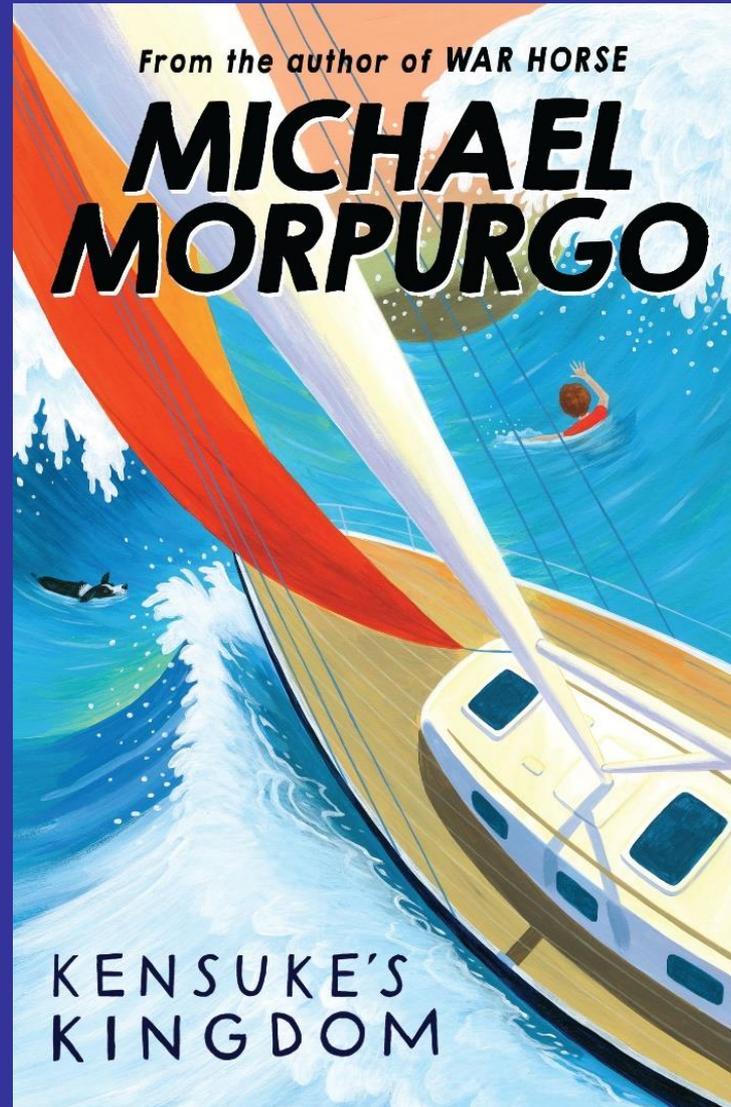


Kensuke's Kingdom
by Michael Morpurgo



Chapter 3

Ship's Log

Chapter 3, page 1

September 20

It's five in the morning. I'm on watch in the cockpit and no one else is awake. We left Southampton ten days ago. The Channel was full of tankers, so Mum or Dad took turns on watch the first two nights. I don't know why they wouldn't let me, I can see as well as they can.



We were planning to sail about 200 miles a day, but in the first week we were lucky if we sailed 50 miles a day.

Barnacle Bill had warned us about the Bay of Biscay.



So we were expecting the weather to be bad. The wind was force 9 or 10, we were slammed all over the place. I thought we'd sink. We went up the waves, Peggy Sue's bow pointing straight up at the moon, then we were hurled down the other side. It was bad, horrible, really horrible. But the Peggy Sue didn't fall apart and we made it to Spain.

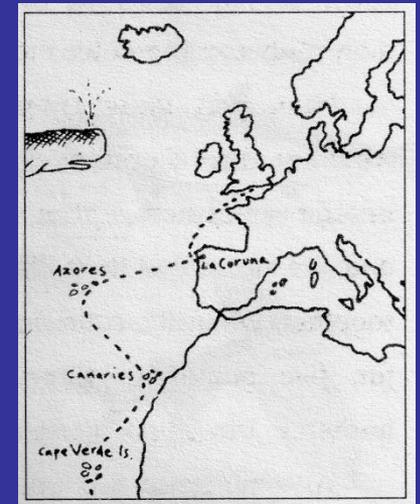
Chapter 3, page 2

Mum gets snappy with us sometimes when we don't do things right, but Dad just winks at me. When it's calm enough they play a lot of chess. Dad's winning so far, five games to three. Mum says she's not bothered but she is. I can tell.



We only spent a couple of days in La Coruña. Mum slept a lot she was really tired. Dad did some work on the rudder cable, though he's not really happy with it.

We set off for the Azores two days ago. Yesterday was the best day we have had for sailing. Strong breeze, blue sky and warm sun to dry things out.



My blue shorts blew off the washing line into the sea. It doesn't matter, I never liked them much anyway. We saw gannets slicing into the sea, really excellent, Stella Artois went mad.

I'm fed up with baked beans already, and there are stacks of them still down below.



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October 11

Today I saw Africa. We are going down the west coast. Mum showed me on the chart. The wind will take us down the coast for a few hundred miles then across the Atlantic to South America. We must keep on course so we don't get into the doldrums. There is no wind there at all, and we could be becalmed for weeks, for ever maybe.

It's the hottest day we have had. Dad's very red and the tops of his ears are peeling. I am more nutty brown like Mum.



Saw flying fish this morning and so did Stella.



Then Mum spotted a basking shark off the port bow.

I didn't see it, but they are massive. They don't eat people just fish and plankton.

I wrote it down in my note book and drew them.

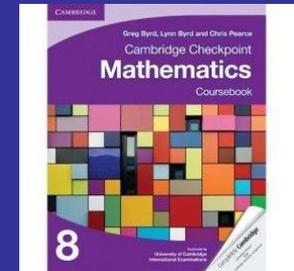


Chapter 3, page 4.

At times when I was frightened I always kept Eddie's football beside me as well. The football had become a sort of talisman for me, a lucky charm, it really seemed to work. At the end of every storm we were still there, still alive and still afloat.

I had hoped my parents would have forgotten about the planned school work. But once we had settled well into our voyage my mother was adamant I was going to keep up with my schoolwork. At home she had been my mother and I could argue with her, but not on the Peggy Sue here she was the skipper.

Between them they had devised an entire programme of work. There were maths course books which my father helped with if I got stuck. For geography and history I was to find out and record all I could about the countries we visited as we went round the world.



For environmental studies and art I was to note down and draw all the birds we saw and all the creatures and plants we came across.

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I sent a card to Eddie from the Cape Verde Islands. I wish he was here we would have a real laugh. Stella loves chasing the football around the cabin, I know she will puncture it one day. Dad's been gloomy and Mum's gone to lie down with a headache. I think they have had tiff, I think it's about the chess.



November 16

We've just left Recife in Brazil. We were there for four days as we had lots of repairs to do on the boat.



Eddie, I've played football in Brazil, and with your lucky football. Dad and I were playing on the beach, and soon there were dozens of kids joining in. Dad set up a proper game. We picked sides, I called my side the Mudlarks and Dad called his Brazil. They all wanted to play for Brazil of course, but Mum joined in on my side and we won Mudlarks 5 - Brazil 3. Mum invited them back for tea but Stella growled at them and we had to shut her in the cabin.



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December 25

Christmas day at sea. Dad found some carols on the radio. We had crackers, all of them a bit soggy so they didn't crack. We had the Christmas pudding Gran made for us.



I gave them a drawing each, Dad my flying fish picture and one of the skipper in her hat, at the wheel for Mum. They gave me a really neat knife they'd bought in Rio. I gave them a coin back. You're supposed to do that if someone gives you a knife. It's for luck.



Chapter 3, page 7

When we were in Rio we gave the Peggy Sue a good scrub down inside and out. We took on a lot of stores and water for the long haul to South Africa. Mum says we are doing fine, just so long as we keep south and stay in the west to east South Atlantic current.



We passed south of St Helena a few days ago. No need to stop. Nothing much there, it's where Napoleon was exiled and died. So of course I had to do a history project on Napoleon. It was quite interesting but I didn't tell them.



I saw a sail today, another yacht. We shouted Happy Christmas and waved, and Stella barked but they were too far away to hear. When the sail disappeared the sea felt suddenly very empty.

Mum won the chess this evening. She's ahead now, twenty-one games to twenty. Dad said he let her win as it's Christmas. They joke about it, but they both want to win.



Chapter 3, page 8

January 1

Africa again! Cape Town. Table mountain. This time we are not just sailing by we are stopping. They told me this evening. They didn't tell me before in case we couldn't afford to stop, but we can.

We are going to stay for a couple of weeks or more. We're going to see elephants and lions in the wild. I can't believe it.

Mum and Dad are really happy laughing and smiling. They were never like this at home. These days they really smile at each other.

Mum's been getting stomach cramps. Dad wants her to see a doctor in Cape Town, but she won't. I reckon it's the baked beans. The good news is the baked beans have finally run out.

The bad news is we had sardines for supper. Eeeuk!



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February 7

We're hundreds of miles in the Indian Ocean, and then this happens. Stella hardly ever comes up on deck unless its flat calm. I don't know why but she came up. We were all busy. The boat was pitching and rolling a bit. I looked up and saw her up at the bow of the boat. One minute she was there the next she was gone.



We had practised the 'man overboard drill' with Barnacle Bill. Shout and point. Get the sails down and the engine on.

I was doing the pointing and shouting. Stella was paddling for her life in the waves.

Dad was leaning over the side trying to reach her, he didn't have his safety harness on and Mum was going mad.



Mum was trying to bring the boat in as close as she could, three times we came in, but each time we passed Stella by. She was getting weak, she was going under. We had one last chance. This time Dad managed to grab her and between the three of us we managed to haul her back on the boat by her collar and tail.

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"Well done, monkey face," from Dad, and Dad got a huge telling off from Mum for not wearing his safety harness. He put his arm round her and she cried. Stella shook herself and went below as if nothing had happened.

Mum has made a strict rule. Stella must never go on deck without a safety harness clipped on. Dad's going to make one for her.

I did lots of pictures of the animals we had seen in Africa and I keep looking at them to remind me.

Australia next.

Kangaroos, Possums and wombats.

Uncle Joh's going to meet us in Perth.

The stars are so bright, and Stella was saved. I think I am happier than I've been in all my life.



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April 3

Off Perth, Australia. Until today its been nothing but empty ocean all the way from Africa. I love it more and more when its just us, Peggy Sue and the sea. But then when we sight land we get so excited. When we saw Australia for the first time we hugged each other.

We've sailed all the way from England to Australia, that's half way round the world. And we did it on our own.

Mum's been having stomach cramps again. She's definitely going to see a doctor in Australia.



May 28

At sea again after nearly six weeks with Uncle John. He said we had to see Australia properly. He took us to stay with his family on a huge farm. He has thousands of sheep and masses of horses. I went riding a lot with my two little cousins Beth, and Liza. They're only seven and eight but can really ride. They call Me Mikey and both want to marry me, but we are going to be penpals instead.



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I saw a snake called a Copperhead. Uncle John said it could have killed me if I had trodden on it.



He told me to watch out for Redback spiders in the toilet. I didn't go to the toilet very often after that.



They called us their 'pommy cousins' and we had barbeques every evening. We had a great time, but I was happy to get back to the Peggy Sue. I missed her and I miss Eddie. I've been sending him cards, funny animal ones if I can find them.

The plan is to put in at Sydney and explore the Barrier Reef for a bit.



Then through the Coral Sea up to Papua New Guinea.

Mum's stomach cramps are much better. The doctor said it was most probably something she had eaten. She is better now.

It's really hot and heavy. It's calm too, no wind. We're hardly moving. I'm sure a storm is coming, I can feel it.



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July 28

I look around me. It's a dark, dark night, no moon, no stars. But it's calm again at last. I will be twelve tomorrow, but I don't think anyone except me will remember.

We've had a terrible time. Ever since we left Sydney it's been one storm after another, and each one blows us further north across the Coral Sea. The rudder cable snapped. Dad's tried to mend it but it's still not right.

The self steering isn't working so someone has to be at the wheel all the time. That means Dad or me as Mum is sick. Her stomach cramps again, but a lot worse. She doesn't want to eat at all, she just has sugared water.

Dad wants to put out a May Day call, but Mum won't let him. She says that's giving in, and she's never giving in.

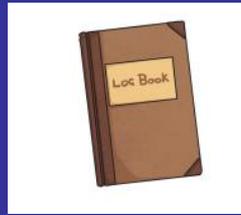
Dad and I have been navigating as she hasn't been able to look at the charts for three days. We've done our best, but I don't think we know where we are anymore.



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They're both asleep down below. Dad's really wiped out. I'm at the wheel in the cockpit. I've got Eddie's football. It's been lucky for us so far. We really need it, we need Mum to get better or we're in real trouble.

I don't think we could stand another storm. Thank God it's calm. It'll help Mum to sleep. It is so dark out there. Black. Stella's barking. She's up on the bow. She hasn't got her harness clipped on.



Those are the last words I ever wrote in my log. After that it's empty pages.

I tried calling Stella, but she wouldn't come. So I left the wheel and went forward to bring her back. I took the ball to tempt her away from the bow.



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"Come on Stella," I said rolling the ball from hand to hand. I felt the boat turn in the wind, and I knew I shouldn't have left the wheel.

The ball rolled away from me, I lunged after it, but it had gone over the side before I could grab it. I watched it bob away in the darkness.

I thought I heard singing out there in the darkness. I called out but no one replied. So that was what Stella had been barking at.

I looked again for the ball but it had disappeared. That ball had been very precious to me, to us all. I knew then I had just lost a great deal more than a football.

I was angry with Stella. The whole thing was her fault. She was still barking but I couldn't hear singing any more. I got to my feet and went forward. I took her by the collar and pulled, but she wouldn't be moved.



Chapter 3, page 16

I couldn't drag her all the way back, so I bent to pick her up.

She was still reluctant.

I had her in my arms, but she was struggling.

I heard the wind above me in the sails. I remember thinking: this is silly, you haven't got on your safety harness or your life jacket. You shouldn't be doing this.

Then the boat veered violently and I was thrown sideways.

With my arms full I had no time to grab the guard rail.

We were in the cold of the sea before I could even open my mouth to scream.

