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CROSSING THE LINE

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M.M.S. "BERMUDA"

March 11, 1947

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CROSSING THE LINE.

H. M. S. "Birmingham". March 11, 1941.

NIGHT BEFORE CEREMONY.

Piper: "Clear Lower Deck. Hands to cross Equator."

Masthead Lookout: "Line Ahead, Sir."

Captain: "Step Both". (The ship is stopped. Herald and Trumpeters with Bears and Cermaid in attendance appear on the forecastle. Coloured beams from 20" S/Ls. Spray from hoses.)

Fanfare by Trumpeters.

Herald: "Ship Ahoy. What ship is this?"

Captain: "His Britannic Majesty's Ship, Birmingham, and who are you?"

Herald: "I am the Herald of His Watery Majesty, King Neptune Emperor of All the Seas."

Captain: "Welcome, Herald. Pray advance. I have sighted the Dominion of your Royal Master and have stopped my ship until I receive permission to clear the line and proceed."

Herald: "My Royal Master down below has been expecting you, S
Sir, Sir,
And sends His Royal Greeting to you and to your crew, S
He instructs me to instruct you that he gives you his permission,
To proceed until tomorrow on your Southward expediti

Captain: "Our very humble greetings to His Majesty, your Master
We know we cannot enter his domain without disaster
Until we pay him homage, so we beg to be allowed
To receive him in the morning with his Court - we'll have a crowd
To receive initiation in the very solemn rite
Of crossing the Equator on this happy Tuesday night.

Herald: "I bring a parcel from his liege
Which now I give to you,
Containing Neptune's summonses
For many of your crew.
Our policemen don't like shirkers.
Our bears are fierce and strong.
Our barbers don't like whiskers
Or hair that grows too long."

Bears: "Shave him and Bash him"
Duck him and Splash him
Torture and Smash him
But don't let him go."

Herald: "I thought I'd give you warning.
I'll take your message down below,
Farewell until the morning."

Captain: "Farewell until the morning". (Fanfare by Trumpeters.)
(OFF 20" S/Ls.)

Captain: "Clear the Line."

Masthead Lookout: "Line cleared, Sir."

Captain: "Half speed ahead Both."

CROSSING THE LINE.

NEXT MORNING.

(NEPTUNE and COURT assemble in the waist.
Route for procession:- All the stbd. side
and forward the port side. Up on to the
Hangar Deck by brow abreast the 2nd
whaler. Order of procession:- Herald and
Trumpeters, Judge and Judge's Clerk,
Police, Boats, Doctors, Barbers, NEPTUNE
and AMPHITRITE, Mermaid.)

(Arrangements on the Hangar Deck, see
SKETCH, in sketch of Herald and Trumpeter
there is a Mermaid.)

Herald:

"His Majesty's Court Approaches.

(He announces each in turn.)

"His Majesty's Judge and Judge's Clerk.
(They take position on Dais.)

"His Majesty's Police." (Arrange themselves round
arena.)

"His Majesty's Boats." (Musters on left of the
Guard.)

"His Majesty's Doctors." (Musters on the Platform.)

"His Majesty's Barbers." (Musters on the Platform.)

(FANFARI by Trumpeters.)

"His Majesty King Neptune and Queen Amphitrite."

(Neptune and Queen Amphitrite
are met by the Captain in
middle of the Dais.)

Captain: "I have much pleasure, Honoured Sirs, to welcome you on
board,
Together with your Royal Spouse and all your humid horde
And now I pray Your Majesty, inspect your guard of honour
And bring the Queen, for every marine wants to feast his
eyes upon her.

(NEPTUNE, AMPHITRITE and CAPTAIN inspect Royal
Marines.)

DURING INSPECTION:-

NEPTUNE: "Come here, my dear, don't linger near that scupper
You needn't frown, for when we get down, you can
have a bootneck's supper
(To the Captain.)

"Pray pardon this domestic scene,
But the Queen is very partial to a Royal Marine."

AT END OF INSPECTION:-

NEPTUNE: (To Captain of Marines.)

"I'm always impressed by the elegant pose
Assumed, when in doubt, by His Majesty's Joes.
Congrats, Mr Marsh, on a splendid collection.
Their motto, I know is Per Mare Perfection.
I'm especially pleased by the splendid peruke
of this elderly, dignified Royal Jerock."

(After introduction of Captain Neptune and
Aspirant takes up position on Deck.)

NEPTUNE:

"I'm delighted to welcome the Birmingham
For I've heard many stories concerning 'em
How they've boasted that they
Crossed four times in one day
Without giving me chance of confirming 'em.

(To the Captain:)

"Captain, Sir, when last we met, methinks you looks
more chubby.
Weren't you in Inflexible - a blue-eyed, blushing
subby?

CAPTAIN:

"Yes, the very first time I crossed the Line
We were bound for the Falklands' shore.
We'd a call to pay on Admiral Spce
With his Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.
We presented a bill for Coronel-
The result I don't think you've forgotten.
For both of these ships we sent down as tips
And you've still got them both on the bottom.

"And now to your seas we've brought salts and O/B's
Who have never been South before.
I hope you'll accept them for sacrifice
In accordance with ancient tradition
And allow us to enter your Southern Sea
With a blessing on this commission.

"But before you proceed, there is someone you need
To see that no novice goes light.
There'll be many who'll sigh, "Let the sleeping dog
lie"
But his bark is ^{much} worse than his bite.
He has eyes, it is said, in the back of his head
For loafers or the least speck of rust.
He's crossing the line for the twentieth time
And is willing to twist and go bust.

(Introduces FIRST LIEUTENANT as
NEPTUNE'S A.D.C.)

NEPTUNE:

"The appointment is good.
I am right, am I not?
So first met in the HOOD
At this very same spot.

(To the Captain)

"I must thank you indeed for the courteous way in
which I have been received,
The joy of my court when they saw your approach
should be seen to be really believed.
My Barbers below have been itching to go from the
the very first moment they heard,
That of all the ships in the Royal Navy, the
Birmingham had most heard.
I have brought all my Doctors, Policemen and Bears,
to apply the traditional rites
And I'm sure we shall have an enjoyable day and some
very unusual sights.
But first, Captain Hadden, my Court it will gladden
and joy to the company bring
As, for nights without number, you've broken our
slumber
And there's no means of stopping your ASDIC
eyebrow-droppers.
We appoint you THE GREAT PING KING."

NEPTUNE: (To U.S. Naval Officer, Lt/Cdr. WELLING.)

"Welcome, Mr Welling, let me say how glad I am
 To initiate a dialogue from my old friend, UGWIN SAIR.
 This ship is proud to have you (tho' if it must take lodgers,
 Between you and I, they wonder why they weren't sent Ginger
 Forest.)
 The last time we met, I will never forget, 'twas a most
 remarkable feat.
 For you crossed the line at the very same time as the whole
 American fleet.
 Now, as you've seen how they keep my sea clean from that East
 Indiaman lot,
 I think you'll agree, tho' your Navy's I.M., that there's much
 to be said for a tot.
 So now, my dear Welling, for the tale you'll be telling, back home
 adorn in the Land of the Free
 'Tis right, I suggest, to pinxan your chest with the HANDS
 ACROSS THE SEA.

NEPTUNE: (To the PAYMASTER/COMMANDER GLEWISTER.)

"Greetings, Pay Commander, this really is a pleasure
 To meet the man who sends tin can to swell my ocean treasure.
 The see your mighty torse, does not the least surprise us
 For I and the Queen have frequently seen your morning exercises
 exercises.
 I'm told there's none can touch you at tearing off a senata
 And the only man on board who can eat herrings in tomato.
 But in spite of your sins in opening tins with the lust ofna
 Jack the Ripper,
 Kneel, I request you, that I may invest you, with the
 BADGE of the TAINTED KIPPER.

NEPTUNE: (To Master Gunner, Mr CLEARY.)

"Welcome, Mr Cleary, King of Master Gunners,
 You've seen half a hundred winters, though they might have
 all been summers.
 I'm very glad to see you here, for we've had many dealings.
 Just one little matter - I don't want to hurt your feelings -
 Do you remember, last November, when you sent me down a diver?
 That he only paid me half-a-crown and borrowed another fiver?
 When this war is over and you return from sea
 I expect you'll spin them many a yarn, with your grandchild
 on your knee;
 And maybe you'll go further to impress the little crawler
 And boast how once you went and sank a great big German
 twattler.
 So now, my old friend, on both knees bend, and I'm sure my
 Bears won't skin it.
 With considerable glee, I now confer the degree of the
 ANCIENT CRUSTED LIMPET.

NEPTUNE: (To Midshipman STUART.)

"Here stands the Senior Middy, whose fame has crossed the
Atlantic,
Whose news of his wonderful tropical growth has driven my
Menzies frantic.
I'm really glad to meet you, Sir, and see what I've heard from
the birds
That they're tough, mighty tough on the Birmingham, where
even the midgies have beards,
As you stride up and down, with a terrible frown, you can
see three-hadgers quaking;
"Keep out of the way", you can hear them say, "It's an
Admiral in the making."
So now, my dear Stuart, it's high time that you ought
to take your place among us,
So with this in view, I confer on you, the BADGE of the
DEEP-SEA FURBER."

NEPTUNE: (To Ldg/Stoker CRAWSHAW.)

"Now here's our dear old Hanky, Leading-Stoker Crawshaw,
Who's been on every ocean and in the pubs on every
foreshore.
He says it was in 'thirteen that we did first receive him,
But I do not think that anyone is likely to believe him,
He's stuck to that tall story and maintained expression
in 'cent
Ever since they lost his papers at the battle of St.
Vincent.
He's got a wicked sense of humor, only found among the old
for it's he who makes you scold yourself from every top
marked "GOLD";
And it's he who keeps on drinking all the "beers" in the
ship,
For years the acknowledged master of the steady, lakewave
drip.
But in spite of all his failings, he's a decent sort of whiz
chap,
So I pin on him the ORDER of the DRINKING WATER TAP."

NEPTUNE: (To Boy S STEPHENSON and Marine/Bugler HUSBAND.)

"And, lastly, two Boys; their Mothers' joys, despair of
Leading Beamen,
Who joined up as cots, just out of their cots, now but soon grew
growing into ke-men.
I'm very glad to greet you both and hope to see you more."

(TO Boy STEPHENSON)

Tho' I must say, for a sailor, you look very much peier,
since my Bears have smelt your gore.
It is down in my books that to your good looks, suitable
dues shall be paid.
So if you can afford her, I give you the ORDER of LULU
the GOLDEN MERMAID."

(TO Marine/Bugler HUSBAND)

"~~And~~ As you spoil our ease with ear-splitting "G's" and
frighten the poor ship's cat,
I wind up the day, in the time-honoured way, with the
BADGE of the OLD RIN HAN."

CAPTAIN:-

"I am honoured, O King, by the Badge of the King, and am
 subject always to you,
 So please make use of my ship as you wish and instruct
 your watery crew,
 To supply enough pills to cure all the ills of my marine
 novices, so that they may
 Conduct themselves as your servants should, in a decent
 seamanly way.
 I earnestly hope that the razor and soap of the Barber
 will raze many hairs,
 So Polishment, go to it, and see they go through it,
 and then heave them unto the Boars."

NEPTUNE: "Old Shellbacks and Scribe, and the rest of your
 tribe,
 Are you ready to act as you ought?
 Is everything ready?"

CHORUS:

"Ready, Aye, ready."

NEPTUNE: Then OPEN KING NEPTUNE'S COURT.

(The two Warrants are then produce
produced by A. D. C.)

NEPTUNE:

" And now, so that my Beers may have their fun
Bring me Herrant No. 1.
Policemen! Do not at your duty falter,
Fetch me here my first defaulter."

(A. D. C. hands warrant to Judge or Judge's Clerk
who reads:-)

JUDGE'S CLERK:-

"Whereas it has been represented to me that
NAME:- Charles Frederick St. Quintin. RASING:- The Black.
CONDUCT:- Filthy. CHARACTER:- None. LEAVE:- Plenty.
Did,

Endeavour to evade paying his dues to His
Majesty, King Neptune, and to sneak over the line by
disguising himself as a bearded lady.

(1) Did fail to give a make and mend during the
first two months of 1901;

(2) Did cause to be confined contrary to Habeas
Corpus the guns turret crews of A, B, X and Y turrets for
unreasonable periods during the present voyage;

(3) Did delay or cause to be delayed fourteen
pipes in one day, thereby causing confusion and dismay among
His Majesty's loyal servants;

(4) Did cause the starboard watch to "out" P.V.s
ten times running;

(5) Did cause the port watch to "out" P.V.s
ten times running;

(6) Did endeavour to capture satellites of
His Majesty's Govt, to wit Mermaids, in order to compel
to paint ship whilst in harbour.

JUDGE:

"I do hereby adjudge him, the aforesaid, to be
shaved with black soap, given sundry pills for his
inner comfort and to be immersed four times with
North End up and four times with his South End up.

"Before awarding the foregoing punishment, I did
in the presence of the accuser and the accused,
investigate the matter, and having heard the evidence
of the said Mermaid, three Beers and One Sea Slug
in support of the charge; the accused not being allowed
to offer any defence; I do hereby adjudge him to be
punished as afore stated.

"Given under my hand on the Equator, on the
twelfth day of March, Nineteen Hundred and Forty One."

NEPTUNE: (After execution of Sentence No.1.)

'Tis gives great pleasure, as it ought
To see an old offender caught.
Now Follicensen, I look to you
To bring Defaulter No.2.

(The CHAPLAIN is roughly arrested
by Policemen and brought to
Plurion. S.O.C. hands Warrant No.2
to JUDGE'S CLERK.)

JUDGE'S CLERK: "Warrant No.2."

"Whereas it has been represented to me that
NAME: George Reinberg, RACE: Sky-pilot,
CONDUCT: Unpredictable. CHARACTER: Loose.
LEAVE: Stopped.
D.D."

Display unseemly mirth in the presence
of his Vet Majesty, King Neptune;

(2) Did make improper advances, to wit
winking, at one of His Majesty's subjects, to wit
a Mermaid (black) whilst bathing at Lemley Beach;

(3) Did scandalise said subject by later
frolicking improperly clad on said beach;

(4) Did talk too much on many occasions;

(5) Did appear improperly clad in church,
to wit wearing shorts underneath his surplice.

JUDGE: "I do hereby adjudge him, the aforesaid, to be
thrown to my Bears, to be dosed with three pills
and a tonic, to receive a close shave and to be
ducked once with his channel end uppermost and
once nave downwards.

"Given under my head on the Equator on the
twelfth day of March, Nineteen Hundred and Forty
One."

(The Sentence is executed.)

NEPTUNE: "And now, with chief offenders caught,
Deal with the others as you ought.
After the Novices! In with the first!
Bears and Barbers, do your worst!

(General ceremony then proceeds.)

End.