Warship Poseidon
Book 1 of the Adventures of Jonathan Moore series

Sample of Chapter 1
Life on Brick Street

Twelve-year-old Jonathan Moore lived in a three-sided wooden box at the end of a dark and filthy alley. It was situated within a heap of broken boards, split barrels, and rotted wood crates. All he had to his name was the clothes on his back and a tattered old horse blanket he had earned one day by working odd jobs at a local stable. Usually dirty, smelly, and chilled to the bone, he never knew when he would have his next meal. Jonathan spent most of his days searching for food, repairing damages to his box, and trying to stay out of the inhospitable weather.

As Jonathan and all the other poor souls that had no home or money were well aware, living in London in the year 1800 was a dangerous existence. It seemed that most of the days and nights were subject to howling wind and ever-present rain. In the winter, the snow and icy temperatures were more than uncomfortable: the cold could even kill. Clean water, simple water, was difficult to come by. Many were forced to drink from contaminated sources and caught cholera. Jonathan had seen people die from the disease, and it frightened him very much. At night, there were rats almost everywhere, and other more dangerous animals on the streets: dark and scary men, some roaming the cobblestone in gangs, loud and boisterous, committing crimes of the most terrible sort. There was drinking, stealing, fighting, and sometimes … even murder.

Living on the streets was hard enough for a grown man. Still, to Jonathan, a mere child, it was nearly impossible and always uncomfortable and wretched. Many boys did not survive.

Now, to children that lived in homes in the better parts of town, life was wonderful. Inside, kitchens buzzed with activities that produced scrumptious beef and chicken pies, and breads that filled the air with sweet aromas. There were sugar cookies and sometimes, even a cherry tart or two. Children played parlor games, ran races in the parks, and had stories read to them out of big, mysterious books. Birthdays and special occasions always meant there would be parties and presents. And each night, there were warm fireplaces and soft music that lulled little ones to sleep in their comfortable beds, surrounded by puffy pillows and soft blankets.

Quite differently, Jonathan Moore spent most of his days sitting silently in his miserable, gloomy box. He would often look down the length of his alleyway, out past the street into a second-floor window of a quaint old house. The outside was nothing special, it being like most of the homes he saw in the neighborhood. However, it was special on the inside. If he were lucky, Jonathan would sometimes see a father walking down a hallway, carrying a little boy. He would watch intently as the man would place the boy in a small highchair and lovingly feed him porridge and milk.

Watching this made Jonathan remember that at one time, he, too, had a father and a mother and a house to live in, with a fireplace and, yes, even his own bed in his own room. It had been warm and dry, and there was always something to eat. Most especially, he knew that his mother and father loved him because they told him so every night as they tucked him into bed. However, they were both gone now, and there was no one to care for him. He had become a street urchin, a boy like many others who lived in the gutters and the alleys, just trying to make it through another day.

It was not the cold, wet rain, or the alley's foul smell, or even the difficult life he led that dampened his spirits. It was the simple fact that Jonathan vaguely recalled better days as part of a family, and that memory made his current situation almost unbearable. He missed his mother and father greatly, and each day he wondered about all that had happened in the last few years. Sometimes, the sadness seemed to surround him, like a bitter, dark cloud, and it weighed heavily upon his heart.

Following another night spent shivering from the awful chill, Jonathan awoke cold and stiff, as he no

longer fit entirely inside the box. He seemed to be healthy and growing like a weed despite his meager nourishment. By keeping his manners sharp, his words clear and precise, and his tone always gracious and respectful, Jonathan was often able to find some kind of work. And work meant a few shillings, and shillings meant a meal. Many times, he earned just a single meal a day, but that is all he seemed to need.

Sitting up, Jonathan looked outside of his box to notice that once again, the morning brought no relief from the night's cold. It had been raining most ferociously; only just letting up as the sun rose somewhere above the dark gray clouds that covered the city. Water still poured off the rooftops of the buildings that made up the alley. It seemed to Jonathan that most of the water fell upon his box and somehow found its way inside to drop on his woolen cap, soaking it thoroughly.

This will turn out to be another fine day! Jonathan said to himself. I will probably catch a cold by noon. But at least it's quiet, and no one will bother me. Even evil men stay inside when it rains.

Today he was to work for a chimney sweep, along with his best friend, Sean Flagon. The boys had met on the streets of London and formed a fast friendship, being of similar age and disposition. Together, they would devise ways to work on the farms near the outskirts of town or in local businesses. No matter what the situation, Sean always had a cheery attitude, and the two boys made a successful go of it as a frequent team. After a short while, they became deep friends and cared for each other like the closest of brothers.

Once inside an old, dreary London pub, the boys had done a hard morning's work on the sizeable stone-stacked chimney. As Sean cleaned the flue, Jonathan's role was to collect the black soot in a canvas bag, careful to keep the dust from spreading.

"Are you finished yet, Sean?" Jonathan asked, looking up the flue.

"Almost!" came the reply, along with a stream of black soot rushing downward from somewhere high in the chimney, dousing Jonathan in a cloud of coal-colored dust.

"You had better watch it, Jonny Boy," said Sean from somewhere above. "I'll be sending the last of this black stuff your way."

"Thank you for the timely warning," Jonathan said as he coughed and tried wiping the dirt from his face as best as he could.

"Don't mention it," replied Sean as he continued working, sending ash downward.

Jonathan tried to sweep the dust into the bag and contain the spread of dirt. This pub on Ayliff Street was too dark and dirty to begin with, he thought. A little dust would not be noticed as there were only two other people in the house besides Sean and himself. However, there was considerably more than just a little dust in the bag.

The chimney sweep had agreed to use the boys as assistants, though did no work himself. He decided to take his payment early at the bar and was now resting comfortably, slumped over and snoring. Jonathan and Sean had reached an agreement with the pub owner directly to do the sweeping and cleanup for one sandwich each. A meal like that would be most welcome to both boys as neither had eaten more than crumbs and crust for several days. Being orphaned and homeless and living literally on the streets of London meant that the frequency of meals was anything but frequent.

"Done!" came the call from the flue, and shortly Sean Flagon appeared in the firebox, covered in blackness but smiling widely. He dusted himself off as best he could; however, that only caused the dark cloud of dust to grow and drift as Jonathan tried to contain the storm.

"I am as hungry as I can ever remember, Jonny Boy," said Sean.

"I am as well," agreed Jonathan. "I can't remember when we ate last, but I am sure it was less than filling. The sooner you help me tidy this up, the sooner we eat."

Sean smiled and immediately began scooping soot and debris from the fireplace with his cupped hands, adding to the collection in the bag.

"Are ya little urchins finished?" came a deep voice. It was the proprietor of the pub.

"Yes, sir," said Jonathan as the man approached them from behind the bar.

"Oh. Well then, I believe yer employer said ya were to be paid out of his share," the man said, "so he will take care of ya when he wakes, I'd gather."

Jonathan watched the shift in the man's eyes and knew immediately that he was attempting to cheat

them. He had seen that expression before from unscrupulous employers when it came time to receive his pay.

Jonathan and Sean now looked suspiciously at the pub owner and tried to think a step ahead. They needed food desperately, as it had been a long stretch without. Waiting to discuss the matter of payment with the drunken chimney sweep would probably yield no fruit whatsoever.

"Begging your pardon, sir," said Jonathan graciously. "Though we were hired by the sweep, we made our agreement with you personally, as you must recall. A sandwich and a glass of milk each."

"Aye, it was," added Sean, now growing wary.

"That's not 'ow I remember it," said the man, growing angry. "Ya little brats best be off—and 'ope your friend 'ere doesn't drink yer share and forget to pay ya now!"

Jonathan saw that Sean. Appeared to be shocked and about to burst into anger or tears; it was hard to tell which. The afternoon's work was now wasted: no pay, no food—just a bag of ashes for their trouble. And that gave Jonathan an idea.

"You will not cheat us, sir," he said as he handed the bag to Sean.

"Why you lit'l—"

"—and it would be a shame if my associate here would have to run about this shop and empty the contents of his bag… all over your establishment, yes? I can tell you, sir, that he is a difficult one to catch."

Sean now smiled and opened the bag a peek, then tilted it slightly to one side. A thin stream of soot poured out, streaming down to the stone floor and creating a cloud of dust that was surprisingly large.

"Oops!" he said. "I spilled a wee bit! What a mess it made!"

The pub keeper relented.

Jonathan was quickly shown to the kitchen, where the cook made him the promised sandwiches—just cheese, but enough of it—and produced two glasses of thin milk. Sean stayed in the pub, holding the bag of soot as insurance.

When Jonathan returned, they hastily drank the milk, a rarity to be sure. They then walked out the back door, carrying the brushes and poles used to clean the flue, along with the bag of soot. They sat down quietly on the stoop to enjoy their well-earned rewards.

"It's still raining, but just a drizzle," said Sean, looking up to the gray sky.

"I don't think it ever stopped," added Jonathan. "It's a wonder we aren't flooded out to sea."

"Aye! Jonny! That reminds me! I heard that ships are due at the docks. Cargo ships coming—a lot of them!" said Sean.

"I love going to the docks," said Jonathan between bites. "The ships are wonderful, aren't they? And maybe we can find a little work as well!"

"I need to ask around and see when they are coming in," said Sean, rising from the stoop with his sandwich in his hand. "I'll let ya know. Hopefully, tomorrow, eh?"

"Thanks, Sean. Until tomorrow, then."

With that, Sean disappeared around the corner, leaving Jonathan to his sandwich. He ate silently and hurriedly, thinking about the London docks and the beautiful ships that were always present. If they were lucky, they might see a few warships with handsome white sails and tall masts. Jonathan wondered what it would be like to live on one. It had to provide some sort of adventure to the men aboard. However, in his position as a poor, orphaned boy, this was only a dream. Chances were extremely slight that he could ever sail on a ship of any kind. His adventure would come from his quest for survival. And maybe it was true what Sean had said to him about the ships and the British Navy: "It's no life for anybody. Working on a ship is like being a slave, and that is a terrible existence, toiling all day and all night with no food or sleep!"

I will never know, thought Jonathan, and he returned to his meager meal.

As he took another bite of his sandwich, he heard strange laughter from the alley beyond. It was not the kind of laughter made when people were enjoying themselves, but the sneering type as heard when bullies were about. Jonathan had heard it before. Unfortunately, he had often been on the losing end of bullying when he first landed on the streets. They would take clothes, food, and even the small trinkets he

carried. After several years, though, he had become bolder and had recently put a few bullies in their places. It was never his intention to start a fight; however, if he was forced to be in one, he would leverage whatever advantage he could. Physically, Jonathan was of average height for his age—and average weight as well. This offered no benefit when dealing with older bullies. His mind was his greatest asset and coupled with his superior speed, the result was—surprise.

He put the remainder of his sandwich unceremoniously into the pocket of his thin jacket and then rose and peered around the corner. There, as he had feared, he saw Sean on the ground, surrounded by three older boys, appearing to be a few years older than Jonathan. He had seen this particular group roaming the streets the past week. It was known that they were recent additions to the area—homeless for sure, and still a bit new to the game, as he and Sean called it.

"I said give me the sandwich, ya pig!" said a dark-haired boy as he loomed over Sean.

"You can take a hot poker and lick it, ya scab!" retorted Sean, more angry than afraid.

The dark-haired boy delivered a hard kick aimed at Sean's side. Instinctively, Sean blocked the blow with his arm, but searing pain raced from his elbow to his shoulder. As bad as it felt, Sean knew it could have been worse.

"We can split that sandwich three ways!" said a blond boy.

"That's not much!" said the third boy as he tried to kick Sean but clumsily missed.

"Give it to me!" said the dark one, delivering another kick that found its mark.

Jonathan crept forward slowly—but not until he'd taken one of the brush poles they had just used to clean the pub's chimney. It was made of strong, hard wood and about three feet long. He had seen a few street performers use poles and the like to act out sword fights and balancing feats. He'd even worked with them, playing roles, and received a few quick lessons on their use as swords. He was a fast learner. One rule was to never use the stick as a bat, he remembered. Never swing until the game was over.

"This is ya last warnin', ya Irish cuss! Hand it over!" said the dark boy once again.

Sean did not answer but moved backward on the wet ground. His escape was soon blocked by the other two bullies, who continued laughing and spitting at their prey.

"Now yer gonna get a lickin'!" said the dark one. He moved in closer to Sean. As he raised his fist to strike the boy, he felt a sharp poke on the back of his head that almost made him topple over.

"Aay!" he cried, turning.

There was Jonathan, standing with his right hand holding the pole like a sword, aimed straight at the bully's face. Without a word or hesitation, Jonathan thrust the stick forward with great speed and, more importantly, accuracy. The tip punched the dark-haired boy in the left eye, and he screamed out in pain. Jonathan advanced quickly, delivering a sharp kick to the side of the boy's knee. The cracking sound was sickening. The dark-haired boy went down.

"What's this?" said the blond bully as he turned from Sean and moved toward Jonathan. "Are ya a knight with yer sword and yer—"

Jonathan reacted swiftly. He lunged directly at the boy's lower midsection, arm extended first and right foot moving forward. The pole struck painfully in the boy's crotch, dropping him straight to the hard cobblestone. Spinning, Jonathan turned back to the dark-haired bully who was beginning to rise. Jonathan delivered a sweeping blow on the side of the enemy's neck. Down he went, again.

"Are you hurt, Sean?" asked Jonathan as he eyed the third boy.

"Not really. I was just about to teach 'em a lesson when you came along."

"What about this last one, Sean?" Jonathan asked.

Rising with a little help from his friend, Sean faced the clumsy bully and smiled.

"Aw, he's no trouble," Sean said.

"I don't want no trouble!" said the remaining bully, obviously afraid.

"Boo!" shouted Sean, laughing as he started at the last standing ruffian.

The boy ran as fast as he could out into the street, never looking back.

"I'll get ya for this!" said the dark-haired boy. His voice was pinched and weak, and he rolled in pain on the rain-soaked ground.

Jonathan quickly rushed to his side and bent over the boy's strained face. He looked him in the eye.

"You were stealing from us. That will not stand. I wish you no further harm. However, I warn you. If you ever bother my friend again, you won't need to come searching for me. I will find you. Do you understand?"

The bully regarded Jonathan for a moment. As he stared into Jonathan's eyes, he realized that this young boy was no one to be trifled with. Resigned to defeat, he simply looked down and nodded.

"Good," said Jonathan. "It would be best if you were to find another neighborhood. Welcome to London."

Jonathan and Sean walked away, dusting themselves off, but to no avail. The soot from the chimney and the scuffle in the alley had left them dirty and a bit shook. The addition of rain was turning the dirt that covered them into an oozing black paste. Though the water aided in cleaning their faces slightly, their clothing was utterly ruined.

"But at least our stomachs are full, right?" asked Sean.

"Another day in the great city of London!" chuckled Jonathan. "I'll see you tomorrow."

Heading back to his home, as it were, Jonathan blended in with the thin crowd on Brick Street, eyes on the ground, searching for dropped coins or food as was his habit.

After walking a few lonely and fruitless wet blocks, Jonathan turned down his alley, at the end of which was his three-sided wooden box. There was a tarp hidden within the pile of debris; he would not leave it out in the open, knowing it would be stolen. Its precious quality of being somewhat waterproof was his only defense against the harsher elements of rain, sleet, and snow. He retrieved the tarp and draped it over his box as the rain now picked up, turning from a drizzle to a mild downpour.

As tales often tell, events do happen that alter lives, and so it would be for Jonathan Moore. His state of affairs changed dramatically the very next morning.

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Jonathan had been sleeping uncomfortably, tossing within the wooden box. The rain had lessened to a mere drizzle as morning approached, and since he was now unable to sleep, he decided to wake. It was still dark; the lanterns in the street beyond glowed dimly. As he rose, there came a commotion: running feet—dozens of them—approaching his alley. There were voices of gruff men swearing and calling out. He could hear a few screams and cries from young boys, one most assuredly belonging to Sean Flagon.

Jonathan peeked out from his box in time to see Sean stop at the entrance of his alley. He looked at Jonathan, fear on his face, and yelled, "Run, Jonathan Moore! They are after us all! Run!"

"Who is after us?" Jonathan called. But Sean was already gone.

Jonathan cautiously crawled out of his box and stood up, shaking with dread. He peered down the alley and out into the street, not knowing what to expect. Within a moment, he saw a shadow against the wall growing larger and larger. Then a stocky, dark man appeared. He stared at Jonathan for a moment and growled loudly.

"I see another one in a-here!"

With that, the dark man began rushing toward him. Being prepared, Jonathan had practiced his escape route for just such a purpose. With a streak of panic to propel him, he ran to the back of the alley. Swiftly, he climbed the crates, broken barrels, and planks of wood he had stacked at the alley's end. He scurried up, up, up, making his way to the top. From there, he could go over the high brick wall that separated the alley from the open square of shops and carts on the other side. He would be safe in the market; there were many nooks in which to hide.

As he scrambled, he could hear footsteps coming fast from behind. He glanced over his shoulder to see that the large man was almost upon him. He clambered to the top of the pile as fast as he could. Suddenly, he felt the man's cold hands scratching and grasping at his ankles and feet. He spun around to see the stubble-faced brute. The man had shadowy eyes and a scar on his face. He wore a dark jacket and a funny cap with something written on it in gold, though Jonathan could not make out the words. The

man leered and snarled as he tried to better his grip on Jonathan.

"Arr! Ya scruffy bilge-rat! Hold a-still! Don't-a you know what's a-good for you?"

Jonathan answered with a kick to the man's large and pimply nose, knocking his attacker backward. The man was shocked at the blow's power and teetered back and forth for a moment on the pile of boxes and wood. He tried to grab hold of something to stop from falling, but the boy sent another kick to the man's chest, finally knocking him down off the crates, to crash right through Jonathan's box with a loud bang.

"Ow!" the man cried. "I think I broke-a me buttocks!"

Jonathan did not wait to see if that was true. He quickly swung his legs over the last crate at the top of the heap and pulled himself up onto the wall. The rain had left the bricks slippery and wet, and that caused him to lose his footing. He clumsily went over the brick wall into the market square on the other side, yelling as he fell. His legs hit something soft and squishy.

Expecting to see a pile of rags or a few sacks of flour, Jonathan heard a voice.

"Ooof! Get off of me, ya little gutter pig!"

He had fallen on a fat, drunken man sleeping in the street.

"Pardon me, sir, I meant no harm!" Jonathan said as he rolled away from the man and quickly ran into the square. Hiding behind carts and crates, he made his way along to the center of the market, then stood up to carefully look about. Though the morning light had not yet lit the scene, he could tell that no one was in the market at this early hour. He sighed in relief, trying to calm his shaking nerves. Once he had caught his breath, he adjusted his wool cap and began thinking of what to do next.

Suddenly, a voice called out from behind.

"There he is, lads! Faster! Faster! He's the last one for this evening!"

There were now several men rushing after him. Each appeared mean and dirty. And like the man from the alley, each was clothed in a silly cap and dark jacket. Jonathan now realized who, or really, what they were: a press-gang, a group ordered to capture men and boys to be sent out on England's sailing ships to help fight the war or, possibly, to work in the yards that supplied the ships.

Jonathan sped through the square, around the empty carts, and behind piles of boxes and crates. All the time, the men seemed to be getting closer and closer. He ran from the market and down a side street, looking over his shoulder as the men pointed and called out. Could he escape? He was so tired of running and so weak from hunger. The cheese sandwich from the day before was not enough to sustain his effort.

He knew he must continue running, and he did, gasping for every breath. Then, his chance: a dark alleyway just ahead. Jonathan turned sharply into its shadows and ducked behind a large stack of barrels. If he could not outrun them, he could outthink them and hide. Trying to slow his breathing, he crouched behind the barrels, holding as still as possible. Peeking out after a moment, he saw the men run past. They had not seen him.

Jonathan waited a few minutes for good measure to make sure the men were far, far away. He then stood up, brushed himself off, and fixed his cap upon his head. He decided to walk back to the alley where his broken, cold box awaited him. But as he stepped out from behind the barrels, a tall, thin-faced man suddenly appeared, blocking his way.

"Oh! Who are you?" Jonathan cried out in surprise.

This man was much like the others who chased him, and he too wore a cap with something written upon it. His beard was a bit shorter than that of the man Jonathan had kicked off the crates. He was thinner, and for the most part, free of large scars, and somewhat less pimply. As he approached, Jonathan could see he wore a thick, black, wool coat with large black buttons. In the dim light, Jonathan could finally read what was embroidered upon the cap in gold letters: HMS *Poseidon*.

"The question is, my son, who are you?" asked the thin man. With incredible speed, he grabbed Jonathan and held him at arm's length with steely hands. He looked deep into the boy's eyes and inspected his face from all angles, noting the color of his hair and eyes.

Finally, he asked, "What's yer name?"

"I'm not telling you my name for anything," Jonathan said, trying to sound brave and strong. The thin-faced man only laughed, showing his big smile, which was missing a few teeth.

“Oh, really?” the man replied. As quick as a flash, he spun Jonathan about, pinned his arms in a tight grasp, and swiftly tied a small rope around Jonathan’s wrists.

“Ouch! Let me go!” Jonathan cried, struggling to break free. He tried to kick the man, but it was no use. He would not budge or let him loose.

The man leaned into Jonathan’s ear and said, “How about a little game, lad? Simple enough, yes? I will try to guess yer name, and all ya ‘ave to do is tell me if I am right or wrong! Then I will decide if ya go free or ya come with me! Aye, it rhymes, right?” He laughed with a scratchy-wheezy cackle that Jonathan found very scary.

“I don’t want to play your game! And you could never guess my name,” said Jonathan. “And that rhymes, too!”

“Aye, it does—and well done!” said the thin man, surprised.

“No one knows who I am, except my parents,” said Jonathan, “and they are gone!”

Then the man smiled and said the most fantastic thing. “Ah! Then yer name might be… Jonathan Moore.”

Jonathan was stunned into silence. How could this peculiar, skinny man know his name?

The thin man was now grinning. His mouth appeared as wide as the moon in the sky, and he started to laugh once again.

“Now I know I’m right! The look on yer face tells it all! Ya are Jonathan Moore, and I have found ya! The cap’n will be so pleased—pleased as punch! There will be anchovies fer dinner tonight, I can tell ya!”

“Let me go!” protested Jonathan.

“I am correct, am I not? Ya are Jonathan Moore?”

“Yes!” said Jonathan, “how did you know my name? And who is the captain?”

The thin-faced man turned Jonathan around and firmly but gently led him out of the alley. Still holding him, he pointed down the street.

“The cap’n will need to see ya, that’s all I can say. Nonetheless, not to worry. No ‘arm will come to ya. That’s me word.”

The man led Jonathan along the lane, away from the center of the city.

This man knows my name, Jonathan thought. He had obviously been searching for me, but why? And who is the captain? What is an anchovy?

All these thoughts and feelings made him think about dinner for a moment, and Jonathan remembered that he was horribly hungry. Maybe he could have an anchovy for dinner as well if there were any available. Perhaps they were tasty, and eating one might almost be worth all this mystery and suspense.

They continued down the street, the rain now stopping, and the cold of night subsiding. The quietness was interrupted from time to time by the waking sounds of the city.

Now and again, the thin man would chuckle and wheeze. Then he’d look at Jonathan and smile kindly.

“Now, sorry to ‘ave tied ya up, but ya see,” said the man, “it is only fer yer protection and delivery. Ya are precious cargo, don’t ya know? I cannot lose Jonathan Moore. That would be quite serious.”

Jonathan kept quiet, thinking as they walked on. After a few more moments, the man led him down a dark and dreary side street, and there Jonathan saw five or six men moving about two horse carts. One cart was a simple flatbed; the other had what looked like a cage upon it made of iron bars, the kind in which were kept dangerous animals such as tigers or lions. Though it was difficult to see clearly at first, eventually, as he drew nearer, Jonathan could see that there were things inside the cage, moving slowly about.

“Now, lad, I know ya are a man of yer word, right?” asked the thin-faced man.

“Yes,” said Jonathan. “It’s all I have.”

“True!” the thin man said with a laugh. “That is all I ‘ave much of the time as well! So, if I untie yer hands, ya will not run? Ya will do as yer told?”

“That depends on what you want me to do,” said Jonathan warily.

“Oh, a simple thing,” the thin man said. “Just get in the cage.”

As they approached, Jonathan strained his eyes to see what was in the cage. He expected to see wild boars or, even worse, bears. However, as he neared the enclosure, he saw Sean Flagon—along with two other people, grown men, from their appearance. All sat nervously yet quietly in the bottom of the cage.

“Sean!” he called out in surprise.

“Well, I’ll be!” said Sean softly. “Jonathan Moore! They have got you, too?”

At the mention of his name, a man tending the cart nearby turned and regarded Jonathan in astonishment.

“Now, now, me lads!” said the thin-faced man. “Just ya be back to work. Mum’s the word! Say not a thing. It’s all up to the cap’n now!”

“But, Steward!” said one of the men, “I heard ‘em say his name is Jona—”

“I said hush, Jones!” snapped the thin man, now known to all in the cart as Steward.

Steward’s men smiled and went back to their work of hooking horses to the carts, though, now and again, they would sneak a peek at the boy called Jonathan Moore. Steward removed the rope about Jonathan’s wrists, opened the door on the back of the cage, lifted the boy up, and placed him inside.

“In ya go,” Steward said to Jonathan politely. “Off to Chat’am with ya.”