HOME READING

# Patrick O’Brian

MASTER

&

COMMANDER

####

## I. APPRAISAL

The story begins in Port Mahon in year 1800. Jack Aubrey is made captain of the *Sophie* just after he first met Stephen Maturin. At first they don't like each other but their mutual love of music brings them together. Despite their very different natures they do have more than a little in common: both are broke, both are out of work, and both are in need of an opportunity. Aubrey induces Maturin to ship as his surgeon.

At first assigned the lowly duty of convoying merchant ships, the *Sophie* sails east from Minorca with a dozen merchant ships to Cagliari, a fortified seaport on the southern coast of Sardinia. From Cagliari she escorts another convoy of merchant ships north to Leghorn (Livorno), a major Tuscan seaport, which is neutral and open to ships of all nations. In the Genoa roads, Aubrey gets his break when Lord Keith, Admiral of the Blue and commander in chief in the Mediterranean, orders the *Sophie* to cruise the French and Spanish coasts down to Cape Nao to menace their commercial ports and vessels. In short order Aubrey takes full advantage of this command and makes his overachieving ship an infamous nuisance to the enemy.

Spanish merchants convince their government to send the ship *Cacafuego* after Aubrey. But he fools the bigger ship by pretending to be a Danish brig with a plague-ridden crew. The deception is so successful that the smaller ship might have seized the opportunity to attack her predator, but the captain refuses to take this perhaps morally unfair advantage.

Following a return to Port Mahon and an errand to Sir Sydney Smith's squadron off Alexandria, Egypt, the *Sophie* sails back to Minorca and then is allowed another cruise. She sails to Barcelona, Spain, once again playing cat and mouse with the merchant vessels on the busy Spanish coast. Early one morning the *Sophie* sails past the mouth of the Llobregat River, which flows southeast from the Pyrenees Mountains and enters the sea three miles south of Barcelona, when she again meets the *Cacafuego*.

Following an all-too-brief refit in Port Mahon, the *Sophie* is ordered away again, this time for Malta, to be refitted more fully, and then, regrettably, to Gibraltar with the mail. In his anger at having the *Sophie's* cruise cut short and for other abuses from Admiral Harte at Port Mahon, Aubrey gives this assignment a rather liberal interpretation. A nighttime shore attack against three Spanish coasting vessels off the coast of Spain results in an encounter with a formidable French squadron - including the ships *Formidable*, *Indomptable*, *Desaix*, and *Muiron* - under Rear Admiral Linois.

At the conclusion of Master and Commander, Aubrey witnesses two great battles from different sides of Bay Algeciras. In the first - when an English squadron under the nonfictional Admiral James Saumarez sails into the bay and attacks the French squadron and batteries - Aubrey views the encounter from a somewhat disadvantageous point of view on the west side of the bay - that is to say, in Algeciras. With Maturin, Aubrey watches the second action, which occurs in the Strait of Gibraltar, from the eastern side of the bay, high atop the Rock of Gibraltar.

**II. MAIN CHARACTERS**

##### JACK AUBREY

He was appointed to be the master and commander of the sloop *Sophie*. Before he set sail he met Stephen Maturin and they became great friends. Jack invited Stephen to be ship’s surgeon and so Stephen joined the crew.

Jack is middle-aged tall man with bright blue eyes. He has great interest in music and he plays fiddle from time to time. He is very ambitious and impatient of any restraint.

##### STEPHEN MATURIN

Stephen is small and white-faced Irishman. He had been a member of the *United Irishmen*, a secret society, calling for the emancipation of Presbyterians, dissenters and Catholics. But their rising had been put down and many had been betrayed and killed.

Stephen is a middle-sized spare man about forty years old. He has a hooked nose, grey eyes and a large mole near his mouth. He shares Jack’s passion for music – he plays ‘cello. He became surgeon on sloop *Sophie* after he met Jack.

**III. EXTRACT WITH EXPLANATION**

The Spanish bowman was about to hook on when Stephen, speaking a Scandinavian but instantly comprehensible Spanish, called out, “Have you a surgeon that understands the plague aboard your ship?”

The bowman lowered his hook. The officer said, “Why?”

“Some of our men were taken poorly at Algiers, and we are afraid. We cannot tell what it is.”

“Back water,” said the Spanish officer to his man. “Where did you say you had touched?”

“Algiers, Alger, Argel: it was there the men went ashore. Pray what is the plague like? Swellings? Buboes? Will you come and look at them? Pray, sir, take this rope.”

“Back water,” said the officer again. “And they went ashore at Algiers?”

“Yes. Will you send your surgeon?”

“No. Poor people, God and His Mother preserve you.”

“May we come for medicines? Pray let me come into your boat.”

“No,” said the officer, crossing himself. “No, no. Keep off, or we shall fire into you. Keep out to sea – the sea will cure them. God be with you, poor people. And a happy voyage to you.” He could be seen ordering the bowman to throw the boathook into the sea, and the launch pulled back fast to the bright-red xebec.

They were within very easy hailing distance now, and a voice from the frigate called out some words in Danish; Pram replied; and then a tall thin figure on the quarter-deck, obviously the captain, asked, had they seen an English sloop-of-war, a brig?

“No,” they said; and as the vessels began to draw away from one another Jack whispered, “Ask her name.”

“*Cacafuego*,” came the anwser over the widening lane of sea. “A happy voyage.”

“A happy voyage to you.”

This is how they fooled their enemies, the ship *Cacafuego*, which was persuading them. They painted *Sophie* and changed her appearance so she couldn’t be recognised. When *Cacafuego* approached they were pretending to be a Danish brig with plague-ridden crew. Xebec left them without any suspicion.

**IV. NEW WORDS**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **WORD** | **PHRASE** | **EXPLANATION** | TRANSLATION |
| 1 | HIPPED | “You are looking very hipped…” | sad | potrt |
| 2 | TO CURTSEY | She curtseyed and smiled. | bending the knees; gesture of respect | prikloniti se |
| 3 | WIG | He was wearing a wig, a gizzled wig… | head-covering of false hair | lasulja |
| 4 | TEDIOUS | …during this tedious work… | lenghty | dolgotrajen |
| 5 | TANNED | His face was deeply tanned… | sunburnt | ogorel |
| 6 | SASH | …English houses with sash windows… | frame (of a window) | okvir |
| 7 | TO PAD | …as they paded by… | to walk | pešaciti |
| 8 | LARK | …it was enough to make any man’s heart rise like a lark… | kind of a small songbird | škrjanec |
| 9 | TO CRANE | Jack craned with one foot on the parapet… | to hesitate | omahovati |
| 10 | PARAPET | Jack craned with one foot on the parapet… | fence | ograja |
| 11 | TO ASTONISH | “You astonish me.” | to surprise | presenetiti |
| 12 | DEPRECATING | …spreading his hands in a deprecating gesture. | disapproval, disapprobative | neodobrovajoc, odklonilen |
| 13 | CLERK | “…if you have no one else in mind for your clerk… | officer in charge of records | uradnik |
| 14 | BRIG | “I had been told the brig was stripped.” | two-masted ship with square sails | vrsta dvojambornice |
| 15 | PURSER | …he is well enough for a purser. | officer responsible for a ship’s accounts and stores | ladijski ekonom |
| 16 | COMMISSION | …he would not have to pick up his commission,… | authority | pooblastilo |
| 17 | TO RATTLE | …the waterman rattled his boathook. | to make short, sharp sounds | rožljati |
| 18 | BOSUN | …calss of the bosun and his mates… | boatswain; senior seaman who controls the work of of other seamen | poveljnik palube |
| 19 | DUNNAGE | …send a boat for my chest and dunnage. | cargo, shipment | ladijski tovor |
| 20 | TO POSE | There you pose me. | to confuse | zbegati |
| 21 | SANGUINE | …his advisers had been altogether too sanguine. | fiery | ognjevit |
| 22 | ACERBITY | …he said with a touch of acerbity. | bitterness | trpkost |
| 23 | BLUNDER | …what a sad blunder. | mistake | zmota |
| 24 | DOUBLOONS | Doubloons, they lie in a soft leather sacks… | Spanish gold coin(not in use anymore) | španski zlatnik |
| 25 | BANTERING | He had spoken in a bantering tone… | teasing (but in a good way) | šaljiv |
| 26 | TO STRAIN | …never strain at gnats of that kind. (=biti dlakocepski) | to hold tightly, squeeze | pritiskati |
| 27 | GNATS | …never strain at gnats of that kind. (=biti dlakocepski) | small two-winget fly that stings | mušica |
| 28 | CANDOUR | But you speak to me in such candour… | quality of saying freely what one thinks | iskrenost |
| 29 | TRIFLE | …we must not let trifles stand in the way… | thing of little value or importance | malenkost |
| 30 | WARRANT | A warrant from the Navy Office you must have… | commission, authority | pooblastilo |
| 31 | DELIBERATELY | “No,” said Stephen deliberately. | carefully, cautious, with consideration | pazljivo, premišljeno |
| 32 | ACUITY | …his face had an almost forbidding acuity. | sharpness | ostrina |
| 33 | WHARF | Any sign of life on the wharf? | port | pristanišce |
| 34 | TO RIG | We must rig a tube! | prepare, supply | opremiti |
| 35 | TUBE | We must rig a tube! | long hollow cylinder of metal | cev |
| 36 | DRAFT | A draft for us? | plan, outline | nacrt |
| 37 | TO CRAM | Can I cram him aboard? | to ship, to load | vkrcati |
| 38 | TO TROLL | …he will troll you out. | to seduce | zvabiti |
| 39 | TO ANOINT | …I forgot to anoint them. | apply oil or ointment to | namazati |
| 40 | TO SLING | …half of the men had the whole of the available space to sling their hammocks. | to hang | obesiti |
| 41 | HAMMOCK | …half of the men had the whole of the available space to sling their hammocks. | hanging bed of canvas | viseca mreža |
| 42 | TALLYMAN | How is the tallyman? | merchant | trgovec |
| 43 | DIRK | Where is your dirk? | dagger | bodalo |
| 44 | INANITION | He is dying of inanition… | exhaustion | izcrpanost |
| 45 | HARE LIP | He has a hare lip. | divided upper lip | ajcja ustnica |
| 46 | CROW | …he was tired of being a white crow… | large, black bird with harsh cry | vrana |
| 47 | LOBLOLLY BOY | …he shall be my loblolly boy… | boy who helps ship’s surgeon | pomocnik ladijskega zdravnika |
| 48 | REMORA | A remora! | kind of a fish that sticks on other, bigger fish | vrsta ribe, ki se prilepi na druge, vecje ribe |
| 49 | VEXATION | And he was too much of a philosopher to feel much vexation… | unpleasantness | neprijetnost |
| 50 | TO VEER | …the wind veered… | to turn | obracati se |
| 51 | ODIOUS | …an odious man… | obnoxious | zoprn |
| 52 | HAZE | …the thinning haze unveiled five vessels… | fog, mist | meglica |
| 53 | OBLIGED | …I am much obliged to you… | grateful, thankful | biti hvaležen |
| 54 | TO PLY | She is always plying up and down the coast… | to sail | pluti |
| 55 | SPURT | …he said with the spurt of pride. | sudden burst | nenaden izbruh |
| 56 | GRUNT | …he heard the grunt… | grumbling, growling | godrnjanje |
| 57 | PERTINACIOUSLY | The grey-haired captain fired on pertinaciously… | persistently, steadily | vztrajno |
| 58 | ASP | …and what did I see? My asp drained! | kind of a snake | gad |
| 59 | DRAINED | …and what did I see? My asp drained! | dried | posušen |
| 60 | EMETIC | Must he not have an emetic? | medicine causing a person to vomit | bljuvalo |
| 61 | VULTURE | A bearded vulture! | kind of a bird | jastreb |
| 62 | HULL | Then it will certanly protect our hull. | body of a ship | ladijski trup |
| 63 | PORTLY | Besides, I am not portly. | stout, round and fat | zajeten |
| 64 | REPROACH | They all looked at Stephen with some reproach… | reprehension | ocitek |
| 65 | GENTEEL | The captain has an uncommon genteel figgar. | polite, well-mannered | uglajen |
| 66 | TO CRINKLE | His face crinkled up… | to wrinkle | gubati se |
| 67 | FORT | The fort was very close. | stronghold | utrdba |
| 68 | TO SPIKE | Spike up those guns! | to fix | pritrditi |
| 69 | HIDEOUSLY | His face was hideously seared and bruised… | disgustfully | ostudno |
| 70 | SEARED | His face was hideously seared and bruised… | burnt | osmojen |
| 71 | BRIUSED | His face was hideously seared and bruised… | beaten | potolcen |
| 72 | LEE | …and under Sophie’s lee lay three prizes… | shelter | zavetrje |
| 73 | PRIZE | …and under Sophie’s lee lay three prizes… | plunder | vojni plen |
| 74 | BALD | Pretty bald, ain’t it? | poor | boren, reven |
| 75 | CRAYFISH | …avoid the rocks where the crayfish live. | lobster | jastog |
| 76 | MUTINY | Mutinies aways happen… | rebellion, revolt | upor |
| 77 | LAX | …where the discipline is too lax… | bad | slab |
| 78 | CASK | …the casks are full… | barrel | sod |
| 79 | SCUT | …he saw white scuts bobbing away… | rabbit’s tail | zajcji repek |
| 80 | TO BOB | …he saw white scuts bobbing away… | to leap, to hop | poskakovati |
| 81 | NIBBLING | …he could hear their quick nibbling in the thyme… | tiny biting | grizljanje |
| 82 | THYME | …he could hear their quick nibbling in the thyme… | kind of a plant with aromatic leaves | timijan |
| 83 | TO PURGE | I spend half my time purging them… | to clean | cistiti |
| 84 | SULLEN | …who was quite sullen at times… | dull, in a bad mood | mrk, cemeren |
| 85 | TO DART | He darted into his cabin. | to haste | planiti |
| 86 | OWL | …there might be owles. | kind of a night-flying bird | sova |
| 87 | RAMBLING | …this rambling about on a hostile shore. | roaming, roving | potepanje |
| 88 | FATIGUE | …Jack was shattered with with fatigue… | tiredness | utrujenost |
| 89 | FRITTERED | It was not frittered away… | wasted | zapravljen |
| 90 | WENCH | …he loved a wench… | young girl, prostitute  | razuzdanka |
| 91 | COPIOUS | You were in a very copious flow of spirits… | plentiful | obilen, ploden |
| 92 | ERRAND | We are to run an errand to Sir Sidney Smith’s squadron… | appointment, business | opravek |
| 93 | SQUADRON | We are to run an errand to Sir Sidney Smith’s squadron… | group of four ships with special task or appointment | eskadra; skupina ladij s posebo nalogo |
| 94 | RENCOUNTER | Rencounters are most uncommon in England. | fight | dvoboj |
| 95 | EVASIVE | …but they give evasive answers… | ambiguous | dvoumen |
| 96 | NEAT | A quart of of neat rum? | pure | nerazredcen |
| 97 | TO RUMMAGE | Rummage her cabin… | to search | preiskati |
| 98 | FATIGUING | A fatiguing day. | tiresome | utrudljiv |
| 99 | ANTINOMIAN | You are antinomian. | amazing | osupljiv |
| 100 | SHABBY | …and his shabby dress.. | worn out | oguljen |