

PM

Life in London in 1852 was hard for a poor boy like Joseph. When Joseph accidentally found himself on board a ship travelling to a distant port, things became even worse for him. But what happened on that voyage would change his life forever.



Narrative

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The Stowaway

Story by Jill McDougall

Illustrations by Wendy Tan Shiau Wei

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Chapter 1

On the Dock



Liverpool, England, 1852

“Get your chestnuts here!” Joseph sang out. “Lovely chestnuts!”

The passengers standing on the Liverpool dock hardly glanced at Joseph. They were busy with their luggage as they prepared to board the sailing ship *Charlotte Jane*. When the tide rose, the great ship would set sail on the four-month voyage to the distant country of Australia.

Joseph smiled sadly to himself. He had not sold a bag of chestnuts all day. But then, he wasn't surprised. The passengers were rich people in fine clothes and Joseph was a twelve-year-old boy in rags.



Nearby, a group of men were speaking in excited voices. It seemed they were off to the goldfields in Australia. One of them, a burly man with fists the size of rocks, noticed Joseph. He strode across the dock towards him.

"Where are you going, Crusher?" called one of the men.

The man they called Crusher didn't answer. His glass-green eyes were fixed on Joseph. "I've hardly got a penny for when I land in the colony," he hissed. "Give me all the money you have, boy."

"Y-yes, sir," stammered Joseph. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his money bag.

"Good lad," said Crusher.

Joseph watched the man lumber up the gangway and onto the ship.

Whew! At least Joseph wouldn't be around when Crusher opened the bag! Crusher would discover nothing inside it except a few spare chestnuts.





Just then, a woman in a green dress hurried towards Joseph. Her arms were full of parcels. A small, pale-faced boy clung to her skirts. "I'm Mrs McNab," the woman told Joseph. "I'm a passenger on the *Charlotte Jane*."

"And I'm Malcolm McNab," said the little boy in a serious voice.

Joseph smiled at Malcolm and tipped his cap. "Pleased to meet you, Master McNab," he said.

Mrs McNab pointed to some luggage on the dock. "I wonder if you would carry my cabin trunk on board?" she said. "The porters are busy. I'll gladly pay you."

Joseph smiled. "Pleased to be of service, ma'am," he said. He took hold of the woman's trunk and followed her and the boy up the gangway.

