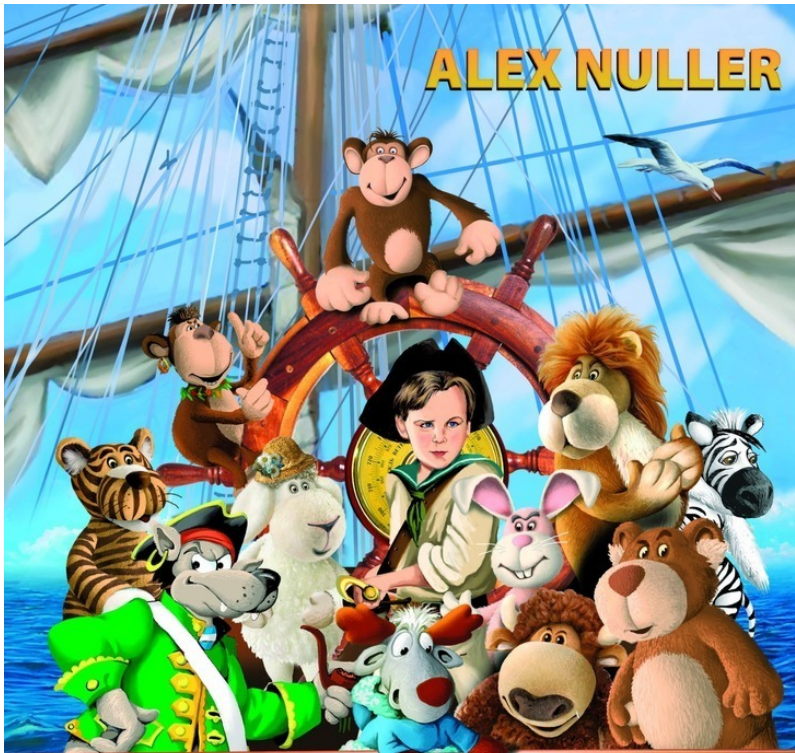


ALEX NULLER



MICHAEL'S ARK

Alex Nuller

Michael's Ark

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Аннотация

Приключенческая сказочная история на английском языке для детей от 6 до 12 лет. Взрослому будет нескучно читать эту историю вслух малышу. Ребенок между прочим открывает для себя континенты, страны, их обитателей и обычаи, постигает устройство парусного корабля, узнает о морских пиратах, аборигенах Африки и тайнах Бермудского треугольника. На протяжении 28 глав герои общаются, помогают друг другу, узнают новое, шутят, изобретают, борются с трудностями. Книга полезна для изучения английского языка

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Michael's Ark

Alex Nuller

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Foreword

This is an adventure book. It's all about the sea, ships, wild animals, pirates and Flying Dutchmen. And about friendship, and home. Because home is the place we go back to with our friends after all our sojourns.

But I should warn you straight off that this book is a bit unusual. You see, I wanted to please all my readers at the same time, both big and small. Adults usually get bored reading books out loud to children. So I decided to help them, by writing a book in which adults will find something to laugh at too. But it's hard to please adults; what's more, they like long, educated words.

So I wish to beg the forgiveness of those youngest readers among you for using so many complicated words that you don't know. But there are explanations for most of the hard words at the bottom of the page. Those of you who want to read them can read them; those of you who don't, don't have to.

And now, full speed ahead!

Chapter 1. Moosie

Moosie had always lived in the house. Mike didn't remember how he got there or where he came from. Moosie himself said he came from the North.

“And where is the North?” little Mike would ask.

“It's that way!” Moosie said, pointing behind him with his paw, so that north was always behind his back.

Moosie had long soft horns. Moosie called them his “handlers”. Mike would explain to him that they're not “handlers”, but “antlers”, but Moosie would answer that other animals may have antlers, but he had “handlers”. He had soft little hooves at the end of his legs. Moose usually have four hooves, but Moosie had only two, so he walked on his hind legs. His front legs had short paws that barely reached around his belly. And he had a long, soft nose. Moosie loved to stick his nose about and smell everything around him.

Moosie had white fur, especially in his younger days. He got a little greyer as he got older, but when he talked about himself he still said “I'm little white Moosie”, even though he was hardly little; together with his “handlers”, he reached Mike's nose.

Moosie wore a blue hooded jacket that hardly reached the middle of his belly. The jacket had white fur on the cuffs and bottom, and Moosie was quite fond of it. He almost never took it off, except when he took a bath. And Moosie didn't like to take

baths. He was afraid that he would get wet all through and never dry off. So he only took a bath once a month, and even then he didn't dip himself all the way in the water, but rubbed himself down with a soft white sponge using baby shampoo. And then he would spend all day drying off on the radiator, wrapped in a clean bath towel.

Generally speaking, Moosie was nice fellow, but a worrywart. He was always worrying about catching cold and getting sick. As soon as it started to rain outside, Moosie would crawl under a blanket and say that he would not go out, since his "handlers" might catch a chill and his hooves would get all wet. Mike was used to him acting like that and he never asked Moosie to go out when it was raining.

Mike and Moosie were very good friends and never quarrelled. Well, almost never. Whenever Moosie got upset with Mike, he would puff up his cheeks, climb on the sofa and hide under a throw blanket, horns and all. Mike would go to him right away to apologize, saying: "Moosie please forgive me!" And Moosie would stick his nose out from under the blanket, thrust out his lower lip and grumble "You hurt my feelings – me, so little and so white! And I'm not Moosie, I'm Theodorus Moosovich."

That was is full name. But Moosie almost never used it. That is, he kept it in reserve for when somebody hurt his feelings, or when he felt like showing off. How he ever got that name Mike never knew. What's more, Moosie couldn't properly explain how he got it either, and would say "That's my name, that's all."

Moosie ate only lichen. That is, he ate everything – vegetables and fruit, but he called it all lichen. For example, apples were “apple lichen”; carrots were “carrot lichen”. And when he saw a melon on the table, he cried “That’s lichen. Melon lichen!” Then he would add “Only Moosie eats lichen, so it’s for me!” But Moosie wasn’t greedy; he always shared a piece of “lichen” with Mike, and sometimes he gave him two or three pieces.

Mike wondered why Moosie called all the food lichen. After all, reindeer eat lichen, and Moosie wasn’t a reindeer, he was a moose. And his horns were almost like the kind a real moose has.

One day, Mike decided to get Moosie to tell him what he did before he came to live at the house. That evening, after Mike washed up and brushed his teeth, Moosie went to bed with him, as usual.

“Moosie, tell me a story”, Mike asked.

“I don’t know any stories”, Moosie said.

“Then tell me something about yourself”, Mike suggested.
“What did you do before you came here?”

“I migrated”, Moosie said, rather unhelpfully.

“And where did you migrate?” Mike asked.

That way, up North”, with his paw, Moosie pointed behind himself, at the closet.

“And what was there around there up North?” Mike pressed on.

“Up North there was the tundra”, Moosie said, adding

“I migrated around the tundra!”



“And what did you do there?” Mike asked.

“I dug up lichen”, Moosie explained.

“And how did you dig it up?” Mike asked

“I dug under the snow with my hoof, pushed the snow away and ate up the lichen under it”.

“Did you migrate by yourself?”

“No”, Moosie said, “I was with a pack.”

“A pack of moose?”

“No, a pack of reindeer.”

And you were Moosie then?”

“No”, Moosie said, “I was a reindeer then.”

This surprised Mike. “Moosie, how did you change from a reindeer into a moose?”

“I didn’t change”, Moosie said, “I just grew up and became Moosie.”

Mike thought this over and then asked “So, are you going to change into somebody else?”

Moosie sat silent for a moment.

“No”, he said, “probably not.”

Mike thought about this. He thought about whether one type of animal could really turn into another type. He wondered if Moosie might keep growing and become an elephant. How big would he be, and how could we put him up here? And then he imagined Moosie digging his soft hooves into the sharp crusty ice, getting to the lichen, wandering around the tundra in the

Arctic night and not being afraid of his “handlers” catching a chill. And then he decided to think about who Moosie’s mommy and daddy were. But he never quite did, because he fell asleep.

Chapter 2. Camel

On the very day before Christmas, a camel showed up at the house. He was sitting on the floor under the Christmas tree and attentively scrutinizing the room with his tiny eyes under his frizzy brows. He sported a small knit cap, with clumps of ruddy fur sticking out from underneath.

Mike came into the living room. It was dark; the only light came from the string of lights on the Christmas tree, and the star on top.

“Mommy, daddy!” Mike cried. “Come quick, look at what Santa Claus brought me!”

But mommy and daddy were in no hurry to come to the living room. Instead, the camel started to talk. His voice was singsong and nasally, as if he was memorizing what he was saying.

“First of all, young man, I’m not a ‘what’, but a ‘who’”.

“Secondly, by your leave I shall blandly ignore your speculation¹ regarding Santa Claus”.

“Now then, allow me to introduce myself: Dromedary Camel, which would signify a ‘one-humped camel’. You may call me Dromedary”.

Mike stood there popeyed with his mouth hanging open. He understood almost nothing of what the Camel had said to him.

¹ Pay no attention to your idea

“Your name is Dreama what? Mike asked.

“Hmpf . . .,” the Camel sniffed. “Young man, I can see that you are as of yet not conversant with complex lexical constructions². Hence, I am obliged to repeat that my name is Dromedary Camel”.

² Familiar with difficult words



“Camel”, Mike said, “I didn’t quite understand everything you said. Can I just call you “Dreamer”?”

The camel put all four of his hooves in front of himself, put his head on them and thought for a moment.

“On one hand”, Camel began, “addressing me as ‘Dreamer’ smacks of a certain familiarity³. On the other hand, if one wishes to remain in a home and to make a favourable impression⁴, it won’t do to be too fastidious⁵ in such matters. Hence, I have no objection to you calling me ‘Dreamer’, young man”.

Mike was beginning to understand some of what Camel was saying.

“And I’m Mike!” Mike said. “You can call me Mike.”

“Pleased to make your acquaintance, Mike”, Dreamer said, “however, allow me to observe that the use of nicknames is somewhat questionable in a formal relationship⁶”.

“You don’t need to be questionable with me”, Mike said. “I’m still a kid”.

“Very well”, Camel said. “We shall refer to each other on intimate terms, even though such forms of address presuppose an amicable relationship⁷ between the parties involved”.

³ Being too friendly when we don’t know each other very well.

⁴ Make sure everybody likes you

⁵ Fussy

⁶ You shouldn’t do it with somebody you don’t know well

⁷ Means that we think we’re friends

“There’s no need for us to be amicable either. We can be friends instead”, Mike said. “We’re all friends here in this house. Let’s be friends!”

Camel considered this briefly. “I am afraid that you’re not taking my meaning precisely, young man.

“However, although a proposal such as yours may be somewhat premature⁸, it is nonetheless quite gratifying⁹ for a lonely camel. Therefore”, Camel said, raising his head to Mike, “I am pleased to accept it. And allow me to mark the commencement¹¹ of our friendship by referring to you as ‘my young friend’”.

“You can call me that, if you want to,” Mike said. “It’s okay with me”.

Mike took Camel in his arms and sat him on the sofa.

“Dreamer,” said Mike, “why do you talk so funny?”

“And what is it that you find humorous about my speech, my young friend?” Camel asked.

“Well, it’s not easy to understand what you say. Can you say things a little simpler?”

Once again Camel stopped to think this over.

“I shall try,” he said, “but I can’t promise”.

Mike wanted to know as much as he could about his new acquaintance.

“Where do you come from, Dreamer?” Mike asked.

⁸ It seems too early

⁹ It makes me happy. ¹¹ Beginning

“I come from Africa, from the desert”.

“And what did you do there?”

“I once worked in a caravan as a camel.”

“And what kind of work did you do as a camel?”

“I busted my hump carrying lots of heavy things across the desert”, Camel said.

“And where did you learn to talk like that?”

“I subsequently studied for a long time and completed the curriculum in applied linguistics¹⁰ at the University of Alexandria¹¹, where I graduated with a first.”

“With a first what?” Mike asked.

“First honours,” Camel said patiently. “Summa cum laude¹².”

“Ah!” Mike said. “So you went to summer school.”

“My young friend”, Camel said, “it is no simple thing to conduct a conversation with you, given your primitive command of the language. Furthermore, I am quite tired from my journey. Would you happen to have some saksaul sprigs for your new friend?”

“What’s six-all?” Mike asked.

“Not six-all, saksaul”, the camel corrected. “It is a plant of the Amaranthaceae family, a shrub or small tree with forked branches and segmented shoots, which camels use for food.”

Mike thought about this and said:

¹⁰ The study of how language is used.

¹¹ The biggest University in Africa

¹² With highest honours (Latin)

“It sounds like you’re hungry, Dreamer. But we only have one tree in the house, and that’s the Christmas tree, and you can’t eat that now. There are ornaments on it. And we don’t have any saksaul, either.”

“Perhaps you have some camel thorn in the house?” asked Camel.

“No”, Mike said sadly. “We only have thorns on the cactus”.

“Very well”, Camel sighed. “Bring on the cactus. One must adapt one’s self to a new environment”, as Darwin¹³ said.

¹³ A famous scientist that lived 150 years ago.

Chapter 3. How Camel Met Moosie

One morning Mike started off on a walk, while Camel stayed home. Camel fussed around the room, pacing back and forth, and just couldn't get comfortable. Sometimes he stopped, sat down on the rug, stretched out his hooves in front of himself and laid his head on them. Then he would stretch out one hoof from the bunch, scratch behind his ear, sigh deeply, grunt and let out a sustained "Hmmmmmmm...pf!" And after Camel let out his fifth "hmpf!" and scratched himself behind his ear for the third time, a rustling noise came from behind the arm chair. A large plaid throw blanket moved on the floor and Moosie popped out from underneath. He had just woken up and he was trying to scratch his nose with his short little paws, but without much success. He thought the matter over, and began rubbing his nose on the leg of the arm chair, when all at once he saw Camel. The two animals stared at each other.

"Who are you?" Moosie was the first to speak. Camel took his time carefully examining Moosie, at length letting loose his usual "hmpf" and articulating:

"I see that I have not yet made the acquaintance of all the residents of this household.¹⁴ It would seem that other species

¹⁴ I still don't know everybody that lives here.

of cloven hoofed fauna are harbouring¹⁵ here.”

“What did you call my hoofs?” Moosie asked.

“I said nothing about your hoofs”, Camel answered, “I merely observed that there are various herbivorous¹⁶ creatures of the cloven hoofed order residing in this house, the existence of which I was not previously cognizant¹⁷.”

“Yes”, Moosie said, “I live here, but how did you get here?”

“Let us relegate as parenthetical¹⁸ the actual facts of my arrival in this house and maintain the hypothesis¹⁹ of Christmas and Santa Claus”, Camel said.

“Ah!” said Moosie, calming down. “So Santa Claus brought you. So where’s Relegate, his parents and Hypo? Did they all come together with you?”

Camel wiggled his ears, raised his brows and gave Moosie a disapproving look.

¹⁵ Living

¹⁶ Plant-eating

¹⁷ aware

¹⁸ not worry about because it’s not important

¹⁹ assume that it’s true



“Yeeees, I see!” he drawled, “Lovely company we have here, I must say!”

“Yeah? Where is this lovely company?” Moosie asked. But Camel didn’t answer him. Then Moosie asked:

“So it’s Christmas already?”

“Allow me to inform you”, Camel said, “I beg your pardon, I don’t have the pleasure of your acquaintance, and hence I do not know your name – that Christmas arrived exactly two days, eleven hours and twenty-five minutes ago. And you, I take it, have been slumbering?²⁰”

“Slobbering?” Moosie asked, wiping his mouth.

“I merely observed that you were asleep”, Camel answered.

“Yeah”, Moosie said, “I fell asleep for a while. I wanted to sit in the arm chair, but I fell behind the back and went to sleep. And nobody woke me up. And now I missed Christmas and everything!”

“No great loss”, Camel said. “Another year over, a new one just begun. Life goes on, everything changes! “Sic transit Gloria mundi’, which translated from the Latin means “thus passeth earthly glory’.

Moosie wanted to say something else, but he couldn’t get it out, so he asked:

“So what’s your name?”

Camel slowly raised his brows at Moosie. “I *do* beg your

²⁰ Asleep.

pardon, I have forgotten to introduce myself”, Camel said, my name is Camel Dromedary, although I have recently acquired the new name “Dreamer”. Allow me to inquire as to your name.”

“My name is Moosie”, Moosie said, “I’m little white Moosie”.

Camel’s eyebrows rose even higher. He stood up, walked around Moosie, carefully scrutinizing him from horns to hoofs, and then back the other way. Then he unhurriedly returned to his former position, sat on the rug and said:

“The ancient Roman philosopher Seneca once observed ‘Errare humanum est’, which in Latin means ‘To err is human’, although in that particular case he was not alluding to moose. Possibly, I can now expand the application of that statement: ‘Errare mammali est’, which means ‘To err is mammalian’²¹. A silence descended on the room.

“Dreamer”, Moosie said after some moments, “do you mind if I sniff you?”

“Why would you do that?” Camel asked. “Allow me to be more specific: to what purpose?”

“Well, so I can get to know you better and we can be friends.”

“I already have one friend in this house”, Camel said, “Nevertheless, if you wish, by all means sniff as much as you like.”

Moosie stuck his big nose into Camel’s face and carefully sniffed him. Camel couldn’t resist and started sniffing Moosie

²¹ Mammalian – related to mammals, animals that feed their young with milk like camels, horses, moose and many others do.

too. Then Moosie happily snuffed right in Camel's nose to show he had finished sniffing him.

“There”, Moosie said, “we’ve sniffed each other all over. That means that now we’re friends!”

“Right!” Dreamer offered, “Right on the nose, I dare say!”

Chapter 4. Building the Ship

Mike climbed up on the sofa and said:

“We’re taking a trip around the world!”

“And what about me?” Moosie asked. “Will I have to stay home all alone?”

“No”, Mike said, “We’ll build a ship and we’ll sail on it all together. Me, you and Dreamer.”

“You wish to involve me in a trip around the world on a ship?” Camel asked. “But let me inform you that the camel is a terrestrial animal. We don’t swim and we have no affinity²² for it. Sometimes they call me a ship, but they mean a ship of the desert, as opposed to a typical oceangoing vessel.”

“Don’t worry, Dreamer,” Mike said “we’ll go on a ship. You won’t have to swim...”

“Until such time as we suffer a shipwreck”, Camel concluded to Mike, “an intriguing prospect, don’t you agree? In any case,” he continued, “I am not refusing, I am merely giving a timely warning, and I strongly urge you to take it into consideration.²³”

“So you agree, Dreamer? Hooray!” Mike cried.

“And what about me” Moosie said. “I can’t swim either. I could fall in the water, get waterlogged and drown!”

²² Can’t do it.

²³ Think about it.

“It’s okay, Moosie, don’t worry, I’ll save you, I promise!” Mike said.

“Moosie will have to have his horns fastened to an unsinkable object, such as a life saver. It will improve his buoyancy²⁴,” Camel added.

“No”, Moosie said, “that’s a bad idea. If I fall in the water with a life saver on my horns, my nose will be underwater, and I’ll drown.”

“It would appear that our antlered friend is showing a germ of intelligence,²⁵” murmured Camel.

“Germs? What germs? You see germs on me?” Moosie said frightened, turning his head around and trying to look at himself from every angle.

“He means that you’ve started thinking smarter,” Mike said for Camel, “but let’s get to work on the ship!”

“But what are we going to build the ship out of?” Moosie asked.

“Out of the sofa,” Mike answered quickly, “and we’ll make masts out of hockey sticks. We’ll have a sailing ship!”

“While you are planning the construction of the ship, it would behove you to carefully consider the material side,” Camel looked attentively at Mike and added “we must know what it will consist of.”

“Of course,” Mike said. “I’ve got a big book about sailing

²⁴ Ability to float

²⁵ A little bit of intelligence.

ships, and it's got everything in it." Mike ran to his room and brought the book. The book really was quite big. Mike put the book on the carpet and started flipping through it. Moosie and Camel moved closer to him.

"Here it is!" Mike cried. The chapter on "Types of Sailing Ships". What kind of ship will we have?"

"Seeing as we have only two hockey sticks," Dreamer said, "it will have to be a two-master. So what is left to determine is whether it will be a schooner, a brig or a brigantine."

"And how do we find out?" Mike asked.

"Look carefully in the book, my young friend," said Camel, "it says here," Dreamer pointed at the page with his hoof, "that a brig is square-rigged, a schooner is gaff-rigged and a brigantine is mixed²⁶, which is to say that it has various types of rigging."

Mike lay on the carpet and began examining the pictures attentively. Then he got up and stuck the two hockey sticks into the sofa with the blades facing up, one at the sofa's "stern" and the other at its "bow".

²⁶ "Square rigged" means that the spars make a right angle with the masts. "Gaff rigged" means the main sail angles away from the main mast.



“I can hang a t-shirt on each stick,” Mike said, “so then it will be square rigged. So the ship will be a brig!”

Dreamer looked at the sticks sticking out of the sofa and shook his head.

“I would advise you, my young friend,” he said, “to use some other material for the masts. Hockey sticks will hardly hold square rigging.²⁷”

“But what else can we put there instead?”

“I have an idea,” Dreamer said, “but I am not prepared to share responsibility for the consequences of its implementation.²⁸”

Moosie, who by this point had lost the thread of the conversation, raised his head and asked:

“I don’t understand. What aren’t you prepared to share with who?”

Camel turned his head to Moosie and said:

“My antlered friend, allow me to give you a small piece of advice, so that you will – how can I put it gently? – appear... a bit smarter.

“What advice?”

“If you don’t understand some word, then don’t ask display your ignorance by asking naive questions. Just say ‘Uh-huh’. I will try to explain to you.”

“And what if I don’t understand two or three words?” Moosie

²⁷ Where the sails are square shaped, or rectangular shaped.

²⁸ I don’t want to be blamed if there’s a problem.

asked next.

“Then say ‘uh-huh uh-huh’ or uh-huh uh-huh uh-huh!” Dreamer explained. “Agreed?”

“Uh-huh,” Moosie said.

“So what don’t you understand now?” Camel inquired.

“I understand everything,” Moosie said, “I just said ‘uh-huh’ because I understand everything.

Camel sighed deeply, and then continued:

Very well, I propose the use of the mop that we use to wash the floors as the foremast, and for the mainmast the big broom we use for sweeping. But if the application of these measures results in an altercation²⁹ with your parents, I would not wish to suffer any complaints and accusations.”

“Uh-huh,” said Moosie.

“I understand,” Mike added, “don’t worry, nobody will blame you!”

“I merely wished to say,” Dreamer concluded, “that all must be shipshape before we cast off.”

“Of course,” Mike said, “We’ll settle everything ashore, before we’re on the high seas.”

²⁹ Argument

Chapter 5. Captain Wolf

The ship was ready. It had masts, yardarms³⁰, sails and two anchors made out of shoehorns. Mike fitted out two cabins inside the sofa – crew quarters and the galley. Then he built a captain’s bridge and set up the helm there, made from the front wheel of his scooter, which he managed to unscrew.

Food and water were loaded aboard: a jerry can, pots and pans, a tea kettle, salt, sugar, macaroni and bags of rice and flour. Mike brought in lots of canned food – potted meat from his mother’s supplies – a whole twenty cans. He brought along a Swiss Army knife, a compass, matches, a flashlight and a box of batteries too. It would be enough for a long time.

But Mike paid particular attention to weapons. To defend the ship, he requisitioned two cannons from his set of tin soldiers, three antique pistols, a short sword, a sabre, a dagger and a hammer for pounding meat.

All that remained was dividing responsibilities on the ship and setting sail.

“I’ll be the captain!” Mike said, and after thinking about it, added “Does anybody else want to be captain?”

Moosie clearly didn’t want to be. However, once more Camel complicated matters.

³⁰ A yardarm is a horizontal pole on a mast that the sail hangs from.

“My young friend,” Dreamer said, “The responsibilities of captain of a seagoing vessel require specialized knowledge and the mastery of specific skills. Allow me to inquire – have you ever studied geography, piloting or navigation, either of the terrestrial or celestial variety?³¹ Do you know how to take coordinates from the sun and stars on the high seas using a sextant and an astrolabe?³² Do you know how to tack³³ and how to raise sails? How to...”

“Stop, enough!” Mike answered, “I don’t know how to do any of that yet. Do you?”

“Well,” Camel said, “I have a certain amount of theoretical knowledge. But I have no practical experience. Hence, I would not be in a position to take such a responsibility upon myself.”

“So you can’t!” concluded Mike. “So what are we going to do? Maybe we won’t go on a cruise around the world after all.”

“My young friend,” Dreamer answered, “first of all, I would advise you to find an experienced captain to take command of the vessel.”

Mike said nothing. The idea of finding another commander was clearly not to his liking. But finally he said:

“But where will we find a captain like that?”

“I have already given the matter some thought and I have

³¹ Study of the earth, and how to know where you are by looking at the earth or the sky.

³² Tools you use to check the position of the sun, moon and stars.

³³ How to maneuver sails on a ship to best use the force of the wind.

located suitable material,” Camel replied.

“Material? What do you mean? You want to make a captain?” Mike said, surprised.

“No, no,” Creamer repeated, “I mean somebody that could be captain, if nobody has any objections.”

“And where is this captain of yours?” Mike asked. “We’ve got no captains here in the house!”

“You are sorely mistaken, my young friend!” Camel replied. “In my investigations of our surroundings, I came across a cupboard. Upon examining its contents, I encountered someone that fully satisfies the requirements of our search.”

“Stop showing off how smart you are!” Mike said angrily. “Just tell me – who did you find?”

Dreamer stuck out his lower lip and said nothing. Then he chewed on some invisible saksaul and continued:

“I am not showing off, as you put it, my young friend, I am simply laying out the facts of the situation. If you object...”

Mike started getting angry again, but all of a sudden Moosie spoke up.

“Mike,” Moosie said in a frightened voice, “I think I know who he found! But if it’s HIM, then I’m not sailing with you at all!”

“So who is he?” Mike asked.

Moosie hid himself down in the berthing behind the sofa pillow, stuck out his nose and whispered:

“He’s a WOLF!”

“Who?” Mike asked again. “A Wolf?”

“Yes, it’s a wolf,” Dreamer said, “an old Sea Wolf. Just the person we all need now.”

“Not me! I don’t need a wolf,” Moosie cried, “I don’t want a wolf, I don’t like wolves, I’m afraid of wolves, I’m little white Moosie and the wolf will eat me all up!”

“Calm down!” Mike said. “I remember, he’s an old wolf that lives in the cupboard. You’re the one who asked me to stick the wolf in the cupboard, Moosie.”

“He would have eaten me a long time ago, because I’m little white Moosie!” Moosie snivelled.

“Don’t be silly,” Mike said. “Wolves are dangerous only when they’re hungry. But our wolf is never dangerous, because he’s a sea wolf. And sea wolves don’t eat land moose. I’ll introduce you two now.”

Mike went out to the hallway. The cupboard door creaked, a box grated, and then a hoarse, raspy growl was heard:

“Ten thousand sharks and five points to port! I’ve been sniffing mothballs³⁴ enough for a hundred thousand years to go. Now all moths will die when they hear my name.”

Mike brought Wolf into the room. He was wearing a short green frock coat with shiny buttons and a white sash over his shoulder with a sword hanging from it. Wolf had a black cocked hat on his head and a big curved calabash pipe in his left hand.

When he saw the ship, Wolf cried in a hoarse voice:

³⁴ Little balls with a strong smell that people put in cupboards to keep moths away.

“I’ll be deep sixed! What manner of old hulk is that? I swear by Davy Jones³⁵ that she’ll sink before she leaves the harbour!”

“Allow me to observe, my dear sir,” said Camel, “that such expressions are inadmissible in polite society. This ship was built by ourselves, the genial crew. In making such rude observations, you offend all here.”

Wolf opened his muzzle, then closed it, then opened it again and said “eeeh”. But since words didn’t come to him, he had to close it again. Mike said, helping Wolf out:

“Don’t swear, Wolf, just tell us what we need to do!”

³⁵ The sailors’ name for the devil.



In a half hour, the ship took on a completely new look. The masts changed places. The high one became the main mast and was moved astern, while the low one became the foremast and was moved forward. The helm was moved back, closer to the stern. White ropes, which Wolf called sheets, braces and lines³⁶, were run from the sails. And the anchor was fastened to a real anchor chain made from Mike's father's watch chain.

Wolf carefully inspected the ship, looking at every corner. He sucked on his pipe and growled "Double down on that snatch block!³⁷" It looked as if the inspection would wrap up peacefully. But then Wolf opened up the pillow hatch, looked in the hold, pulled his pipe from his mouth and rumbled "Shiver me timbers! What's a great big horned beast doing on my ship?"

Terrified, Moosie stuck his nose out from the hold, and whispered "I'm not a beast, I'm Moosie".

Wolf barked:

"Who? Squids in me bilge! Speak up, mate! I can't hear you!"

"Moose, I'm a m-m-moose," Moosie murmured almost inaudibly.

Wolf dropped his pipe from his paw, rolled his eyes and guffawed:

"A moose? You're a moose? Well, skewer me with a swordfish! This is a moose? Ha ha ha!"

³⁶ Different types of rigging on a ship.

³⁷ A device to pull things up using ropes that can be opened on the side.

“What do you find so humorous about our horned friend?” Camel stepped up on Moosie’s behalf. “He’s a typical example of a young moose. What is it about him that you find unsatisfactory?”

But Wolf couldn’t answer Camel because he was still laughing. Finally he got tired and dropped on the deck. “And what manner of beast are you to be sailing the high seas?”

“I’m little white Moosie,” Moosie said, shivering from fright.

Stick a horn on me nose and call me a narwhal! I know what a REAL moose looks like. Before I went to sea, I lived with my pack in the forest. I saw moose all the time. They were big and brave, and dangerous in a fight! Even we wolves respected them. But this beast looks more like a horned rabbit than any moose I ever saw!”

Moosie’s horns drooped. “I’m little white Moosie”, he repeated, barely audible.

Dreamer came to Moosie’s defence.

“Honourable captain,” he began unhurriedly, “it may very well be that our antlered friend is not prototypical of his breed. However, that does not give you the right to deride and abuse his animalistic dignity.”

Mike came to Moosie’s support too. “Mr. Wolf”, he said, “we respect you as a brave and wise captain, but don’t make fun of my friends again, or I’ll have to put you back in the cupboard.”

At a loss of what to say, Wolf opened his mouth and then

closed it, just like before, and then he opened it again and wheezed:

“A fid³⁸ in me ear, if I meant to insult him! I’ve seen hundreds of moose, but I never saw a moose like this one. I didn’t even know they existed!”

“If one is uncertain about something, it is best to be reserved in displays of emotion!” Dreamer said. “Furthermore, our antlered friend fears that he may become the object of your gastronomic preferences³⁹. You should categorically dispel his misgivings⁴⁰.”

“What does he fear?” Wolf asked, confused.

“Moosie is afraid that you’ll eat him!” Mike explained.

Pop-eyed, Wolf twisted his muzzle and cried:

“May a swordfish stab me in the ribs, and the sharks eat me liver! What do you take me for? I’m an old Sea Wolf, a veteran of Trafalgar and Livorno⁴¹, a knight of the Legion of Horror⁴². I’m a captain, and I don’t devour my shipmates! If I’m a wolf that still doesn’t mean I... I... well, I’m a vegetarian⁴³, if you want to know!”

³⁸ A big spike used to work lines on a ship.

³⁹ What the wolf likes to eat.

⁴⁰ Make sure that he doesn’t have to worry.

⁴¹ Famous naval battles that took place very many years ago.

⁴² Wolf confused top French award “Legion of Honor”. But it’s unlikely that he ever got it

⁴³ Wolf doesn’t eat meat.

“What?!” Mike, Camel and Moosie said all together.

“A vegetarian wolf?!”

Wolf felt that he had already said too much. But he gathered himself up with feeling and dignity, and said:

“Yes, it’s my rule of life! I don’t eat anybody!”

“That’s great!” Moosie exclaimed. “A vegetarian wolf is the best wolf in the world! Now I’m not afraid to sail with you.”

“Yes...” pronounced Camel, “O tempora! O mores!”, which translated from the Latin means ‘Oh, the times! Oh, the morals!’ I hope at least that Wolf doesn’t eat cactus yet.”

Chapter 6. Getting the Name

“Wait!” Mike said, “what are we going to name our ship?”

“Indeed!” wheezed Captain Wolf, “you mean she hasn’t got a name?”

“No ship can exist without a name!” Camel observed.

Mike thought about it. He had read a lot of books about ships and the sea that had names of lots of different ships, but none of them seemed to fit.

“Maybe we should name her Poseidon?” Mike suggested. “After all, he’s the god of the sea!”

“Such a name is hardly suitable for a small brig”, Camel retorted.

“Then let’s call her Fair Wind!” Mike said.

“Fair winds in me gob!” Captain Wolf said, disagreeing. “With a name like that ye’ll have to whistle for a fair wind!⁴⁴”

“But that’s just a superstition!⁴⁵” Mike retorted.

“You can think what ye like, but I’m not setting sail on no ship named Fair Wind!” Wolf said, unexpectedly adding: “And by the way, ships are often named in honour of famous captains. Why don’t we call her the Sea Wolf?”

“No!” Moosie said, terrified, “I’m not sailing on a wolf, even

⁴⁴ Sailors say that whistling on board ship is bad luck, except when there’s no wind; then you have to whistle to make the wind come up.

⁴⁵ Like when a black cat crosses your path, or walking under a ladder.

if it's a sea wolf. It's too scary!"

"The name does indeed sound exceedingly rapacious,⁴⁶" Camel said, supporting Moosie, "furthermore, in the event of any untoward incident, we would look foolish. Think of the newspaper headlines: 'Sea Wolf Loses Control, Founders on Reef off South America.'"

"Bite yer tongue!" Captain Wolf swore, but he didn't insist on the name any longer.

"Then let's name the ship the Sea Moose!" Moosie said. "I'm not afraid of anybody laughing at me, as long as we don't drown!"

"You may as well call her the Sea Camel," Captain Wolf parried, "at least then we'll win a prize for the silliest name."

"It appears to me that we are forgetting our young friend," said Camel, pointing his hoof at Mike, "the construction of the ship was his idea."

Mike felt his cheeks turn red.

"If anybody is worthy of the honour to have the ship named after him, it is our young friend," Camel continued.

All the animals agreed to this proposal, but they got no further; they couldn't call her Captain Mike, because Mike wasn't the captain. A number of exotic names were suggested: Floating Mike, Mike and Company, Young Friend of Animals, but none of them seemed right.

"Hold on!" Camel said. "This reminds me of something! In my youth I read a quite illuminating book. A man gathered

⁴⁶ Like an animal that preys on other animals.

a collection of various animals on his ship so that they wouldn't drown."

"And they didn't drown?" Mike asked.

"No," Camel answered, "as far as I can recall, the story had a happy ending. But I've forgotten the name of the ship."

"Was it a frigate, a battleship, a yacht, a cruiser, a destroyer, a steamship, a schooner, a launch or a barge?" Captain Wolf suggested, ticking off the names. "Maybe it was a submarine?"

"Nothing like that," Camel said, "it was a long time ago, when ships like that didn't exist."

Mike was getting bored with thinking about a name for the ship. He went over to the window and moved the curtains apart. "Wow", he said looking out the window. "Look at the beautiful rainbow. I've never seen one in wintertime before."

"Ah, an *arc en ciel*, as they say in French," Camel replied, "an arc in the sky."

"That means good luck for our voyage", Wolf added.

"Yes..." Camel said, thinking. "Of course!" he exclaimed suddenly. "An ark! That's what we'll call the ship. Just like in the book!"



“That’s a strange name,” Captain Wolf said, surprised. “I’ve been to sea on twenty seven different types of ships, but I’ve never gone on an ark!”

“So the ship will be named Mike’s Ark?” Moosie asked.

Everybody liked the name. But Mike said:

“Thanks, everybody. But if the ship is going to have my name, it should be my grown-up name.”

“What do you mean, my young friend?” Camel inquired.

“It’s like this,” Mike said, “My daddy calls me Michael, like an adult. A ship should have a grown-up name. Let’s call our ship Michael’s Ark.”

“A wise proposal,” Camel observed. Let’s write that on the side. “Vox emissa volat, litera scripta manet’ which in Latin means “the spoken word flies away, the written remains’, concluded Camel, adding: “Ita fiat! Dixi!⁴⁷”

⁴⁷ Let it be! I have spoken!

Chapter 7. First Adventures

“Weigh anchor, cast off all lines!” Wolf cried, “Steady on two points to port⁴⁸! Secure the jib⁴⁹!”

Michael’s Ark slid away from the pier and gaily flew from the harbour.

The place that the ship set sail from had a very pretty, but long name: “Newfoundland”. Why it was “Newfoundland” Mike really didn’t know. He had spun and spun the globe, checking the names of the seas and oceans, and finally found this island with the beautiful name. Dreamer approved of the choice.

“Newfoundland”, said Camel, “means a new-found-land, which in this case is in complete consonance with the facts, given that you were the first to find it on the globe I concur with the development of...”

But Mike didn’t care to listen to one of Camel’s long-winded speeches. He wanted voyages and adventure, so he went forward, all the way to the ship’s bow.

Moosie stood at the brig’s helm. Captain Wolf had taught him how to steer the ship – that is, how to tell port from starboard⁵⁰. Moosie was very pleased and proud of himself. He even asked

⁴⁸ A “point” is 1/32 of the distance around a circle. “Port” means left. Turning “two points to port” means turning left 22.5%.

⁴⁹ A “jib” is a triangular sail that is attached to the bow of a brig.

⁵⁰ “Starboard” is the right side of the ship, just like “port” is the left side.

to be called Theodorus Moosovich, but Wolf flatly refused.

“Squids in me craw!” he said. “I’ll run us up on a reef before I’ll call you such a silly name! I’ll call you either seaman, or seamoose!”

“No,” Moosie said, “I want you to call me Seamoosie.”



Moosie liked that name so much that he didn't call himself "little white Moosie" any more, but would repeat to himself "I'm Moosie, Seamoosie". Moosie gladly agreed to be the helmsman⁵¹, but he absolutely refused to climb up in the rigging and lines. In any case, Wolf didn't insist; after looking Moosie over, he wheezed "Can't use you aloft⁵², you'll get them horns fouled in the rigging⁵³." Camel wasn't suited for the work either, since he had hooves on all four legs.

"By St. Elmo's fire," Wolf croaked, "what use are ye on a ship?"

"I have analyzed my capabilities," Camel said, "and I have come to the conclusion that the best position for me would be lookout. Camels are known for their excellent sight and hearing."

"With hearing that good, you ought to be a hearout," Wolf croaked, slightly confusing even himself, "anyway, all right, be a lookout. Just be brief in your reports, or else we'll be stuck on a reef before you shut your gob!"

Wolf made Mike the cabin boy and assigned all the other work on board to him. At first Mike was a bit upset:

"I wanted to be captain, or at least first lieutenant⁵⁴, and now I'm only going to be a cabin boy?"

⁵¹ To steer the ship.

⁵² Up in the sails.

⁵³ The lines between the sails and the deck.

⁵⁴ The assistant captain on sailing ships in the old days.

“Better to start off as cabin boy and end up as captain than to start as captain and end up at the bottom of the sea,” Wolf said.

“A sage observation⁵⁵,” Camel agreed.

“There’ll be no favourites on my ship,” the captain concluded, “stand your watch, boy!” But Mike wasn’t downhearted. First he had to be the cook for the animals and for himself. He had stocked the galley⁵⁶ and laid in supplies for the purpose. In addition, Mike learned how to raise and lower the sails, tie sailor’s knots and drop the anchor. True, sometimes he confused the mainsail with the mainbrace⁵⁷, and Wolf loudly dressed him down. But the cabin boy bravely withstood Wolf’s criticism, and didn’t resent his captain.

Their first days at sea were tranquil. A fair warm wind filled the sails. The friends enjoyed the views of the faraway shores, the fresh sea air and the sunny sky above the sails.

“It’s so great that we’ve started off on this voyage!” Mike thought. “It’s so terrific!”

Moosie manned the helm. Camel dreamed, dozing on the brig’s bow, occasionally raising his eyebrows and looking off into the distance. Wolf paced up and down the ship importantly, sucking on his pipe and barking comments at Mike and Moosie.

⁵⁵ A wise comment.

⁵⁶ The kitchen on a ship.

⁵⁷ The “mainsail” is the largest sail. The “mainbrace” is a big line used to move the mainsail into the wind.

“Just how in Davy Jones’s locker⁵⁸ are you securing that jib⁵⁹, boy? Can’t you tie a sailor’s knot? You’re not tying your shoes! And as for you, don’t you know yet how to come about⁶⁰, you horned beast? You’re gonna lower the boom⁶¹ on them horns of yours! You’re not driving a streetcar!”

At first Moosie was afraid of Wolf and he winced every time he heard his hoarse yells, but then he got used to it and just lightly flapped his ears.

On their third day at sea, the weather took a nasty turn. The sky was filled with rain clouds, a fine rain was falling and a blustery wind blew.

“Of course, I am not a meteorologist⁶²,” Camel said, “but the weather no longer favours us. Preventive measures⁶³ are called for!”

Wolf ordered lowering half the sails, and Mike had to climb up the pitching, rolling mast right into the rain.

By the morning of the fourth day the bad weather had turned into a real storm. Gigantic waves tossed Michael’s Ark up and down, and the brig creaked and rolled from side to side. Rain

⁵⁸ The bottom of the sea, where drowned sailors go.

⁵⁹ A triangle-shaped sail in the front of the ship.

⁶⁰ Turn around the ship

⁶¹ The “boom” is a mast connected to the bottom of a sail. It can swing around and knock you over if you change course suddenly.

⁶² A weatherman.

⁶³ We need to do things before something bad happens.

came down in torrents. You couldn't even see the sky, only clumps of gray clouds hanging over the rolling masts.

Moosie could barely control the helm with his short paws. He was soaked all through, his hooded coat stuck to his body, his horns waving back and forth in the wind. But to Mike's surprise, he wouldn't abandon his post for anything.

"I'm Seamoose, and I'm steering the ship," he would say.

"You should put up your hood, Moosie!" Mike suggested.

"I can't," Moosie said, "my handlers won't fit in my hoodie."

"Then go below and dry off, I'll take your place. Your paws must be all rough and raw!"

"Yes," Moosie said, "they are, look!"

Moosie let go of the helm and showed his paws to Mike.

Just at that moment, a gust of wind made the ship lurch; the helm spun around and a grip hit Moosie right in the nose. The helmsman lost his footing and fell on the deck, floundered around on the wet boards, flipped over the railing and landed straight in the boiling sea.

"Moosie!" Mike cried, "Moosie fell overboard!"

"What?!" roared Captain Wolf. "Fell overboard?!"

"Yes!" Mike cried, despairingly. "Over there!"

"Moose overboard!" Wolf bellowed. "Cast a line!"

Mike didn't understand what Wolf meant, but there was no time to ask questions. So he jumped in after Moosie, without taking off his shirt, trousers or sandals.

For a moment, Mike was struck blind and deaf in the cold

water. The waves slapped him from side to side, and he couldn't figure out where he needed to swim to.

"Swim more to your left, ten thousand moose in me craw!" bawled Wolf from the deck.

Mike started working his hands and feet and swam to his left. Suddenly, in the trough between the waves, two brown branches appeared on the surface that looked like a moose's horns from a distance. But waves immediately engulfed them, and the horns disappeared in the depths.

Mike took a deep breath and dived. He opened his eyes, but he couldn't see anything. The water was murky and burned his eyes. Mike fumbled around with his hands everywhere, as if he was playing blind man's bluff, and finally got hold of something soft that reminded him of the hood on Moosie's coat. He grabbed onto it tight and started working his legs with all his might, tugging the hood to the surface. Judging from how heavy the coat was, his horned friend was still in it.

"Aah!" Mike's head popped up between the waves, and he gratefully gulped the salty sea air.

"Grab the line!" Wolf's voice called out from somewhere up above.

There was a splash next to him, and a red donut was tossing around on the waves. Mike grabbed the life saver with one hand.

"Hold on! We'll pull you out!" Wolf wheezed.

"I've got the moose under water," Mike yelled.

Just at that moment a wave hit him in the face. Mike coughed,

but he didn't let go of either the moose or the life saver.

"Pull him up and stick him in the life saver!" Wolf ordered.

Mike pulled the hood inside the life saver and yanked Moosie up. First his horns popped up, then his ears, and finally his terrified, bulging eyes. But that is where matters ground to a halt. Moosie's long nose just refused to fit inside the life saver. Mike pressed down on Moosie's nose and pushed it through the hole. His nose squeezed through and popped back into its normal shape, and his antlered friend was securely ensconced in the life saver.

"Pull!" Mike yelled.

"We can't pull both of you!" Wolf growled. That moose has taken on a bilgeful of water!"

"Okay," Mike agreed, "I'll let go!"

Wolf and Camel hauled on the line with the life saver, and Moosie crawled up alongside the ship, sea water cascading off of him in torrents. Finally he got his waterlogged body over the railing and plopped himself down on the ship.

"Hooray!" Mike wanted to say, but he felt unexpectedly that his mouth, neck, legs and arms were getting numb and didn't obey him. Mike looked up, but he couldn't see Wolf or Camel at the edge of the deck.

"Heeeeeelp!" Mike weakly whispered.

And as if in answer to that weak, unheeded sound amid the stormy ocean, Captain Wolf appeared on the pitching deck. With a short motion of his paw, the life saver flew out and almost hit

Mike in the head. Mike reached out for the life saver and just barely managed to stick his head and arms in it...

He came around because he felt something warm in his face. Mike opened his eyes and saw a big shaggy nose in front of him.

“Apparently our young friend has regained consciousness,” Camel pronounced.

“Let’s get our cabin boy below right away, change his clothes, warm him up, get him some tea and lay him in his bunk!” Wolf ordered.

“A most opportune idea,” Camel replied, “but what shall we do with the moose?”



“Hang the moose!” the Captain said dismissively.

“I beg your pardon! I don’t think I quite heard you correctly,” Dreamer said, “are you proposing that we hang our antlered friend?”

“I said, hang him out to dry!” Wolf growled.

“Don’t hang me!” whined Moosie, who had also come around and was now lying on the deck, rivulets of salt water running off of him. “I’m little white Seamoosie, my handlers are all wet, and if you hang me out to dry they’ll get all droopy.”

“I fully support the apprehensions⁶⁴ of our antlered friend,” Came said, “a moose must be washed down with fresh water, and then hung out to dry with its hooves upward.

“Well, scrub me down with a holystone!⁶⁵” Captain Wolf said, “All right, we’ll hang him to dry on the yardarm, hooves up. The rain’s almost stopped.”

“One may observe with some satisfaction that meteorological conditions are noticeably improving,” Dreamer said, “we have successfully braved our first ordeal⁶⁶.”

⁶⁴ Fears.

⁶⁵ A special stone shaped like a brick that was used to scrub wooden decks on old ships.

⁶⁶ Trial.

Chapter 8. The Pitfall

“If you will permit me the observation, it appears that there is land on the horizon. In my opinion, it is the mainland. However, I may be mistaken.”

“Mainland?” growled Wolf. “Blow me down! It can’t be the mainland! By my calculations we should be somewhere between Trinidad and Tobago⁶⁷.”

“All the same, I suggest that you glance through your long glass,” insisted Camel, “two humps are better than one’, as the wisdom of my people would have it.”

“Don’t tell me what to do! I know where I should be looking!” Wolf snapped, all the same pulling his long glass from his belt and training it on the horizon.

“Well, call me Captain Bligh⁶⁸ and throw me overboard! It is the mainland! It looks like we were badly set west during the storm, and we’re off course.”

“That is a totally logical explanation,” Camel said, “however, I would not rule out...”

“Avast yer palaver⁶⁹!” barked Wolf, “helmsman, come two points to starboard! We’ll head for that bay and drop anchor

⁶⁷ Islands in the southern Caribbean Sea.

⁶⁸ The captain of the British ship *Bounty*. The crew mutinied and put the captain out to sea in a life boat.

⁶⁹ Stop your useless talk.

there.”

Mike obediently turned the helm right.

After the business with Moosie, Captain Wolf assigned Mike to the helm. When Mike needed to go aloft to furl or unfurl the sails, Wolf took the helm himself. Deep down, Mike was glad for the promotion, even though he felt sorry for Moosie being demoted.

“Reef the mainsail⁷⁰!” Wolf ordered. “Dead slow. Three points to starboard. Look alive up forward, watch out for reefs!⁷¹”

Camel hung his nose over the ship’s prow, diligently scrutinizing the calm water of the gulf, but he didn’t see any reefs.

When the shore didn’t look more than a cable length⁷² away, Wolf ordered all sails lowered and then dropped anchor. The anchor hit bottom in a few seconds; the gulf wasn’t deep.

“Launch the small boat, boy!” Wolf commanded. “Moose, Camel, cabin boy – head for shore and find fresh water!”

Moosie was not exactly dying of curiosity to set foot on the unfamiliar shore.

“Maybe there are wild animals there,” he said, “maybe they’ll eat me. Let me stay on the boat!”

“Palaver! And she’s a ship, not a boat!” wheezed Wolf, but looking at Moosie’s droopy horns, he changed his mind. “All

⁷⁰ Tie up the mainsail so only half of it is open.

⁷¹ Rocks under the water level that the ship may hit.

⁷² 100 fathoms, or about 600 yards.

right, Antlers, stay on board, keep a sharp eye on the ladder and don't climb anywhere with those hooves of yours. Batten down the hatches⁷³ and don't start any fires!"

"Yes, yes!" Moosie said gratefully. "I won't burn anything. I'll close everything and not open up for anybody."

Wolf, Camel and Mike climbed down into the boat and headed for shore. Soon the boat's bow nosed into the coastal rocks. The voyagers jumped out onto the shore. The air on dry land carried aromas of cliffs in the sunshine, warm grass and other smells that they had never sniffed before. There was no smell of predators in the air.

"We'll split into two groups!" Wolf ordered. "Boy and camel, you go right, and I'll go left. If anybody finds water, start yelling, and if you run into any danger, start howling."

"May I be so bold as to observe, Dreamer said, "that camels do not howl; they generate a sound like..."

Wolf started to get angry, and Mike hastened to calm him down.

"It's okay," he said, "I can howl almost like a wolf."

He crouched down, lifted his face up and let loose a mournful, lingering howl. Camel unconsciously shrunk back to one side, and Wolf chuckled, pleased.

"Well done, boy, you're making progress! We'll make a real Sea Wolf out of you yet!"

Camel wanted to ask whether it was mandatory for Sea

⁷³ Close the doors and portholes.

Wolves to howl so frighteningly, but he thought the better of it. They had to hurry; night was falling, and the shore was getting dark.

The friends split up each their own ways, expecting to find some spring or stream running into the ocean. Mike and Camel moved in silence, stepping around the boulders and avoiding the deep holes on the shore.

“My impression is that the topography⁷⁴ of the area...” Camel began, but he didn’t manage to finish the sentence. They heard a blood-curdling, wild howl from behind them on the beach.

Mike felt goose bumps break out all over his body, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet.

“What’s that? Who’s that?” he stammered.

But Dreamer didn’t even wince. He turned his head in the direction of the howl, sniffed the air and said:

“The noise appears to be coming from our most honourable captain. I believe that he is in need of help.”

“Let’s go!” Mike cried, and started running as fast as they could, stumbling and scraping feet and hooves on the rocks.

The howling stopped; it turned into a kind of deep-throated rumble.

“Maybe wild animals attacked Wolf?” Mike said, gasping.

“High-highly unlikely,” Camel managed to get out on the run, “He’s qu-quite inedible.”

They stopped. The howl came from somewhere below, as if

⁷⁴ The surface of the ground.

it were underground.

“Be careful, my young friend!” Camel said, catching his breath, “it might be some kind of trap!”

He began carefully sniffing the rocks on the shore. Finally, Dreamer stopped.

“Come over here, my young friend,” Camel called to Mike, “mind that you step carefully!”

Mike could see a deep black crevice between the rocks. Hoarse bawling and curses were coming from it.

“It would appear that our captain has fallen into a wolf trap!” Camel stated. “Do you have a torch or matches?”

Mike regretted leaving his torch on the ship. But he had matches, of course, and he had wrapped them twice in a waterproof wrapper to boot.

Mike pulled out the box, crawled up on his stomach to the crevice and lit a match. He saw a narrow hole with sheer walls, and something pacing around and swearing down at the bottom.

“Wolf, Wolf!” Mike called into the darkness of the hole. “Are you alive?”

The grumbling stopped, but then Mike heard the saltiest expressions he’d ever heard from the captain.

“An albatross round me neck and thrash me with a thieves cat⁷⁵ if I ever go ashore again without a light!”

“Are you okay, Wolf? Mike asked. “Where are you hurt?”

⁷⁵ An albatross is a big sea bird. A thieves cat is a big knotted whip used to punish sailors in the old days.

“Right in me pride!” the captain howled. “How can an old Sea Wolf like me fall in this blasted HOLE?”

“Pride is hardly the most serious trauma under such circumstances!” Camel observed. “What’s more, a Sea Wolf is not necessarily well-versed in terrestrial ways.”

The response from the crevice was a more mournful “ooh”.

“Don’t cry, Wolf,” Mike said, “we’ll get you out of there right now!”



“The task at hand is clearly defined,” Camel said, “all that remains is to effectuate its completion. And that is never a simple affair.”

“Dreamer,” Mike begged, “you’re smart! Figure out how we can get Wolf out of the hole!”

“I have been considering this problem for a minute and a half, but all this hue and cry is impeding my thought processes.”

“We’ll keep quiet,” Mike promised, although vouching for Wolf was a somewhat unreliable promise to make under the circumstances.

“We need rope,” Camel said profoundly, “but it’s on the ship. To make the circuit there and back in total darkness is risky. I propose that we make a fire and wait until morning.”

“But what about Wolf?” Mike asked. “Do you mean that he’ll be sitting in that hole all night?”

“That is hardly the most fearful prospect in life, my young friend!” Dreamer said. “In any case, the operation for his extraction should take place in daylight.”

Camel lowered his nose to the ground, sniffed around the area, disappeared and a little while later appeared with a big piece of rotten bark in his teeth. Then he disappeared again and returned with a dried out bramble bush.

Mike pulled his Swiss Army knife from his pocket, cut some kindling, collected it in a pile and carefully lit it with a match. The flame took, and it lit up the shore. The smell of the camp

fire filled the air, making things comfortable and pleasant. Camel broke up the rotten bark with his hooves. Mike laid the pieces around the fire so that they would dry out.

The ship's boat, tied to the rocks, was visible in the light of the fire. Mike dug around in the box in the stern and found their Emergency Supplies there: three cans of potted meat and half a jerry can of water. Mike dragged the items over to the fire.

"I'm sorry, Dreamer," Mike said, "there's nothing for you to eat!"

"No matter," Camel said, "I can go without food and water for over a month. A short fast would only do me good. Better to consider our captain and how to raise his fighting spirit."

"What can we feed him with? Mike asked.

"You should open a can and throw the meat into the hole," Camel said.

"But Wolf doesn't eat meat, he's a vegetarian," Mike fretted.

"We shall test that right now," Camel answered.

Mike went up to the crevice, where hoarse growling could be heard.

"Wolf, ah, how are you doing?" Mike inquired.

"Grrrr! Aah! Grrr!" came from below.

"You're probably hungry, do you want to eat?" Mike asked.

"Aah! Yees!" Came the voice from the hold.

"Will you eat meat?"

"Yeeeeesssss!" Wolf howled again.

Mike threw half a can of meat into the hole. A juicy "plop"

was heard, followed by hearty munching.

“As I assumed,” Camel pronounced, “the rumours of lupine⁷⁶ vegetarian tendencies were somewhat exaggerated⁷⁷. As camel proverbial wisdom would have it, “No matter how much cabbage you feed a wolf, he still wants meat!”

“I don’t think we should tell Moosie about this,” Mike observed.

“I suppose not,” Dreamer agreed.

⁷⁶ Wolf-like

⁷⁷ That wolf really did eat meat.

Chapter 9. Low Tide

The cold woke Mike up; the fire had gone out. A crimson dawn broke over the sea. Dreamer peacefully dreamed on, all four legs tucked up under himself. Mike snuggled against Camel's warm side and tried to warm up. But he was still cold.

"Dreamer! Dreamer! Wake up!" Mike said, poking Camel in the side, "it's time to get Wolf out!"

Camel smacked his lips and answered in a calm, peaceful voice, as if he wasn't asleep at all.

"It is my impression that the weather favours our plans. Return to the ship for a longer rope. And I will check on our captain and inquire into his physical and mental well-being."

Mike looked toward the sea and was dumbfounded. The sea had disappeared! Instead of the gulf, there stretched a field of dirt, mud and rocks sticking up. Seaweed glistened greenly in between them. Michael's Ark sat lonely on the bottom, listing slightly to port. The anchor chains sagged limply, and the masts tilted dejectedly.

"Dreamer!" Mike cried. "The sea is gone!"

Camel turned his head back and forth, sniffed the air and thoughtfully pronounced:

"It is my impression, my young friend, that we are experiencing a classic example of a neap tide, which reaches significant proportions in this part of the world. It is surprising,

however, that our highly experienced captain failed to take that factor into account⁷⁸.”

“What kind of tide?” Mike asked. “A leap tide?”

“Neap tide, my young friend,” Dreamer replied. “You are of course familiar with the fact that high and low tides are related to the gravitational pull of the sun and moon. When their effects are combined, unusually strong high and low tides occur, which are called spring and neap tides.”

“I understand,” Mike said, but how will we get out of here now?”

“Seeing as high tide occurred last evening, the water should regain its previous level by evening today. The most important thing is that our ship’s hull should not sustain any puncture by sharp rocks, or else there is a chance that it will remain on the bottom when the tide comes in, just as it did when the tide went out.”

“So we’ll have no tide until this evening?” Mike clarified.

“Quite likely,” Camel responded, “but then, now you can walk out to the ship.”

Mike had no desire whatsoever to walk out over the soggy bottom. He remembered that his daddy told him that in any dilemma there are at least two solutions. And one of them immediately came to his mind.

“Dreamer,” Mike said carefully, “Could you help me?”

Camel raised his left eyebrow and studied Mike.

⁷⁸ That Wolf didn’t think about the tides.

“How can I help you, my young friend?” Camel asked.

“Are you the ship of the desert?” Mike obliquely suggested.

“That is how our proud tribe is sometimes described!” Camel agreed.

“And the bottom here looks like the desert, doesn’t it?” Mike said.

Camel laid back his ears, chewed his lip and wiggled his brows, grumbling:

“I have laid aside the labours of a beast of burden⁷⁹ in order to devote my life to intellectual pursuits for some time now.”

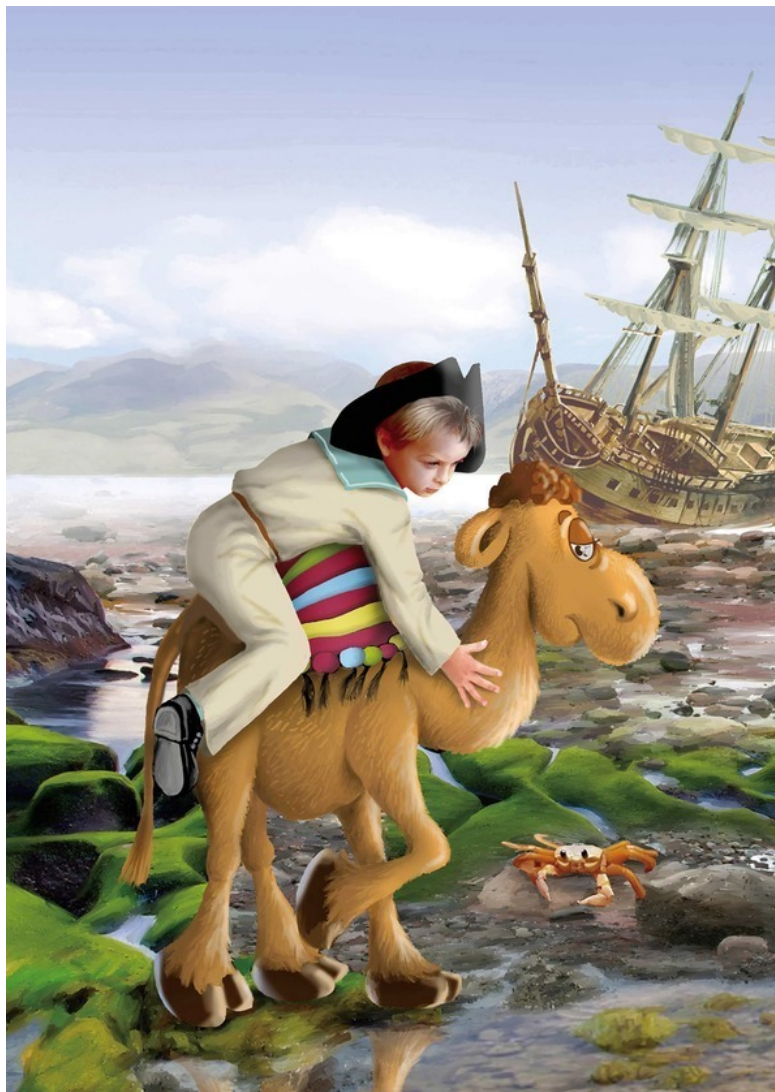
“Please carry me to the ship and back, please!” Mike asked.

Camel sighed deeply and dropped to his knees.

“All right, climb on!” he said. “But remember, my young friend, that I am a dromedary, not a Bactrian camel⁸⁰, so try not to slide down on my head!”

⁷⁹ An animal that carries things on its back.

⁸⁰ “Dromedaries” are one-humped camels that live in the Middle East and Africa. “Bactrian Camels” are two-humped camels that live in Central Asia



Camel worked his way across the ocean bottom toward the ship. Mike had never ridden on the back of a camel, and it wasn't comfortable. He laid his stomach on the hump so as not to slide down on Camel's neck, and he started looking down. The exposed ocean floor was teeming with life. Bug-eyed little crabs swarmed around in the mud and fish swam in the puddles, and on the rocks seagulls were perched, springing up right under Camel's hooves.

Camel plodded on silently, only grunting when Mike fidgeted on his back.

After five minutes they made it to the ship.

"Let's check to see if there are any holes in the hull," Mike suggested.

They walked around the ship. Fortunately, the sea bottom at that spot was fairly even, without any stones. The starboard side was fully visible, but the port side was sunk in sea mud.

"The likelihood of penetration appears to me to be minimal!⁸¹" Camel said. "However, my young friend, enough riding on my hump. Climb aboard the ship!"

Mike looked around and noticed that the rope ladder had disappeared. Apparently Moosie had pulled it up.

"Moosie!" Mike called, "let down the ladder for me!"

He waited a bit, but Moosie didn't appear on deck.

"He's probably asleep," Mike thought, pulling a pistol from

⁸¹ There were no holes in the ship.

his pocket and tapping on the hull with the handle.

The sound echoed around the gulf. And then there was silence. Not a rustle or a murmur was heard on the Ark.

“It would appear that our antlered friend has hoofed it!” Camel said.

Mike cried as loud as he could:

“Moose, I know you’re in there! Drop the ladder or else we’re sailing away!”

The clapping of hooves was heard from the depths of the ship. Slipping along the listing deck, Moosie managed with great difficulty to reach the edge and hold on to the railing with his nose. He was terrified. His horns and ears hung at different angles, while the crest on his head was all knotted and twisted. “H-how can you sail away?” Moosie stammered. We can’t sail anywhere! The sea is all dried up, and the boat is gone all sideways.”

“Gone all sideways...” Mike taunted. “Throw down the ladder!”

Moosie looked around, but didn’t go for the ladder.

“Where’s Wolf?” Moosie asked, hiding behind the railing. “Was he the one howling all night on the shore?”

“My antlered friend”, Camel said to Moosie, “May we please postpone this narrative for a more opportune time?⁸² If you please, help my young friend climb aboard!”

Moosie took the end of the rope ladder in his teeth and threw

⁸² “Can we please talk about it later?”

it over the side. The ladder fell on Mike's head and painfully whipped his face.

"Moosie! Can't you watch what you're doing?" Mike cried.

There was no response, and Mike climbed up.

When he finally was on deck, he saw that Moosie had disappeared again.

"I hurt his feelings!" Mike thought, immediately regretting that he had yelled at his friend.

However, there was no time for apologies. Walking along the listing deck turned out to be very difficult; you could fall down and go over the side at any time. Grabbing on to the railing, Mike got hold of a mooring line, worked it into a circle and hung it around his neck. Going back with the line looped around his neck was even harder. Fortunately, Camel was standing under the rope ladder, just as before.

"Well, Dreamer, shall we go back? You're not too tired?" Mike tried to cheer up his means of transportation.

"That is of no significance!" Camel dignifiedly observed. "As the great commanders would say, 'Gaudet patientia duris!' which in the Latin means 'Patience rejoices in adversity!' Let's be off!"

They were back on the shore next to Wolf's hole in twenty minutes.

Wolf had recovered somewhat; he didn't howl any more, he just cursed.

"We'll get you out now, Wolfie!" Mike cried happily. "We brought a rope."

“It’s not a rope, it’s a line!⁸³” Wolf growled.

It was time to start the rescue operation. Mike tied one end of the line to Camel, and dropped the other carefully into the crevice.

“Okay, Wolf, wrap the line around you!” Mike cried. “We’ll pull you out now.”

Wolf tied the line around his waist, and then took it in his teeth.

“Okay!” Mike called to Camel. “Pull!”

Camel walked along the shore, moving away from the hole. The line took a strain, but immediately hung up by a rock on the edge of the hole and got stuck. Mike tried to work it loose, but he wasn’t strong enough.

“Halt!” Mike cried. “This won’t work.”

Camel took a step back, and Wolf plopped down on the bottom of the hole.

The friction is preventing any movement,” Camel observed. “We need to somehow enhance the lubricity of the line.”

“What?” Mike asked. “Just tell me simply, what do we have to do?”

“We need to place something slippery, right here,” Camel explained, pointing with his hoof at the edge of the hole, as for example a piece of wood soaked in water.”

“We need to find one.” Mike said.

“That is a reasonable conclusion, my young friend,” said

⁸³ On a ship, a “line” is made out of nylon. A “rope” is made out of wire.

Camel, “but I advise you to be careful. If you should fall into a hole as well, it would be necessary to extract you both, which would significantly complicate the task.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t fall in!” Mike said and went off to search along the shore.

Chapter 10. Buffalo

Mike walked rather far, but he couldn't find a suitable piece of wood. He had already decided to turn back, when all at once he saw something like a copse⁸⁴ in the distance, stretching from far away inland to the shoreline. Mike picked up his pace.

It took Mike about ten minutes to reach the copse. He heard water flowing behind the trees. Pushing aside the branches, he saw a stream trickling along the stones and flowing into the sea.

“Fresh water!” Mike thought.

He worked his way through the bushes, jumped across the stones among the sedge⁸⁵ and got to the edge of the stream. Mike crouched down and scooped up some water in his hands. The water was very tasty and smelled of fresh grass.

Mike turned back to find some piece of wood, made a step and...froze in his tracks.

Some unknown animal with sharp, curved horns stood where Mike was standing a minute before, staring at him with a steady gaze. From a distance, the animal looked like a bull, but his foreparts were covered with thick curly wool, while his hind parts were normal, like a cow.

“Hello,” Mike said cautiously, not expecting anything good

⁸⁴ A group of trees growing in the middle of a field.

⁸⁵ Plants like grass that grow in swampy places.

to result from the meeting.

The animal said nothing, just flicking its tail.



Mike thought it would be best to run from the beast, but the stream was behind him, and his path to Wolf and Camel was cut off. He had to resort to discussion.

“I’m Mike,” Mike said, loudly and clearly pronouncing each word, “I’m travelling through here. My friend got in trouble, and I’m trying to help him.”

It was hard to know whether the animal understood Mike. He stood silently, just flicking his tufted tail.

Mike carefully moved toward the beast, but the animal dipped his head, pointing his sharp curved horns forward.

“I...” Mike began, but he didn’t manage to finish.

“Do you butt heads?” the animal asked unexpectedly.

“Butt heads?” Mike said, dumbfounded. “I can’t butt heads, I’m not a bull, I’m a boy. My name is Mike.”

“And I’m a buffalo – a bison,” the animal said, “my name is Bruiser.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you,” Mike replied, although so far it hadn’t been much of a pleasure.

“*Butting* is a pleasure,” said the buffalo Bruiser, “nothing else matters! I’m looking for somebody that I can butt with. Have you met anybody I can butt with?”

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