



Celebrating the Joy of Reading

International Book Giving Day, observed on February 14, is a celebration of sharing the gift of books and spreading the love of reading. The day encourages people of all ages to donate books to children, schools, libraries, or those in need, fostering literacy and imagination. By giving a book, you open doors to knowledge, adventure, and creativity, nurturing a lifelong habit of reading. This initiative also highlights the power of storytelling to connect communities and inspire minds. International Book Giving Day reminds us that a simple act of generosity can ignite a world of learning and curiosity.

#BLACK SAPOTE

Nature's Chocolate Pudding Fruit

The Aztecs regarded it as the 'fruit of strength,' believing it provided energy and endurance. It was commonly eaten fresh and appreciated as a nourishing food



Black sapote (Diospyros digna) is a tropical fruit native to Central America, admired for its unusual appearance and impressive nutritional value. Often called the "chocolate pudding fruit," black sapote looks plain on the outside but reveals a rich, chocolate-like flesh when ripe, despite containing no cocoa, no added sugar, and almost no fat. The fruit is round to oval in shape with a smooth green skin. Externally, it resembles a tomato or apple and gives little hint of its distinctive interior. When unripe, the flesh is pale and extremely bitter and astringent, making it unsuitable for consumption. As the fruit ripens, it softens dramatically and the flesh turns dark brown to nearly black, developing a creamy texture similar to chocolate pudding. Although its taste and texture resemble chocolate, black sapote is naturally sweet and

light. This makes it a popular choice for healthy desserts and plant-based recipes. The fruit is especially valued for its nutritional richness. It is high in dietary fiber, which supports digestion, and is an excellent source of vitamin C, contributing to immune health and skin vitality. In addition, it contains antioxidants that help protect the body from cellular damage. Black sapote has a long cultural history in Central America. The Aztecs regarded it as the 'fruit of strength,' believing it provided energy and endurance. It was commonly eaten fresh and appreciated as a nourishing food long before modern nutritional science confirmed its benefits. Today, black sapote is enjoyed fresh or used in smoothies, puddings, and desserts as a natural alternative to chocolate-based foods. Its ability to combine a rich, indulgent taste with health benefits makes it a unique and valuable fruit.



The Awakening Conscience

Have a look at her hand. Notice anything other than a slight agitation? She has got ring on every single finger except for the one that counts. A sort of "I am not married to this man" statement, as far as the symbolism goes and we have just scratched the surface because if you pan over to the right, you might have noticed something else.



© ArtsDot.com - William Holman Hunt - The Awakening Conscience



And he is definitely not her husband. How could you know that? For starters, this room is a bloody mess. And by carefully combing over every intention clues, that are spread across this painting, we reveal that she is probably his mistress.

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No, not what appears to be the disease-ridden hands of the perverted gentleman, but keep going a little more and on the music rack of the piano is an arrangement titled, "Oft in the still of night." A real song by a very real person, named Thomas Moore, who speaks of missed opportunities and a happier past life.

And did you notice the cat playing with the poor, helpless bird? I assure you the bird isn't having fun, and instead, it is a detail intentionally placed to suggest a few intriguing ideas. A life destined for a poor outcome? A detail to further enforce that this place doesn't feel homely? Or is he the predatory cat and she the helpless bird? Pinning down the wings so that she might never fly off? We have got a clock concealed in glass. The strings of an unfinished tapestry, scattered on the floor. Alfred Tennyson's "Tears, Idle Tears" disposed like a piece of garbage.

Remember the diseased hand? Well, it is not diseased, despite appearances but instead shielded by a glove. The same glove as this one that has been tossed to the floor, suggesting hasty intentions, but maybe, even suggesting a wasted purpose. It is not politely put away because nothing about this scene is polite to

begin with. And while this bumbling fool sings away a song about wasted life, we pull away and realize that she, but a moment ago, was singing. In fact, you can almost hear it. The final note that got away before she finally came to her senses. Because while we have spent this entire time uncovering at the highest degrees of probability, the nature of this relationship and who it is that we are observing, we haven't really considered what it is, that is in front of us, until right now.

The Awakening Conscience. The title of the painting by William Holman Hunt, and it is all the context we really need, because that is what is exactly going on inside her head. It is undeniable. She was just sitting in this man's lap. She was just singing this song, but the mirror in the background gives us a glimpse in her inner dialogue.

And as she realizes that her life isn't wasted, we too realize that it isn't either. There is a whole world out there and everything in this room can be forgotten. Something better is only a few steps away. And unlike this bird, who is trapped inside this room, this cat can't keep her down any longer.

In some ways, this painting is a companion to Hunt's Christian painting *The Light of the World*, a picture of Christ holding a lantern as he knocks on an overgrown handleless door which Hunt said represented "the obstinately shut mind." The young woman here could be responding to that image, her conscience pricked by something outside of herself. Hunt intended this image to be The Light of the World's material counterpart in a picture representing in actual life the manner in which the appeal of the spirit of heavenly love calls a soul to abandon a low life.

In Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Hunt wrote that Peggotty's search for Emily in David Copperfield had given him the idea for the composition and he began to visit 'different haunts of fallen girls' looking for a suitable setting. He did not plan to



recreate any particular scene from David Copperfield, and initially wanted to capture something more general: "the loving seeker of the fallen girl coming upon the object of his search." But he reconsidered, deciding that such a meeting would engender different emotions in the girl than the repentance he wanted to show. He eventually settled on the idea that the girl's companion could be singing a song that suddenly reminded her of her former life and thereby act as the unknowing catalyst for her epiphany.

The model for the woman was Annie Miller, who sat for many of the Pre-Raphaelites and to whom Hunt was engaged until 1858. The male figure may be based on Thomas Seddon or Augustus Egg, both painter friends of Hunt.

The look on the girl's face in the modern painting is not the look of pain and horror that viewers saw when the painting was first exhibited, and which shocked and repulsed many of the contemporary critics. The painting was commissioned by Thomas Fairbairn, a Manchester industrialist and patron of the Pre-Raphaelites, after Egg discussed Hunt's ideas and possibly showed him some of the initial sketches.

Fairbairn paid Hunt 350 guineas. The painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1864, along with The Light of the World. Fairbairn found himself unable to bear looking at the woman's expression day-to-day, so, persuaded Hunt to soften it.

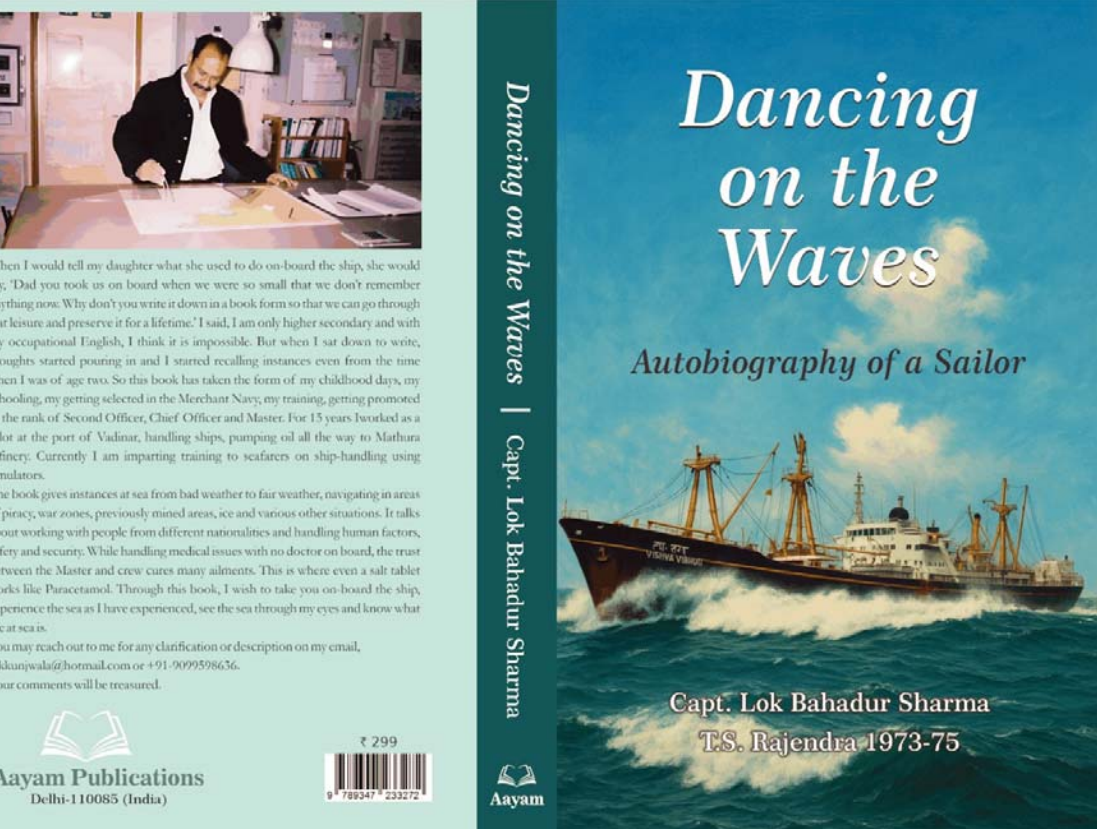
Hunt started work but fell ill and allowed the painting to be returned to Fairbairn for display at the Birmingham Society of Artists exhibition in 1856 before he was completely happy with the result. Later, he was able to work on it again and confided to Edward Lear that he thought he had 'materially bettered it'. As noted in the spandrels, Hunt retouched the painting in 1864 and again in 1886, when he repaired some work that had been carried out by a restorer in the interim.

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#DANCING ON THE WAVES

A Life Shaped by the Sea

The sea is neither exaggerated nor idealized. It is shown as majestic yet merciless, capable of rewarding respect and punishing carelessness



● Asif Ullah Khan

In *Dancing on the Waves*, Capt. Lok Bahadur Sharma offers readers a rare and intimate glimpse into the life of a sailor whose years at sea have shaped his character, discipline, and philosophy of life. The book stands as a thoughtful maritime memoir that blends personal experience with quiet reflection.

The narrative captures the sea in all its moods, serene, unforgiving, and endlessly commanding. Through vivid recollections of long voyages, changing skies, and restless waters, the author portrays the ocean not merely as a workplace but as a living presence that tests both skill and spirit. Calm horizons bring moments of peace, while storms demand courage, quick judgment, and unwavering



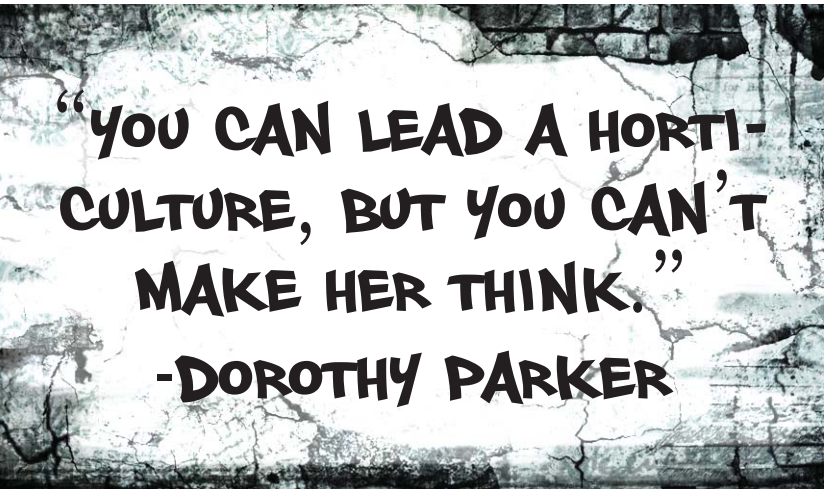
focus. What sets this book apart is its human focus. Rather than concentrating on technical details of navigation, the author emphasizes the emotional realities of life at sea. Loneliness during extended journeys, strong bonds among crew members, and the mental resilience

required to face uncertainty form the core of the narrative. These reflections make the book accessible to readers beyond maritime circles.

Capt. Sharma's writing carries a sense of honesty and restraint. The sea is neither exaggerated nor idealized. It is shown as majestic yet merciless, capable of rewarding respect and punishing carelessness. Each experience shared in the book reinforces the idea that a sailor's greatest lessons are learned not from calm waters but from adversity. Beyond adventure, *Dancing on the Waves* is also a story of personal growth. The author reflects on how life at sea teaches patience, leadership, and humility, values that remain relevant long after a voyage ends. The book quietly suggests that navigating the ocean is as much about understanding oneself as it is about steering a ship.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman