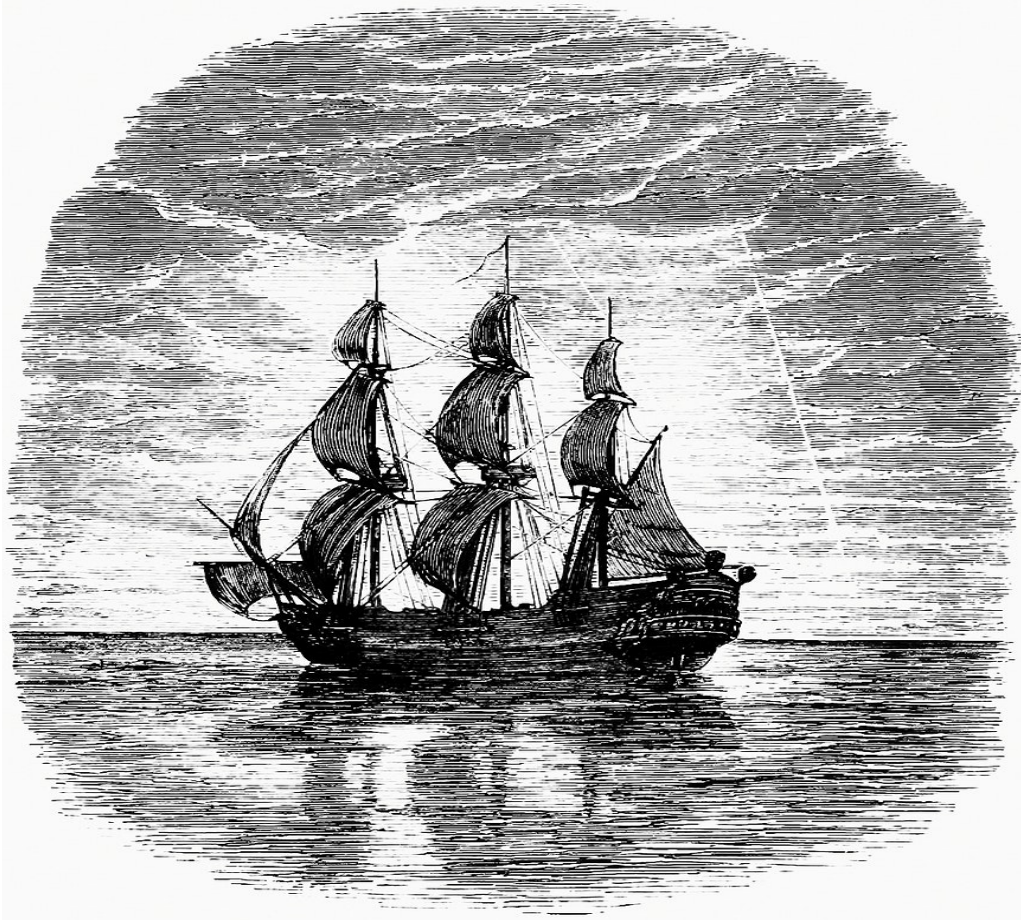


## Spassky At A Safe Distance, Issue 5

### 1: Introduction

### 2: Spassky's Senior Speculation

### 3: Story + Bonus



1

This one's a bit of a courtesy to my good friend, the writer of "A Cosmic Disagreement" – included in the latest Kzine.

He told me he had another story – of the same theme – that he wanted to get into people's eyeballs, but had no good way of doing it, so here I am, consumed by my unending magnanimity, putting it into yours, so that he'll stop pestering me over it. (You owe me one!)

2

### The King of Every Tin

It was the greatest invention since sharp edges: The Expeditor.

It was a whistle-blow away from unfurling its sails, a stiff wind from divorcing the harbour, an odyssey over untouched waters distant from That Piece of Land In That Foaming Blue Death That We Would Very Much Like To Explore.

The Tin-Folk, all eighty-three of them, had gathered to see The Expeditor off – though not so much witnessing the writing of history as witnessing who wrote it... The Tin-King wanted every Tin-soul to see that it was he, punctured with every medal the royal treasury had funds to bestow, who was the most skilful in all things, who was the greatest Tin-Person to have

clinked, clanked or clonked, that he who would be the first to venture to That Piece of Land In That Foaming Blue Death That We Would Very Much Like To Explore, and conquer it!

He sat on his throne in the Captain's Quarters of the ship. They had already made it out of the harbour, commencing what the Chief Calculation of Distances predicted to be a three day journey.

Tin-King's chef came into His Quarters, and put a dish of frothing Coals-In-a-Waterbed in front of him.

"It needs oil." Tin-King said, "And by the sounds you're making, I'd prescribe some for you, too."

The Chef, sure he had balanced the oily-ness perfectly, said. "Your highness, perhaps you should have another taste?"

"Are you questioning my culinary expertise, chef? You should know that I surpass any man's skill in any thing! That includes culinary matters, you see."

"To be sure?" the chef said, "What is a Rhumary Tertyloine, then?"

Tin-King did not know. It was plain that the chef knew more about culinary things than himself. But Tin-King could not accept this, for he was meant to surpass any man's skill in any thing!

Tin-King called at once for his guards to throw the chef overboard, so that Tin-King would thereafter be recognised as most knowledgeable in all culinary matters.

Dinner-time came; the crew was hungry, but could – after the chef's unfortunate departure – no longer eat. It was decided among them that the helmsman – doubling as Tin-King's Chief Advisor of Things – should try to negotiate with the captain to turn the ship back and rescue the chef.

"That is impossible," Tin-King said after the case was made, "I surpass any man's skill in any thing, and know that turning ships around is impossible!"

To prove Tin-King wrong, the helmsman turned the ship around, whereupon Tin-King realised the helmsman knew more about ships than himself, and the only way to know the most about ships would be for the helmsman to be thrown overboard. So he was.

The ship stood still, for nobody knew how to move it, and were too hungry to do anything but dream of food.

When the Tin-King walked about the ship and saw so many doing nothing, he was struck with the realisation that they were even better at doing nothing than himself – despite a lifetime of training. He called for the guards to throw everyone overboard, including themselves – for he now realised they were better at throwing people overboard than himself.

Tin-King enjoyed a time of being the best at everything, now that he was alone. But as soon as the Seamen were thrown overboard, there was nobody to maintain the ship.

By and by, water breached the hull, and The Expeditor sank.

The Tin-people at the harbour were surprised to find that, only a day after The Expeditor had sailed off, the entire crew had floated ashore – save for Tin-king. They were fed with the finest oil and coals, and asked how they all survived.

“We learned to swim before we stepped on board,” they said, curiously uncinious, “knowing we weren’t any good at it. And then, unlike poor Tin-King, we didn’t wear such heavy medals!”

After that tragedy the Tin-Folk decided to never challenge the sea again, and to never think at all highly of themselves, to avoid fates like poor Tin-King’s. We see them today in toy-shops, as Tin-soldiers, and other characters, as a people without hubris – inanimate.

3

Short Story of the Week: [The Brave Little Tailor \(The Brothers Grimm, 1812\)](#)

Bonus: [Over 900 Episodes of One the Weirder 40s Radio Shows I've Found. They're Fun. I Promise!](#)