

Ramblings of a Mad Captain Solution

Puzzle: Michael Chen

Solution: Michael Chen

Answer: FLAG

The entire puzzle revolves around “signal flags,” as referenced by the flavor text. Each paragraph corresponds to a meaning of a flag which in turn corresponds to a letter. The hard part is, of course, sorting through what is “useless drivel” and what actually leads to the meaning. The colors throughout always correspond to colors of flags, but many flags share the same colors. Below, each clue contains the general thought process of each paragraph. The letters when figured out spell out FOOTBALL PENALTY, which, perhaps too simply, is meant to clue the final answer **FLAG**.

I open my eyes and see white. Lots of white, everywhere. I open my mouth but no words come out. There is nothing but static in my ears. I start flailing and my fists hit the ground. My vision blurs and soon I cannot see anything. I frantically look for others around to hear my drumming and help me, but no one does. I am sad.

F: I am disabled, communicate with me.

The paragraph focuses on not being able to see or hear, which clues the “disabled” part and the last two lines is meant to clue the idea of “communication” or at least the attempt to. The white checks out since the flag is white and red.

Look at the flames, the golds and the reds. Look at how they move. How they divide. How the stand. My ship’s on fire... I should probably do something about that. Jump off the ship? Hmmm.

O: Man overboard.

The colors gold and red refer to the colors of the “O” flag, which is gold and red, along with the idea of “divide,” since the flag is divided. Furthermore, the last two lines clue the idea of man overboard.

I tried to iron my clothes the other day, specifically my favorite yellow shirt. Ironing is good except when the clothes catch on fire. Fire is red on the corner. That happens a lot. Too much. But it's a good thing that homo sapiens can jump over the fire. But unfortunately beyond the fire lies an unending stretch of water. Splash! Now if only humans were fireproof. And waterproof.

O: Man overboard.

This clues the same letter as the previous paragraph but in a significantly less direct way. The colors are the same with the shirt being “yellow” and the fire being “red” but the story is different with the idea being a man (“homo sapiens”) jumping over a fire which is on a ironing board so “man overboard.”

Doing detective work is boring. Especially when there's a lot of material to sort through and you're using a pair of fish scales to take notes. These fish scales are ancient things passed down for generations. You wonder why nobody else would work with you. It's because the fish scales are too scary.

T: Keep clear of me. Fishing boats: "Keep clear of me; I am engaged in pair trawling.

This used the second meaning with “pair trawling.” Trawling can have dual meanings of either fishing (so fish scales) and sifting through information in a search, so the idea of doing detective work and sorting through materials. The idea of “keep clear” is signaled through the part about “nobody else would work with you.”

Red! Red! I'm swimming in so much blood and uranium and explosive power. I'm absorbing radioactivity at a rate faster than you could imagine. I feel like the whole ship will just go boom! Suddenly the whole universe becomes red.

B: "I am taking in or discharging or carrying dangerous goods."

This paragraph tries to clue the idea of “carrying dangerous goods” with “uranium and explosive power” and how the “whole ship will just go boom!” The heavy emphasis on red correlates with the red that covers the entire flag.

I dropped the blue parachute out the door as the other passengers looked at me in fright. Ahahahaha! I saw another blue parachute spiral down, down, down into the

white clouds. I turned to look at the other passengers who began to look strangely ghostlike. "Stay transparent!" I yelled as I jumped from the swallow's tail.

A: "I have a diver down; keep well clear at slow speed."

The idea of "diver down" is shown by a sky-diver falling down. The idea of "keep well clear" is shown by needing to "stay transparent!" Furthermore, the flag is a blue and white swallow-tail, which is clued in the paragraph.

There are dangers up ahead. A whirlpool that will suck me in and Loch ness monsters taller than skyscrapers. Suddenly I know what I must do. I bellow at the sailors to lower the sails and I pull the rudder sharply to the side. The ship slows down. After a hectic minute, we are left bobbing up and down in the ocean waves, just a few meters from treachery.

L: In harbour: "The ship is quarantined." At sea: "You should stop your vessel instantly."

This uses the second definition since the ship is at sea. The idea is of course that the ship in the paragraph has to stop instantly because of the dangers ahead.

It's only the next day, but there are again dangers up ahead. A vortex that will suck me in and waves monsters taller than skyscrapers. Suddenly I know what I must do. I bellow at the sailors to lower the sails and I pull the wheel sharply to the side. The boat slows down. After a hectic minute, we are left bobbing up and down in the ocean waves, just a few feet from treachery.

L: In harbour: "The ship is quarantined." At sea: "You should stop your vessel instantly."

This is the same letter as above and uses pretty much the same exact paragraph.

What a ruckus! All the sailors, and the captain, and the cooks, and the navigators, and the sword-fighters, all rushed in one direction as the crowd around me slowly petered out, leaving me to feel blue all around. Where were they are going? Why was everybody so immediately leaving the tavern for the harbor?

P: In harbour: All persons should report on board as the vessel is about to proceed to sea. At sea: It may be used by fishing vessels to mean: "My nets have come fast upon an obstruction."

This uses the first definition, as the ship is in the harbour. The idea of the paragraph is everybody is rushing to the harbour ("all persons should report on board") since the boat is leaving. The flag is also sometimes called the Blue Peter so the words "blue" and "petered" clues that a bit.

What's this joyous game? A race on land? This just cannot do. So uninteresting. Why don't I just switch direction and hey! A different galaxy, a different solar system, a different sun? Let's add a bit more color. Red flames shoot from the ground. Much more interesting!

E: "I am altering my course to starboard."

This definition is also less direct. The idea is "altering my course" with changing what is supposed to be a obstacle course. Furthermore, the idea of "switching direction" ("altering my course to starboard") and the idea of a "different sun" (star) and the color red corresponds to the color of the flag.

No! No! No! You can't make me! Uh-uh. Nay. Nada. I don't care what you say. Nope. No way. No way Jose! I don't care if it's blue and white. Not on your life. Negative, Sir! No, siree! You can go do it by yourself. I won't play 4 by 4 checkers with you.

N: "Negative."

This one should be pretty easy. It's just "no" over and over again, which of course translates to "negative." The blue and white, 4 by 4 checkers, is the layout of the flag.

Walk slowly and in big circles is great advice for life. But only when you want to avoid somebody. Sometimes, in your life there are just dolphins who drag you down into the blue ocean. You swim up to them because you just want to talk and what do they do? They drag you down, down, down, deeper than any diver has ever gone. So, if you want my advice? Go slowly in big circles.

A: "I have a diver down; keep well clear at slow speed."

This clues the idea of having a diver down with dolphins dragging down a diver. Thus the idea is to “keep clear” at slow speeds.

Have you ever felt trapped in a box? Like everybody on the outside are just watching you, a tiny frog in a huge aquarium that just floats on a harbor. There’s nowhere to go; there are doors and windows, sure, but you can’t leave through them. As the years go by you’ll start to look a bit yellow on the corners.

L: In harbour: "The ship is quarantined." At sea: "You should stop your vessel instantly."

This has the same letter as earlier but uses the first definition, where the ship is in harbour. The idea of “quarantined” is shown by “nowhere to go” and not being able to leave through the doors and windows. In addition, the yellow matches up with the color of the flag.

I watched the blue stripe through the window. Fish everywhere! A fisherman’s paradise. I get out my fishing net and bait the net with a pair of krill. I let out my breath which fogged the glass. No! It must remain transparent!

T: "Keep clear of me; I am engaged in pair trawling."

The idea of “keep clear” is shown through the glass needing to remain transparent. The idea of trawling is shown by the fish and the blue stripe matches with part of the flag.

I lay my head back and listen to the sound of the news being read by a handsome man. Yellow fish swim by in multiple narrow streams. Wait? Fish? I lift my head and see myself and the heavy TV set being dragged away by a steamboat.

Y: "I am dragging my anchor."

This is also a less direct definition, where it centers around a TV news anchor (“sound of the news being read by a handsome man,” and “the heavy TV set being dragged away”) to mean “I am dragging my anchor.”