

The Cargo



Point, Portsmouth by Alick D Summers

It was dusk. The gulls screeched as the wind jabbed the lone sailor ruthlessly around the ears whilst he rowed towards the Point on Spice Island. The man cautiously glanced over his right shoulder at the mysterious box of cargo that he alone was moving to a secret location. Burning questions plagued his mind. He knew he shouldn't even think about why he, an Able Seaman, randomly selected out of hundreds of others, was here. Intently, he peered at the curious cargo in the hull near the stern.

The sailor rolled his shoulders abruptly and sat on the bow, lightly tugging the oar. He knew the cramped boat had a working engine, but he wasn't permitted to use it after dark. Looking around to make sure that he was alone on the white waves he slowly started to relax. A full moon and a thousand stars scattered the sky, with one star, Canopus, easily outshining the others.

Thoughts of home crossed his mind. His father taking him fishing by the Hot Walls, sitting for hours peacefully, catching nothing but smelly clumps of green and brown seaweed. Neither of them had minded. He remembered the cakes that his mum had made, haphazardly dusted with an

excessive amount of icing sugar. And the fisherman who came to his school, who had drawn maps of the Solent and explained the rocks between the Isle of Wight and Spice Island. A smile, that hadn't been witnessed for a while, broke into a cheesy grin, reflecting an air of contentment.

Suddenly, there was an odd sizzling noise, like bacon hitting a saucepan. A curly wisp of steam hazily rose higher into the sky, coming from the box of cargo. Unsure what to do, the sailor contemplated it for a while, and then ignored it. However, curiosity overcame him. Carefully, the man prised the wooden box open with a knife, and was shocked at what he saw. Instantaneously he paddled like he wouldn't see tomorrow if he didn't get to the rendezvous. For the first time in months spent at sea on the cruiser, the sailor felt proud of his blue and white uniform. He caught sight of his final destination. It appeared quite small from a distance, however the sailor could trace the lines of this city in his sleep. The tall compact buildings had no lights in the windows, that were reassuringly covered with black blinds in case of air-raids. It seemed quieter than before, even from afar. Although the atmosphere was cold and the current was stronger, the boat sped up.

Now he knew why he had been selected to go ashore. It occurred to him that every messily folded piece of paper in that bowl must have had his name on it. The sailor, man, father, son, knew that this wasn't coincidence. A faint light blinked from the shoreline and his excitement grew as his mission drew to a close. **Written by Iona Perkins, 12 years old**