

The wind blew from the west gaining strength with every gust. We struggled against its apparent desire to dash our fragile craft against the jagged rocks growing ever closer. Every sinew stretched to its utmost attempting to pull against the relentless incoming tide and push of the wind but we were fighting a losing battle.

That afternoon had been so different. We enjoyed our meal on deck as our boat was rocked by the gentle waves. We were wafted along in the warm zephyr breeze but then the skies started to darken as this sweet wind collided with its cold easterly neighbour. Our earlier pleasure was replaced with fear as we fought to beat our boat against the wind but to no avail. We raced along driven by the developing storm so we lowered our sails and lashed them to the masts to try and slow our passage through the waves that grew in tempo with the rising wind. We lost all control. As the wind gained strength it brought with it rain which lashed our bodies and soaked our clothes. Fingers became numb with cold and could hardly grasp the ropes. Only the cresting waves with their white heads crashing against the rocks relieved the greyness that surrounded us, grey sea joining grey sky seamlessly.

Did we imagine the speck of yellow to our left. No there it was again, a regular flicker of colour against this monochrome world. The lighthouse. We only had to hold on a little longer, work a little harder and we would clear the rocks and reach safe harbour. Lifted spirits lent strength to our aching limbs as we pulled and pushed to turn our craft. We were so near now, we were saved. We all let out a cheer and at that moment there was a sickening tearing of wooden timbers. We were run aground on the very rocks we had tried so hard to escape. How could this be? Then we saw another flickering yellow light a mile or so down the coast. That was the true lighthouse. We had been tricked by a lantern on the summit of the rocky nearby cliff. The wreckers were at work that night. Our poor little boat didn't stand a chance. Each wave pushed it harder against the unrelenting rock. Water poured in, cargo poured out. It was every man for himself. Those that hadn't already been washed overboard tried to jump onto the rocks themselves, but even though they crossed the gap they had little chance as the waves overpowered them and dragged them back into the depths. A few of us waited for the highest waves. We jumped, slipping and sliding on the greasy rocks we found hand and footholds and held on for dear life. As the waves slid down we climbed up until eventually our shredded hands grabbed tufts of grass instead of shards of stone. Exhausted we pulled ourselves up and over onto the top of the cliff. It took some time to regain strength and breath but when we were able to eventually sit up and view the scene all we saw was devastation. Splintered timbers bedecked the rocks, only our figurehead gave any indication that a ship had passed this way.