd gone, Michael, my Samsonesque watch mate, muttered, "I thought a tugboat was bad, but this is a floating gulag."

Then Geoff's voice bellowed again from deep inside the ship. "Who is hammock fifteen? Hammock fifteen report here immediately!" I wearily fan through the numbers I'd been assigned since coming aboard: muster order, peg number, hammock ... fifteen. Perhaps, I thought* dreamily, the first mate was ordering me back to bed.

Geoff hunched over the hammock storage area with the rest of mainmast gathered round. Before I lay my bedding, which I'd clumsily stowed hours before. Geoff poked at it with his foot, like a detective probing a badly bundled corpse. "We've just got a message," he said, "your mother's not going to be here to make your bed today." While the rest looked on, I fumbled several times before finally stowing the hammock properly.

When Geoff returned to the quarterdeck, Todd gave me a sympathetic pat on the back. "Sit down

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