

## Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> March - Lower school reading text

*It is so dark out there. Black. Stella's barking. She's up by the bow. She hasn't got her harness clipped on.*

Those were the last words I ever wrote in my log. After that it's just empty pages.

I tried calling Stella first, but she wouldn't come. So I left the wheel and went forward to bring her back. I took the ball with me to sweeten her in, to tempt her away from the bow of the boat.

I crouched down. 'Come on Stella,' I said, rolling the ball from hand to hand. 'Come and get the ball.' I felt the boat turn a little in the wind, and I knew then I shouldn't have left the wheel. The ball rolled away from me quite suddenly. I lunged after it, but it was gone over the side before I could grab it. I lay there on the deck watching it bob away into the darkness. I was furious with myself for being so silly.

I was still cursing myself when I thought I heard the sound of singing. Someone was singing out there in the darkness. I called out but no-one replied. So that was what Stella must have been barking at.

I looked again for my ball but by now it had disappeared. That ball had been very precious to me, precious to all of us. I knew then I had just lost a great deal more than a football.

I was angry with Stella. The whole thing had been her fault. She was still barking. I couldn't hear the singing any more. I called her again, whistled her in. She wouldn't come. I got to my feet and went forward. I took her by the collar and pulled. She would not be moved. I couldn't drag her all the way back, so I bent down to pick her up. She was still reluctant. Then I had her in my arms, but she was still struggling.

I heard the wind above me in the sails. I remember thinking: this is silly, you haven't got your lifejacket on, you shouldn't be doing this. Then the boat veered violently and I was thrown sideways. With my arms full I had no time to grab the guardrail. We were in the cold of the sea before I could open my mouth to scream.