

Logbook

No sooner had I arrived in La Rochelle than I received a call from the director of the museum where I work. He ordered me to go and start my research in an old warehouse. I wasn't very happy about the news, because I hadn't even unpacked my boxes and I already had to go and do research in an unhealthy and abandoned place. The next day, feeling unmotivated, I set off. I quickly found the warehouse located near the Bassin des Chalutiers because it gave off something that indicated a place full of history.

Once inside, I got to work and started sorting out what interested me and what didn't. After about two hours, my attention was drawn to an old wooden chest covered in dust. At the bottom, I found only an old leather-bound notebook. The initials 'L.S.' were still legible. After a few sentences, I realised that I was reading the logbook of Captain Lukas Schulz, dating from the 16th century.

29/09/15** *Dear diary,*

We have just boarded the Peter von Danzig for a long voyage to La Rochelle with two stopovers: in Bergen, in the Kingdom of Norway, and then in Boston in the Kingdom of England. My dear Gudrum, my second in command, is joining us on the voyage. Despite the recent birth of his son, he has agreed to accompany me to plunder an English cargo. We hope that everything goes well, we have to collect wool and sheets in addition to our legal cargo; we are bringing back herring and of course beer. I think we will know more when we arrive. But at least it will make the time pass more quickly.

Oh well. I found it hard to leave my night-time companion because I don't know if I'll be going back to Germany. Apparently I'm wanted by the police. I think they took the gold from our last trip.

Apart from that, a new sailor has joined our crew, a Frenchman, Pierre Dupuy. I hope I can trust him. I don't like having a new sailor on such a journey. But Gudrum trusts him completely, so I trust him in turn.

I'll leave you my diary, Gudrum is calling me. A problem with the cargo if I understand correctly. Bis bald.

30/09/15**

Today is the big day. We are heading northwest towards Bergen. I hope the weather will be favourable during this tough first leg, because to reach the North Sea it is absolutely necessary to go around Denmark from the east or to cross it between the islands. The latter is the fastest route, but it is dangerous, especially at night, when there is a greater risk of shipwreck. But for obvious safety reasons, I took the longer route around Denmark.

We set off at dawn, and the whole crew answered the call to embark on this long voyage.

Dusk is approaching and we have left the Bay of Lübeck. The sea is calm, there are no clouds but a bright sun, and surely one of the last before entering the North Sea where cold and cloudy weather awaits us.

2/10/15**

After two days of sailing, we are about to cross the city of Copenhagen. There are so many ships that it is difficult to find a way through. That is why we will not stop. This decision will prevent the Copenhagen brigands, who have a reputation for robbing moored ships, from looting our food, gunpowder and other valuables. Once we have crossed Copenhagen, our journey will be smoother, despite the bad weather.

Suddenly, I heard my phone ringing: it was the director. He asked me how my research was going,

but also why I hadn't gone back to the office to get my badge.

I was so caught up in the story that I hadn't realised what time it was: 10.30pm. I imagined the captain and his shipmates on their boat, ready to set off on an adventure. I had carefully put the newspaper in my bag so that I could read it at home with a clear head. Perhaps its adventures would keep me awake until the end of the night.

06/10/15**

Four days after passing Copenhagen, we arrive at the tip of Denmark. We are now very close to Bergen. We had a difficult night with rain until dawn. The crew is extremely tired after this somewhat eventful night, so today we will rest and then in the days to come we will go more slowly to avoid too much effort, which could cause too much fatigue and damage to my sailors.

10/08/15**

The storm has finally subsided, and the waves, although still rough, have calmed down now. The exhausted crew gradually regained their strength after fighting tirelessly.

Then a cry was heard from the top of the mast, pointing to a figure floating on a board. As we gradually approached it, we discovered a soaked woman clinging to what was probably left of a wrecked boat. Her clothes are in tatters, but she is alive. So we pull her on board as seamen are honour-bound to do.

Her eyes are wide open, but filled with terror. She doesn't say a word, either to explain where she comes from or to give us her name. So we know absolutely nothing about her. The other men murmur that the storm may have rendered her mute with fear, but I sense that she is hiding something... Another page closed, as the sea and the sky merge into darkness. We will resume at dawn.

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The woman remains silent, still withdrawn. Every attempt to question her fails, but her gaze, although frightened, is keen. She barely eats, but seems grateful for our help. Nevertheless, I suspect her of being English. Her features and manner suggest that she comes from a respectable family. The crew and I, after some discussion, don't know what exactly to do. We finally decide to keep her on board until we can take her somewhere safe.

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After a few days at sea, she still hasn't said anything. But today, as we passed the coast of Bergen, when she heard some sailors talking about our next stop in Boston, she seemed to relax. Maybe she understands more of our language than she lets on. I'm almost certain now that her silence is deliberate. It is clear that she does not want to be guarded by us Germans, for fear that we will detain her longer. Thanks to the few floating debris not far from her when we found her, I assumed that her boat must have sunk in the storm. Moreover, there is every reason to believe that she was on board a British ship, perhaps en route to France...

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Tomorrow, we will finally put it ashore in Boston. A brief stopover before our course takes us back to the coast of France. We will leave behind us this strange encounter, silent and shrouded in

mystery.

Suddenly, my cat jumped on me, which violently pulled me away from my reading. This interruption, which brought me back to reality, made me go to bed. In my bed, I started to rehash the stories I had read earlier, which led me to ask myself countless questions. At dawn, determined to find answers, I headed for the archives of the museum where I was working in order to carry out my research on Lukas Schulz and his journey. After a few hours of research, I learnt that the so-called Edna Schlerer, a storm survivor, was in fact Lena Schröder. She used an anagram to impersonate someone else and spy on Lukas's crew. She reported her observations to the king to inform him of any actions that could potentially undermine his power. Lukas Schulz was a privateer in the service of the king, but as he was completely free to do as he wished, he could have set up a smuggling operation, which greatly worried the king. I also learnt that Gudrum's son had followed in his father's footsteps and become a famous privateer who left his mark on the era.

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We were met in Boston by that fog so typical of England, so that in trying to moor in the harbour, we crashed into the quay. The damage to the hull is such that we will no doubt have to stay on dry land for at least a week, in order to find what we need to restore our vessel. In the meantime, we found an inn near the quays. In this very warm and welcoming place, we were able to relax and let ourselves go. So we drank well, ate well, drank so much that, slightly tipsy, my sailors confronted some locals. The confrontation was incredibly violent.

The inn was smoky, full of sailors with the smell of cigars and adventure. A fire crackled in the hearth. The smell of rum and burnt wood filled the air. Mugs clinked, the laughter and shouts of drunken men echoed between the rough wooden walls. It all started when a group of English pirates started spying on us. A poorly translated English joke by one of the teammates caused the Englishmen to laugh loudly. One of them knocked over a German pirate's beer mug, triggering a scowl

An argument broke out between an English teammate and me. We were very drunk. Suddenly, he punched me in the face. A fight broke out instantly. Mugs were flying, furniture was being overturned. Some customers stayed out of the battle, several of them taking refuge under the tables to avoid the chaos. One of my comrades threw a stool at another man's head, while a sailor grabbed a bottle to use as a weapon and smashed it against the wall.

An Englishman crossed paths with our mysterious refugee, prompting me to intervene in her defence. A scarred English captain yelled at his men not to let my companions go without a fight to the death. In the ensuing chaos, Gudrum and an English pirate fought near the fireplace. My second-in-command sent his enemy to perish in the flames. Finally, the brawl reached a chaotic peak when the exasperated innkeeper fired a pistol into the air, forcing everyone to freeze. The bullet ricocheted off a chandelier and headed straight for the refugee. With a swift movement, the captain intervened, taking the bullet in his shoulder. He staggered under the impact, but immediately got back on his feet, a determined gleam in his eyes, ready to protect his protégée at all costs. Blood was running down my leg and the pain froze me in place. Out of breath, bloodied and drunk, the pirates stopped their quarrel to realise that, in the chaos, a man had been burnt alive near the hearth.

We initially planned to drop the young woman off ashore but the battle had frightened her, so we decided to keep her by our side. She is looking panicked and seems completely lost. The crew don't have the heart to leave her in this hostile city. So we will continue our journey with her.

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We weighed anchor this morning, heading for La Rochelle, our final destination. According to our calculations, it will take us about two weeks of sailing before we reach the port, if the winds are favourable and the sea remains calm. On board, the rescued woman remains silent. She has only given us a few words scribbled on a piece of paper: a name, Edna Schlerer, with no further explanation or story. Her silence weighs on the crew, and already, everyone feels that the days ahead will be long and mysterious, haunted by this enigmatic presence.

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The minutes are long. The hours are even longer. My crew has suggested we loot the next ship we come across. We have to have some fun, don't we? We have a week left before we arrive in La Rochelle. We are bound to come across some formidable enemies.

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In just one day, we found our target. We divided up the tasks. As I injured my calf during the battle, I stayed on our ship and gave orders to my men. Gudrum, Pierre Dupuy and nine other sailors went to defend their teammates who, in the meantime, were looting the barrels in the hold. We found cider and tea there, as well as wool in separate boxes. Meanwhile, the crewmen were fighting, sword against sword. We could see blood spurting, deep cuts on the arms and legs of some of the men. Suddenly, I heard a shrill scream that ran through my whole body. The sailors retreated to the boat, but I didn't see Gudrum return. It was at that moment that Pierre came up to me and said to me word for word: 'Gudrum's heart was pierced by a sword. He is dead.'

After reading this long passage, I felt my emotions rise, the sadness of losing a loved one being felt in the captain's words. A tear slid down my cheek at the thought of the sadness caused by this death, both for Lukas and for Gudrum's family. It was at that moment that I realised how involved I was in Lukas's stories. His words took me to a parallel universe, making me feel every event, full of history and emotions, as if I had experienced them myself. And on reflection, I had to face a situation similar to Lukas's... the loss of my best childhood friend in an accident.

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Only three days to go before we arrive. I can't stand it any more. I can't wait to stretch my legs and take my mind off things. My most loyal deputy Gudrum died during the robbery, the result of an impulse of my tired mind, bored by this interminable journey.

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*Only two days to go.
I can't see myself facing his family and admitting my guilt in the death of my deputy. I'm dreading the return journey.*

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Only one more day. My mental state is not improving. I feel so bad about myself.

The silence on board the caravel grew heavier and heavier as the days went by. Edna seemed as discreet as ever. She seemed to be scrutinising the slightest movement around her. However, her gaze betrayed nothing of her thoughts.

This morning, as I passed her on the pontoon, there was a special gleam in her eyes, a fleeting spark, but one that was impossible to forget.

She looked at me, examining me with her small, clear, wrinkled eyes, always emphasised by a natural blush. When she met my gaze, hers would flee and her attitude would change. She was no longer as serene as she let on. This mystery, the invisible veil surrounding Edna, captivated me. And for the first time, I wanted to get to know a woman. Although she did not speak, her gaze tried to convey a message to me that had never ceased to captivate me. It was not so much her silence as the intensity of her gaze. Each of her movements seemed calculated, precise, as if each gesture, each glance, were a piece of a puzzle of which I did not yet have the whole picture.

I had the impression that she was playing a game whose rules only she knew. She mastered them as if she had created them. But above all, she seemed to know exactly what she wanted and what she could get from others. The men in the crew didn't seem to understand what was behind her reserve, but I felt that she was hiding more than she was showing. I had never been a man quick to give in to temptation, despite 'my woman of the night'.

But with her, there was something inexplicable, a strange call, an invisible tension that hovered around us. Ellen was not like the other women I had met. There was a depth, a gravity in her gaze that made me doubt my own certainties.

Her incessant silence was not a weakness but a strength. A strength whose captivating as well as frightening magnitude I could sense. As I kept crossing paths with her, new questions and intrigues arose within me. I felt that Edna, behind her silence, was hiding a secret that I would soon discover, or so I hoped. This trip could hold much more in store for me than I could possibly imagine.

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Finally, after those weeks, we arrived in the port of La Rochelle. It is a very beautiful city. I decided to go and pay my respects to my second in command, Gudrum. The last days of the journey had been so slow. My memory would not clear up after the past events. Guilt, hatred, a desire for revenge were eating away at me. None of this would have happened if we hadn't tried to loot the first ship we came across. I hope that luck was simply not on our side. I went to the Protestant church in La Rochelle, where I asked for forgiveness for my sins, and I prayed for the soul of my friend.

At the end of this diary, there is a sheet of paper. It says 'Verhaftet', 'arrest' in English. I realise that this is the end of the adventure. He was arrested for looting the English ship in which the second-in-command, Gudrum, died. This is where the captain's adventures end. I am going to put the dusty notebook back in its place, but as I do so, I notice another sheet of paper with very familiar handwriting. The first words make me realise that it is a farewell letter. I unfold it with some apprehension. As my eyes follow the lines, the reality of the message hits me full force. The letter is addressed to Konrad, Gudrum's son. From the very first words, the tone is solemn. The words resonate with infinite, almost poignant tenderness. The captain, in his isolation, seems to want to pass on to this young child the legacy and greatness of his father. I read his words with emotion. '

My dear Konrad, I am Captain Lukas Schulz, your late father's best friend and his captain. I met you when you were just a newborn baby and I am writing you this letter a few weeks later. When you are old enough to read these words, you will have no memory of your father, which is why I am writing to you today. I want you to know that your father was an extraordinary man who wanted nothing more than the happiness of his loved ones. I want you to know that he carried you in his heart every day. His love for you and his pride in you were obvious, even in the darkest moments. More than anything, he hoped that you would grow up to be an honest and courageous man, faithful to his values, as he was. I know that more than anything he wanted to see you grow up, but that even though he is not here, he is watching over you. I hope you don't hold it against me too much for taking your father away from you so soon and that you won't hold it against me when you grow up. I leave you with the hope of much happiness in your life.

Lukas Schulz

Translated with DeepL.com (Pro version)