



## Hornbill-Ch-2

### We're Not afraid to Die—If We Can All Be Together (Summary)

by Gordon Cook and Alan East

The story, 'We're Not afraid to Die-if We Can All Be Together' is a story of extreme courage and skill exhibited by Gordon Cook, his family and crewmen in a war with water and waves for survival. In July 1976, the narrator, his wife Mary, son Jonathan and daughter Suzanne set sail from Plymouth, England to duplicate the round-the world voyage made 200 years earlier by Captain James Cook. They took the voyage in their professionally built ship, the Wavewalker, accompanied by two experienced sailors – Larry Vigil, an American and Herb Seigler, a Swiss, to tackle one of the world's roughest seas – the Southern Indian Ocean.

The first part of the journey, that is, about 105,000 kilometres up to Cape Town passed off very, pleasantly. On the second day out of Cape Town, -they began to encounter strong gales. Gales did not worry the narrator. But the size of the waves was alarming – up to 15 metres, as high as the main mast. On 25th December, the writer's ship was in the southern Indian Ocean, 3500 kilometres to the east of Cape Town. The family celebrated their new year on board the ship.

At dawn on January 2, the waves were gigantic. Unfriendly weather and gigantic waves compelled the sailors to slow their speed, drop storm jib and take other precautions. The danger was so obvious that the sailors completed life-raft drill, attached lifelines and life jackets.

Suddenly at 6 pm, a tremendous explosion shook the Wavewalker and the author was thrown overboard. The ship was about to capsize when another gigantic wave hit it tossing it upright once again. The author was thrown back onto the deck, his head and ribs smashing against the walls. In spite of his injuries, the narrator took charge of the situation. Somehow he found the wheel, lined up the stem for the next wave and hung on till Mary appeared and took charge of the wheel. Larry and Herb started pumping out water like madmen. The whole starboard side bulged inwards. The narrator managed to cover canvas across the gaps to prevent water from entering the ship. Then came more problems. Their hand pumps stopped working and electric pumps short-circuited. Fortunately, the narrator found a spare electric pump under the chartroom that worked. The entire night was spent in pumping, steering, repairing and sending radio signals. The narrator checked charts and calculated that He Amsterdam, a French scientific base was their only hope.

Sue and Jon were injured but they said that they were not afraid to die if they could all be together. Sue's head was swollen and she had a deep injury. The narrator became more determined seeing his children's courage. Finally, they reached lie Amsterdam, a volcanic island where they were welcomed by 28 inhabitants. Thus, the collective strength and never failing optimism of the sailors made it possible for them to come out of the jaws of death. Though Jonathan and Suzanne did not do anything to save Wavewalker but their courage, forbearance, faith and optimism gave extra strength and persistence to the narrator and his team. The bravery of the strong-willed children is noteworthy in the story.

### **Question 1:**

**List the steps taken by the captain**

1. to protect the ship when rough weather began
2. to check the flooding of the water in the ship

### **Answer:**

1. In order to protect the ship from rough weather, the captain decided to slow it down. So he dropped the storm jib and lashed heavy mooring rope in a loop across the stern. Then they double fastened everything and went through their life-raft drill.
2. Larry and Herb started pumping out water. The captain stretched canvas and secured water proof hatch covers across the gaping holes. When the two hand pumps blocked and electric pump short circuited, he found another electric pump, connected it to an out pipe and started it.

### **Question 2:**

Describe the mental condition of the voyagers on 4th and 5th January.

### **Answer:**

On January 4, the voyagers felt relieved after 36 hours of continuous pumping out

water. They had their first meal in almost two days. Their respite was short-lived. They faced dangerous situation on January 5. Fear of death loomed large. They were under great mental stress.

### **Question 3:**

Describe the shifts in the narration of the events as indicated in the three sections of the text.

#### **Answer:**

The first section describes a peaceful journey from Plymouth (England) to 3500 km east of Cape Town (Africa). The narrator is relaxed and full of confidence. As the weather deteriorated, they faced gigantic waves. They took precautions to save themselves and struggle with the disaster. The narration becomes grim. But it exudes the fighting spirit, confidence and strong will power. By the morning of January 6, Wave walker rode out the storm and by evening they sighted Amsterdam island. The narrator is now relaxed.

## Talking About the Text

### **Question 1:**

**What difference did you notice between the reaction of the adults and the children when faced with danger?**

#### **Answer:**

**There is a lot of difference between the way in which the adults and the children reacted when faced with danger. The adults felt the stress of the circumstances but prepared themselves to face the dangers. They took sufficient precautions to protect the ship when the rough weather began. They equipped everyone with lifelines, water proof clothes, and life jackets. Larry and Herb worked cheerfully and optimistically for three days continuously to pump out water from the ship. Mary replaced the narrator at the wheel when the deck was smashed, and steered the ship. She also served them meal after two days of struggle against odds. The narrator performed his role as captain with courage, determination, resourcefulness and full responsibility. He undertook repair work and provided apparatus and directions needed to protect the ship. He also helped in steering the ship towards the island. The children suffered silently and patiently. Sue did not want to bother her father with her troubles. Jo acted courageously. He was not afraid to die if all of them were together.**

### **Question 2:**

**How does the story suggest the optimism helps to “endure the direst stress”?**

#### **Answer:**

The story suggests that optimism certainly helps to endure the direst stress. The behaviour of the four adults during crisis bears it out. Larry Vigil and Herb Seigler were two crewmen. As the mighty waves smashed the deck, water entered the ship. Right from the evening of January 2, Larry and Herb started pumping out water. They worked continuously, excitedly and feverishly for 36 hours. It was a result of their continuous pumping that they reached the last few centimetres of water on January 4. They remained cheerful and optimistic while facing extremely dangerous situations.

The narrator did not lose his courage, hope or presence of mind while facing problems. His self confidence and practical knowledge helped them to steer out of storm and reach the Ile Amsterdam . Mary stayed at the wheel for all those crucial hours. She did not lose hope or courage either.