

Dead Reckoning

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*Dead reckoning, all that's left to me now is dead reckoning
Though I've mastered the seas
And the fresh living breeze,
All that's left to me now is dead reckoning.*

I was fifteen when first I went off to sea,
And in forty-one years under sail,
I've seen losses and crises and tragedies,
And a way of life falter and fail.

(Chorus)

I sailed once round the world as a deckhand,
I sailed twice round the world as first mate,
And for thirty-odd years I've been Master here,
Of my crew and my ship and my fate.

(Chorus)

I've seen crewmen who fell from the main yard arm,
Stiff and numb from the sleet and the cold,
I've seen crewmen who died from the poisoning
Of some venomous booze they'd been sold.

(Chorus)

I met a crewman of mine by the railway bridge,
In his new bosun's jacket so fine,
And he signed me aboard of this smoking hulk
To sail round the world one last time

(Chorus)

Now I'm polishing brasses and sweeping dust,
On a steamer that goes where it will,
And instead of Cape Horn we've got Panama,
So who needs an old sea captain's skill?

(Chorus)

And instead of white canvas above us now,
There's a plume of black smoke to be seen
How I wish I had died with the men I knew,
While the sky and the seas were still clean

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