

deep end

THE DUTCH SEAFARERS MISSIONS MAGAZINE

HOME ALONE

SAGRADA
FAMILIA

INDEPENDENT
WIVES

UKRAINIAN
SEEDLINGS



★ CHRISTMAS EDITION

CHRISTMASWISH

Times are changing, and the maritime industry must prepare for the future. Across the sector, conferences and summits are being held on cleaner fuels, digitalization and automation, modern maritime education, and new regulations. The sector is “navigating change”. What will the maritime world look like twenty years from now?

Amid all these changes, Christmas remains a beacon of calm. Whether it's the Filipino version — where Christmas trees appear as early as September — or the Eastern European tradition of celebrating on January 6th, the story of the child in the manger continues to be told around the world, even after two thousand years.

In this issue, you'll find several Christmas-related articles. With that, our bilingual magazine — Diepgang together with its new English counterpart DeepEnd — has completed a full year of publication.

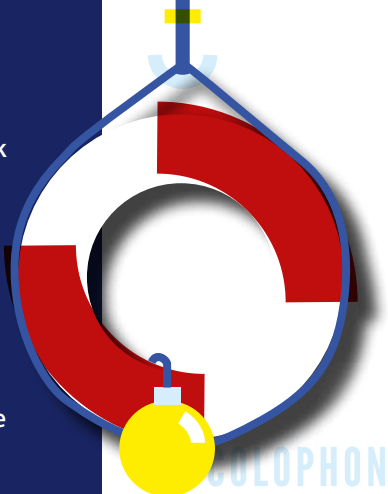
For now, we'll keep our wish simple and sincere, just for the upcoming year: we wish you a safe and healthy 2026!

P.S. We welcome your feedback. If you have comments or topics you think we should cover, please email: deepend@gmail.com

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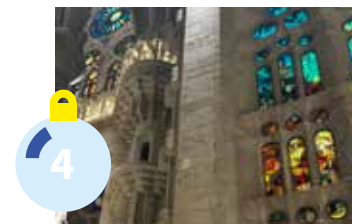
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deep end



SAGRADA FAMILIA



SEAFARERS' WIVES



ARNOLD DE LANGE

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SHELTERED IN THE SMALL

by Helene Perfors



In the majestic basilica of the ‘Sagrada Família’ in Barcelona, people instinctively lift their gaze upward. The towers rise like praying hands toward heaven, while soft streams of coloured light pour through the stained glass.

Everything in this building seems alive: stone that breathes, glass that sings. And yet, amid all its grandeur, it is the small details that touch the heart. Hidden among the pillars is a tiny bird’s nest, carefully carved by the architect Gaudí—as if he wanted to say: the sparrow and the swallow, too, belong to God. They, too, find a home near His altars.

That thought connects this place to the mystery of Christmas. The name of this church — ‘Holy Family’ — recalls that small house-

hold in Bethlehem. God did not come into a palace or a temple, but into a stable. No crown, but straw. No power, but tenderness. There, in the simplicity and wonder of a newborn child, heaven became tangible.

Christmas tells the story of a God who chooses nearness. He does not seek greatness, but smallness; not strength, but vulnerability; not the extraordinary, but the everyday. Wherever people hold one another, wherever love is shared, there He is born. The sparrow and the swallow from the psalm are symbols of that deep truth: every creature, no matter how small, finds safety with Him.

In a world often driven by speed, success, and spectacle, Christmas invites us to pause and no-

tice the small things. To see that true security is not found in power or possessions, but in love that gives itself away. In a glance of affection, a comforting hand, a child’s laughter — there God dwells.

Christmas calls each of us to become a ‘Sagrada Família’: a holy family, not necessarily by blood, but by heart. A living space where others feel welcome, where seekers find rest, where peace may be born.

For that is the promise of Christmas: that every person, like the sparrow at the altar, may find a home in God — a place of warmth, safety, and belonging. Not in the great, but in the small. And in that smallness, something of the everlasting light begins to shine.

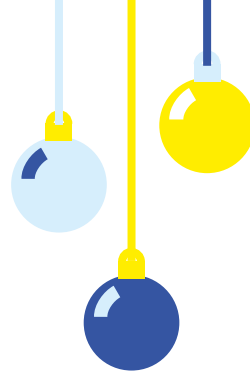


*Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young—
near Your altars,
Lord Almighty.
(Psalm 84)*

Amen.

Seamen's wives

A Kind of Freedom



by Stefan Francke

Recently I was in Vlissingen for the premiere of the film *“Seamen’s Wives – A Kind of Freedom.”* The film was made by journalist and documentary filmmaker Helge Prinse — herself the daughter of a seaman.



In it, three women, now in their eighties, tell their stories of living with men who were away at sea for months at a time. Their memories are interwoven with archive footage and personal film clips.

Their stories moved me deeply. They spoke of the freedom they had as seamen’s wives — the independence you develop when you simply must. But they also spoke of the emptiness that comes with that freedom: the quiet days, the long wait for an airmail letter, the voice of their husband crackling over the radio from Scheveningen. And the strange adjustment when he finally

came home — as if two worlds had to slowly fit together again.

They also spoke of the times they were allowed to sail along — a mix of boredom during the long voyage and the thrill of adventure, visiting faraway places in an era when holidays were anything but common. It made me think of my own mother, now 86, who once sailed with my father to Paris. Perhaps not as far as the journeys to other continents mentioned in the film, but for her, it was the opening of an entirely new world.

Though times have changed, the film still felt like a ‘celebra-

tion of recognition’. Today, fewer partners sail along, there is internet instead of airmail, *WhatsApp* instead of *Scheveningen Radio*. Yet the feeling remains the same. The days spent alone while your partner is at sea, the weight of responsibility, the rhythm of farewell and reunion — it’s a melody every seafaring family knows by heart.

Seamen’s wives learned to do everything on their own. Fixing the leaking tap, caring for a feverish child, celebrating holidays without a father at home. There was no choice — it simply had to be done. And yet,



there was pride in their voices. **Pride in their husbands, yes — but also in themselves.** In their resilience, their independence, their ability to turn waiting into something other than despair.

The sea was woven into everything — in the way they raised their children, in the gifts brought home, in the family finances. Sometimes there was as much money as the-

re were stories; other times, they had to save every penny. Exotic souvenirs appeared: strange smells and tastes, brightly colored fabrics. The children listened wide-eyed, while the mothers knew that behind every gift lay weeks of silence.

But the absence was felt especially at Christmas — those days that remind you most of who is missing.

I remember how often my own father couldn't make it home for Christmas after all. The ship had to call at one more port, or his replacement had “coincidentally” fallen through. Thankfully, there were always grandparents, aunts, and uncles to take us in. The women in the film speak gently of those quiet Christmases — as if they had learned that love doesn't shrink because of

distance but simply takes a different shape.

Longing instead of presence. Perhaps that's what Helge Prinse means by “a kind of freedom”: knowing that you can miss someone without the bond breaking. **That love doesn't only live in closeness, but in the trust that the other will return.**

And as a pastor, I can't help but think: isn't that what the Christmas story is about as well? Waiting, distance, and longing — hope being born in silence. About the son of God, far from home, yet close to us in our world.

Happily, “*Seamen's Wives – A Kind of Freedom*” will continue to be shown in various

cinemas and art houses — and hopefully, one day, on international television too. So that many more people can discover this remarkable way of life.



Lost in thought, he wanders through the streets of Strasbourg — walking with no destination, letting the city guide him past its houses, churches, canals, and market squares. His mind is on his crew.

He's the only Dutchman among an all-Romanian team, and the question keeps circling in his head: How on earth am I supposed to make a team out of this?

FORGIVENESS

At least, over the past few weeks on board, he's managed to build a bit of trust with the ship's engineer. From him, he's learned how things really work on board — and his suspicions were soon confirmed: Cristian, the second captain, plays a big role in it all.

He had already noticed something about Cristian during their early conversations. The man didn't like questions. He kept his distance, spoke quickly, and never quite clearly. Was it deliberate? It was a kind of aloofness he wasn't used to from fellow officers.

When Cristian went on leave, he noticed that the last three days in the logbook were left blank — Cristian's responsibility.

When a sailor needed to be disciplined, Cristian offered no support; when asked to stand behind his decision, he only yawned in reply.

And worse — Cristian had failed to inform him about the ship's ballast condition when several railings on the upper deck were damaged. Was it negligence, or something else? Every time he confronted him, Cristian denied responsibility. He had even said he wanted to transfer to another ship — but that transfer never came.

The office had promised a meeting to discuss things,

but when he wrote in his evaluation that communication with Cristian was well below standard, the silence from the office was deafening.



They're moored on a pontoon in Trier, waiting for new passengers. Together, they go over the departure plan. He prefers to turn above the red buoy, but Cristian insists it's better to turn below.

When the passengers finally come aboard, the voyage begins. Cristian has the watch. As the captain prepares for the welcome cocktail, a sudden shudder runs through the ship — they've hit the bottom. One of the main engines stops.

He throws on his uniform and rushes to the aft deck, now buried in the riverside bushes.

"Is this normal?" a passenger asks.

"No," he says dryly, "this is not normal."

The damage is done — there's no undoing it.

He walks to the bridge and asks if everything else is under control.

"I bounced off the bottom and ended up with the stern on the shore," Cristian says.

"Alright," he replies calmly, "contact the office."

Then he goes to the reception area, waiting to be called for his welcome speech.

What on earth is he supposed to tell the guests?

"Is everything alright?" asks the cruise director.

"We're still floating," he says with a faint smile.

After the cocktail, after the toasts and polite laughter, he returns to the bridge to take over the watch.

Cristian sits there, crushed — all arrogance gone. The captain feels a flicker of pity. This is the moment for peace. He realizes he, too, has made things hard.

"Cristian," he begins quietly, "we've clashed more than once, and I understand how you feel about me. I'm not an easy captain. I say things as they are, and when something's wrong, I show it. But I've never worked behind your back. The office has known since April that there's tension between us. It's been half a year now, and still no response. Apparently, they don't know how to deal with it. I think we should start over."

Cristian nods. "But things are already better between us." "That's true," he says, "but trust is something else. I still feel you're not telling me everything." Cristian stays silent — he knows he's right.

In Würzburg, the ship must be turned around to prepare for departure. There's hardly room to manoeuvre. Cristian refuses; he says he's never done it in all his years. The captain hasn't either — but now he must. The move demands total focus. There's no time for radio talk; Cristian handles the communication. And to everyone's surprise, the turn goes perfectly. Cristian watches in disbelief.

"That was better than anything I've ever seen," he says with a grin.

"Thank you," the captain replies.

For the first time, Cristian gives him a compliment — and he feels something lift.

The barriers to becoming a real team have finally fallen away.

He had waited, hoped, that Cristian would one day apologize for everything that happened.

It never came.

And yet — what else can he do, but forgive?

Merry Christmas



And then, in August 2025, it suddenly happened — a ruling from the *Netherlands Institute for Human Rights*: paying seafarers based on the cost of living in their home country constitutes unlawful discrimination.

by Stefan Francke

Justice HAS MANY SIDES

Two seafarers, one Indonesian and one Filipino, had filed a complaint, arguing that their lower salaries amounted to unequal treatment. The board agreed and urged Dutch shipowners to pay crew members of other nationalities the same wages as their Dutch colleagues. What's more, the decision implies that back pay may have to be issued retroactively.

This judgment marks a sharp break from the 1997 position, when the then *Equal Treatment Commission* ruled that wage agreements based on collective labor agreements from a seafarer's country of residence were permissible.

I'm no legal expert — we miss Jos Hilberding, who passed away last year — but it's clear that this decision could have major consequences for both Dutch shipowners and their crews. To understand more, I reached out to *Nautilus* and the *Royal Association*





of Netherlands Shipowners (KVNR). Interestingly, they seem to be on the same page in this case. Naturally, the union stands for equal treatment, yet no one benefits if Dutch shipping companies are pushed into bankruptcy.

From a sense of fairness, it's easy to draw a quick line: Of course, those Indonesian and Filipino seafarers deserve the same pay. Equal work, equal pay!

But at the same time, we can't ignore the fact that 100 euros stretches a lot further in Asia than it does in the Netherlands. And if a Filipino must be flown in from Manila at considerable cost, why would a company do that if they're required to pay the same salary as a European sailor?

The question is whether the Human Rights Board has applied the principle of "equality" correctly.

There's a real risk that Dutch shipowners — who generally maintain a decent standard in terms of working conditions and benefits — will respond by reflagging to cheaper countries. We all know what that means for the people on board.

This could end up being one of those cases where a small group of seafarers — and their lawyers — benefit enormously, while the rest lose out. And that, I must admit, doesn't sit comfortably with my sense of justice.

It reminds me of the famous (or infamous)

"Bosman ruling" in the football world. In 1995, the European Court decided that players could move between clubs without a transfer fee. That sounded good for the players — and it certainly was for the highly paid ones. But the youth academies suffered, and not every footballer benefited from the inflated salaries that followed. (And in my view, the game hasn't become any better for it.)

If there's something in the maritime world that needs improvement, the IMO and the ILO remain the best bodies to address it.

They represent the interests of the entire sector — shipowners and seafarers alike — not just those of one country or group. That's also how the *Maritime Labour Convention (MLC 2006)* came into being.

The foundation Equal Justice Equal Pay is now preparing to file a lawsuit. In the meantime, *Nautilus*, *KVNR*, and other stakeholders are in close talks with the minister.

We'll just have to wait and see.



Splashes

Tiny splashes of news featuring fresh headlines, eye-catching facts, and nautical oddities.

NAVIGATING CHANGE IN BARCELONA



The International Christian Maritime Association (ICMA) gathered in Barcelona, Spain, in early October for its World Conference themed "Navigating Change." Hosted by Stella Maris Barcelona, the event brought together more than 250 participants from over 40 countries — all part of Christian maritime welfare organizations dedicated to supporting seafarers, fishers, and their families.

Over three inspiring days, participants came together for sessions, worship, and fellowship. They shared stories, swapped ideas, and explored new ways to collaborate. Discussions covered a wide range of topics — from the MLC2006 and mental health, to women in maritime ministry, fishers' welfare, and the role of port welfare committees. Delegates also heard moving firsthand accounts from chaplains serving in places such as Ukraine, Panama, and Bahrain.

Barcelona proved to be the perfect setting for this global gathering — a city shaped by the sea, much like those in maritime ministry are shaped by their calling to serve the people who live and work upon it.

Tip!

CHRISTMAS VIDEO

The Dutch seafarer's centers have recorded a special Christmas video. This video will put you right away into the Christmas mood, perfect to be shown to the crew on Christmas Day. The video is created by port chaplain Leon Rasser.

Scan the QR code





CHRISTMAS PARTY





CHRISTMAS DINNER AT SEA





CHRISTMAS TREES AT SEA





Not Welcome in America - Astrid's Plant Inn

It's just before Christmas, and today my husband is leaving. I drive him to the ferry, suitcase in the trunk. We've had a few lovely days together on the Wadden Island where our caravan stands, but now his leave is really over. The ferry pulls away, it's raining cats and dogs, and as I drive back to the campsite alone, the windshield wipers wave wildly.

Inside the caravan it's quiet — too quiet, and I am struggling to find my rhythm. I do the dishes, two breakfast plates. I make some coffee. I accidentally let the kettle boil dry, and soon the whole place smells like scorched metal. To shake off the gloom, I call the hairdresser and book an appointment. Then I decide to tackle the laundry.

To reach the machine, I squeeze past the bicycles, shove in his clothes, and press start. Nothing. I check the door, the plug, the faucet, the hose, the power connection under the caravan — nothing. The washing machine,

faithful for four years, has decided it's done with me.

By now my husband is at Schiphol Airport, and through a video call we try to troubleshoot together. I lean awkwardly over the bikes so he can see what's happening, but the stubborn thing just sits there. Finally, when I unscrew and reattach the water hose ("No, turn the other way!"), the machine suddenly whirs to life, as if it had never meant to worry me. Typical.

To chase away the burnt smell, I light a scented candle. Then I hang the damp laundry on the little rack above the heater and start packing my bags. I can't stay here — the plants at home need me.

Because in our terraced house, there's a whole jungle waiting. Pots and cuttings everywhere: crowded together by the fireplace, balancing on cupboards and side tables. They're not even mine — they belong to the ship's crew. On board, they were cared for with love by

the Ukrainian engineer, who potted and repotted them in whatever containers he could find. The big ones came from the bridge; the succulents, easy-going as ever, lived in the control room. Each crew member had their own little plant to brighten up their cabin. On that ship, the phrase "green vessel" took on an entirely new meaning.

But the American authorities didn't see it that way. No greenery allowed on board when entering U.S. waters. No plants, no cuttings, no exceptions. No room at the Inn. So when the ship went off to lay power cables on the American seabed, every last leaf had to go.

To save the ship's garden from the trash, I offered them a new home. The heartbroken Ukrainian engineer packed them up carefully — plastic pots, white saucers underneath, neatly boxed and loaded into the car. From the port of Eemshaven they made their way to our house.

Now, a few weeks later, some are thriving — stretching happily toward the daylight they never used to see. Others can't handle the change and have withered



into little brown stumps. Still, all things considered, it's going surprisingly well. There's just one small problem: with all this greenery, there's no space left for a Christmas tree!

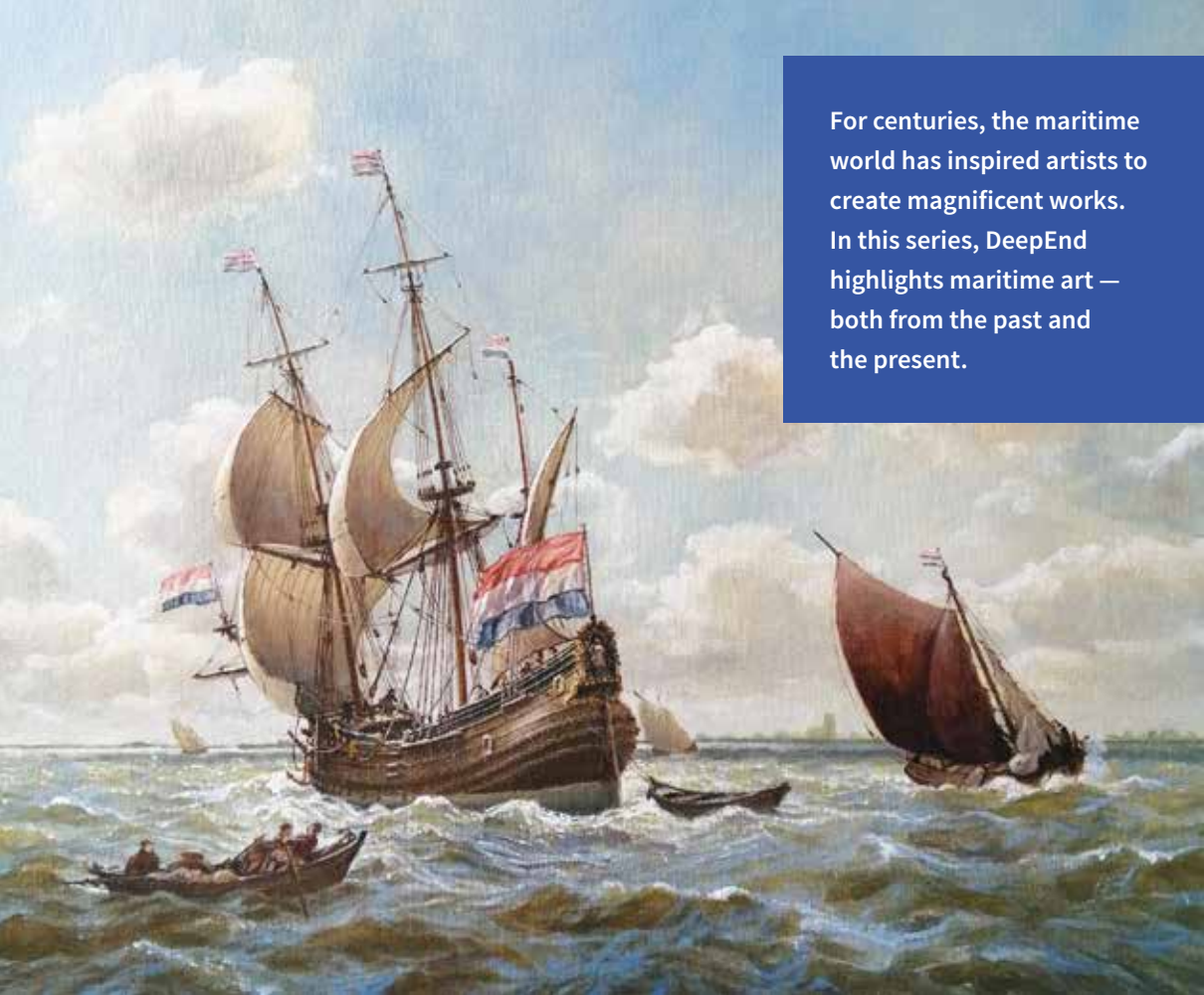
That's all right. When I get home with the dry laundry and our bags, I'll hang a wreath on the front door and light a candle. Let Christmas come.

Wishing you all a warm and peaceful holiday season, and all the best for 2026. Take care of each other, look out for one another, and make it cozy together.

Thanks for reading,

@strid





For centuries, the maritime world has inspired artists to create magnificent works. In this series, DeepEnd highlights maritime art — both from the past and the present.



“THE VIRTUOSIC PAINTING OF SEA AND SKY, THE REALISTIC DEPICTION OF PERSPECTIVE, THE CREATION OF DRAMATIC COMPOSITIONS, AND THE PRECISE RENDERING OF SHIPS — THE TALENTED PAINTER WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER IS REGARDED BY MANY AS THE MOST IMPORTANT MARINE ARTIST OF THE LATE 17TH CENTURY.”



MARITIME MASTER PAINTER

by Kees Heavylift

Arnold de Lange

This is the introduction you'll find on the website of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam when you search for the maritime painter *Van de Velde*. If you simply replace his name with *Arnold de Lange* (born 1968), the description would still be perfectly accurate. For Arnold — a professional welder by trade — is a highly skilled and passionate maritime painter who can easily hold his own alongside the two 17th-century masters, *Willem van de Velde the Elder and the Younger*. A visit to Arnold de Lange's extensive website is well worth your time.

I came across this artist purely by chance while looking for a maritime painter in my area. I actually had someone else in mind, but he turned out to live in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen — a bit too far for a one-day interview. But what a painter Arnold is! And what an incredible depth of knowledge he has about the subjects he paints. He has been drawing and painting all his life. Because maritime history is his great passion, his works almost always feature historically accurate seafaring scenes. The artist lives in Wormer, a perfect location for a maritime painter. His home looks out over meadows and waterways near 'het Zwet' — a landscape that clearly inspires his other works as well. His landscapes





couldn't be more quintessentially Dutch.

Just like the 17th-century masters *Van de Velde*, who prepared detailed studies before starting their paintings, Arnold also invests a great deal of effort before he even touches brush to canvas.

The *Van de Veldes* often gathered their knowledge firsthand at sea; Arnold, meanwhile, sketches out compositions in his mind while welding or fabricating metal. Then comes the research — poring over books, photographs, and online sources. He also visits maritime museums to study ship models in detail and consults ship blueprints or other archival materials. Once he has a clear vision of the scene he wants to depict, he makes several preliminary sketches. The result is that every block, sail, and line is painted realistically and positioned precisely where it belongs — as if he had witnessed the scene himself.


As I walked through his living room — which also serves as his gallery and studio — and admired the dozens of paintings on display, I realized that some of them looked familiar.

**“THAT’S POSSIBLE,”
ARNOLD EXPLAINED.
“MANY OF THESE
PAINTINGS HAVE BEEN
FEATURED IN BOOKS.**

For instance, this one — depicting the voyage of Willem Barentsz and his wintering in Het Behouden Huys. It was used as an illustration in a book about that expedition.” Indeed, I had read that very book. Before I knew it, it was time to head home.

I thanked Van de Velde — or rather, De Lange — took one last look at the beautiful paintings and left with a new and memorable experience.



A young boy with a surprised expression is in the foreground, wearing a red and white patterned sweater. He is on a ship deck at night, decorated with Christmas lights and garlands. In the background, a ship's bridge is visible, also decorated with lights. The scene is festive and captures a moment of wonder.

Every year around this time, little Kevin's house is attacked by two not-too-smart crooks. And every year, millions of people sit on the couch laughing at a kid who defends his 'home' with paint cans, falling irons and slimy stairs. It's Christmas.

HOME ALONE



On board we recognize the feeling, only fortunately mostly without crooks and much quieter. It sometimes feels like you must guard your house (ship). The engine room hums, it is quiet on the bridge, the sea is rippling, and in the vicinity no Christmas bells, at most the ringing of an insignificant alarm or the radar.

Christmas on board is a strange mix: you miss home, but you also get something special in return. No in-laws arguing about the menu, no traffic jam towards grandpa and grandma – but sometimes a starry sky that stretches from horizon to horizon. Any garden center is jealous of such Christmas lights.

But still, to be honest: sometimes Christmas at sea is a bit *Home Alone*. Alone or with a small group of colleagues, you try to make something of it with a plastic tree, some lights that are tangled up and maybe a DVD of Kevin on repeat. But where Kevin worries about burglars, on board you often have the biggest battle with failing internet and the lack of a hug from your loved ones.

I don't think Christmas is about full tables and crowded rooms. It's about the light that brings warmth, even in small things. In that joke of a colleague, that memory you reminisce together, an unexpected sharing of thoughts that makes you get to know someone better. And through which you realize that you are part of a larger story together, that you are not alone.

Kevin had quite an exciting Christmas. He learned to be creative, that you can handle more than you think and that some guts and humor can help you through difficult moments. And even when you're alone, there'll always be a light that gives hope and brings a smile. Maybe that's the Christmas spirit in a nutshell: that there is always hope, and that new opportunities will come. Even Macaulay Culkin, the actor who played Kevin, once ended up deep in the gutter – depressed and addicted. But he got back on his feet and is back again. Living proof that light can always come back, no matter how dark it seems.

So, wherever you are – ashore or on board – I wish you a Christmas with a bit of guts, a good dose of humor and above all: a light that brings warmth.



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NEED HELP?

ISWAN Free, confidential, multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families
available 24/7 | phone +44 20 7323 2737 | help@seafarerhelp.org

Splashes

Tiny splashes of news featuring fresh headlines, eye-catching facts, and nautical oddities.

CHRISTMAS AT SEA

With the holidays approaching, many seafarers are once again surprised with a Christmas package on board. From the traditional parcels provided by the **Christmas at Sea Committee**, to the cozy hand-knitted hats from **The Bridge Knitting Club**, and the cheerful goodie bags distributed together by the **Rotterdam seafarers' centres** — all meant to bring a little extra festive cheer to life at sea. This

year, the initiative was further supported by a generous donation from **Shurtz.nl**.

Especially at this time of year, seafarers — often thousands of miles from home — feel that they are not forgotten. A simple gesture that brings warmth, hope, and a sense of connection to places where family feels far away.





WISHING YOU A
BRIGHT CHRISTMAS

Veel licht toegewenst deze kerst