

From *The Green Ship* by Quentin Blake

And then suddenly we were taken by surprise by a voice which said: "Well, what have we here, Bosun? Stowaways?"

There was a thin lady in a dark dress looking up at us.

"What do you think, Bosun? Shall we clap them in irons?"

"Only youngsters," said the Bosun, who actually looked more like a gardener. "Swabbin' the decks is the thing, if you ask me."

"And after that perhaps we shall have tea on deck."

Swabbing the deck turned out to be sweeping away the leaves; but tea really was tea, with madeira cake and cucumber sandwiches. At the end of it Mrs Tredegar (that was her name) said: "The Bosun will see you ashore. Any why not come aboard again tomorrow? I'm sure that's what the Captain would have wished."

Next morning, with permission from our aunt, we were back at the green ship.

We climbed the masts. We took turns to stand at the wheel and steer the ship. Mrs Tredegar showed us how to use the telescope. By the end of the day we were a fully-trained crew.

On our next visit Mrs Tredegar produced an old atlas, and every day after that we imagined that we were voyaging to some new place. A flower urn became an Italian ruin; a palm tree (there really was a palm tree) became the far-off shore of Egypt. One chilly day we pretended we were in the Arctic. Bushes became icebergs and some sheep that had got into the garden by mistake became polar-bears.

The last few days of our holiday were hot and sunny. They got hotter and hotter. We wore sunhats and played deck-quoits and drank lots of limejuice. It seemed as though we were heading southward through tropical seas. Eventually it became so hot that Mrs Tredegar decided that we must have reached the Equator, and that we must have the ceremony of Crossing the Line.

