

## **Master and Commander (1973)**

Mr Hilton was not just a teacher, he was a Master.

The Master of illusion and self-preservation.

Now seated in the corner of the ferry's restaurant, Mr Hilton was able to watch in quiet amusement the comings and goings of his class 1N and erratic attempts of Miss Nutley, the newly-qualified teacher, to keep the 28 ungrateful 12-year-olds in check.

A day trip to France is a splendid thing if organised correctly, he thought. First, a 20% mark-up on the cost of the tickets to enable him to make the most of the ferry's Duty Free shop, as well as the little supermarket nestled behind the Ferry Terminal. Secondly, an excuse that he had an ear infection preventing him to walk about the ferry, instead having to remain in the restaurant.

As he surveyed the rain-lashed sea through the wide protective glass, he appreciated the willingness of Miss Nutley to enter into this venture with such enthusiasm. She had created worksheets for the kids to fill in with questions such as 'Can you find the lifeboats' (that might be useful, Mr Hinton thought), and then when they arrived in Calais, she had suggested that the kids have conversations with the locals. Mr Hilton smiled to himself as it was likely that once the kids had been released from the coach they would make a dash for the Duty Free only to find it closed until the ferry was outside UK waters. Instead, they would make for the ferry's cafeteria where there were vats of greasy bacon and oily fried eggs sliding across the metal, silver platters. So the question paper would come in handy to clean up the puke once the ferry got into mid-channel.

Even now he could see Lauren Jones and her mates retching over the side and the ferry was only just leaving the port of Dover. Mr Hilton looked away, partly because he didn't want to upset his appetite, but also because he was disappointed that the girls couldn't even take the wind direction into account. Never mind, that's what washing machines are for. Pity, it seems to have sprayed that older couple. They seem quite upset. Well, it will allow Miss Nutley to practice her de-escalation and complaints management skills.

Yes, it was going to be a good day. Mr Hilton allowed himself to look forward to the end-of-the-day bag check when he would go through the boys' bags and confiscate the booze and fags. He has made the same arrangement as before with the Head teacher: 70/30 split.

Oh dear! Now Miss Nutley was hanging over the side. But at least she had taken the wind into consideration.

Yes, Mr Hilton thought, he really was Master of the sea.