

Captain SUNSHINE



ALSO AVAILABLE

HOTEL
FLAMINGO

Hotel Flamingo

Holiday Heatwave

Carnival Caper

Fabulous Feast

Frosty Fiesta

**Big Sky
Mountain**

Big Sky Mountain

The Forest Wolves

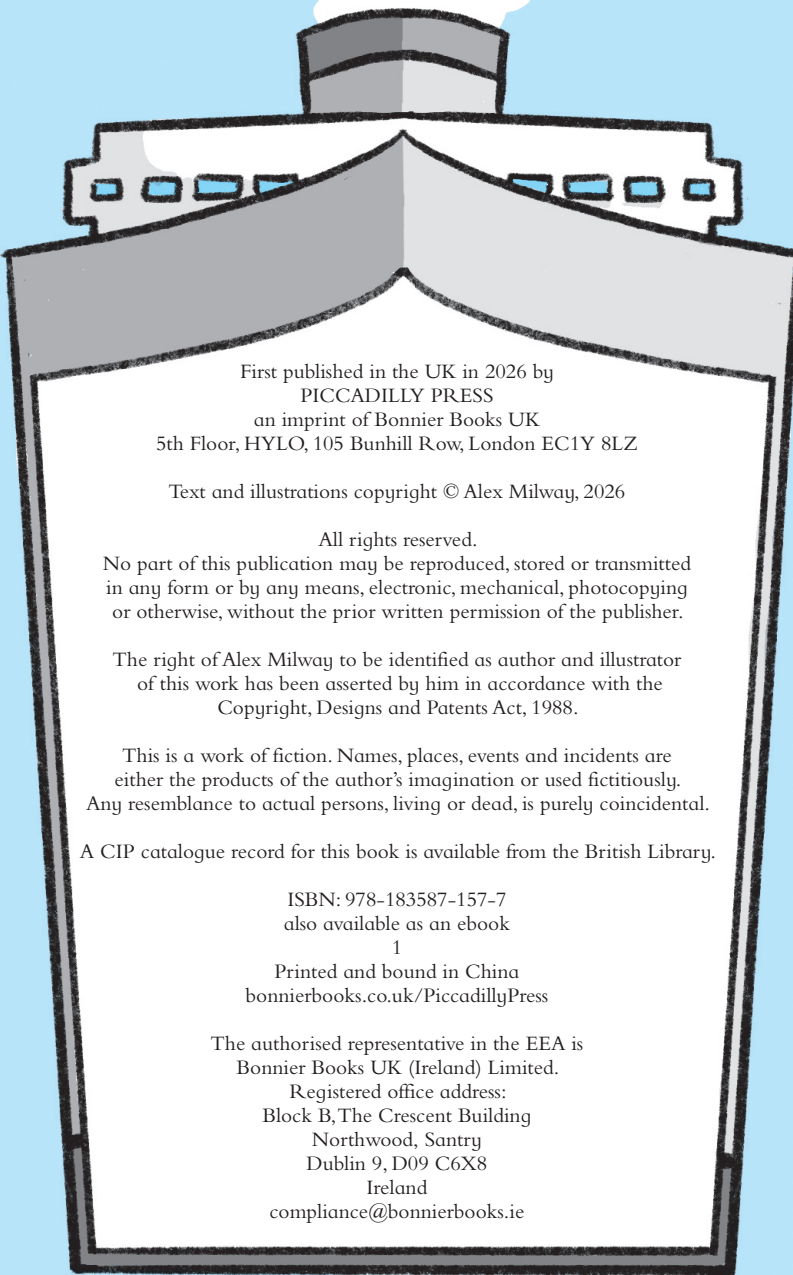
The Beach Otters

The Sky Eagles



ALEX MILWAY



A stylized illustration of a ship's bow, viewed from the front. The ship is white with a grey hull. It has a single dark grey funnel at the top. Along the upper edge of the bow, there are several small, rectangular portholes or windows, some of which are colored blue. The ship is set against a solid light blue background.

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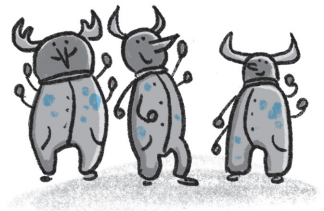
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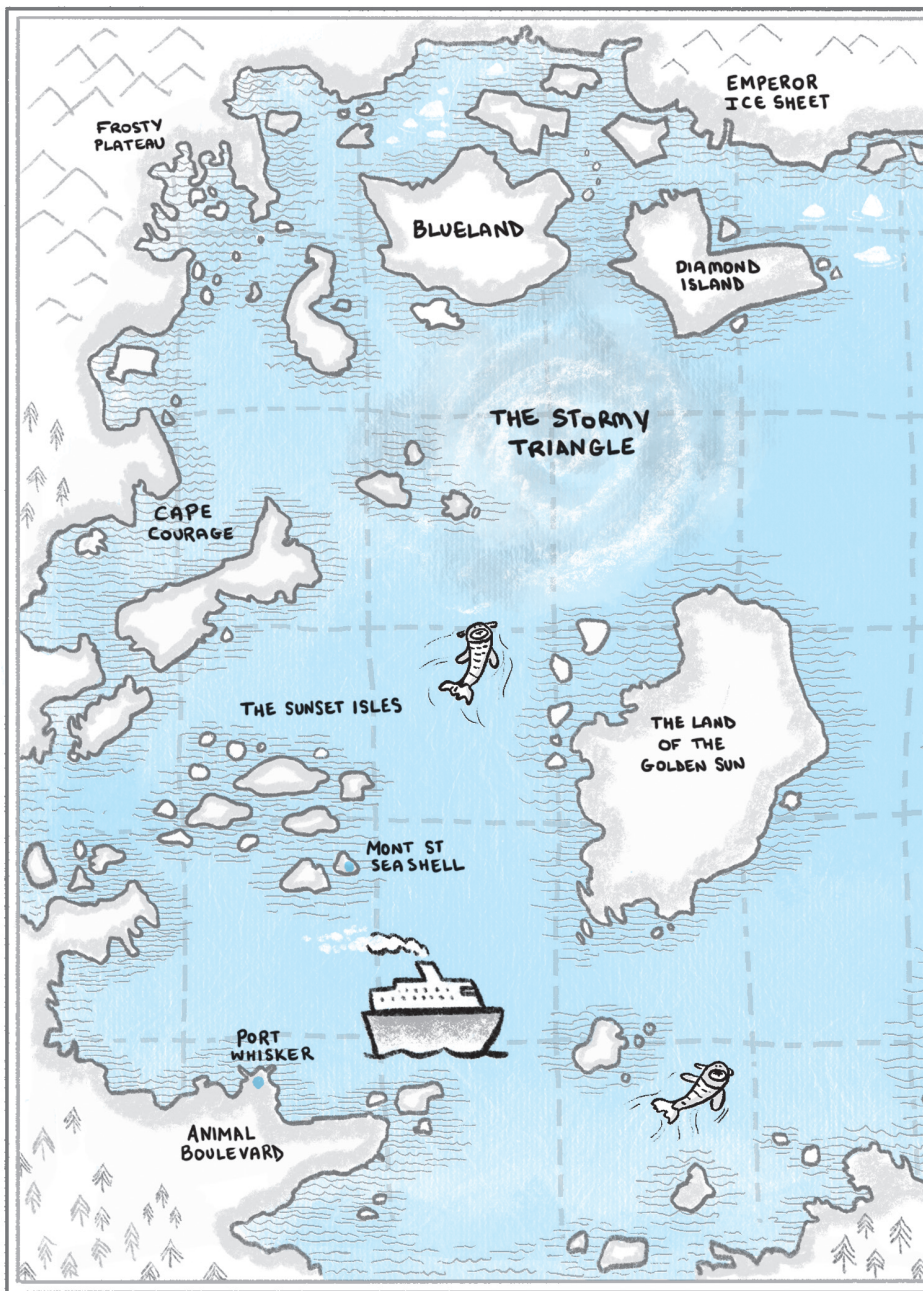
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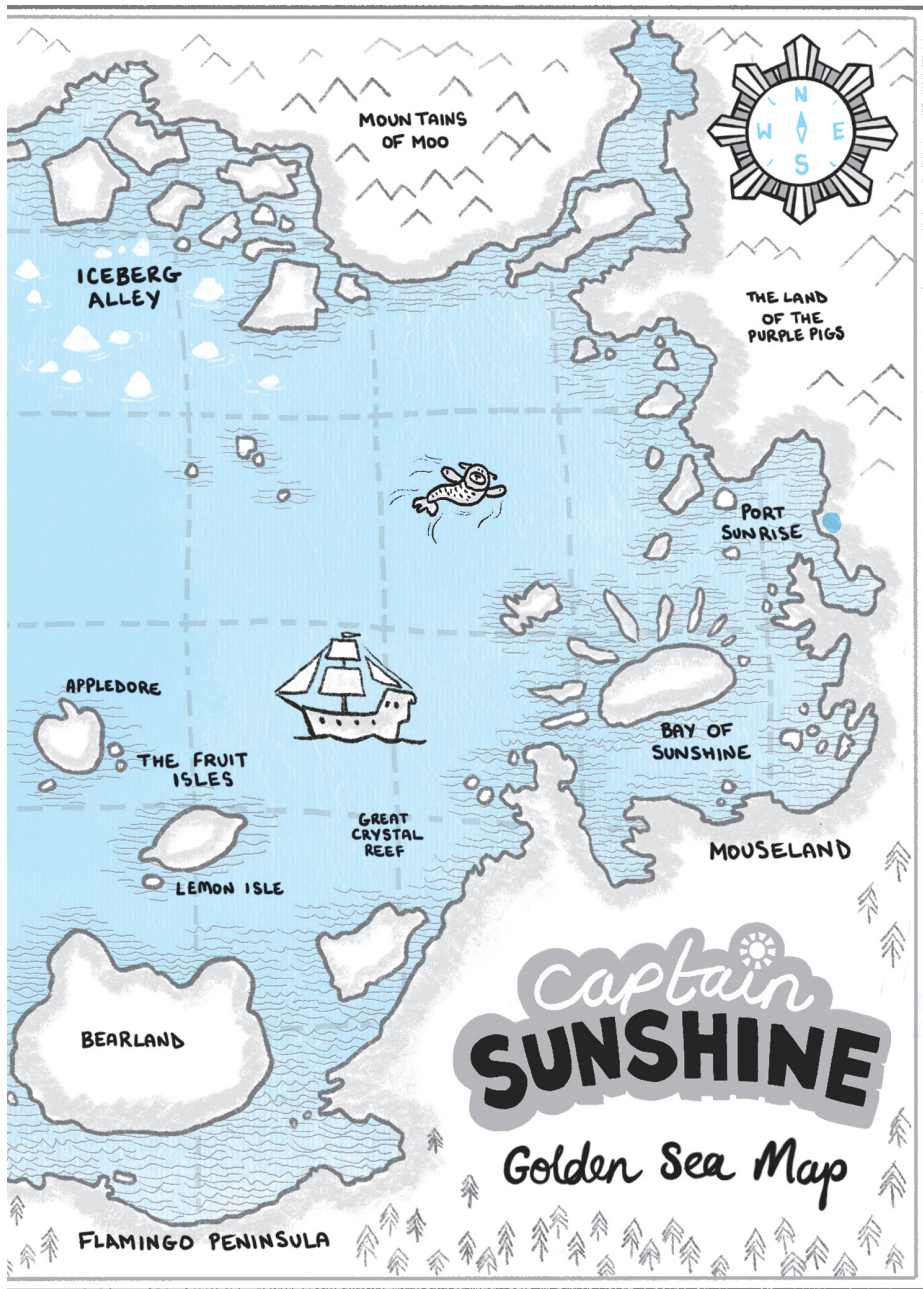
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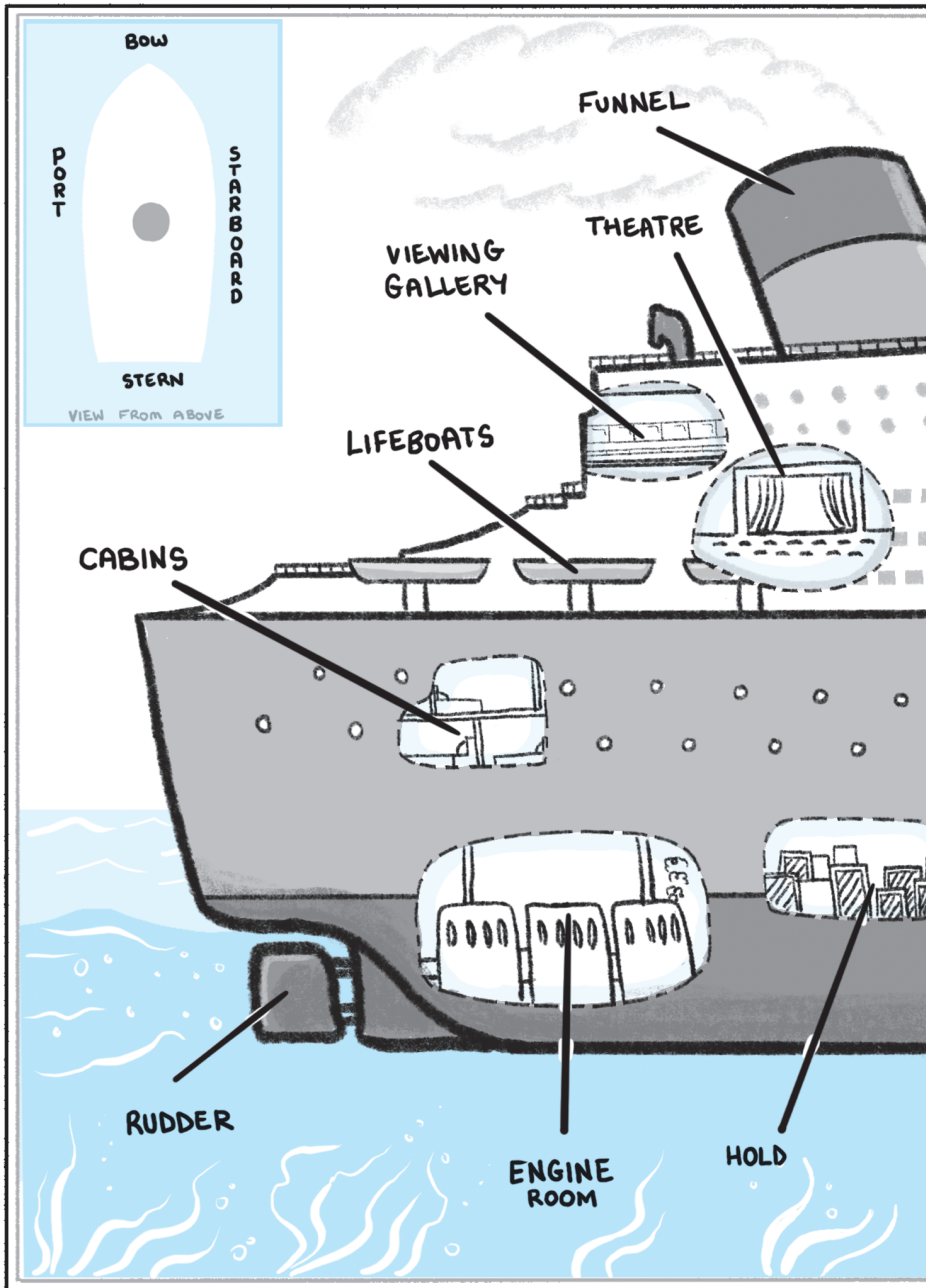
For Jonathan

**CAN YOU FIND
ALL OF US
IN THE STORY?**

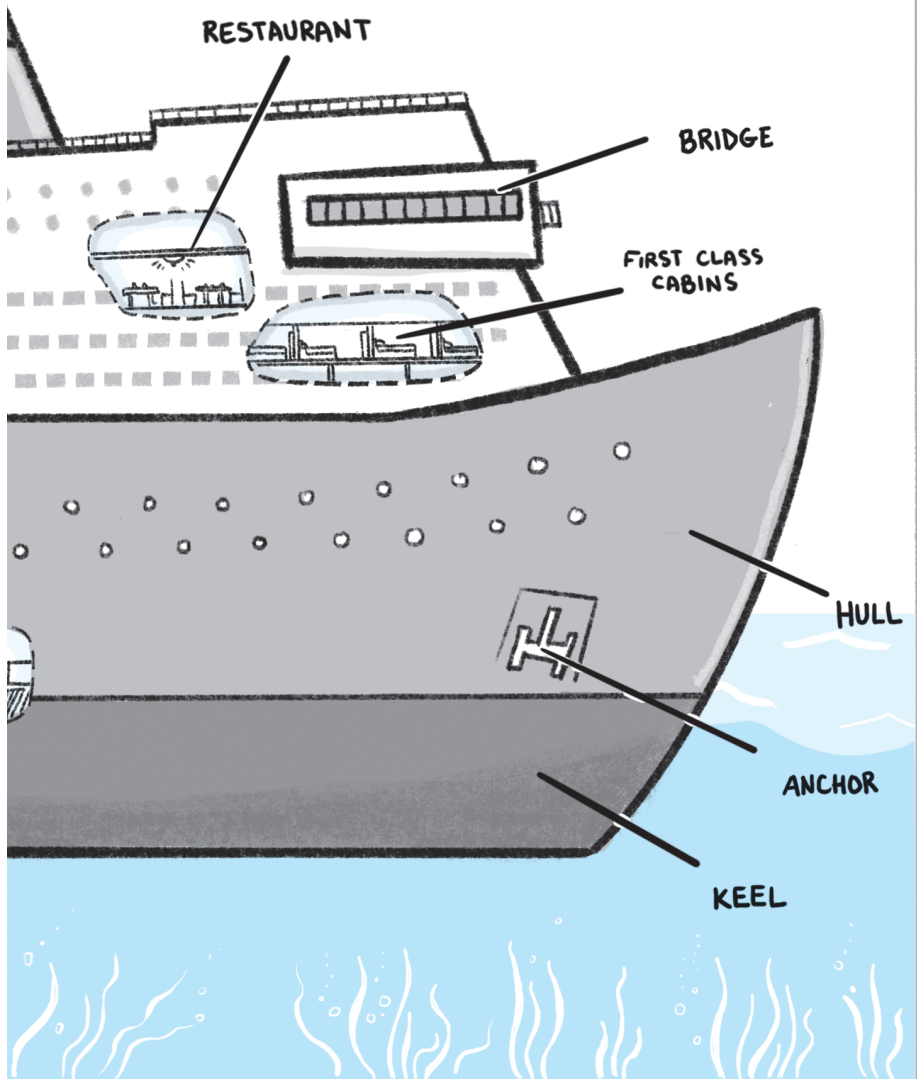








THE SUNSHINE







1

The New Captain

Bella Day raced through the bustling, narrow streets of Port Whisker and down to the docks.

‘Sorry! Sorry!’ she said, holding her bag up high and trying to avoid everyone.

Built around a rocky, natural harbour at the northern shore of Animal Boulevard, the port was always busy. Be it tourists arriving for a holiday or

passengers ready for an adventure on the high seas, its docks were never quiet.

‘Bella!’ shouted a lumbering old walrus, as she loaded supplies onto her sailboat. ‘You coming out to sea today?’

Bella skidded to a stop but bumped into a stack of nets and floats, which scattered everywhere.



‘Auntie Sylvie!’ she panted. ‘I can’t stop and chat!’

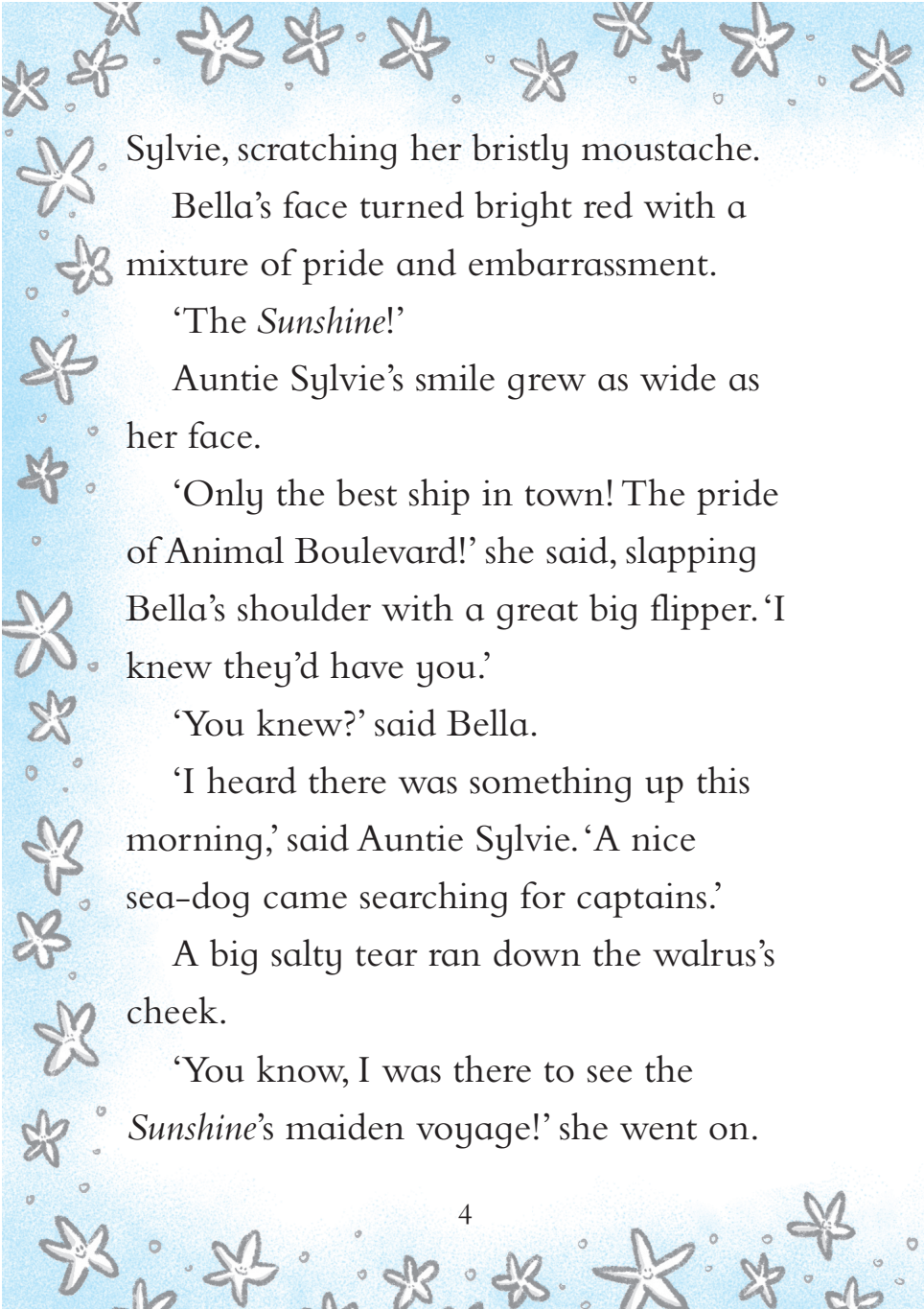
‘What’s got you in such a rush?’ said Auntie Sylvie.

‘My first job,’ said Bella. ‘I’m going to be a captain!’

‘Flying fish, what a turn-up!’ said Auntie Sylvie. ‘That news has made my day.’

Bella had spent much of her young life at the old walrus’s side, sailing across the Golden Sea and trading goods between ports and islands along the coast. Auntie Sylvie was one of the most popular captains at port, always helping out other sailor folk, and with Bella at her side they were unstoppable.

‘So what’s yer ship?’ asked Auntie



Sylvie, scratching her bristly moustache.

Bella's face turned bright red with a mixture of pride and embarrassment.

‘The *Sunshine*!’

Auntie Sylvie's smile grew as wide as her face.

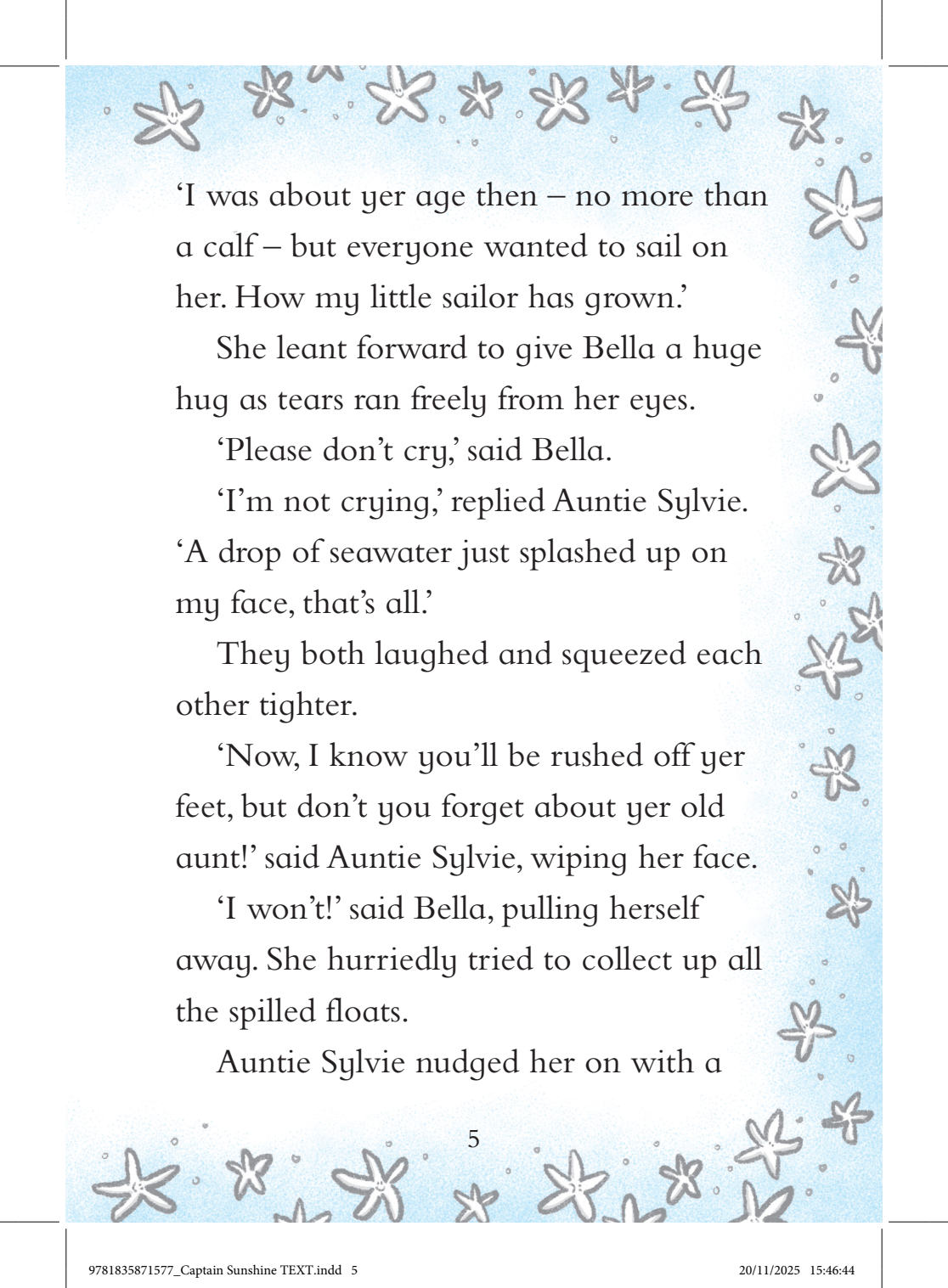
‘Only the best ship in town! The pride of Animal Boulevard!’ she said, slapping Bella's shoulder with a great big flipper. ‘I knew they'd have you.’

‘You knew?’ said Bella.

‘I heard there was something up this morning,’ said Auntie Sylvie. ‘A nice sea-dog came searching for captains.’

A big salty tear ran down the walrus's cheek.

‘You know, I was there to see the *Sunshine*'s maiden voyage!’ she went on.



‘I was about yer age then – no more than a calf – but everyone wanted to sail on her. How my little sailor has grown.’

She leant forward to give Bella a huge hug as tears ran freely from her eyes.

‘Please don’t cry,’ said Bella.

‘I’m not crying,’ replied Auntie Sylvie. ‘A drop of seawater just splashed up on my face, that’s all.’

They both laughed and squeezed each other tighter.

‘Now, I know you’ll be rushed off yer feet, but don’t you forget about yer old aunt!’ said Auntie Sylvie, wiping her face.

‘I won’t!’ said Bella, pulling herself away. She hurriedly tried to collect up all the spilled floats.

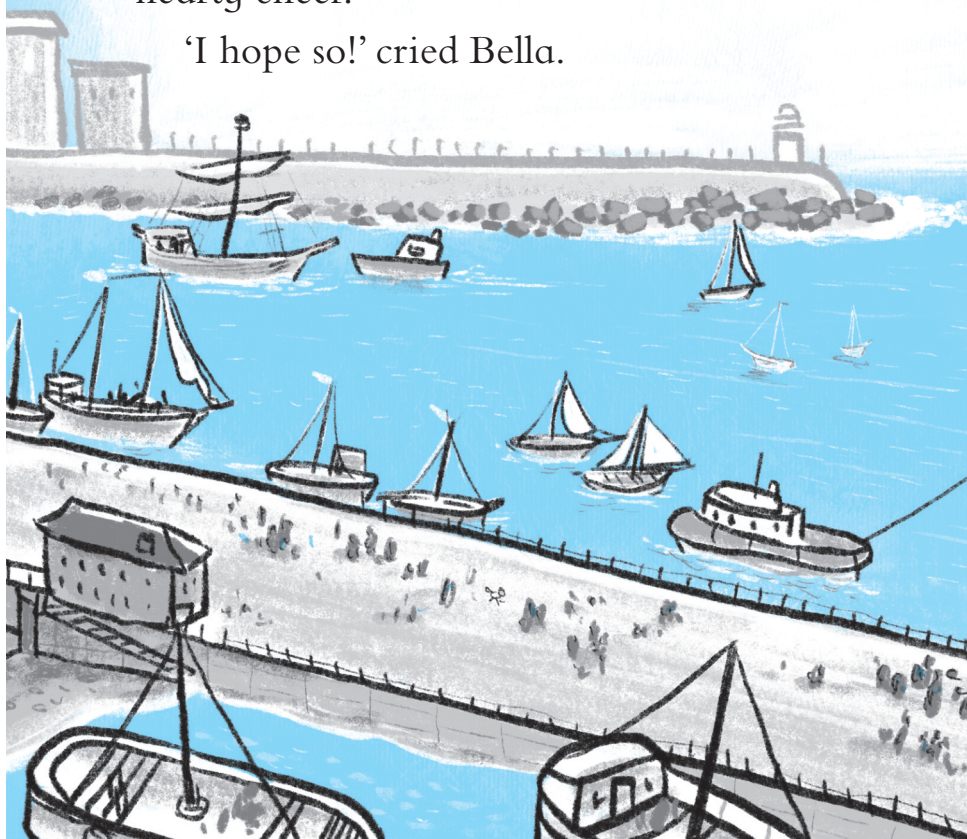
Auntie Sylvie nudged her on with a

wink. 'I'll clear up here. Don't you be late on yer first day!'

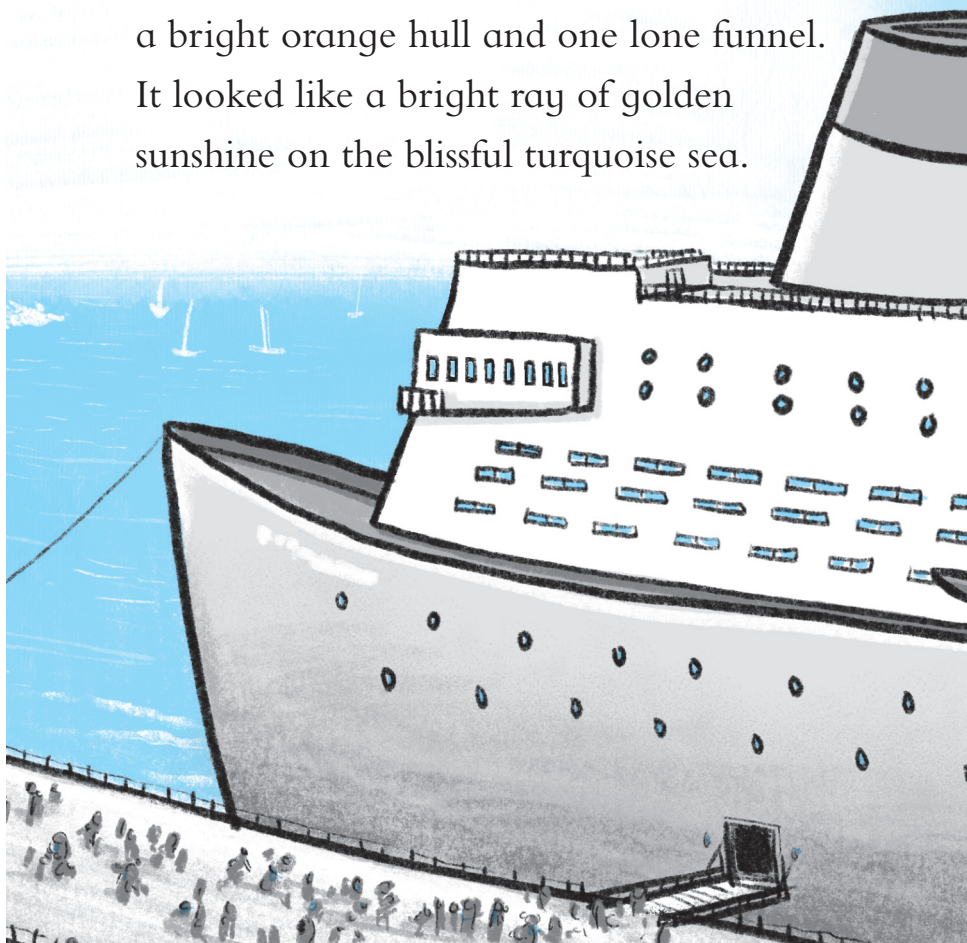
'Thanks, Auntie Sylvie,' said Bella, running off.

'And may them merry merdogs take kindly on you!' shouted the walrus with a hearty cheer.

'I hope so!' cried Bella.



Bella raced along the quayside and up the harbour arm until the buildings thinned out and the town's flotilla of ships reared into view. There, at the furthest point, was an unmissable cruise ship with a bright orange hull and one lone funnel. It looked like a bright ray of golden sunshine on the blissful turquoise sea.



‘WOAH!’ gasped Bella as her jaw truly dropped. She knew the *Sunshine* was big, but up close it was truly gigantic!

A weathered sea-dog in a crisp white and blue sailor’s outfit approached, his bare, muscly arms covered in tattoos of anchors and sea monsters.



‘Captain Bella Day?’ he asked.

‘Y–yes?’ she replied nervously, while trying to catch her breath.

‘Thank the shooting stars, miss!’ he said. He stood a little more upright, puffed out his chest and clutched his paws behind his back. ‘I’m Mr Tatou, your new first mate. I wasn’t sure my message had reached you, Captain.’

‘I left the moment I read it,’ said Bella honestly. She’d barely stopped to pack, let alone brush her teeth. ‘Did your captain really quit?’

‘Upped and left – just like that!’ he replied. ‘Took most of our crew with him . . .’

‘Your *crew*?’ interrupted Bella.

‘Aye, and we set sail this afternoon

and all!’ Mr Tatou said. ‘But with you on board, all will be well.’

Bella’s nervousness blossomed into full-grown worry.

‘Are you sure I’m the person for the job?’ she asked.

‘No mistake, Captain,’ said Mr Tatou. ‘You have impeccable credentials, with recommendations from Captain Sylvie Tuskolio herself. But we do need to hurry, our passengers will be boarding soon.’

Good old Auntie Sylvie, thought Bella with a smile. She pushed any doubts to the back of her mind.

‘Then we’d best get started,’ she said.

‘Aye, Captain!’ agreed Mr Tatou, saluting. ‘Follow me.’



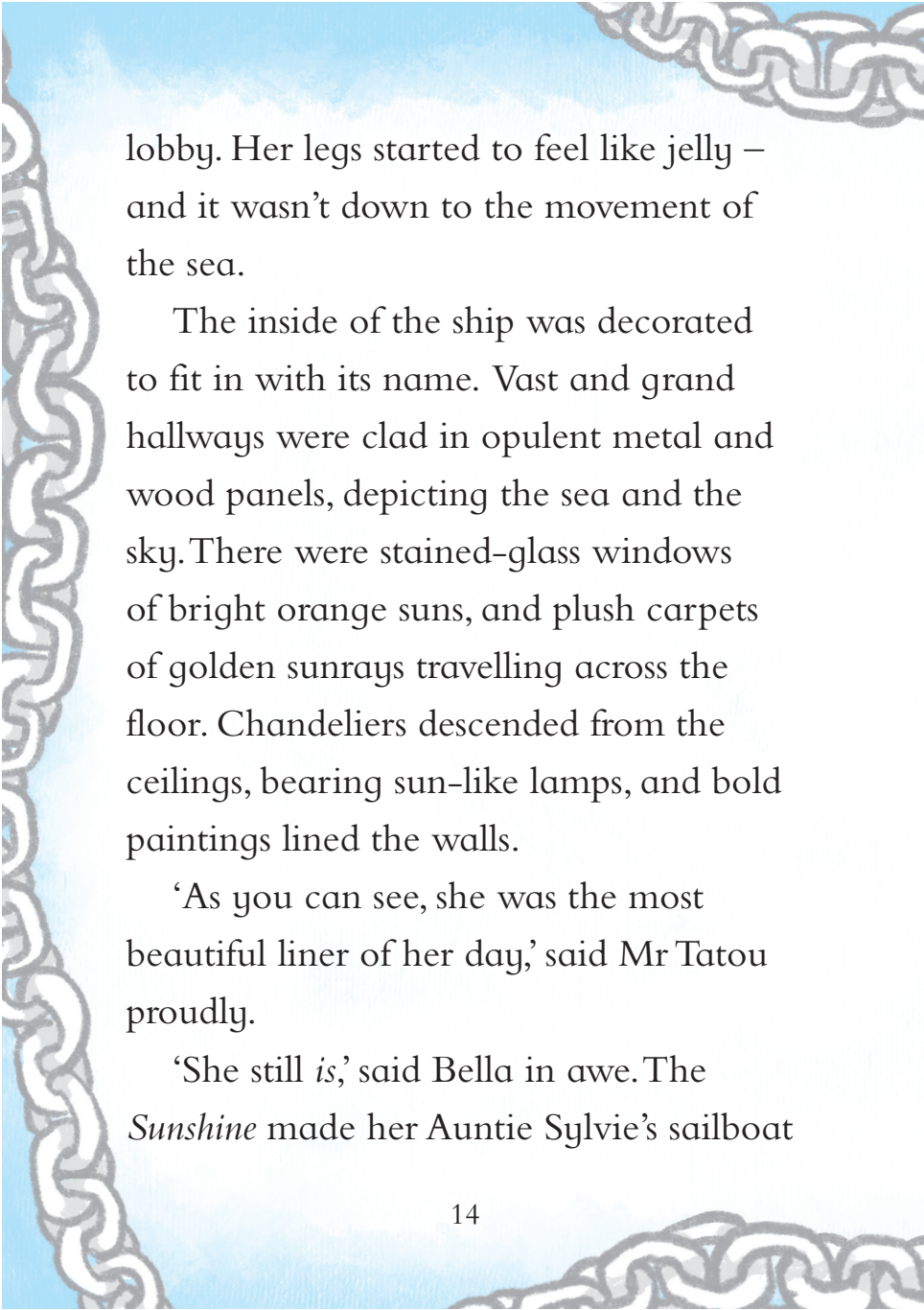


Basking in the Sunshine

The bright orange hull of the *Sunshine* loomed large over Bella as they passed a line of eager passengers – colourful creatures of all kinds – and walked over a gangway onto the ship.

Mr Tatou blew a little whistle to alert the crew that the captain was on deck.

‘Blustery days!’ said Bella in shock, walking on board and into a cavernous

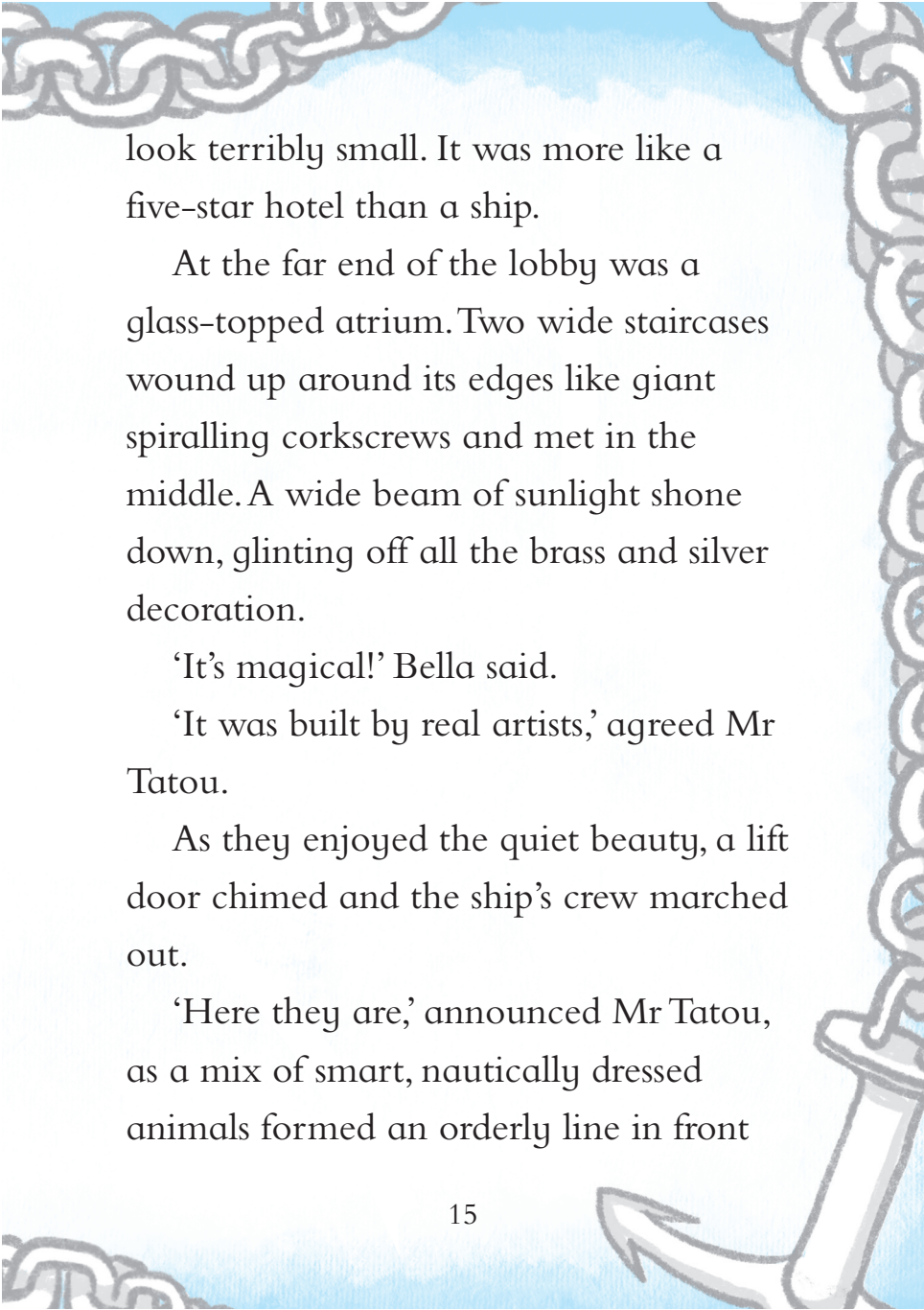
A decorative border consisting of a thick, stylized chain link runs along the left and top edges of the page. The chain is grey with a white outline and a slight 3D effect. The background of the page is a light blue sky with soft, white clouds.

lobby. Her legs started to feel like jelly – and it wasn't down to the movement of the sea.

The inside of the ship was decorated to fit in with its name. Vast and grand hallways were clad in opulent metal and wood panels, depicting the sea and the sky. There were stained-glass windows of bright orange suns, and plush carpets of golden sunrays travelling across the floor. Chandeliers descended from the ceilings, bearing sun-like lamps, and bold paintings lined the walls.

‘As you can see, she was the most beautiful liner of her day,’ said Mr Tatou proudly.

‘She still *is*,’ said Bella in awe. The *Sunshine* made her Auntie Sylvie’s sailboat



look terribly small. It was more like a five-star hotel than a ship.

At the far end of the lobby was a glass-topped atrium. Two wide staircases wound up around its edges like giant spiralling corkscrews and met in the middle. A wide beam of sunlight shone down, glinting off all the brass and silver decoration.

‘It’s magical!’ Bella said.

‘It was built by real artists,’ agreed Mr Tatou.

As they enjoyed the quiet beauty, a lift door chimed and the ship’s crew marched out.

‘Here they are,’ announced Mr Tatou, as a mix of smart, nautically dressed animals formed an orderly line in front



of them. The crew stood up straight with their arms tucked neatly behind their backs. All eyes turned to Bella.

‘Captain Bella Day!’ announced Mr Tatou.

Feeling everyone’s eyes on her, Bella realised she was terribly underdressed: she was wearing sturdy clothes fit for a sailboat, not the smart attire of a luxury cruise liner. What would everyone think of her?

‘H-hello, everyone,’ stuttered Bella, clapping her hands together.

A prim-looking cat with a piercing stare broke the silence.

‘I am Mrs Purrpot, the Passenger Liaison officer,’ she said in a snippy tone. ‘Passenger



satisfaction is key.
Passengers sail with
us for the prestige
and style
associated with
the *Sunshine* –
it is my duty to
see that the ship
meets their requirements.’



Bella thought Mrs Purrpot seemed a
bit intimidating.

‘Pleased to meet you,’ said Bella,
feeling slightly cowed.

Mrs Purrpot peered down over her
petal-shaped glasses.

‘You appear to be travelling light,
Captain,’ she said.

Bella looked down at the small bag

in her hand. It held nothing much other than her toothbrush, a pair of socks and a telescope.

‘What more does a captain need?’ said Bella.

Mrs Purrpot made a little huff.

‘Style and panache, Captain,’ replied the cat.

‘Oh . . .’ said Bella.

‘And this is Sailor Flip and Sailor Flap,’ said Mr Tatou, introducing two short penguins.



‘CAPTAIN DAY!’ they screamed at the top of their lungs, their flippers shooting into salutes.

Mrs Purrrpot made a furious hiss of disapproval, but the two penguins screwed up their faces at the cat and giggled. Their cheerful, naughty energy helped to put Bella at ease.

Mr Tatou glowered at them.

‘They provide entertainment, *of a sort*,’ he said, and moved along.

The penguins bowed gracefully.

‘And this is our cabin boy, Chip,’ said Mr Tatou.

The young bear saluted and held out his paw.

‘Chip Chipper reporting for duty, sir! Miss! Sorry . . . CAPTAIN!’ he gasped.

Mr Tatou patted him on the shoulder.
‘He’s a hard worker, Captain,’ he said.
‘Can move cases quicker than a detective!’
‘That’s right, sir. I have very quick legs,
sir,’ boasted Chip. ‘I have the record for
fastest cabin service delivery on ship!’



‘That’s amazing,’ said Bella, loving
Chip’s enthusiasm.
Mr Tatou carried on.
‘This is Cally,’ he said, introducing

a young fresh-faced
capybara whose
eyes sparkled
brightly.

‘Captain.’ She
nodded.

‘Cally is our
navigator,’ explained
Mr Tatou. ‘She knows the sea inside out.’

‘From top to bottom,’ said Cally.

‘That’ll be very useful,’ said Bella.

‘The sea talks to me as well,’ she
replied. ‘I always know when a storm is
due because my nose twitches.’

‘Causing the loudest sneeze you’ll ever
hear.’ Mr Tatou chuckled.

‘That *is* very useful!’ said Bella.

‘And next . . .’ said Mr Tatou, looking



off towards the lift. He paused. ‘We’re missing Beeks. Where on earth is he?’

‘Who’s Beeks?’ asked Bella.

‘Our helmsman,’ said Mr Tatou. ‘He can guide us through a snowstorm with his eyes shut –’

‘Well, it looks like he’s got lost again.’ Mrs Purrrpot sighed, her frown dipping below the rim of her glasses.

‘He is one of the best, Captain, I assure you,’ said Mr Tatou.

‘I don’t doubt it,’ said Bella. ‘And this is everyone?’

Bella knew that for a large ship, they really *were* short of staff. They were going to struggle.

‘Not quite,’ explained Mr Tatou. ‘We have Mr Filigree and his team in the

restaurant and Nipper down below in the engine room, but they'll all be busy preparing to set sail. Everyone is ready to step up and fill the gaps, though. Aren't we?'

'Aye, sir!' chorused the crew.

'Now then,' said Mrs Purrrpot, taking the reins. 'Our passengers will soon come aboard. May I have a word, Captain?'

'Of course,' said Bella. She waited for a response.

Mrs Purrrpot took a step forward and leaned closer.

'In private,' she added, ominously.

