



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The September Storm

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Once upon a time, there was a broad river that flowed into the ocean, and next to it was a small town. In that town was a wharf where large ships from distant lands were moored. A narrow and steep road led to the wharf, and anyone who wanted to go to the wharf had to go through that road. And because ships had been coming for many years and all sailors, captains, and other men had to pass through that narrow road, the pavement was very worn.

Once, more than a hundred years ago, a ship sailed up the river. It had sailed all the way to India and China and always brought back beautiful fabrics, porcelain dishes, beautifully lacquered tables, trays, wood, tea, and spices.

Captain Solomon and all the sailors were very happy to be back from those distant lands. They had been away for more than a year and had not seen their families during that time. So they tied the ship to the wharf with big ropes and went away as fast as they could. Some went to their families, others went to the Sailor's House. But Captain Solomon went to the office of Captain Jonathan and Captain Jacob, who were the owners of the shipping company.

Captain Jonathan and Captain Jacob shook his hand and sent him home to see his wife and baby. Because Captain Solomon had only been married for four months when he went on his trip. The baby was born while he was away, so he had not seen him yet. That baby was named Little Sol, and some ship stories also tell about him. Captain Solomon was very happy to see his wife and baby.

Meanwhile, the mate and his men removed all the things they had brought from distant lands from the ship. They brought the things with small trucks to the building where Captain Jonathan and Captain Jacob had their office. In the room where they piled up the boxes, it smelled strange of spices and tea. When all the things were taken off the ship, it was floating very high in the water. The railing now came high above the wharf. Captain Jonathan and Captain Jacob came out of their office to talk to the mate. The mate said the ship was completely empty; he was proud that he had done so much work with his sailors in such a short time.

Captain Jonathan praised the mate for being so quick. But Captain Jacob said nothing, because he was looking at the sky. The mate saw it and looked up too. "Looks like we have a breeze," he said, as small white cumulus clouds floated in

from the southwest and covered the sky like a thin veil.

Captain Jacob nodded. "It's more than a breeze," he said. Captain Jacob was a real captain who knew everything about the weather. "I tied the ship to the wharf with double ropes," said the mate.

Captain Jacob nodded again. "That's a good thing." And they wished each other good night and went home.

That night, Captain Jacob heard the wind howling around the house while he played chess with his wife. Captain Jacob listened to the wind and forgot the chess game he was playing, so he lost. That made Captain Jacob angry because he was actually better at chess than his wife. Captain Jacob got so angry that he put away the chess pieces and went to bed. But he didn't sleep very well; the wind was howling so loudly.

Early in the morning, Captain Jacob got up. He had been awake for a while, listening to the sound of the rain against the windows and the howling and screaming of the wind. He was worried about the ship and knew all too well what could happen to ships along the coast during a storm. After the storm, there would be many wrecks. They couldn't read in a morning newspaper what had happened far away that night. The news was told or sent by boat. So Captain Jacob became more and more worried until he couldn't stand it any longer.

He quickly got dressed, pulled his hat down over his head, lit a lantern, and walked to the quay. It was difficult to walk because the wind was so strong that he was almost lifted off the ground and carried away. Sometimes he had to hold onto the railing to keep from being blown away, and he could barely cross the street. A chimney even blew off a roof.



When he arrived at the quay, he was surprised to see how high the ship was, even though it wasn't yet high tide. Finally, he reached the edge of the quay, held his lantern in front of him, and looked at the water. The high water was only about a meter below the quay because the wind blew the water straight from the ocean into the river.

Captain Jacob looked at the water for a moment. "Hello!" he shouted. But no one could hear him, the noise of the wind and the waves crashing against the quay was too loud. He listened again, and he thought he heard a sound as if someone was on the ship. So he climbed up the side and saw the helmsman. Captain Jacob stood next to the helmsman. "What are you trying to do?" he shouted as loud as he could.

"What did you say?" the helmsman shouted back as loud as he could.

"What - are you trying - to do?" Captain Jacob shouted again. The wind played a tune on every rope of the ship and also sang a song, so the noise on the deck was frightening.

"I'm trying to pull up an anchor," the helmsman shouted, holding his hands like a trumpet to his mouth. "The quay will be under water when the tide rises. I'm afraid the ship will capsize."

"You can't do it alone," Captain Jacob shouted.

"I'll get some men!" the helmsman shouted.

But the helmsman didn't have to go far because men were already on their way. They lowered the largest boat they had into the water and managed to hold the boat steady while Captain Jacob and the helmsman lowered the anchor into the water. The anchor was so heavy that it almost sank the boat. Then all the men rowed very hard, and the boat moved slowly forward, but they couldn't get far because the wind was so strong and the waves so high. When they had gone as far as they could, they managed to heave the anchor overboard. It went into the water with a tremendous splash and made all the men wet, but that didn't matter. The boat turned around. But the men didn't try to row back to the ship. The wind blew them up the river, so they came three or four yards further up the coast.

Captain Jacob and the first mate worked hard to haul in part of the anchor chain. Together with the crew, they managed to anchor the ship in the midst of the storm and rain. Once Captain Jacob was back on shore, he called and waved to the men, then carefully walked with them to the office. As soon as they were inside, they began to remove all the items from the main room. The captain feared that the water would rise so high that the room would be submerged, and all the fine things would be ruined. By the time the water seeped in, they had just managed to move everything to higher ground.

They all stood in the water and watched as small and large boats were swept away by the wind and waves, and several fishing huts were swallowed up by the water.

"The wind will die down when the tide turns," the first mate said.

Captain Jacob nodded and looked at the ship. "She should have a longer anchor chain," he said worriedly. "There's a lot of tension on the chain."



"If one man were to go to her," the first mate began slowly.

"No way!" said Captain Jacob.

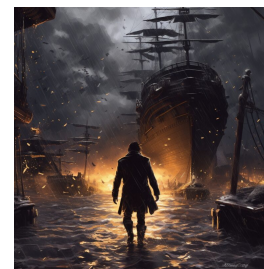
As he spoke, the bow of the ship lifted up and a dull sound was heard. Then the ship began to drift. The anchor chain had broken. For a moment, the ship was still tied to the dock, but then the ropes also broke.

"Well," said Captain Jacob, "I wonder what will happen next. There's nothing more we can do."

They watched as the ship drifted towards the dock. Captain Jonathan, who had just come out of the office, saw the ship drifting towards land. Exactly there was a dock to lift ships out of the water. So Captain Jonathan and two other men, who were part of the railroad crew, lowered the dock and tried to catch the ship. It didn't fit exactly, as it was overturned by the wind, but the captain thought it would be all right once the tide turned. When the tide turned, the wind also died down. The men quickly rowed around in boats to retrieve anything still usable from the sea.

Within a few hours, Captain Jonathan, Captain Jacob, the first mate, and all the men had the ship afloat again and brought it back to its dock. There was no major damage, just some scratches and bumps, and the anchor was at the bottom of the river. After this long night of hard work, everyone went home to eat. On the way, they saw the damage the storm had caused: chimneys knocked over and trees snapped in half. They also heard that an old woman had been picked up by the wind and carried away.

They called this hard wind the Great September Storm because it happened in early September. That is the time of year when such strong winds usually blow. People talked about it for a long time. It was the worst storm in twenty years.



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