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The Call of the Sea

I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York in northern England. My father was a wealthy merchant from Germany who had moved to England. His name was Kreutznaer. But because this name was too difficult to say in English, he changed it to Crusoe. After settling in York, he married my mother, the daughter of a very good family. When I was born, I was named Robinson, my mother's family name.

I had two older brothers and two sisters. One brother was an officer in the British Army. He was killed in a battle near Dunkirk in England's war against the Spanish. I never knew my other brother. Nobody in the family

seemed to know what had become of him. My father had always wanted me to become a lawyer. So he sent me to the finest schools. But I had my own ideas about how I wanted to live my life.

Ever since I was a young boy, I had been drawn to the sea. I used to enjoy sitting at the edge of the dock. There I would watch the tall sailing ships set out to sea. I would always wish that I could be going with them. I'd imagine that I was standing on board, waving to the people on the dock.

One day, when I was 18 years old, I dared to tell my parents about my longing for a life at sea. My father was very upset to hear this surprising news.

“You would be making a big mistake,” he said. He had a sad look in his eyes. “Think about all that you would be giving up. Here you can have whatever your heart desires. You don't even have to work, if you would rather not. You have a family that loves you and a nice place to live. Who will look out for you at sea? You will be lonely so far from home. And life at sea is hard and dangerous. Think

about what I am saying, son. Life at sea is not for you!”

I listened politely to my father’s words. Then I said to him, “Perhaps you are right, Father. I will try not to think any more about the sea.” But I knew that going to sea was what my heart still desired most of all.

About a year later, I was visiting Hull. Since this city was a major seaport, I went down to the docks. As I walked along the waterfront, I ran into an old friend of mine. He told me he was sailing that day on his father’s ship to London.

“Why don’t you come with me?” asked my friend. “Do come! It will be great fun.”

My heart beat faster at his words. Here was my chance to go to sea. I could think of nothing else. In an instant I decided to go with my friend. As we climbed aboard the ship, my heart was filled with a wild joy.

It was the first of September, 1651. I was on board a ship bound for London. Now I felt that my life was truly beginning. Since this was my first time at sea, I had no idea of what to expect. Otherwise I might have begun to

worry that the sky was growing black and the wind was kicking up.

No sooner did the ship sail out of the harbor and into the open sea than the wind began to howl. I stood on the deck as the sea began to rise. At first I enjoyed watching the waves and feeling the cold salty spray on my face. Soon, though, I began to feel sick because of the ship's rocking motion. As the ship tossed wildly about, I felt afraid for the first time. *Maybe my father was right. I should have stayed at home.*

The storm lasted for two days. I was seasick the whole time. But on the third day out, I walked up on deck. The sun shone in a clear blue sky. The sea was calm, its waves dancing in the sunlight. This was the most beautiful sight I had ever seen! Once again I heard the sea calling me.

A few days later the winds began to blow again. Soon another storm was upon us, worse than the last one. This time even the other sailors looked afraid. Huge waves washed over us. Then the mast snapped and crashed to the deck. Soon the hull sprang several leaks and