

THE HUNGRY GODS
GO ON A FERRY

N. Van Seters & Claude

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

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PART ONE

SHORE

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MV QUEEN OF SURREY — ENGINEERING LOG**Friday. Morning rounds commenced 0512.**

0512 — Daily rounds commenced. All machinery spaces sighted. — R.T.

0518 — No. 1 and No. 2 M/E lube oil levels sighted. Within limits. — R.T.

0524 — Steering gear tested both ends prior to first departure per SMS checklist. Satisfactory. — R.T.

0531 — Fire patrol, decks 1 and 2, completed. Nil defects. — D.M.

0538 — Bilge wells sighted fore and aft. Dry. — R.T.

0544 — Sewage treatment plant: duty dosing pump seal weeping, changed over to standby unit. Replacement seal on order since 14 May. C/F. — R.T.

0551 — Fresh water system pressurized. Domestic hot water at temperature. — D.M.

0555 — Passenger elevator inspected and run through full travel. Satisfactory. — D.M.

0603 — No. 2 M/E: B-bank exhaust temperatures running 15–20 °C above A-bank at service load, trend continuing from Tuesday. Within limits. Injectors suspected. Spares: nil on board. Two reconditioned units expected ex supplier, ref. standing order 44-1181, no confirmed date. Monitor. — R.T.

0611 — Emergency generator test run under load, 12 minutes. Satisfactory. — R.T.

0617 — Deck 3 vehicle ramp hydraulics cycled. Satisfactory. — D.M.

C/F 03-2019 — Deck 3 ramp interlock indicator intermittent at panel. Interlock itself proves sound at each test. Indicator lamp assembly discontinued. Awaiting substitution approval. — Eng. Dept.

C/F 11-1998 — Forward escape trunk ladder, second rung from top, polished smooth. Sign posted. — Eng. Dept.

Spares note — Governor drive coupling, No. 1 M/E: OEM support withdrawn 2014. Serviceable unit fitted 2019 ex QUEEN OF COQUITLAM refit surplus. No further units held in fleet. Nil action available. — C.Eng.

I

0545 · RAMP AND COMPOUND, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 06:25 ACTUAL 06:25

The terminal compound before dawn. Sodium light. Sixteen empty lanes running down toward the water. A booth, lit. Three TERMINAL ATTENDANTS: WADE, who has done this for twenty-six years; BALJIT, who has done this for nine; DEE, who started in April. A tractor idles with three carts behind it.

WADE Gates.

BALJIT Gates are open.

WADE Cones.

BALJIT Cones are out. Dee's doing the booth.

DEE *(from the booth)* The float's short a roll of quarters.

WADE The float's been short a roll of quarters since Tuesday. It's not short. It's a rumour that got into the paperwork.

BALJIT mounts the tractor. It starts, stalls, and starts again on the second ask.

BALJIT Number Three wants asking twice.

WADE Number Three's been here longer than you. Show respect. Garbage carts out first, then bring the food carts up from the gate. The truck came at five.

The tractor pulls away, three carts swaying behind it like ducklings with a drinking problem. It returns towing four insulated food-service carts and, behind them, the baggage cart, which carries one small blue suitcase.

DEE Whose is that?

BALJIT Nobody's. It rides along. It's been to Langdale six times this week.

DEE Why?

WADE Because the alternative is walking it up to lost-and-found, and lost-and-found is full.

DEE Full of what?

WADE (*counting on his fingers*) One crutch. A car key for a make of car nobody here has ever seen. A wedding hat. A retainer, which nobody has claimed, which I understand. And a full set of encyclopedias, A through W, missing X-Y-Z, which somebody carried onto a ferry and then decided against.

DEE Decided against the alphabet.

WADE Decided against the last of it, anyway.

DEE hauls the hose out and begins washing the ramp. Gulls object from the light standards.

DEE There's more of it every morning.

WADE They're fed. That's the trouble. People feed them chips off the sun deck and then the gulls come home and file their reports on my ramp.

BALJIT backs the food carts into the queue for the vessel. At the head of the ramp, a big man neither of them has seen before is squaring the cart line. He walks it once, sets his shoulder to the last cart, and brings it in flush. He checks the coupling pins with his thumb, each one, and steps back.

BALJIT Who's the big fella?

WADE Not on my sheet.

BALJIT He's done the carts.

WADE Then he's ahead of you. Coffee shop. The muffins came in with the truck and the truck won't wait to be argued with.

In the coffee shop, DEE counts the muffin tray.

DEE Sheet says forty-eight. I count forty-seven.

WADE Count again.

DEE Forty-seven.

WADE (*without looking up*) Night shift.

BALJIT There is no night shift.

WADE Then it's a good mystery and I'm not solving it before six.
Write forty-seven and initial it.

The first cars come down the hill, brakes singing on the grade. Headlights fill Lane 1, then Lane 2. A camper van the size of a modest ambition eases into Lane 3.

DEE Here they come.

WADE Long weekend. They'll be up the hill past the church by nine.
Booth, Dee. Baljit, ramp. And somebody tell the gulls the terminal is now at capacity.

Lights along the lanes. The tractor idles. Down at the berth the QUEEN OF SURREY sits against her wingwalls with her lights on, warming up, forty-four years old and first in the queue like always.

II

0710 · OPERATIONS, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 08:40 ACTUAL 08:40

The long weekend is not a surprise. It arrives on the same Friday every year, it behaves the same way every year, and my position is that a thing which announces itself twelve months in advance does not get to be called a crisis. It gets to be called Friday.

The plan for today has been posted since Monday. Reservations on the Langdale run are at ninety-one percent through the afternoon block. The overload allowance gives me a margin of roughly forty automobile-equivalents per sailing, and an automobile-equivalent is a more flexible unit than the public imagines: a motorhome is two point seven five automobiles, a motorcycle is zero point three three, and a pickup towing a boat is, in my experience, however many automobiles it decides to be once it is on the ramp.

Staffing is full. I confirmed the complement at six, which is not a formality, because a vessel that is short one qualified position does not sail at reduced service, it does not sail at all, and so the difference between a full crew and a nearly full crew is the difference between a schedule and an apology. Today I have a schedule. The collective agreement asks that crew keep accommodation within reasonable commuting distance of their home terminal, which is a reasonable request, this being a reasonable industry. For new hires I keep a list of local rentals in my top drawer. The list currently has three entries. One of the entries is a berth at the marina, live-aboard, which I am advised is not technically permitted, but I keep it on the list because it is the only entry under two thousand dollars and I believe in giving people options.

The morning bulletin from the regional office advises that, effective next month, bulletins will be consolidated into a weekly bulletin, in order to reduce the volume of bulletins. I have filed it with the other bulletins.

The engineering summary reached me at six forty. Fourteen items. Thirteen are routine, and the fourteenth, item nine, concerns exhaust temperatures on the number two main engine, running warm on one bank, disposition: monitor. Engineering dispositions are engineering's to make, and second-guessing a Chief Engineer from a desk with a stapler on it is not management, it is theatre. I noted it, which is my function, and moved on, which is also my function.

At seven I signed a taxi chit out of the discretionary line for a walk-on passenger who spent the night in the terminal after missing the last sailing, an older gentleman travelling with a folding chair and no particular urgency, and I would rather explain a forty-dollar chit to head office than explain the alternative to myself. I also approved a shift swap for one of the deckhands, whose daughter swims in a meet in North Vancouver at four. The coverage came out of the spare board and cost the operation nothing but the ten minutes I spent on the telephone arranging it, and I record it here because the file should show that the operation can afford ten minutes.

Walking back from the wharfinger's office I passed a man in the corridor outside the muster room, lanyard, dark jacket, standing in front of the posted safety management policy and reading it. Not scanning it. Reading it, the full text, taking his time about it. Head office sends people down before long weekends and does not always tell me, which I have stopped regarding as an insult and started regarding as a compliment to the terminal's readiness. I said good morning. He said good morning. The policy has not changed in four years, but it read well, apparently, because he was still at it when I turned the corner.

On-time performance for this terminal sits at ninety-two percent for the quarter. A long weekend is where a number like that is either defended or surrendered, and I have no intention of surrendering it. The eight forty will load at eight, the ten twenty behind it, six more

behind that, and at close of day the board will show what it shows. I intend it to show ninety-two.

III

0835 · LANE 4

POSTED 08:40 ACTUAL 08:40

The septic inspection is at one. I want to say that plainly, because everything else about today is negotiable and that isn't. Six weeks I waited for the slot. The buyer's subject-removal is Tuesday, the inspector works the Coast two days a month, and his office told me the window is one to three, and if I miss it the next opening is late August, by which point there is no buyer, there is just me and a house in Gibsons that I have been trying to stop owning since March.

So I built margin. I got here at quarter to eight for the eight forty, which any reasonable person would call comfortable, and the fellow at the booth ran my card and said, "Two-sailing wait, you're on the ten twenty," and gave me Lane 4 like he was dealing me a card he'd apologize for later. The sign over the compound agrees with him. TWO SAILING WAIT, in lights, the most honest piece of writing in the terminal.

Fine. The ten twenty gets in at eleven. Langdale to the house is twenty minutes if the highway's kind. That's still two hours of pad. I did the math three times and it held all three times, so I shut the engine off and rolled the window down.

My wife would tell me that a man who arrives an hour early for a ferry has already lost the argument he thinks he's winning. She would be right, and she is in Calgary until Sunday, so the argument doesn't come up.

Lane 4 has a society. It took about twenty minutes to learn its shape. There's the dog area up by the fence, which at this hour is less

an area than a negotiation, six dogs and five owners and one long conversation about breeds that nobody is listening to. There are the smokers, who stand at the exact painted line where smoking becomes legal like it's the border of a small principality. And there's the man in Lane 3 with the camper van, who has done this run a thousand times and wants you to know it without saying it, which he manages through posture alone.

Around eight a doodle the size of a loveseat did its business dead centre of the walkway while its owner faced the sea and talked into her phone about somebody named Craig. She drifted off with the dog and left it, the business, sitting there on public concrete like an installation. A kid from the terminal came down with a flag on a stick and a bag, planted the flag beside it the way you'd mark a golf hazard, dealt with it, and walked back up the ramp with the flag on his shoulder. Nobody applauded. I wanted to. There's a man being paid, I'd guess, twenty-two dollars an hour to close the gap between dog owners and civilization, and he does it with a flag.

I went up for coffee at ten past. This was a mistake, not because anything moved, nothing moved, but because when I came back the camper van man had established a camp chair in the gap between our lanes and was holding court. He had a theory. The theory was that they hold the ten twenty for the Bowen boat, always have, some arrangement from the nineties, and that's why the ten twenty is never really the ten twenty. He said this with the confidence of a man quoting scripture. The woman from Lane 5 nodded along. I drank my coffee and did not say that the ten twenty had been the ten twenty every time I'd ridden it, because you don't argue with a man who brought his own chair.

A woman two lanes over lost her keys walking her dog, and you could track the loss spreading through the compound, that widening circle of people patting their own pockets in sympathy. While she retraced the fence line, a thin man came through the lanes, no hurry in him at all, walking like the lot was a corridor he'd walked before. He stopped at the concrete planter by the dog area, stooped, came up with the keys, set them on the planter's rim where the sun caught them, and kept walking. Didn't look for her. Didn't wave. Just left

them where they'd be found and was gone between the trucks. She found them two minutes later and stood there turning them over, trying to remember putting them on a planter.

At eight forty exactly, the boarding call came and Lanes 1 and 2 poured down the hill onto the boat like water finding a drain. Beautiful, honestly. A compound's worth of patience converting into motion. The Surrey took them all, swallowed the last pickup at five to nine, and pulled off her berth so smoothly you'd have to be watching to see the moment she stopped being a building and became a ship again.

The board rolled over. NEXT SAILING 10:20.

I have four hours of margin. I built it on purpose. I'm fine.

IV

0812 · DECK 2, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 08:40 ACTUAL 08:40

Loading is a shape problem. The public thinks it's a queue, first come first down the ramp, and the queue is real, but what comes down my ramp is a puzzle that was solved upstairs before the first car moved: overheights to the main deck, commercials forward, the mix balanced across the lanes so she sits level and the discharge at Langdale runs in the right order. Three hundred and some vehicles into a fixed hull, twice a shift, and when it's done right it looks like nothing happened. That's the standard. Nothing happening, on time, four times a day.

The eight forty started coming down at eight sharp. First wrinkle arrived at 8:09, a boat trailer declared at six metres that was nine if it was an inch, because the owner had measured the trailer and considered the boat, with its outboard hanging off the stern like an afterthought, to be separate information. We walked it forward into the commercial run where the nine metres could live, and the deckhand marshalling Lane 6 re-solved the puzzle behind it without breaking stride, which is why she marshals Lane 6.

8:14, propane declarations. Long weekend, so every second vehicle is towing a barbecue. Tank valves closed, tanks upright, the ritual questions. One gentleman declared a tank, and then the spare, and then, after a pause I'd describe as thoughtful, the spare's spare. Three tanks for a two-day weekend. I told him he was welcome aboard and that his optimism about the weather was noted.

8:19, the booth relayed a question from a car in Lane 8: driver of an electric vehicle at nine percent charge, asking where on board

he could plug in. The answer is nowhere, not on the vessel, not on the property, that's the rule and it isn't ours to bend. The booth reported that the driver took the news calmly, consulted his screen, and announced that it was downhill from Langdale to Gibsons and he'd regenerate on the grade. Which, for the record, he will. I've watched that hill put four percent back on a dead battery. The man has a plan built entirely out of gravity, and I respect it.

8:26, a sedan parked across two lanes' worth of deck like the lines were a serving suggestion. Corrected. The driver corrected it the second time as well.

By 8:33 the main deck was set. Chocks in on the grade positions, lashings on the commercials, the mixed lanes tight nose to tail with the walking gaps held. Down the aft end, a crewman I couldn't place was working the last row, setting chocks. I watched him do three vehicles, chock, check, hand flat on the fender, next, and then I stopped watching, because there was nothing to watch. He was doing it right. Not one of mine, is my point. Relief board, maybe, faces change on a long weekend. When he finished the row he stood a moment at the rail of the empty aft end, and then the sweep called and I lost him.

8:37, final sweep. Deck walked end to end, counts reconciled with the booth, thirty-one walk-ons and their bicycles stowed, the blue suitcase from the terminal riding in its usual corner like a season-ticket holder. Ramp up at 8:39.

"Bridge, deck two. All secure, all complete. Clear to sail."

And she sailed at 8:40, on the posted minute, which is a sentence I get to say maybe seven times out of ten and never get tired of saying. The eight forty went perfect. Write that down somewhere, because perfect doesn't leave a mark. Perfect is just the day, doing what the board said it would do, and nobody remembers it by supper.

BC FERRIES — CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS LOG · ROUTE 3 (HORSESHOE BAY–LANGDALE)**Friday.**

09:42 — Current Conditions update: Travelling this long weekend? Sailings on major routes are filling quickly. Reservations are recommended. Check Current Conditions before you travel.

09:55 — Service note: Customers are advised that the washroom facilities at the Langdale terminal foot passenger waiting area will be undergoing scheduled maintenance between 10:00 and 12:00. Additional facilities are available adjacent to the coffee shop. We thank you for your understanding.

10:18 — Service notice: The 10:20 am sailing departing Horseshoe Bay to Langdale is delayed due to operational reasons. We anticipate a revised departure time of approximately 11:00 am. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and thank you for your patience.

10:18 — Terminal announcement script (as read): "Your attention please. The ten twenty sailing to Langdale is delayed due to operational reasons. We anticipate departure at approximately eleven a.m. Please remain with your vehicles and listen for further announcements. Thank you for your patience."

10:21 — Internal — all terminal staff, Horseshoe Bay: Please be advised the 10:20 Langdale departure is operating on a revised schedule this morning. Updated departure information will be provided as it becomes available. Customers may express frustration regarding the revision. Thank you for continuing to deliver a positive customer experience.

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PART TWO

THE HOLD

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

V

1030 · BOOTH AND RAMP, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 11:00

Mid-morning. Full sun. Sixteen lanes, fifteen of them occupied. The board over the compound reads NEXT SAILING TO LANGDALE 11:00. WADE at the booth window. DEE beside him with a clipboard she has not yet needed. BALJIT on the ramp. A steady procession of walk-ups.

WADE (to a window) Eleven o'clock is what we're told. (the window leaves) Next.

DEE What happened to the ten twenty?

WADE The ten twenty is becoming the eleven o'clock. It's a process. Next.

A MAN in a golf shirt at the window.

MAN I want a refund on my reservation.

WADE I can do that.

MAN But I want to keep my spot.

WADE Then I can't do that. The refund and the spot are the same money wearing two hats.

MAN That's ridiculous.

WADE I've heard it put that way. (the MAN leaves, keeping the spot) Next.

A WOMAN, polite, at the end of her rope's first third.

WOMAN Can I speak to someone who actually knows what's going on?

WADE Ma'am, so would I. When I find them we'll go together.

She almost laughs, decides against it, goes back to her car. DEE watches WADE.

DEE You didn't tell her anything.

WADE There's nothing to tell. So you agree with the feeling and you don't argue the facts. I'm not responsible for the facts. I'm responsible for the window.

Up at the top of the compound, a knot has formed: a car trying to back out of Lane 8 to give up and go home, a man on foot cutting across to the booth, and BALJIT's tractor coming through with the food carts, all three arriving at the same gap at the same time. Horns. A door opens. Then a fellow in a grey jacket walks down through the middle of it with a coffee, unhurried, and the man on foot steps back to let him by, and the step back leaves room for the car, and the car backs through the slack, and the snag comes undone the length of the lane like a knot given the right tug.

DEE Who sorted that?

BALJIT *(coming off the tractor)* Nobody. It come loose on its own.

WADE Best kind of sorted. Nothing to write up.

The gulls have not adjusted their schedule in any way. Two of them are working the dog area with the confidence of regulars.

DEE Should we announce something?

WADE The announcement's coming from upstairs. Our job is the window and the ramp. And the muffins.

DEE The muffins?

WADE The boat's still catering whether it's moving or not. Baljit — muffins, the trolley, and take the blue suitcase while you're at it.

BALJIT The suitcase isn't going anywhere.

WADE None of us are. It can be punctual with the rest of us.

BALJIT mounts the tractor. It starts on the second ask, out of respect.

VI

1050 · OPERATIONS, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 11:00

At 10:41 I spoke with the Chief Engineer directly, which I prefer. The situation is as follows. The number two main engine has been running warm on one bank for several days, disposition monitor, and this morning during the work-up the warmth stopped being a trend and became a finding. One injector is out of the engine and on the bench and it will not be going back in. There are no spares on board. There are no spares in the fleet. There are two reconditioned units at a supplier in Delta, and the supplier is closed for the long weekend, and the emergency callout number connects to an answering service, and the answering service is in Toronto. I have spoken to Toronto. Toronto was courteous and is in Toronto.

I have done the following things, and I list them because the file should show the sequence. I notified the operations centre at 10:44. I notified the Marine Superintendent at 10:46. I requested the parts callout at 10:48 and placed a courier on standby at 10:52, so that the moment the part exists in a form that can be picked up, it will be picked up. Each of these actions was completed inside the window our procedures specify. I note that none of them has produced an injector, and that this is not a criticism of the procedures. The procedures govern what we do. They have never claimed to govern what there is.

The customer notification went out at 10:18 under the category of operational reasons. The template offers three categories — weather, mechanical difficulty, and operational reasons — and the guidance directs us to operational reasons while assessment is ongoing, the logic

being that we should not tell customers a vessel is broken while the engineers are still determining in what manner it is inconvenienced. I followed the guidance. The revised estimate of eleven o'clock came from the operations centre and I posted it in good faith, which is the only faith a revised estimate can be posted in.

Head office responded to my escalation at 11:02 with a link to the Service Disruption Communications Toolkit and a reminder that delay messaging should emphasize our commitment to getting customers where they need to go. I have read the toolkit before. It is nine pages and it is not wrong about anything.

For completeness I will note the reporting provision that a sailing which is cancelled and consolidated into a later sailing is recorded differently, for on-time purposes, than a sailing which departs late. I note it because thoroughness is the job. We are not cancelling the ten twenty. The ten twenty will sail, and when it sails it will still be the ten twenty, whatever the clock has decided to call it, and the day remains recoverable. If she is away by noon and the turnarounds compress, the four thirty can be back on its posted time by evening, and the quarter's number holds. The number is not the point, of course. The point is the service. But the number is how the service is remembered, and I intend it to be remembered accurately.

The gentleman from head office, or wherever he is from, was at the counter when I posted the revised schedule to the terminal board, and he read it through as I posted it and nodded once, in the manner of a man reconciling a figure against a ledger only he has seen the other side of. I said we expected eleven. He said nothing, which I have decided to take as agreement.

VII

1115 · WHEELHOUSE, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 11:40

1058, Chief on the phone to the bridge. B4 injector is out, scored, done. Nothing on board, nothing in the fleet, parts landlocked in Delta behind a long weekend. His recommendation: cut B4 out per the maker's guidance, run her on eleven cylinders, derate number two, reduced service speed. I asked what she'd do. He said, "She'll run. I'd rather she didn't have to hurry." That is as close to yes as the Chief gets, and closer to no than he'd like you to notice.

The Old Man had the decision, and the decision was never really the engine. Engines are arithmetic. The decision was the day: eight sailings on the board, minimum crew with hours-of-rest limits that do not stretch, a berth window at Langdale already gone, and every option late. Sail derated and the crossing goes fifty minutes instead of forty and the schedule bleeds all day, but it bleeds slow. Don't sail, and the day is not late, it is gone, and four hundred cars are gone with it.

We have had a rider on the bridge since ten. Transport Canada, steamship inspector, attended without notice, which is his right and his habit. Dark coat. He stood on the wing with his hands behind his back and looked at Howe Sound as if he had all day, which, as it turned out, we did. He asked for nothing and initialled nothing. When the Chief's recommendation came up, he was in the doorway, and the Old Man laid it out loud enough to be heard, which is not deference, it is housekeeping.

The Old Man took the glasses off the Sound, looked at the board, and said we would take her out at 1140, number two derated, speed

restriction logged, Langdale advised. "Slow is a schedule," he said. "Broke down is a story. I'd rather run a schedule."

1112, I logged the derate and the restriction. 1114, Vancouver Traffic advised: SURREY, revised departure 1140, reduced speed, fifty-minute passage. Traffic came back with the Bowen boat's movements and a pleasure-craft advisory for the mouth of the Sound, delivered in the tone of a man reading a grocery list he has read before. 1118, terminal advised. Load to commence 1120.

The board went to 1140 and the compound noise came up the hill through the wheelhouse doors, not words, just the sound four hundred cars make when they are told a new number. The inspector stayed on the wing through all of it. The Sound was flat. The Sound did not care, and I mean that administratively: it has no schedule and it was here first. We load at 1120 and we sail at 1140 and the rest of the day gets what's left.

VIII

1140 · UPPER LOUNGE, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 11:40

They loaded us at 11:20, which I want to be clear I experienced as a victory. Down the ramp, onto the deck, into a spot on Deck 2 between a horse trailer and a minivan with a stick-figure family on the back window outnumbering the seatbelts. Aboard. Aboard is momentum. Aboard is a man making his one o'clock.

Then the announcement: all passengers must leave the enclosed vehicle deck, no exceptions, safety regulation, thank you. Which is how I ended up in the lounge, two decks above my own car, forbidden by federal law from sitting in it. I understand the rule. Fire, collision, evacuation — you want people where people can be counted. Understanding it is the problem. You can't even argue with it. An unreasonable rule gives you somewhere to put the feeling. A reasonable one just closes the door.

The lounge had absorbed the compound and was working out its new borders. Every wall outlet had a phone in it and every phone had a guardian. A baby was doing laps with a grandfather in tow, and the baby was the only passenger aboard getting exactly the trip it wanted. The camper-van man had found a new audience by the windows and a new theory to go with it: the part was coming over from Nanaimo on the two o'clock, his cousin drives commercial, they do it all the time. The woman beside him nodded. There is no part and there is no cousin, but I'd have traded my reservation to believe him for ten minutes.

11:40 came and went without a sound from below. 11:50. At 11:52 the speakers said the sailing was now delayed until further notice, updates as they became available, thank you for your patience.

I did the math a fourth time. The window is one to three. Even away by noon, I'm at the house by one fifteen, and that's if the highway's empty and the inspector waits, and inspectors who work the Coast two days a month do not wait, they have a ferry of their own to catch. I called his office. Voicemail: closed for the long weekend, back Tuesday. Tuesday is subject-removal. I called the realtor next and got her voicemail too, three showings deep in Sechelt somewhere. It wouldn't have mattered. The tank lids are under the back lawn, eighteen inches down, and I'm the only one who knows where to dig. I stood holding the phone after the second beep with nothing to say into it that a machine could fix.

My wife answers on the second ring when things are fine. I didn't test what she answers on when they aren't. She'd want the problem while it was still a problem. I've never learned to hand one over in that condition. I bring outcomes.

There was a girl at the purser's counter in a green vest, twenty years old maybe, posted there like a lighthouse: fixed, visible, and expected to take weather. I went over and asked when we were sailing. She said as soon as there was a time, it would be announced. I asked who had the time, then. She said when they had it, we'd all have it.

"That's nothing," I said. "You're telling me nothing. Is that the job? They put you in the vest and they teach you to say nothing, and you're good at it, I'll give you that. You're excellent at knowing nothing. What does that pay?"

She didn't flinch and she didn't look for help. She said, "I'm sorry, sir. As soon as there's a time, it will be announced," in a voice that stayed exactly where it had been, and the steadiness was worse than tears, because it meant this happened often enough that there was a procedure in her for it, and I was the procedure.

I knew before I finished. That's the truth of it — not after, before, somewhere around excellent, and I went on anyway, because the sentence was built and I rode it down. I walked away without

apologizing. You can't storm off a ship. I got as far as the stern doors and stood there being a man at a rail.

Across the lounge the thin man from the compound was at the forward windows, still, hands in his pockets, looking out at the far shore where Langdale sat in the sun with its ramp down, holding our spot. He didn't check the board. The board had nothing for anyone. It had stopped offering times at all.

It had stopped making promises, is what it had done. Everyone else in the room was still making them.

IX

1205 · GIFT SHOP, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL —

—No, still tied up, you haven't missed a thing. You'll know when it happens. The announcement rattles the shelf with the shot glasses, it's very reliable.

—The orcas are twenty-four ninety-nine and twelve ninety-nine. Same whale. One of them ate.

—Whales? People see them on the sailings I'm not working. That's not a rule, it just behaves like one. Keep looking on the left side, that's my advice, the left side's been lucky this year.

—Gibsons? No, sweetheart, Gibsons is where this boat goes. Vancouver Island is the big one, that's a different boat entirely. You want Departure Bay, next berth over, and don't worry — at the moment nobody's getting anywhere ahead of anybody, so you've lost nothing. It's the fairest day of the summer.

—Sixteen dollars, and between us I'd save it. They're loyal to the wind, those umbrellas. First gust and they're gone over to the other side.

—The puzzle books are four fifty. The crosswords are the same book as June, I'm told, so if you sailed with us in June you've already won.

—Take your time. There's a bench right there, and the browsing's free, it's the leaving with things I have to charge for.

—Nineteen sixty-one? Then you've been riding this run longer than she has. She's only forty-four. You'll have to show her how it's done.

—From Gibsons wharf itself, no. I didn't know that. The terminal at Gibsons proper, and they moved it up to Langdale before the boat was even thought of. So you've outlasted a terminal and you're well on your way through a second one.

—She did? On the overnight, with the folding chair? Then you tell your granddaughter she was born into patience on both sides.

—Well. That's a kind thing to say, and I'll keep it.

—The postcard's a dollar thirty-five. The one with the two lighthouses sells best. Nobody can name either lighthouse, and I've decided that's why. You can be anywhere you like on that card.

—Out of a toonie, sixty-five cents is yours. There. All square.

—You take care of yourself. Come see me on the way back.

—Next? No rush. Nobody's going anywhere, and I mean that as good news.

MV QUEEN OF SURREY — ENGINEERING LOG (continuation)

0951 — No. 2 M/E: cylinder B4 exhaust temperature 41 °C above bank mean at 70% load and rising. Load reduced. Investigation commenced. — C.Eng.

1024 — B4 injector removed. Nozzle scored, spray pattern failed on bench. Unit unserviceable. Spares: nil on board, nil in fleet, ref. standing order 44-1181. — C.Eng.

1041 — B4 cut out per makers' guidance. No. 2 M/E to operate on eleven cylinders, derated to 75% MCR. Terminal management advised. — C.Eng.

1107 — Recommendation to Master: proceed at reduced service speed, No. 2 derated, passage plan amended to 50 min. — C.Eng.

1112 — Derate and speed restriction logged. Master's authorization recorded. — C/O

1132 — Trial run alongside at derated load. Parameters satisfactory. — C.Eng.

1146 — During pre-departure checks, cylinder B3 exhaust temperature trending above bank mean. Departure held. Investigation. — C.Eng.

1203 — B3 stabilized within limits at derated load. Attributed to load redistribution across bank. Vessel cleared for service. Master advised. Monitor. — C.Eng.

1214 — Vessel departed Berth 1. No. 2 M/E derated, 50-minute passage. — C/O

BC FERRIES — CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS LOG - ROUTE 3 (continuation)

11:02 — Service notice (update): The 10:20 am sailing departing Horseshoe Bay to Langdale is now anticipated to depart at approximately 11:40 am. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause and thank you for your patience.

11:52 — Service notice (update): The 10:20 am sailing departing Horseshoe Bay to Langdale is delayed until further notice. Updates will be provided as they become available. We thank you for your continued patience.

12:05 — Internal — all terminal and vessel staff: Customers on board and in the compound may be experiencing frustration regarding today's revised schedule. Please continue to direct schedule inquiries to official announcements. Thank you for continuing to deliver a positive customer experience.

12:16 — Service notice: The 10:20 am sailing to Langdale has now departed. We thank you for your patience and understanding.

—

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

PART THREE

CROSSING OUT

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

X

1214 · DECK 2, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 12:14

Ramp up at 12:11, lines gone at 12:13, and at 12:14 the dock started moving instead of us, which is how it always looks from down here. Underway. Two hours late, and the work doesn't know it. The work is the same work at any hour, and I'll say this for a delay: by the time you finally sail, the load is the best-checked load on the coast. I'd had two extra hours to stare at it.

First job under way is people. The regulation is plain: nobody stays on an enclosed vehicle deck at sea, and the announcement had already said so twice in both official languages of BC Ferries, which are English and Slightly Firmer English. The sweep found the usual census. A man in a Buick with the seat reclined and the paper open, who had done this before and considered the rule a suggestion aimed at other people; escorted up, wounded. A woman who needed a jacket from the back of a Corolla four rows in; I got the jacket, it's faster than the argument. And the doodle woman, who wanted to stay with the dog, or check on the dog, or generally attend the dog. The dog is fine. The dog is the only passenger on this ship legally entitled to stay in the car, and it was asleep before the lines were off, occupying its climate-controlled sedan like the last reasonable creature on the coast.

12:19, doors shut, and Deck 2 was what the regulation wants it to be: three hundred and eleven vehicles and no people. I'm the exception, on rounds. A car park doing eighteen knots, and me the attendant.

The rounds are the same loop every crossing. Walk the ranks, listen to the lashings, put a hand on the commercial straps because a strap that's working has a sound and a feel and you want both. The horse trailer up forward needed watching; the horse was shifting its weight into the turn off the point, and the horse and I had a conversation consisting of one look apiece, and it settled its feet and I checked its ties and we parted professionals. Somewhere aft of midships a car alarm went off, on principle, to an audience of nobody. It ran through its repertoire twice and quit. They always quit. There's nothing down here to impress.

I'd half a mind to hand the aft lashing check to the relief-board fella from this morning, the big one, and I looked for him twice on the loop before I gave it up. Not aboard. Shore gang, then. Shore gang keeps the good ones.

The blue suitcase was in its corner by the stairwell, making the crossing again, patient as furniture.

By 12:40 there was nothing left on Deck 2 that needed me. That's the truth of a well-loaded deck: it does the crossing by itself. The chocks hold, the straps hold, the ranks sit tight and stay tight, and the sea was doing nothing worth a memo. I climbed to the passenger deck for the last stretch, where the humans were, all of them, every one accounted for and above the waterline and audibly ordering lunch.

XI

1225 · WHEELHOUSE, HOWE SOUND

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 12:14

1214 away from Berth 1, clear of the bay by 1221, revs set for the derated passage. Fifty minutes. The Sound had filled up while we argued with an injector: long-weekend traffic, sail and power, most of it competent.

1226, Vancouver Traffic ran the picture. QUEEN OF CAPILANO crossing ahead for Snug Cove per the standing arrangement, punctual, which we noticed. A tug southbound off Bowyer with a tow on a long wire; you give a long wire the room it can't ask for. Assorted pleasure craft. One of them called Traffic and could not produce its own name — “say again your vessel name” — and after a silence that included consultation, offered that it was a rental. Traffic thanked the rental.

1234, two deadheads called down the line, one bearing change to open them. The southeasterly put wood in the water all weekend and the water is in no hurry to give it back. Watch-keeping, glasses up, nothing dramatic. Wood is only dramatic if you stop looking.

Off Hood Point a paddleboarder crossed the lane with the serenity of a man who has never seen a chart. Five short on the whistle is the language for that. He waved. It's always a wave.

The quartermaster, apropos of our revs: “The fast cats would've done this in twenty minutes, and then written to every marina in the Sound to apologize. Quickest boats we ever owned, crossing at our speed.” That's the entire eulogy, and it's the one they get.

The inspector rode the crossing with us. His paperwork was done and his business was ashore, and he stood the wing with a coffee

anyway, coat buttoned, watching the traffic go by. Nobody asked him why. You don't ask Transport Canada why.

1247, I ran the camera bank on the half-hour: engine spaces, ramps, and deck camera two, which showed the main deck at sea. Three hundred and eleven vehicles, no people. That's the picture the regulation wants, and twice a crossing I confirm we're providing it.

1251, Langdale advised our approach, again, third revision of the day. The berth will be there. Berths don't leave. 1256, speed coming off for the run in past the breakwater, arrival sequence to stations. Fifty minutes crossed. Six sailings still on the board, and the two hours we lost this morning are in every one of them, and will be there at midnight.

XII

1220 · TRIPLE O'S COUNTER, PASSENGER DECK

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 12:14

The announcement ends and the wall arrives.

That's the science of it. "We are now departing" is, to a loaded lounge, a dinner bell. They'd been aboard an hour and in the compound two before that, and nobody's hungry like a man who's been told eleven forty. First ticket at 12:16. By 12:31 I had ninety-seven of them and the printer was still talking.

Here's the counter at full slam. Marnie on window, twenty-two years in, could take orders through a hurricane. Dex on grill, three weeks in, reads tickets like they're in cursive. Me floating, which today meant everywhere. The fryer recovers in three-twenty between loads. Physics. Take it up with physics.

The mood of a sailing is in the orders. Today: forty percent gravy. Delay gravy. Nobody comes off a two-hour hold and orders the salad. They order the double, the shake, the fries with the works, and they order it like they're filing a grievance, and I take it like one, and we get along.

The shake machine's been on light duties since May. It does vanilla. It considers chocolate. A kid ordered strawberry and Marnie said, "So close," and sold him the vanilla with a face that made it a prize.

One fella informed me he'd been waiting four hours. Not for the burger — the burger'd been down ninety seconds — for everything, and the burger was just what was here to take it. I said four hours was a long time and his order was up. Both true. He ate at the rail looking at the water like the water owed him money, and I expect

by the fries he'd half forgiven it. The fries are good. The fries have ended feuds.

Around 12:35 the printer double-fed and bunched six tickets into a snag, which at slam is how a counter dies: the lane backs up behind a piece of paper. Somewhere in there a man ordered a plain cheeseburger, no substitutions, exact change ready, took it and was gone — easiest ticket of the day, in and out of the rush like he had a lane of his own. And somewhere in there the rail came unstuck, the printer behaved, and the counter found its rhythm again. Every rush has a hinge. You never see it. You just notice you're on the other side.

Dex was drowning by 12:40, tickets going soft in his hand. I slid onto grill and put him on buns. You don't announce it. Announcing it is the insult. He buttered and toasted and got his breath, and in five minutes he wanted the grill back, which is the right kind of pride, and I gave it to him for the shallow end of the rush and stood the deep end myself.

The wall broke at 12:50 like it always breaks, all at once, ninety seconds from full slam to a lady asking if the tea is fresh. The counter looked like the tide had been through. Forty minutes to Langdale turnaround and the return leg, which will be worse, because the return leg is the compound's afternoon and the afternoon has been reading our schedule.

Marnie started the reset without being asked. Dex asked what he should do. Marnie said, "Everything again," which is the job in two words, and he wrote it down, and I let him, because it's not wrong and one day it'll be funny.

PART FOUR

LANGDALE

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

XIII

1305 · LANGDALE RAMP

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 12:14

The other terminal. Smaller. A parking lot in the trees, a booth, a coffee cart, a berth that has been empty since mid-morning. The compound is full and has been full since eleven. Two TERMINAL ATTENDANTS: RAY, who has worked this side for thirty-one years, and SAMIRA, who transferred over from the Coast bus depot and considers this a promotion with weather. The QUEEN OF SURREY is coming up the reach.

RAY There she is.

SAMIRA There she is. Two hours and nine minutes.

RAY I wasn't counting.

SAMIRA You wrote it on the whiteboard.

RAY That's the whiteboard counting.

The compound has begun to wake: doors chunking shut, engines turning over, a hundred and forty cars adjusting their posture. At the coffee cart, a line.

SAMIRA How's Lorraine holding up?

RAY She's out of muffins, out of cookies, and down to date squares. It's date squares and loyalty over there now.

SAMIRA There's a man at the walk-on gate says he drove down from Sechelt twice today. Came for the eleven thirty, went home when the board went sideways, came back for this one.

RAY That's forty minutes of driving to do no sailing. Tell him he's our top customer.

SAMIRA I gave him a date square.

*The board over the booth still reads NEXT SAILING TO HORSESHOE BAY:
SEE ATTENDANT.*

SAMIRA What did we ever actually hear? From over there. This morning.

RAY Three notices, same as the public. And the one phone call.

SAMIRA Saying?

RAY Saying there'd be further notices.

SAMIRA Well. There were.

RAY Can't fault them on volume.

*Down the highway side, a line of walk-ons has formed at the gate: kayak
dollies, coolers, a scatter of teenagers headed to town for the evening.*

SAMIRA Forty walk-ons and their entire households.

RAY We'll get them across. Overloads till dark if that's what it takes.

SAMIRA Is that us saying so, or did somebody tell us?

RAY That's the ramp saying so. The ramp's never been wrong.

*The SURREY comes off the reach and squares up for the berth, slow,
deliberate, a building deciding to park. Lines over. Ramp down at 1309.
The first walk-offs appear, then the cars, discharging down into the trees,
and the full compound watches them come like the seated half of a waiting
room watching names get called.*

RAY All right. Doors, gates, and let Lorraine know the second wave's coming.

SAMIRA She knows. She's guarding the date squares.

RAY Nobody's grieving the muffins that didn't make the crossing.
Gates, and we'll get this lot home.

XIV

1315 · VEHICLE DECK AND HIGHWAY 101

POSTED 10:20 ACTUAL 12:14

They called us down to the cars at 1312 and the deck did what it does: three hundred people looking for vehicles they'd last seen in another emotional era. A man two rows over pressed his fob and followed the honking like a bloodhound. The stick-figure minivan pulled out ahead of me, all nine of its drawn passengers smiling, the only family aboard that had had a good day.

Off the ramp at 1318. The sign over the exit said LANGDALE, white on green, and I turned left for Gibsons the same as everyone who has ever read that sign. The paper says Langdale. Nobody's ever going to Langdale.

I did the highway at the speed of a man doing math. The window was one to three. It was 1:22 at the bypass, 1:31 at the turn, and the truth is I knew by the turn, because the knowing had been sitting in the passenger seat since the lounge, and the drive was just the last part of not looking at it.

His card was in the door jamb. Attended 1:05. No access, no contact. Attendance fee applies. Re-inspection: August 24. He'd have stood right here, on this step, with a two-day window on this side of the water and a ferry of his own to catch, and he did what the card says he did, which is everything he was required to do.

I sat down on the step and worked it backwards, because that's what was left to do with it. To be here at 1:05 I needed the water at noon, and to have the water at noon I needed the 11:40, and the 11:40 died at about ten to, when the speakers said until further

notice. That's when the house sale ended. In a lounge, between one announcement and the next, while I was watching a baby do laps. Everything after that — the math, the counter, the girl in the green vest — was a man defending a margin that had already been spent.

The girl in the green vest. I thought about her once, sitting there. I didn't go back and I won't, and the thought didn't fix anything, and it doesn't get to. It goes on the day's list with the rest.

Subject-removal is Tuesday. The re-inspection is August 24. The fee is eighty-five dollars. The realtor will call the buyer's realtor, and the buyer will do whatever a buyer does with a Tuesday and no inspection, and that part belongs to Tuesday.

The step was warm. The house behind me was quiet the way an empty house is quiet, which I'd stopped hearing until just then. I took out the phone and called my wife.

It rang twice.

XV

1330 · DECK 2, LANGDALE

POSTED 13:20 ACTUAL 13:45

Turnaround at Langdale, forty minutes behind the revised board, which meant the reload staged while the discharge was still clearing — two rivers using one bed, and my afternoon spent standing where they meet.

The afternoon load is the morning's bill. A hundred and forty vehicles, compound-aged since eleven, every one of them holding a reservation for a sailing that no longer exists. A gentleman at the head of Lane 2 wanted his eleven thirty honoured. I told him the eleven thirty is this boat. He said it wasn't, this was the one forty-five. I told him it's every sailing since ten, wearing different times, and he could board any of them he liked as long as it was this one. He boarded.

Forty walk-ons came down the gantry behind the cars, half of them teenagers going to town for the evening, boarding like the boat was a bus, which for them it is.

One of the Langdale hands, older fella, watched the Surrey's ramp settle and said she'd put that ramp into this berth once, 2019, and folks slept ten hours in the terminal waiting on the highway of her. Then he went back to his lanes. That's how they keep history over here — one coat of it, applied while passing.

I took twelve over what I wanted. The geometry was there, technically, and the alternative was walking the back lanes choosing which four-hour families to leave in the trees, and I've done that walk and it doesn't load any faster. So the ranks ran tighter than I like, the

walking gaps at minimum, and I put the extra time into the checks instead.

Big fella on the Langdale ramp crew was working the chocks ahead of me, quick hands for the size of him, ranks going in tight and staying tight. Langdale's, I figured. Didn't get a name. Between him and my two we had the deck set by 1338, twelve over and every rank of it tight.

Nobody will ask about the morning load. It was right and it's gone and being right is why it's gone. If anyone ever asks about a load from today it'll be this one, the rushed one, the full one. I know that and I took the twelve anyway, and I'd take them again, and that's all the thinking that fits between a discharge and a ramp-up.

Horse trailer came back aboard empty, riding light, rattling over the ramp joints — the loudest vehicle on the deck with the least in it.

Sweep at 1340. Counts good, walk-ons up. Ramp up 13:42. All secure. Away at 13:45.

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PART FIVE

BACK, AND THE FILING

THE HUNGRY GODS GO ON A FERRY

XVI

1350 · TRIPLE O'S COUNTER, PASSENGER DECK

POSTED 13:20 ACTUAL 13:45

The outbound rush is a wall. The return is a siege.

We never finished the reset. The counter went from battlefield to staging area with no peacetime in between, and the return crowd came up from the car deck carrying a full afternoon of compound in them. First ticket 13:48. The difference this time wasn't the volume. It was the supplies.

By 14:00 we were out of the seed bun and down to plain. By 14:10 the gravy entered its conservation era. Marnie ran the rationing off the top of her head, no committee: gravy stays on the poutine, comes off the side orders, and anybody who argues can speak to the fryer, which recovers in three-twenty and doesn't negotiate.

At 14:05 the shake machine concluded its season. Mid-pour, vanilla, it stopped, showed a code that isn't in any manual either of us has met, and stood down. Marnie unplugged it so it could think. The kid at the counter got the half shake free of charge and a spoon, which made him the day's big winner, and he knew it.

One gentleman came in wanting the seed bun, the onion rings, and a chocolate shake, and left with a plain bun, fries, and a coffee, and we got there together, item by item, like two negotiators who respected each other. He said it wasn't what he ordered. I said it was what the boat had. We shook on the coffee.

Dex looked at the clock around 14:18, said "ninety seconds," and started dropping fries. The fifteen-minute announcement came at 14:20 and brought the last-call push with it — everybody who'd been

meaning to eat all crossing suddenly meaning it at once — and the fries were up to meet them. Three weeks in. He'll do.

The tea lady found us again on the return. The tea was fresh. Some days go like that.

A fella in a grey jacket stood in the line long enough to read the shortened menu, and got out of the line, which by then was the soundest order anyone placed all day.

At 14:25 Marnie announced the survivors to the room: plain bun, no gravy on the sides, vanilla in spoon format only. Somebody clapped. It's a strange crowd by the end of a day like this. They'd have clapped for anything that admitted the truth. The rush died at 14:31, cut off clean by the arrival announcement, which is the one thing that beats hunger: parking.

Two hundred and sixty-one tickets across two legs. I wrote it on the whiteboard for the night boat to beat.

XVII

1415 · GIFT SHOP, MV QUEEN OF SURREY

POSTED 13:20 ACTUAL 13:45

—Oh, don't be sorry. Don't be sorry for a second. This is the most life this shop's seen all crossing, and the orcas needed the excitement.

—Leave the shelf, he's rearranging, not wrecking. That's stocktaking. I'll count him as staff.

—Yes, love? Appointments on a Friday, and they wonder why the boat's full. You'll make it. From the ramp it's twenty minutes, and they always run behind on a long weekend, everybody does. You'll sit in their waiting room yet.

—Now. The little one's twelve ninety-nine, and he's picked the right one. The little ones ride better in a car seat. The big ones hog the belt.

—He can carry it. A man should carry his own whale.

—Twelve ninety-nine even. There.

—What's this, then? For me? Out of his own pocket?

—Well. Look at that. A perfect one. He goes right here by the till, and he'll mind the shop nights, and I'll tell him how the day went.

—
—Go on with you now — that's your deck call, and he'll want to push the button for the doors. Let him push the button. It's a good age for buttons.

—
—Mind the sill going out, it's stepped. Bye now.

XVIII

1429 · WHEELHOUSE, APPROACHING HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 13:20 ACTUAL 13:45

1429, speed off for the bay. Traffic ran the picture inbound: the Capilano clear at Snug Cove, assorted sail standing off the mouth, one kayaker off the point, resolute, crossing on principle. Five short. He raised his paddle, which I logged as acknowledgement.

1437, alongside Berth 1. Lines fast, ramp down 1439. Fifty-one minutes berth to berth, one over the amended plan, and the one was the kayaker's.

The inspector went ashore up the walkway, coat over his arm. Attended, observed, departed. His paperwork was done before he rode and it was still done.

The handover sheet for the evening watch balances, barely. The mate coming on has his rest hours by forty minutes, and forty minutes is what the evening has to spend on everything else.

Passage plans for the evening sailings amended, fifty minutes each, four crossings to go. The posted times stand. The difference comes out of the turnarounds, a few minutes a corner, and where it goes after midnight is the night boat's arithmetic, not mine.

1445, watch handed over. The derate stays with the ship. 1450, off the bridge. The board in the terminal said the fifteen twenty was on time, and it was.

XIX

1520 · RAMP AND COMPOUND, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 15:20 ACTUAL 15:20

Late afternoon. The compound turning over: the return crowd discharging up the hill, the evening lanes filling behind them. The board over the compound reads NEXT SAILING TO LANGDALE 15:20 — ON TIME. WADE at the booth. DEE with a clipboard she has now used. BALJIT backing the tractor toward the ramp. The baggage cart goes by with the blue suitcase on it.

WADE How are we, Dee?

DEE Forty-one refunds, two lost children, both found, one wedding hat claimed.

WADE The hat from lost-and-found?

DEE Different hat. We're up a hat.

WADE The department grows.

BALJIT dismounts. Number Three idles behind him, content.

BALJIT Started on one ask this afternoon. First time all summer.

WADE Warm afternoon. Fuel it before the evening run.

The evening intake for lost-and-found is on the booth counter: a phone charger, one pair of sunglasses, and a camp chair.

DEE Somebody left an entire camp chair.

WADE Left it or abandoned it. There's a difference and the chair knows.

DEE Do we tag it?

WADE Tag it. If a man comes in describing it, ask him what colour, and if he hesitates, it's ours.

A PASSENGER at the window.

PASSENGER Does this ferry take cars?

WADE Since 1951, sir. Lane six.

(The PASSENGER leaves.)

DEE Third one today.

WADE It's a fair question somewhere. Just not here, standing in the cars. Where's the seventeen thirty staging?

DEE One through six, overflow to nine.

WADE Keep ten clear for the dangerous goods.

BALJIT The big fella never came back over, did he. I had him down for the evening carts.

WADE Then Langdale's lucky and my sheet's clean. Carts wait for nobody.

The 15:20 begins to load. Lanes 1 and 2 release down the hill, the compound converting to motion, the evening gulls arriving on the light standards to relieve the day shift.

WADE Muffin situation?

DEE Night stock came in. Sheet says fifty-two. I counted fifty-two.

WADE *(pause)* That's suspicious.

DEE I counted twice.

WADE Write it down and don't touch anything. Positions — the fifteen twenty loads, the seventeen thirty stages in forty, and the day's not done till the last one's lit. Booth, ramp, and somebody thank the gulls for their service.

XX

1600 · OPERATIONS, HORSESHOE BAY

POSTED 17:30 ACTUAL 17:30

The day reconciles as follows. The ten twenty departed at twelve fourteen. The one twenty from Langdale departed at one forty-five. The three twenty departed on its posted time, and the five thirty is staged to do the same, and from the board this afternoon a person arriving fresh would conclude that nothing had ever happened here, which is the intended function of a recovered schedule.

For reporting purposes the morning resolves into two sailings recorded outside the on-time standard, cause referenced to the engineering file, category operational reasons, duration logged. The quarter's on-time performance moves from ninety-two point zero to ninety-one point eight, which rounds to ninety-two, and I will report it unrounded, because the tenth of a point is the record of today.

The parts position for tomorrow is unchanged in every respect except the day of the week. The supplier reopens Tuesday. The courier remains on standby, at a daily rate, for a part that continues to exist only as a line in a standing order. Toronto called back at three to confirm that Toronto had no update, a call I have logged, because it happened.

Head office has closed the loop on this morning's escalation by requesting a Service Disruption Debrief, template attached, due Wednesday. The template's first section asks what went well. Sections two through five cite the toolkit.

The crew position is the real carry-forward. Two deckhands and the second cook reach their hours cap at fourteen hundred tomorrow,

and the spare board, as of this writing, covers one of the three. The calls will be made tonight. Someone in Squamish will answer, or someone further than Squamish, and the distance between where our people can afford to live and where the vessel needs them to stand is tomorrow morning's arithmetic and I have entered it into tomorrow morning's file.

The deckhand whose daughter swam this afternoon made the four o'clock meet. The swap held. I note it because the file should also show what worked.

The gentleman with the lanyard was in the corridor as I filed the day's summary, reading the notice board, on which nothing new is posted. I have concluded that he is thorough.

Tomorrow's first sailing is posted for six twenty-five. The posted time is unchanged. The passage will run ten minutes longer than the posted time assumes, and the day will begin from behind, and the procedures for a day that begins from behind are the same procedures. I will be at the terminal at six. The file is closed.

MV QUEEN OF SURREY — ENGINEERING LOG

Friday. Evening rounds commenced 1830.

1830 — Evening rounds commenced. All machinery spaces sighted. — R.T.

1836 — No. 1 and No. 2 M/E lube oil levels sighted. Within limits. — R.T.

1842 — Steering gear tested both ends prior to evening departures per SMS checklist. Satisfactory. — R.T.

1849 — Sewage treatment plant: standby dosing pump seal now also weeping. Both units on watch. Replacement seal on order since 14 May. C/F. — R.T.

1856 — No. 2 M/E: B4 remains cut out. Engine derated to 75% MCR, continues. Spares: nil on board, nil in fleet. Standing order 44-1181: supplier reopens Tuesday, no confirmed date. Monitor. — C.Eng.

1903 — No. 2 M/E: B3 exhaust temperature within limits at derated load. Trend to be logged at each departure. Monitor. — C.Eng.

C/F 03-2019 — Deck 3 ramp interlock indicator intermittent at panel. Unchanged. — Eng. Dept.

C/F 11-1998 — Forward escape trunk ladder, second rung from top, polished smooth. Sign posted. Unchanged. — Eng. Dept.

1918 — Engine hours, No. 2 M/E, at close of rounds: 214,336. — R.T.

1921 — Passage plan for 0625 sailing amended to 50 minutes at derated power. Posted schedule unchanged. Master advised. — C.Eng.

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