

ENGLISH



"WE'RE NOT AFRAID TO DIE...IF WE CAN ALL BE TOGETHER".

~Summary~

-by Gordon Cook and Alan East

The Voyage Begins

In July 1976, the narrator, a 37 year old businessman, his wife Mary, 6 year old son Jonathan and 7 year old daughter Suzanne started their sea voyage from Plymouth, England. They wished to go round-the-world on a long sea journey just as Captain James Cook had done 200 years earlier. The narrator and his wife had spent 16 years preparing for the round-the-world voyage and improving their marine skills. Their boat Wavewalker was a 23 metre, 30 ton boat that was professionally built and they had tested it in the roughest weather they could find.

The first part of their planned three year, 105000 kilometre journey passed pleasantly as they sailed down the West Coast of Africa to Cape Town. Then they took two crewmen--the American Larry Vigil and the Swiss Herb Seigler--before heading east from Cape Town, to help them tackle one of the world's roughest seas, the southern Indian Ocean.

The Problems Begin During the Voyage

On the second day out of Cape Town, they encountered strong winds and high waves. The windstorms continued for the next few weeks. The size of the waves was upto 15 metres. On December 25, they were 3500 kilometres east of Cape Town, but the weather was very bad. Despite the bad weather, they celebrated Christmas Day wonderfully. New Year's Day saw no improvement in the weather and it worsened with the passing of time.

"We're Not Afraid to Die...if We Can All Be Together"

On 2nd January, the waves were gigantic. They were sailing with a small storm jib, but still they were going very fast. The boat moved to the top of each wave but the gigantic waves and dangerous wind continued to terrorise them. To minimise the damage, they dropped the storm jib and lashed a heavy rope in a loop across the stern. Then they fastened everything, went through their life-raft drill, attached lifelines and put on oilskins and life jackets and prepared themselves for the worst case scenario.

Disaster Strikes

The first indication of impending disaster came at about 6 pm, with an ominous silence. The wind stopped and the sky immediately grew dark. Then a loud roaring sound was heard. The narrator thought that he saw a cloud coming towards them. With horror, he realised it was not a cloud

but the biggest wave that he had ever seen. It appeared vertical and double the height of all other waves.

The wave hit the boat and a tremendous explosion shook the deck. Water poured into the boat. The narrator's head smashed against the steering wheel of the boat and before he knew it, he was thrown into the sea. He thought that he was going to die but suddenly his head popped out of the water. He saw that the boat had almost capsized. Suddenly, a wave hurled it upright and the narrator was tossed onto the boat. His left ribs were cracked; his mouth was filled with blood and some teeth were broken. Somehow he managed to find the wheel, lined up the stern for the next wave and hung on.

Frantic Survival Attempts

The narrator knew that the boat was flooding with water, but he dared not abandon the wheel to investigate. Suddenly, Mary came and informed him that the boat was sinking as water was pouring in. He handed the wheel to her and crawled towards the hatch. Larry and Herb pumped the water out like madmen. The wooden beams had broken. The whole starboard side had bulged inwards. Clothes, crockery, charts, tins and toys moved around noisily in water. The boat had been damaged. He somehow managed to reach the children. Sue had a big bump on her head to which he did not pay much attention. He found a hammer, screws and canvas. Somehow he managed to stretch the canvas and secure waterproof hatch covers across the gaping holes. Some water continued to come in but most of it could be prevented from entering the boat. But this was not the end of their troubles.

Damaged and Lost Equipment

The handpumps started jamming with the trash floating around the cabins. Soon their electric pump got short-circuited and the water rose threateningly.

He found that their two spare handpumps had been pulled away by currents along with the forestay sail, the jib, the lifeboats and the main anchor.

He managed to find another electric pump to drain out the water. The night was an endless, bitterly cold routine of pumping, steering and working the radio. However, there was no response to their Mayday calls as they were in a remote corner of the world. Sue's head had swollen alarmingly. She had two black eyes and a deep cut on her arm. She didn't tell the narrator more of her injuries as she didn't want to worry him when he was trying to save them all.

Pinpricks in the Vast Ocean

On the morning of January 3, the pumps had reduced the amount of water on board. Each of them took rest for two hours by turns. They had survived for 15 hours since the wave hit the Wave walker, but the boat was not strong enough to take them to Australia.

The narrator knew that the boat wouldn't hold together long enough. He checked his charts and calculated that the only one hope for them was if they could reach Ile Amsterdam, a French scientific base, one of the two pinpricks in the vast ocean. Mary found some corned beef and cracker biscuits and they ate their first meal in almost two days.

However, their relief was short-lived. The weather again started deteriorating and by the dawn on 5th January, their situation was again desperate.

“We aren't Afraid to Dying... if We can all be Together”

The narrator went to comfort the children. He tried to assure them that they were going to make it. Jon said that they were not afraid of dying if they can all be together. This gave the narrator hope and a reason to fight the sea. He tried his best to protect the weakened starboard side of the boat. However, later in the evening, as more water came into the boat, they felt defeated again. On 6th January, the weather improved. The narrator again tried to calculate their position. While he was at work, Sue came to him and gave him a card. She had drawn caricatures of Mary and the narrator.

The card said that she loved them both and hoped for the best. The narrator was filled with optimism. Somehow they had to make it.

The Most Beautiful Island in the World!

The narrator made several calculations using a spare compass, made some adjustments and asked Larry to steer a course of 185 degrees. He said that, if they were lucky, they would see the island at about 5 pm. Dejected, he went down to his bunk and fell asleep.

It was about 6 pm when he woke up. He thought that they must have missed the island. Just then, Jon and Sue came to him and gave him a hug because he was the "best daddy in the world". The narrator was confused. Sue announced that the island was just in front of them. He rushed out to the deck and saw the most beautiful island in the world! It was Ile Amsterdam, a piece of volcanic rock with little vegetation.

When his feet touched land the next day, he thought of the cheerfulness and optimism of all the people on the boat which made them pass through the worst stress.

Conclusion of “We're not afraid to die...if we can all be together”

To sum up, we are not afraid to die if we can all be together summary, we can say the collective power of unity and the never-failing confidence of the sailors made it possible for them to survive and come out from the jaws of death.