

THE BEACON

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THE STORM

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As you can imagine, experiencing life on a tall ship is like nothing else in the world. Every day, you are a part of a moving vessel, a vessel whose success depends on the structure that upholds it - both in terms of its physical mechanisms and its crew. This shared experience is an indescribable thread that holds the community together and connects all those who have experienced life on the Alex II.

It's dark. It's really dark. Night Watch is always dark, but tonight it's really dark. The little light that is usually bestowed on us by the moon and stars has been snuffed out by the inescapable stormy clouds above. In its place, lashing, ice cold rain cascades across the deck and the occasional strike of lightning flashes in the distance. Formidable waves crash again and again against the boat's hull, competing with the howling roars of the wind and continuous thrashing of the sails to be the most overpowering sounds of the night. Sea water and rain water reunite as they stream across the deck, resisting as the boat's steep tilt fights to force it back out. It is no surprise that Mother Nature is so often described as harsh. Destructive. Overpowering. Unwavering. Unyielding. Her power is inescapable, and it is in moments like this that our comparative size cannot seem more tiny.

The enormity of this onslaught quickly overpowers all else, centering itself at the heart of every experience connected to it. But amidst its chaos, another experience is possible. One where the sharp clinks of hooks secured to metal rails break the monotony of the wind's yells. Where reams of rough rope remain resolutely coiled across the deck, their coarse fibres standing up to the fierce torrent of rain soaking them through and threatening to make them snap. Where crystalline salty sediments glisten across portholes as they break free from each swell. And remarkably, where the faint sounds of laughter rise above the howling storm.

It is only then that, if you give them the chance, the tight bundle of red jackets resisting the storm's attack creates an impermeable shield against the bitter cold surrounding it. Before long, this shield strengthens as an amateur chorus of tired voices breaks out in song, its power growing with every partially remembered lyric. Only in the core of this bubble does the other side of Mother Nature emerge. The one where the howling wind harmonizes with each song. Where the waves become a steady, consistent rhythm and the water a lively friend jumping to say hello. Suddenly, the natural power of the world begins to join forces with its wanderers, and out of this unlikely alliance, the liberating sense of freedom emerges victorious.

-Anya DeCaires



100 DAYS

NEZY'S AWESOME DOPE MUSINGS

I think one of my first or biggest fears was about fate. Fate is a terrifying concept because when everything is supposed to happen, it's all predetermined, meaning you're not controlling your actions, just living them. Just like you live through any inevitable choice someone else has made. It's almost like consciousness isn't even ours. The only thing we're usually assured we have. If nothing else, I'm only human, just like you. I've only ever been human, and I'm just one in particular. So, I'm not sure if I can say definitively whether the choices we make are ours. But maybe it's okay to see how much humans care. We care so much about our choice; we want to know we are choosing to put goodness into the world. We have this desperation for our lives to be in our own hands, all because we want to be assured in the fact that we feel things for people. And even though I say desperation, don't think it's sad or pathetic at all. In fact, I think it's sort of exquisite. Every good thing that we do, we want to know we chose to do ourselves. It's almost like this subconscious moral reward, or "moral dessert" as the great philosophers called it, that we get without even knowing it, instead of having some substructure dictating our relationships. I'm not trying to say I've solved the dilemma of altruism, although maybe I kinda have. Is it so crazy to say that we care about our choices and therefore the love we put into the world? When you think of this, the absurdity of morality becomes a lot more uncovered. Maybe our fate is not only the layout of the future, but the key to the choices we make... the love we give.

-Nezy Foxe-Robertson



The first one hundred days of Class Afloat seemed to drag on endlessly. They were filled with draining Night Watches and the repetitive boredom of everyday school, but they were also filled with new beginnings, with incredible experiences and fresh eyes that seemed to make the days lengthen in time. I remember the day we hit one hundred days in the program. It was mid-sail and when we announced it at Colours, everyone was surprised that we had already hit one hundred days and also that we only had just hit one hundred days. I started counting the days till graduation on the third day in Germany; it was two hundred and fifty six. Every time I wrote a journal entry, I would update the countdown. You can imagine my surprise when my countdown hit a hundred. Not one hundred days in, but only a hundred left. Only four months to laugh and joke with friends, to play card games and dread the next school assignment. Only so much time to make new memories and plan future ones. These days, time seems to fly by—no more endlessly looming ports or dragging homework assignments, no more days running together. We're building up to the crescendo and now every moment seems to go by so quickly yet is clearly defined. It's probably frustrating for our teachers, but a lot of us now agree that the goal is to make memories, not to study or lock in on Watch. Rather, the goal is to make the absolute most of the time we have left. To go on adventures that we'll be telling our grandchildren about 70 years from now and to make the most of the last months we'll all be together for the rest of our lives.

I'm writing this on our last proper part of the Atlantic crossing. We have two ports left, two voyages left on this piece of history we call home. Four weeks to feel the roll of the waves and the bite of the icy wind as we climb the towering rig that is now not so scary. Twenty eight days left to use seasickness as an excuse to get out of class, to chase storms, and to play card games late into the night. Six hundred and seventy two hours to complain about Backshaft and fill-ins. Four thousand three hundred and twenty minutes to joke around on Watch with people we didn't know seven months ago, but we'll carry to our deaths. For now, we have three months to make the most of it all, three months to collect memories and stories for the future. We have seventy-eight days left together, and I can already tell they'll be the most exciting yet.

-Claire Cuddihy

NINETEEN WITH SALT IN MY HAIR

What people don't understand about turning nineteen is that it doesn't feel like a big change right away. It just feels like another morning, quiet and slow.

Yesterday, I woke up on a sailboat before everyone else to go to Watch. The boat rocked gently under me, back and forth, like it was breathing. I could hear the ropes hitting the mast, tap, tap, tap. The air smelled like salt and the sun was just coming up. Then I remembered. IT'S MY BIRTHDAY.

Nineteen.

There was no phone signal, no messages, no parents telling me to wake up or asking what the plan was. Just the ocean and my friends still half asleep around me.

I stood up and stepped onto the deck. The strong winds were pulling me back, making my hair a mess. The water looked shiny like glass.

"Happy birthday," Alyssa called excitedly from behind me.

Rene, our Watch Lead had a great idea. "Let's climb," he said. The adrenaline rushed through my veins with each step, my hands held on for dear life, making sure I didn't slip and fall. We finally got to the top of the rigging and saw the beautiful orange sun slowly rise above the horizon. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath to take in the beautiful views.

Suddenly, I was down on the ground. SPLASH.

Ice cold water crashed over my shoulders, soaking me instantly. I screamed, half laughing half choking on the shock.

Before I could say anything else, SPLASH. Another splash hit me, colder than the first one, stealing the air from my lungs. My hoodie clung to me like it was afraid to

let go. I stood up there dripping, hair plastered to my forehead while everyone was singing happy birthday, but I couldn't stop laughing. It was the kind of laugh that starts in your stomach and spills out whether you want it to or not.

The sun climbed higher, drying my clothes inch by inch. The sail snapped sharply in the wind, loud and proud, and the boat leaned as we started moving again. No destination. No plan. Just forward.

We sailed without data, without knowing what time it was or what messages waited back on land. My phone sat useless in my bed, quiet as if it understood it wasn't needed. Out here, time didn't Rush. It drifted.

The ocean moved beneath us like a living thing, steady and patient.

I realized that turning nineteen didn't mean I suddenly felt older. It just felt bigger, like my life had more space now. My birthday started with freezing water and my friends trying to drown me with buckets. Honestly, I wouldn't have changed anything about it. It was simple. It was quiet. It was perfect.

-Mariandre Arreola



DIGITAL NOISE

A seemingly innocent object, quietly stealing hours from my days with a relentless flood of trivial digital noise. Every notification demands an immediate response, urging urgency where none truly exists, sending my human heart racing beyond its natural rhythm.

-Alyssa Roy



SICK

It was the worst feeling I had ever experienced, and I knew no one could help me at that moment.

I was clinging onto Isabelle between the bench and the skylight on aft, trying to warm up with our body heat. I felt how the cold October wind was freezing my skin under my four layers of clothes, including thick foulies. My eyes closed; I could feel her cold hand, desperate for heat, as she placed it on my cheek beneath my hood, seeking shelter from the wind. The only thing I could hear was the sound of my teeth rattling together as my body ceased to tremble. The nauseating feeling that I had endured for the past 10 hours was taking over my body; the fear of throwing up again came back to haunt me. Considering my stomach was already more than empty, this was not an option.

I knew Isabelle could understand my struggles, as she needed me just as much as I needed her. The comfort of our shared experience gave me the reassurance that I wasn't alone in this.

The four-hour watches were brutal, even though I had the easy one: eight to twelve. The English Channel had no mercy. I wanted to finally hear the Watch Lead's voice shouting, "Watch change!" but it didn't come. The ten minutes of watch that had gone by felt like three hours.

Before embarking on this ship, I had never envisioned myself destined for seasickness. This moment could never compare to the comfort and ease that I was used to on land. I never would have willingly put my body and mind through such torment, had I known its severity. In that moment, it felt impossible that I would ever enjoy the lifestyle of the boat. Regret washed over me as I thought about how impulsively I had signed up for this program.

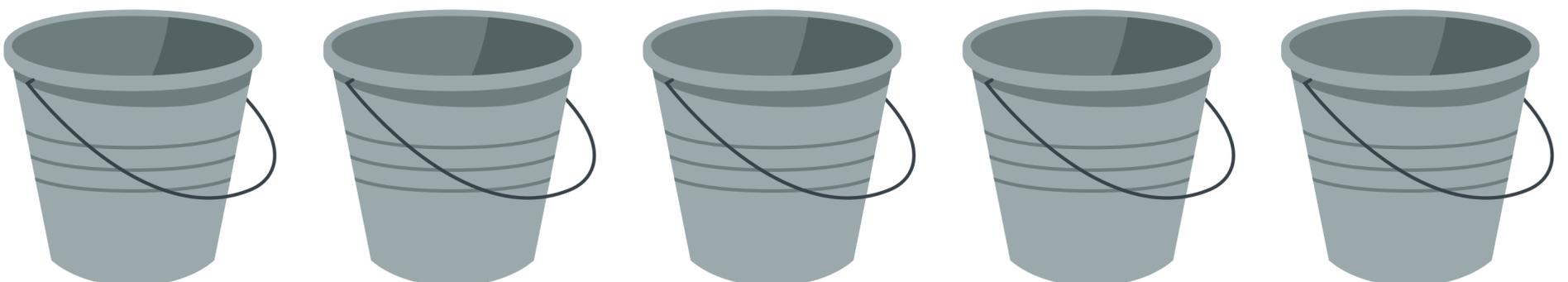
The dread of footsteps approaching the charhouse reminded me that this was not a dream. The Watch Lead signaled for everyone to head towards the Vormast to hol and weg.

Submerged in the nauseating feeling in my body, I was cemented to the ground. I acknowledged his words, but I could not respond. The enthusiasm of the rest of the Watch made me feel guilty for my lack of contribution. I felt behind, weak, replaceable. They moved with purpose while I could barely sit upright. Jealousy rose inside me. What looked like excitement and teamwork for them felt like pure suffering to me. They were laughing into the wind while I was fighting not to collapse. I felt as if I was missing the moments that would later become their best memories.

What makes this stranger now is that I can look back and almost laugh. When we finally arrived in port, stepped onto solid ground, and felt warmth in our fingers again, the misery had already started turning into a story. Somehow, the worst night became proof that we had survived it.

Now it has been a few months since that happened, and when I think about it, I think about how much I appreciated life, food, and feeling healthy after that. That made me realize that even the worst moments teach you something and make you grow as a person.

-Faya Titze



International WOMEN'S Day

International Women's Day is a worldwide event that's been celebrated for the last 115 years. Every year, communities come together to acknowledge the powerful women who stand out against injustice and fight for their community. On a smaller scale we acknowledge the women close to us and everything they do, and thank them for the part they play in our lives.

My grandmother was a special woman. After my grandfather died, she took care of eleven children and she expanded the family business that my grandfather left. She passed away nine years ago, but I still remember her with a lot of love and admiration.

-Alvaro

Thank you, mom for always being there when I need to talk to someone. I am so grateful to be able to call you mom. Love, Ezra

Thank you, mom for being one of the most reliable, intelligent, and caring people I will ever meet.

My mom is the woman that inspires me because she never gives up on her family during hard times. Perseverance.

-Emeric

Happy International Women's Day to my loving mother (Nathalie). Thank you for showing hard work and always putting everyone around you before yourself. You have always been so present and easy to talk to. You're so pretty and I'm so excited to see you soon. Xoxo

A woman I look up to is Jane Goodall because of her loving passion and determination to care for the environment and becoming one of the first women in her field.

Shoutout to my mom, who is the bravest person I know with the most beautiful heart.

-JP

Hedy Lamarr, the 1950s actress/genius who created the groundwork for technologies like Wifi and Bluetooth.

My momma raised me and my brother as a single mother. She gave us everything and she deserves the world. I love you, momma.

-Max

My grandmama inspires me greatly. She is my idol. From her style to her kindness and humour, I aspire to be her. She is the most fabulous woman to ever live. Happy International Women's Day, grandmama, I love you more than anything.

-River

My mom inspires me because she is such an amazing person who takes care of the family even though she has a lot to do. She is a very inspiring person.

-Simon

My mother has always stuck her neck out for me no matter what. She is dedicated and works hard to give me and my sister amazing opportunities in life. I will forever be grateful for her. My Grammy, thank you for taking time to make cookie dough for everyone on the ship and for making 46 hot cross buns for Easter. We really appreciate you.

-Indi

My grandmother Teresa is one of the most inspiring people I know. She is super wise, cultured, and the most intelligent person I know. She has taught thousands about Mexican history and has spoken out for the truth. I am so proud to be her grandson and love her a lot.

-Mauricio

Shoutout to Ella and Beatrice (my cousins). They are such an inspiration to me and show me what it's like to have fun and follow my passions. They are kind, funny, and compassionate. They inspired me to come to Class Afloat and I'm so grateful to have two amazing role models as cousins. Love you guys!

-Ali

A woman I am extremely inspired by is Taylor Swift. I am inspired by her determination to keep making music, even with all the haters. She focuses on the ones who love her and not the ones who don't. That's confidence.

-Klava

I would like to celebrate the amazing women I get to call colleagues this year. Emma, who is kind and compassionate, has been a constant support to me; Orla, who is optimistic and always smiling, keeps me belly laughing; and Jacquie, who is passionate and driven, is a constant inspiration. I watch how these women interact with students daily and keep our community thriving onboard by the million little things they do. Additionally, I want to celebrate those working behind the scenes. Beth, who is intelligent and the best person to have a heart to heart with, Jennifer who is heart driven and understanding, and Megan, who does it all, and who has become one of the greatest mentors I have ever had. What an awesome year we get to have with these women guiding the way! I have so much love and respect for them and am so grateful to do this work alongside them.

-Sydnie

Shoutout to Emma Nordin for being such an amazing mother and making sure I always felt like I belonged no matter what country I'm in.

-Anton

I think that Princess Leia is pretty cool because she's a political figure who fights for liberty and freedom, which is very important. She also fights space tyrannical rulers, which is pretty cool.

-Gavin

Regal and grand, her life is a story of many triumphs and tribulations. The Queen will always be a woman I find inspiring, if only for the fact that she accomplished what she set out to do and excelled at it. As she promised, she dedicated her life to office, ruling with a sovereign steady hand and impacting so many people across the world during her over nine decades of experience. I will always look up to and aspire to be the type of person she was, a symbol of quiet authority, wisdom, and generosity. A Queen.

My grandma is really cool because she's 86, but she still walks, a lot.

-Oskar



Jan Strauch inspires me. She is a fellow Biology teacher and Sir David Attenborough fan! She inspired so many teachers and students in her 40+year teaching career. She always shared her knowledge and wisdom in an engaging and enthusiastic way. She is kind, selfless and she always thinks of others first. I feel lucky to be able to call her a friend and mentor.

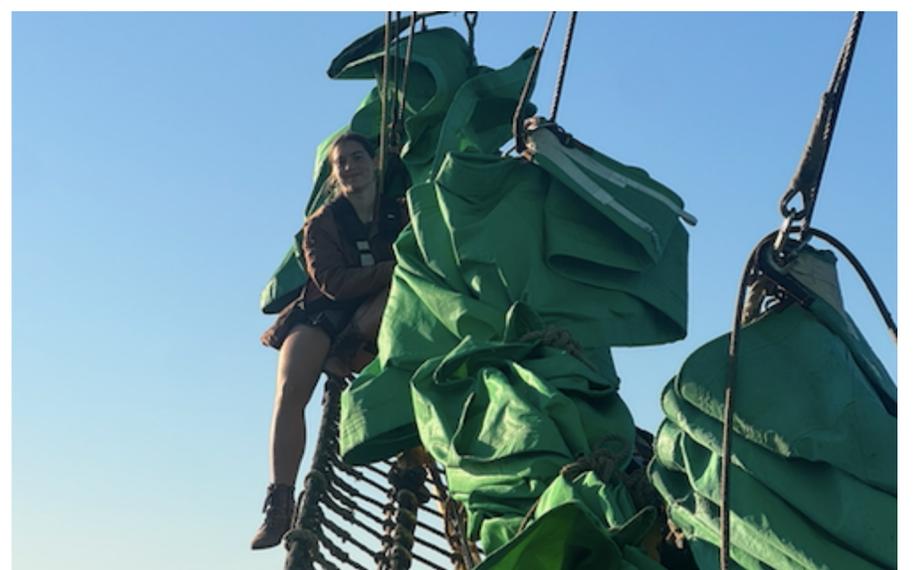
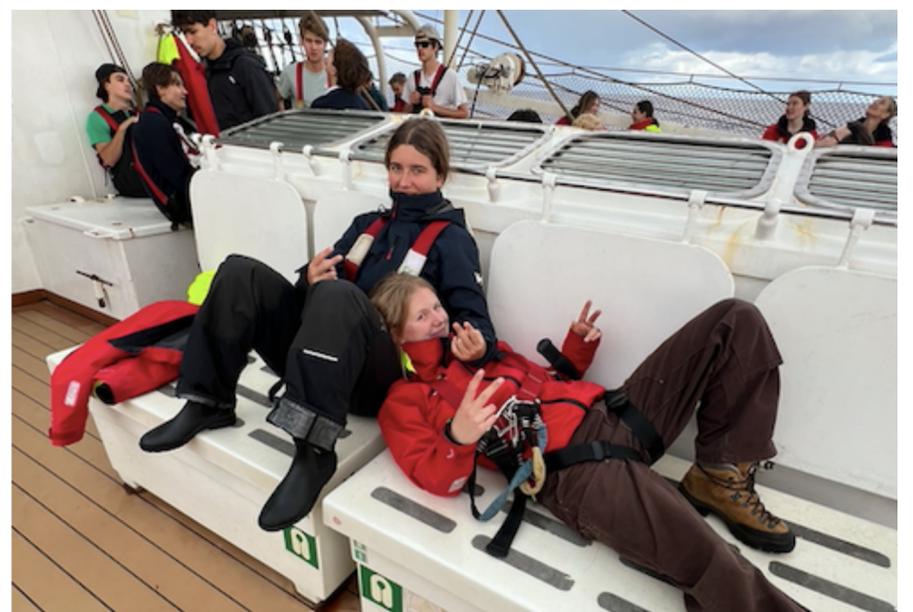
-Jacquie

My mum Julianne is someone who doesn't get enough credit. She has overcome so many obstacles in her life and yet she's never let it affect her goals for life, if anything she's one of the most successful and inspirational people I've ever meant and she pushes me to be my best self every day. Not only is she a great person in her own right, she's the best mum I could've asked for. Smart and caring, she truly shaped me into the young woman I am today. I love you mum.

-Claire

Shoutout to Meghan Etchell for being such a great mom and so inspiring. You raised me to be strong and independent, along with other things, just like you. I appreciate everything you have done for me and all the help, love, and support you have given me. Thank you so much. Love you!!

-Teagan



OUR JOURNEY SO FAR

Time: 2310 UTC

Ship Time: 2010 (+3 hours)

Date: 09.03.2026

Weather: 15 degrees Celsius, 2m swell, clear skies

Sea State: 1

Wind: 8kn

Location: North Atlantic Ocean

Sailing Status: Sailing

Kms Travelled: 2240

NM Travelled: 10346

Days till Graduation: 78



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO...

- Mariandre, who turned 19
- Philip, who turned 19
- Faya, who turned 17
- Kysen, who turned 19
- Luca L, who turned 20



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“WE ARE TIED TO THE OCEAN. AND WHEN WE GO BACK TO THE SEA - WHETHER IT IS TO SAIL OR TO WATCH IT - WE ARE GOING BACK FROM WHENCE WE CAME.”
- JOHN F KENNEDY

