

The King of Prussia (2 extracts)

Extract No.1

1787

Dawn

*The deck of a schooner is revealed as the sun rises and slowly burns off the mist
A solitary deckhand sings unaccompanied a quiet, haunting song:*

SONG Dawn breaks and no day was finer,
Our schooner lies anchored
Fresh home from China.
Stood out four miles
Due west of the Lizard
The crew, ocean-weary,
Yearns for the shore

LOOKOUT Lugger! English! Two miles to larb'd!
Gathering on us with all sail before!

CAPTAIN That's our man. The King of Prussia.

SUPERCARGO Open the hatches!
Prepare to discharge!

JOHN CARTER is received on deck by the CAPTAIN

CARTER Where y'from?

CAPTAIN China.

CARTER I don't want tea.

The hatchtop is replaced

CARTER Did ye pick up any liquor on your voyage home.

CAPTAIN A few ton.

CARTER Lets feel the strength of it.

He watches the CAPTAIN give orders to the SUPERCARGO

CARTER This is me brother's job but e's in gaol so I'm doin 'is job on
toppa my job which is two jobs too many don't ya think?
What's your price?

CAPTAIN Five pounds?

CARTER Jack?

CAPTAIN Nantz.

CARTER Bugger five. Three.

CAPTAIN Three?

CARTER I wouldn't give ya five for Jack. I'd consider four for Geneva but Nantz? Three's generous. In fact you've talked me out of three. Two or nothing. Geneva three. Four the Jack. What did we agree, one?

CAPTAIN Two...

CARTER That was Geneva. And three pound for jack.

CAPTAIN Four pound the Jack...

CARTER So you have Jack!

CAPTAIN Yes!

A barrel is brought

CARTER At two.

CAPTAIN Two?

CARTER Thass better. Two for the jack.

CAPTAIN Three.

CARTER You offered me two! I heard you say it. Come along Cap'm I'm a busy man willya shit or get off the pot?

CAPTAIN hands a measure of brandy to CARTER

CARTER Whass this, nantz?

CAPTAIN Jack.

CARTER (*studying the contents of the measure*) It ain't Geneva.

CAPTAIN No.

CARTER That we do know.

CARTER drains the liquor and hands the measure back

CARTER Pound a tub.

CAPTAIN You said two!

CARTER Thass for jack.

CAPTAIN This is jack

CARTER It ain't geneva so we'm down to jack and nantz.

CAPTAIN Nantz?

CARTER I arn't so sure either Cap'm. Could be nantz could be jack. Now I'm prepared to take the risk and pay y'a pound a tub for what might turn out on closer inspection not to be Geneva not to be Jack but Nantz.

CAPTAIN A pound!

CARTER Good! Thass more like it. *(he shakes the CAPTAIN's hand)*
Have y'never dealt with a free-trader before Cap'm?

CAPTAIN No sir.

CARTER First thing you gotta learn is a free trader's an honest man cus e d'break the law. And if you break the law you gotta be honest. If I offer you a pound then a pound is a fair price.

CAPTAIN How many d'ye want?

CARTER Four hundred and eighty.

CAPTAIN Break bulk there!

CARTER Fast and steady mind.

They watch the unloading

CARTER See the gannets fishin Cap'm. There's always one oo range high and wide. Huntin while the others dive. Thass me.

The King of Prussia

Extract No 2

St. Malo
A prison cell

HARRY CARTER stands at the window with his back to the door
He works with a backstaff, shooting at the sun

SONG Here sits a man denied liberty
 A sailor who's accustomed
 To roaming the seas
 Here sits a man innocent of crime.
 Locked in a prison cell
 Biding his time.

Enter CARTER

CARTER Brother.

The door shuts behind CARTER

HARRY That you John?

CARTER Gather up your stuff.

He impatiently watches HARRY slowly and meticulously fold his clothes and pile his books

CARTER Got the Stackhouse party workin with us.

HARRY Thass good.

CARTER Too damn good.

HARRY How's that?

CARTER I bought ten ton off the China ship?

HARRY What.

CARTER Jack.

HARRY What price?

CARTER Pound.

HARRY That's good goin.

CARTER She's took it to Bath and flogged it for six.

HARRY stops what he's doing to reflect on this

HARRY Who?

CARTER Stackhouse party.

HARRY resumes his packing

CARTER Tis all gone for profit. And I tellya somethin else. She a be pushin for less pay for the farmers. We'll have a riot on our hands. And all that goodwill built up over years gone for nothin.

He knocks on the door to be let out

Guard! See what she gotta learn is there's a network of folk whose dependant on each other. And they all give and take. And the minute there's one oo start to get greedy then the whole damned network's busted. Guard!

He bangs hard on the locked door

Why d'e lock the door? Guard! Whass the French for guard? Whass the boy's name out there?

HARRY Albert.

CARTER (*shouts*) Albert! Where be to! Venez y!

He rattles the door but its locked

HARRY Got all the papers?

CARTER You ready?

*HARRY has packed his bag and slung it over his shoulder
He looks around to check he's left nothing behind*

CARTER Guard! Oy! Come ere! Hell's e to. (*yells*) Guaaaard!

His voice echoes down an empty corridor

*HARRY whistles a short low whistle
The **GUARD** immediatly appears*

*The **GUARD** and **HARRY** speak French*

GUARD Qu'est-ce que vous voulez Henri?

HARRY Tu vas nous liberer Albert?

GUARD Non.

CARTER What d'e say?

HARRY Pourquoi non?

CARTER No? E say No?

GUARD Je dois observer la consigne.

CARTER What d'e say? Show im this!

*CARTER waves the Governor's letter at the **GUARD***

HARRY Mon frere tient une lettre d'elargement.

*He passes the letter through to the **GUARD**, who glances at it and hands it back*

GUARD Cela s'applique a la paix.

CARTER Whassamatter with it?

HARRY Que signifie cela?

GUARD Elle n'est pas valable maintenant que nous sommes entre en guerre.

HARRY Depuis quand allons-nous en guerre?

GUARD Depuis une demie.

CARTER What the fuck is goin on!

HARRY E says since war was declared tis no longer valid.

CARTER War?

GUARD Vous attendrez ici jusqu'a ce qu'on vous transporte a la Prison a Josselin.

CARTER How long we bin at war?

HARRY Half an hour.

CARTER sits heavily onto the bench

CARTER How long's it gonna last?

HARRY How long was the last one.

CARTER Thirty bloody years! Thirty years! I be an old man!

HARRY You'll be fifty eight.

CARTER I'll be dead. So will you be cus I willa killed ya.

HARRY You gotta find something to occupy yourself. Like Cain, oo built a city in 'is mind.

CARTER Built a city did e?

HARRY Yes. Cain did.

CARTER concentrates

HARRY unpacks his bag, meticulously laying out his belongings on the floor

CARTER She's done this. Stackhouse. She got war declared.

HARRY Build a city.

CARTER O yeah. You bet your life. God elp the business now. I knew I couldn't trust er. She's got me out the way. Whatever possessed you in God's name brother to put into St. Malo with no papers?

HARRY I'm learning how to navigate.

CARTER Where from? One enda the cell to the other? (*at door*) Guard!

HARRY Don't harass im. E's the only friend we got.

CARTER slumps in the corner

HARRY Approaching Plymouth Sound from the Westward
Give Penlee Point a berth of half a mile.
Bring the red obelisk on the Hoe
In line with Plymouth New Church.
Keep that mark on til Cawsand's open.
Steer East until the New Church appears
Between the red beacon and the western end of the Citadel.

CARTER Aw God Jesus Christ Al-buggerin mighty in hellfire and damnation.

HARRY Please brother. Quit the profanity.

CARTER Wanna cut me 'ands off while you'm at it?

HARRY I don't allow profane words on deck.

CARTER We in't on the bloody deck. Thanks to you we'm locked up in a cell!

HARRY Out of consideration for your brother and fellow prisoner.
Please.

CARTER I can't even swear.

HARRY Build a city.

CARTER Fuck that.

HARRY Start with the people.

They sit silent on the floor at either end of the cell

HARRY opens his bible and reads