

*A Curious Shipwreck*



# **A Curious Shipwreck**

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*for May Spence*

*and in memory of Stan Spence, 1918–2002*





## **A wreck is a human tragedy & nature shows no mercy**

Last night nobody came so I slipped into a two-piece costume & accompanied the pirate to his ship. Efficiency & equality are not always happy bedfellows yet there's mounting evidence that fish are more intelligent than people give them credit for being. Instead of physical adventures, her mind wandered through a maze of daydreams. As I approached the shape, it crouched down & became smaller. Perhaps we have to become more sophisticated in our approach to the visual image. As he spelt out the link between the men in boots & the men in suits, I walked back rapidly to the compound, waving as I passed the orang-utan.

Claustrophobia reigns over the elegant, marbled corridors as a gentle trickle of allegation & innuendo threatens to become a torrent. She started to say something but then turned & climbed the stairs, looking back at me over her shoulder for the first few steps. For centuries, our island nation has been seafaring & roaming, hedonistic & insatiable, curiously mercantile & unable to stay put. Why is it then, that so many pirates find it difficult to express themselves in what they wear? In anticipation, the old tar cleaned the hilt of his cutlass & loosened the blade in its sheath. Yet he stopped himself, suddenly realising that a plot revelation was spiralling out of control.

As well as getting a picture of the man I planned to meet, I discovered much more while I was on his trail. "He has come to me, the silent boatman, to ferry me across the wine-dark sea". This was not an encouraging

opening to a conversation but whatever happened to the Bard of Salford? She was on her knees, pressed against me, & the carriage was swaying like a ship. Increasingly, I find myself adopting unnatural positions in order to move about at all. Her recovery sparked a period of frantic literary activity & several books were published which offered practical help with navigation. Choosing what you want in life is an art best guided from the heart but many of the overweight pirates still refuse the offer of therapy.

## **At that moment a breath of wind parted the curtains**

There was a mocking smile on her bloated face which seemed to send him mad. Driven by the imperatives of commerce, most contemporary movies are little more than products. Small groups of men move about silently, yet there is no index of scale, no reassuring hint of time or place. “Just look at you, I had no idea you were such a fan of the mollusc”. Due to the credit crunch, city financiers are facing a crackdown on expenses yet they also believe that we’ve lost the ancient world’s respect for the night. So, the set was a fantasy but what about the story? We’ll pursue the pirates as long as we have food & water. There may be no place like home but we always wander around thinking that there could be.

All these years in the wilderness & what have we accomplished? Supporters range from cocktail-sipping socialists to headscarved old buccaneers in coastal retirement villages. Is anxiety about sleep keeping us all awake? Yet there’s so much to do that you’ll never run out of inspiration & things to try. A friend once told me that he felt like a ghost in his own life but he picks up the bill for breakfast as if it’s a perfectly normal thing to do. Much depends on the quality of the apples. I’m not sure if they were pirates but they wore high boots & had long black hair & heavy black moustaches. At that moment a breath of wind parted the curtains & I moved across the room to the window.

There is no relief in sight for those hankering after the model’s life but when did pathologists start looking like Tara Fitzgerald? Argentina is reaping the soya while the sun shines. From below deck she produced a bottle of cabernet

& we both had a glass. Because of their large beaks, pirates are reckoned to be ferocious adversaries, although there is a tendency for humankind to see itself as being somehow apart from the natural world. What does it mean to control a business where stocks are low & prices high? My breathing slowly returned to normal along with my heart rate. There is surely no cause for alarm but he had an excessive, almost hysterical attention to detail. Undeterred, they avoided capture & returned to their piratical careers.

## Let's consider other people's words & how we misuse them

Many are the actors & pirates who rely on others putting words into their mouths. Here already is the rich aromatic breath of resins, a presage of the smell of pinewoods & summer days. Yet how could such a tiny, wingless creature reach the empty island so quickly? Perhaps the difference is merely a matter of tone yet pirates are crippling themselves with impact exercises. Although salt is very much derided these days, we still have a deep desire & craving for something fishy. Interest is fixed for twelve months, calculated daily on the cleared balance & paid at maturity.

One thing is certain: offering steady employment with benefits & holiday pay is a practice which has fallen out of economic fashion. With hits like *Don't you want me, baby*, The Human League took an art agenda onto the high street. There were bottles flying everywhere but the pirates simply decided to carry on with their performance. Waterspouts pick up fish & transport them live to nearby lakes & streams. It's a good thing we don't have to apply these rules to potential lovers. There is some evidence that this process is underway yet today you can sail close by the islands without ever guessing their violent history.

Fish, to the Mesopotamians, were majestic creatures, yet it's time to step off the scale & get out the tape measure. What has prompted France's youth to turn from sensible

tipplers into full-time abusers? For their part, the factory owners are in no rush to expand the size of their workforce, so you really get the flavours dancing in your mouth. Pirates don't come to enjoy the floats & the music, they come to commit acts of violence. Let's consider other people's words & how we misuse them. More to the point, aren't our campuses supposed to be overflowing with troublemaking, tenured radicals? Yet every sea has its own characteristic which contributes to the texture of pirate society.

## **But it's not file-sharing, it's piracy . . .**

Faint shuffling sounds reached us now & then & an occasional hollow beating of wings. Should you call your children George & Emma or plump for Storm & Savannah? For most of the summer, the issue was pushed to the background by other events yet the pirates were off the leash & on the lash. Silver hit the water sideways, broke a leg & was still on crutches a year later. As the pirate turned towards me I noticed a small blemish on her left shoulder. I didn't think anything worse could happen but as I reeled away I saw a sight even more terrifying. As with all markets, the basic forces of supply & demand are in operation.

For the first few months I visited him, he seemed cheerful & sanguine, despite sleeping in a room with three pirates of hideous appearance & terrifying habits. London has become a tropical lagoon filled with weird & wonderful creatures. Yet the Tudor-bowl haircut has been gaining a disturbing momentum among male models & hipsters. He was exhausted, his muscles ached & his back & arms were bruised, but the old tar became quiet again, his brief escapade forgotten. There is something melancholy about the sea wrestling back land we have made our own. In twenty years we may be looking at jellyfish & chips rather than fish & chips.

It's been suggested that alcohol stimulates the striatum, an area of the brain important in sexual attraction. What kind of meaningful democracy can emerge from such a thought? Alice knew little about pirates yet her education

left her with a skewed & slightly unlikely mix of knowledge. Higher energy prices translate into higher food prices & higher food prices tend to create serious political discontent. She had a knack for stating the obvious yet some of the pirates glanced back & made vague protective gestures. Marinade is the noun & marinate the verb: pirates often get this wrong but after a drink everyone looks more desirable. In a few moments Silver slowly rose & shook himself.



## **Solutions, whole or partial, are not entirely lacking**

There was screaming in the background, then the radar went silent. Tell him if he doesn't find water soon, he's going to drown. Previously a good student, she was suspended twice for cheating. There were fears last night that the problem could spread south of the border. I was in a fairly large cabin, furnished with dark wood, sofas & brass fittings, yet the rivals never failed to come to blows. How I wish I'd lurked outside the polling-station with an anti-Boris banner. Focus in on a cone-snail & make a friend for life. Do films about changing the world ever make any money? Mass executions of pirates are often staged to deter others yet boredom is just what we need.

It was growing towards dusk & the autumn light was setting in but we recommend Devil's Nest, a scrambling of avocado, sour cream & spicy sausage. Body armour & helmets are either worn or within reach at all times. She was not her usual sweet self & she bit me in three places. From out of nowhere, a speedboat came alongside the tanker & opened fire with machine-guns & rocket-propelled grenades. Then they both bowed low & their curls became hopelessly entangled. A ship is a small world. To the best of my knowledge, Heathcote Williams has never appeared in a film about pirates yet I knew I had to go my own way, that it was better for me to be alone. The fish-footman began by producing an enormous package from under his arm.

From time to time, there's an agitation to crack down on pirates yet the threat of a bite is far more effective than the actual bite. What's a trademark worth? She pressed her hand softly over her belly & her smile broadened. On the contrary, nobody

wants to be bored but Groucho Marx's solution was to ring people up in the middle of the night & shout at them. Suddenly, men's skin-deep beauty has become their unique selling-point, while librarians are obsessive classifiers who impose on chaos an order they know to be fiction. How do we get down to the beach? There is a lofty ambition at work here. Alice led the way & the whole party swam to the shore in unison. In the privacy of his own home he expressed himself through the medium of creative dance.

## Pirates

After considering the known facts the green pirate opted for the Sargasso Sea. Strange mutating snake-things inhabited the area. They were mainly bright green, similar to the pirate's emerald hue but they glowed with uncanny quickness, electric deep in an awkward kind of way. They bothered no-one but trouble was in sure for sureness. "Too many adjectives", said the pirate. "This is not the sort of story I want to belong to".

Pirate the yellow operated in a different thought zone altogether. After blanketing out the QWERTYUIOPETCETERA of his 1920's model he pondered the non-evolution of the keyboard motel. Need a holiday, he thought, trying hard to think himself back into a REAL narrative but it was already too late in the afternoon of his discontent and post-modernism had been and GONG eloquently resuscitating its hermaphrodite nature along the way. Brother Blue will help me out here, he cogitated thoughtlessly, unaware of the inherent contradiction of this statement.

Blue was also thoughtless, plundering the horse's mane with an Irish contingent of wordless buccaneers. "Action is allness, words is nowt,"—a hearty truism he took in with his mother's milk. Except, of course, he had no mother, being made instantly upon the conjunction of a full stop and an artless colon wherein their feckless copulatory impulse rendered him alive and full of pain. Kicking against the pricks, he thought to himself. Time for Red to set the record straight.

Redness was a condition of great anxiety to the fourth pirate, the one most readily available to the kiddywinks after too much RE and a double dose of MATHEMATICS. Fearful stuff, I remember it well. Despite such an almighty setback, he sailed the seven seas of cod liver oil, warming his frozen hands in times of need at the brightness of his name's content and vigorously pumping iron. "These cannonballs are all too ominous", he joked lugubriously. "Time to head for land I think and Black ought to take a turn at the wheel".

Black was rightly named, unlike the others, whose apparel was not suited to their titles. He was adorned from head to feet in a not-a-colour negative,