

*For Jacob
R.P.*

*For Jack
C.R.*

First published 2001 by Walker Books Ltd
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

This edition published 2014

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text © 2001 Richard Platt

Illustrations © 2001 Chris Riddell

Map used on the cover and pages 1, 95, 113 © National Maritime Museum, London

The right of Richard Platt and Chris Riddell to be identified respectively as the author
and illustrator of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the
Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

This book has been typeset in Truesdell, Humana Script and La Figura


Printed and bound in Great Britain by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, transmitted
or stored in an information retrieval system in any form or by any means, graphic,
electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, taping and recording,
without prior written permission from the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:
a catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-4063-5265-8

www.walker.co.uk



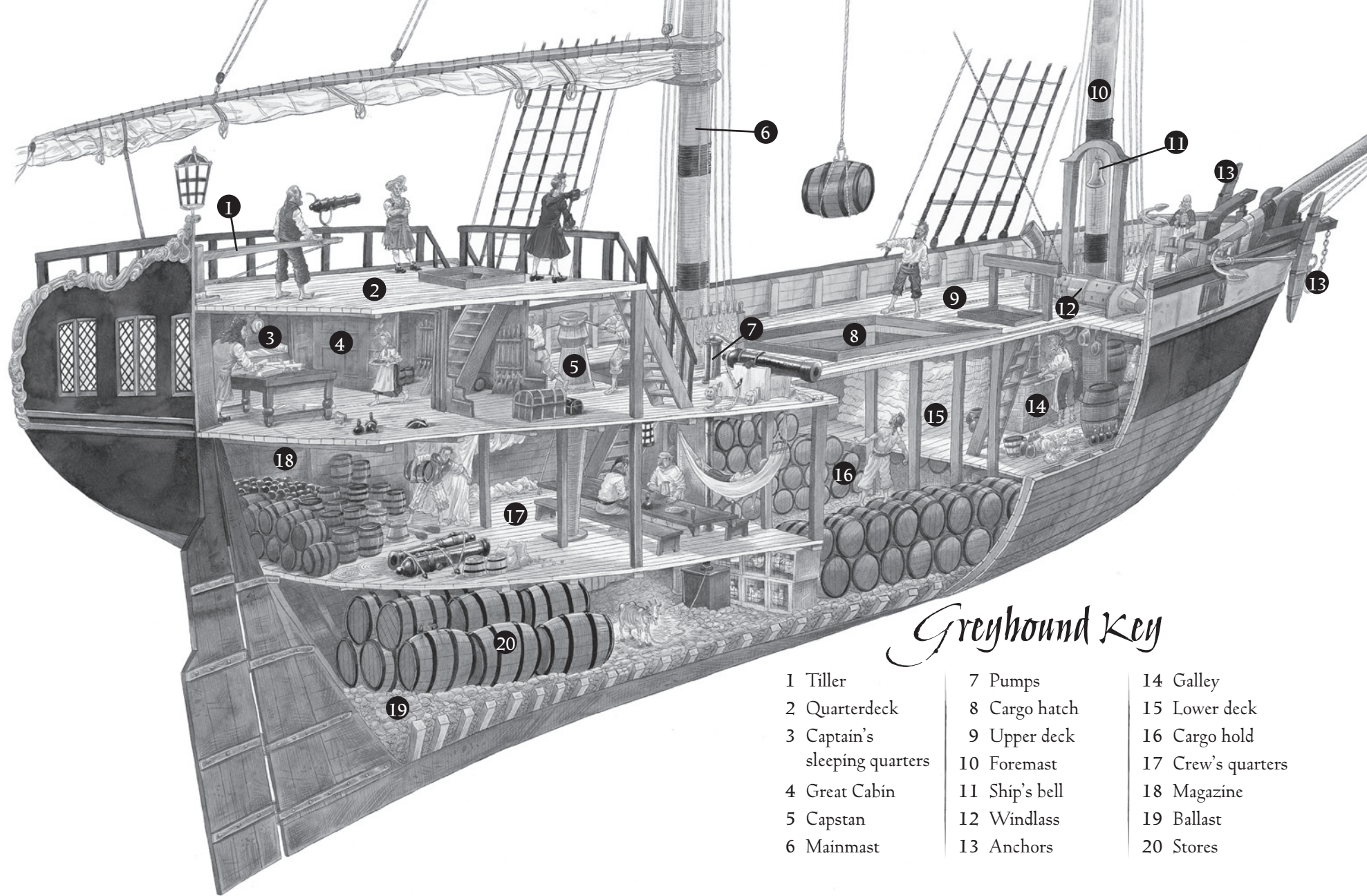
Pirate Diary

THE JOURNAL OF
Jack Carpenter

RICHARD PLATT
illustrated by CHRIS RIDDELL

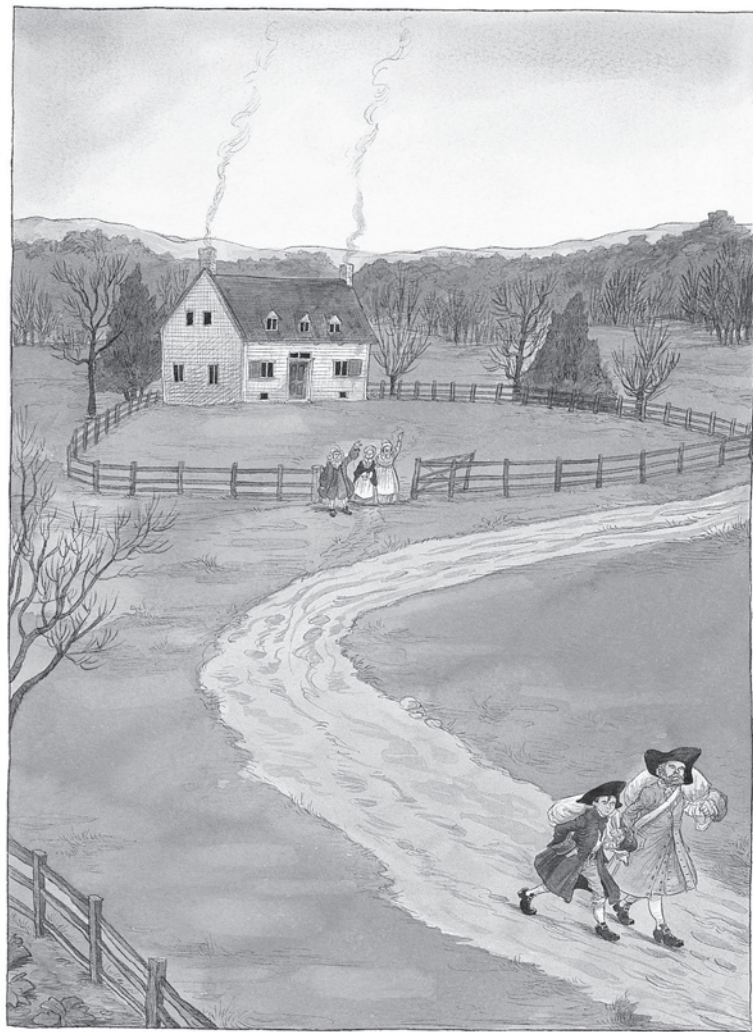


WALKER BOOKS
AND SUBSIDIARIES
LONDON • BOSTON • SYDNEY • AUCKLAND



Greyhound Key

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|
| 1 Tiller | 7 Pumps | 14 Galley |
| 2 Quarterdeck | 8 Cargo hatch | 15 Lower deck |
| 3 Captain's
sleeping quarters | 9 Upper deck | 16 Cargo hold |
| 4 Great Cabin | 10 Foremast | 17 Crew's quarters |
| 5 Capstan | 11 Ship's bell | 18 Magazine |
| 6 Mainmast | 12 Windlass | 19 Ballast |
| | 13 Anchors | 20 Stores |



THIS IS THE JOURNAL OF
Take Carpenter

*I begin on the twenty-third day of
September in the year 1716. It is the third
year of the reign of our good King George,
and the tenth of my life.*

*F*OR AS LONG as I can remember, I have lived in the
village of Holyoak, North Carolina. My family came to
the American colonies from England. I knew not my
mother, for she died when I was yet a baby. My father,
a medical doctor, raised me with the help of his two
sisters. From them I learned my letters. This was my
only schooling.

Now, though, my life is to change, for I am to GO
TO SEA! My father wants me to study medicine but

believes I should see more of the world first. Thus I am to become a SAILOR – at least for a while.

His plan is that I should join his brother, Will, who is already a seaman. My father sent a letter to the owner of Will's ship, who agreed to take me on the crew.

Now the ship has docked and Will has come to fetch me. He is a fine man. He has the same face as my father, but his hands are larger and rough to the touch. Whenever he is ashore he comes to see us, bringing strange gifts and wondrous yarns. My aunts laugh and call them "when-I-was" tales, for this is how they always begin.

Will has told me of sea monsters, mermaids, and of floating islands made of ice. He has seen a whirlpool, sailed through a hurricane and escaped from pirates. And soon I am to see all of these things FOR MYSELF.

I write this on my last day at home, for tomorrow I shall return with my Uncle Will to his ship, the *Sally Anne*.

Monday 24th

This morn Will woke me before sun-up. He bid me fetch my belongings, but laughed out loud when I did. "Fie, man!" he snorted. "Do you think we are going to sea in a tailor's shop?" With this he emptied half the clothes from my bag. Seeing my glum face, he told me they were the clothes of a landsman. (This, he explained, is what sailors call those who are used to a life ashore.) "Such finery is no use on a ship, and there's precious little space aboard to stow 'em."

Thus lightly loaded we set off at dawn. My father clapped me upon the shoulder, wished me luck and bid Will take care of me. My aunts both hugged me and dabbed my eyes with their aprons (though they would have better dabbed their own, which needed it more).

The journey to Charleston took us all the day and I most eagerly desired to see the sea. When we arrived I said to Will that I had expected the ocean to be bigger, for I thought I spied the other shore in the distance.

“Nay, Jake!” he laughed in reply. “This here is but a wide river. The open ocean is three leagues east and is far too big to see across.”

Our inn for the night is a mean and grimy place. Even the straw mattresses are lumpy and dusty.

Tuesday 25th

Today we had some ill luck when we went to join our ship. We were yet two streets away from the quayside when Will stopped suddenly. He gazed up at the masts that towered above the houses. “She’s not there,” he gasped, pointing upwards. “The *Sally Anne*! Her masthead is gone!” With this he dropped his bag and, forgetting me, raced to the waterside.

When I caught up with him, he was sitting gloomily with the harbour master. He told Will his ship had found a cargo sooner than expected and had sailed on the evening tide. I was sorely disappointed. Forcing a smile, Will said, “Never mind, Jake. Our luck will change.”

Then the harbour master added, “*Greyhound* is looking for fit and able men. You could do worse than sign on at yonder inn” – pointing out an ale house – “if you can put up with old Captain Nick!” Will shrugged. “Beggars cannot be choosers.”

We found a man from the *Greyhound* sitting in a back room. To my surprise, he asked us no questions, but bid us write our names in a book below the names of other members of the crew. Thus it was that by signing my name I ceased to be just the son of a doctor and became a sailor!

We go aboard tomorrow.



Wednesday 26th

This morning Will and I joined our ship. I felt a true landsman, for in walking up the plank from the quayside I lost my footing. Before I could topple into the water, though, Will hauled me on board. One member of the crew saw my misfortune and, when he had recovered from his laughter, led Will and me down into the ship.

Will took down a roll of canvas and, using the ropes at each end, hung it up between two deck timbers. "This hammock is where you shall sleep, Jake. By day you stow it away with your clothes rolled inside." I was thrice tipped out of my hammock before I learned how to climb into it. Now I am here, though, I find it as comfortable as any bed.

The *Greyhound* is an odd place. I am to live in a world of wood and water. Almost everything I look upon is wood. That which is not wood is canvas, rope or tar.

I was eager to explore the ship, but before I could do this Will set me to wash the decks. He explained that they must be kept damp, or the boards shrink apart,

letting in the sea. This was a long and tiresome chore, but when it was complete I was free to watch the seamen load the cargo.

They did this with the aid of one of the ship's yards (these being the stout beams crossing the mast, from which the sails hang). Using ropes fixed to yards, it was easier work to hoist the tubs and barrels from the quayside.

There are two tall masts. The front one, which I must learn to call the foremast, has yards for three great square sails. The mainmast behind it likewise has three of these square sails. But behind this mainmast there is also an odd-shaped sail stretched between two spars, making the shape a little like a letter K. I learned that our ship is called a "brig" on account of this rigging (which is what sailors call the arrangement of the sails, masts and ropes).

Here I must end, for daylight fades. Candles are permitted only inside a horn lantern, which protects the ship against fire. But it also makes the candle's light into a dull glow that is useless for writing.



Thursday 27th

I already have a friend – the cook's boy, Abraham. He promised me, "I'll make sure your belly is never empty if you learn me my letters." This seemed a good deal to me,

but after my first meal yesterday my mind was changed. I had food aplenty, but I could not guess what it was, and ate little of it.

The upper deck of the *Greyhound* I measured today by walking: it is thirty of my paces. At the back is the captain's Great Cabin. At least, I am told it is his cabin, but he has yet to come out of it.

Near the back, beneath the upper deck, is a cabin for the rest of us. This is where we sling our hammocks at night and eat our meals by day, at a table let down on ropes.

The hold in the belly of the ship holds the cargo. I am

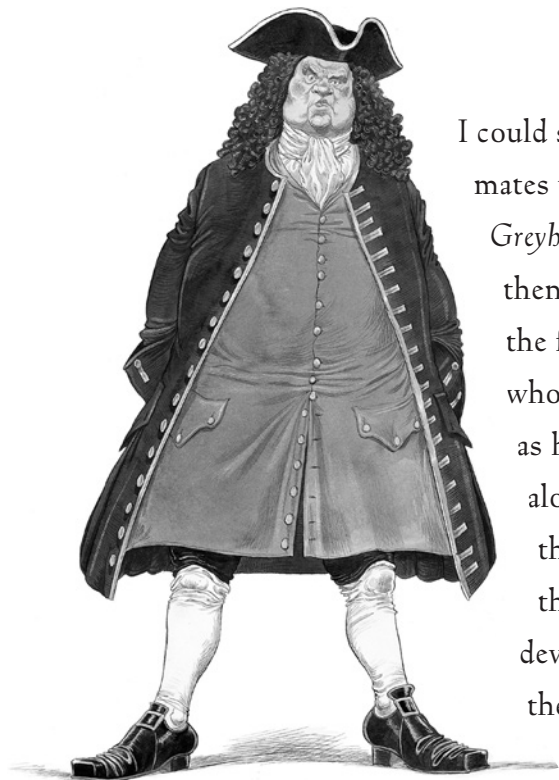
not allowed to go down there until we are at sea, but from its stink, I guess that we are carrying salted fish. When I ask what is in the hold and where we are bound, Will tells me: "Best not to ask too many questions on board this ship, lad, if you know what is good for you."

My head reels with all I have learned. Every part of the ship has its own strange name. The front is not "front", but "fore" or "stem" or "bows". The back is "aft" or "abaft", or "stern", or "astern". Right is "starboard" and left is "port" (yet some call it "larboard", perhaps just to baffle me further!).

Saturday 29th

In the middle of last night a crewman (it was too dark to see who) pitched me rudely out of my hammock. "Come on, lad, we're getting under way." Still half asleep, I clambered up the companionway (which is a ship's staircase, as steep as a ladder) and on to the deck.

The moon was almost full, and looking around

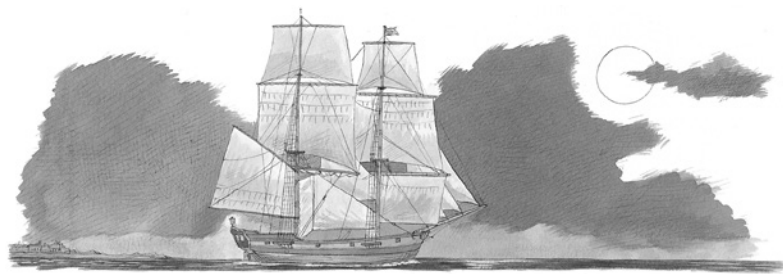


I could see that my shipmates were readying the *Greyhound* to leave. It was then I saw the captain for the first time. I guessed who he was, for as soon as he hissed “Away aloft” in a low voice the sailors hurried up the rigging as if the devil himself had given the order.

When the captain glowered at me, I felt a sudden chill, but before he could speak to me, Will beckoned me over. “Jake, jump ashore and loosen the forward rope from yonder bollard. Let it slide into the water – no splash, now – then run aft and jump aboard.” It took all my strength to unwind the great rope from the

wooden stump on the quayside. The wind pulled the *Greyhound*’s head away from the dock, and I saw why Will had told me to run aft. A yard of water already separated ship from shore and I had to leap to cross the quickly widening gap.

Above us, sailors unfurled the foresail, and it filled with wind. This was enough to make the *Greyhound* glide smoothly away from the dock and into the channel. The tide had just turned, and the current helped us along. Soon we left the harbour lights of Charleston behind us, and as the sun rose over Sullivan’s Island we sailed into the open ocean.



Sunday 30th

I discovered this morning why we sailed at night. Captain Nick owes money to Charleston merchants who stocked the ship, and to craftsmen who repaired it. They would have seized the *Greyhound* if we had not slipped away on the tide. He says that when he returns from this trip, he will pay what he owes with interest. However, I doubt the truth of this, for Will has found out that our captain owes the crew three months' wages. "He will keep back ours too," he told me, "to make sure that we stay with the ship."

Abraham at last answered my questions about the cargo. Apart from the fish, all of it is contraband, which is to say, smuggled goods. Smuggling seems hardly a crime to me. It just means avoiding the customs taxes that ships pay to unload their cargo. Abe says that "Even the king's men who search the ship ignore contraband as long as we give 'em a share!" A couple of our shipmates were listening to us talking and one butted in thus:

"Why should we Americans pay taxes to an English king who cares nothing about us and gives us no say in the way our affairs are run? So we avoid ports in England or Jamaica where we must pay the customs fees. Instead we unload cargoes in Spanish, Dutch and French ports in the West Indies and pay nothing."

Our destination is Martinique, where we shall sell the cargo. As I suspected, we are carrying salt fish, but also rice and timber. We will return with sugar, molasses, Dutch gin, French brandy and lace – all contraband.

OCTOBER

Monday 1st

Until today, Will had been looking after me and setting me chores. But as a jest on my family name, the captain has given me as a servant to Adam, the carpenter. I am to help Adam and learn his work. Already he has taught me the names of all his tools so that I can hand them to him when he needs them.

Tuesday 2nd

Now we are well out to sea the winds and waves are much bigger. Every rope and sail on the *Greyhound* appears stretched to bursting point. Every timber seems to creak and complain, and the seawater licks the deck.

I am very seasick, and suspect that the change of food may not help my guts. We eat mostly a dull stew of beans, with some salt meat and fish and some cheese. The cook told me: “You’d better get to like beans and salty hog, lad. It may be dull but ’tis nutriment enough – and to be sure you shall eat precious little else while we sail.” The cook prepares the food with Abraham in a cabin at the bow of the ship. His hearth there is enclosed in bricks to keep the heat from the ship’s timbers.

Ship’s biscuits (which everyone calls bread) are as hard as nails. When I first bit into my biscuit, I discovered a dozen little white worms that had made tunnels into it. Abraham helped me. “Eat them in the



dark. Or if you cannot wait until nightfall, tap them on the deck. This knocks the worms from their homes.”

Wednesday 3rd

Adam sent me to climb to the very top of the mainmast, for as well as helping him I must share in the work of sailing the ship. Abraham came with me as my guide.

Though I have climbed many trees, none was like this. Even in a gentle breeze a mast pitches and sways as if it is trying to shake you off. This made me feel sick with fear, but I tried to hide it lest Abraham guessed my alarm.

Abraham and I have the job of setting and handing the upper topsails (which means letting them down and rolling them up). These are the highest and smallest sails, but they are heavy enough. As we grow stronger we shall move down the mast and set the bigger sails. Abraham tried to teach me the names of each of the ten sails. In return I taught him the names of the twenty-six letters. He learned his lesson quicker than I learned mine.



Sunday 7th

Since we left port a powerful ocean current has slowed our progress. Noah, our first mate (he commands us when the captain is ill or sleeping), says, “It is like sailing a ship uphill!” Nor has the wind been kind to us. It seemed unsure which way to blow.

At last though we have sailed into easier waters. The ocean is calmer, and much bluer than it has been until now. The winds are steadier too. This gives us a welcome rest: when the winds change often we must adjust the sails each minute.

This afternoon, Abraham beckoned to me, hissing, “Jake! Come! The captain sleeps in his bunk and I have sneaked out from the Great Cabin a chart, but make haste, for I must replace it before he wakes.” On this sea-map he showed me our course and bid me read out the names of places we shall pass by.