

## Chapter One

### Robinson's family. - His escape from his parents' house



From my earliest childhood, I loved the sea more than anything in the world. I envied every sailor who went on a long voyage. For hours I stood on the seashore and without taking my eyes off the ships passing by.

My parents didn't like it very much. My father, an old, sick man, wanted me to become an important official, serve in the royal court and receive a large salary. But I dreamed of sea voyages. It seemed to me the greatest happiness to wander the seas and oceans.

My father guessed what was on my mind. One day he called me to him and angrily said: —I know: you want to run away from your home. It's crazy. You have to stay. If you stay, I will be a kind father to you, but woe to you if you run away! Then his voice trembled, and he added softly: "Think of your sick mother. .. She can't bear to be separated from you.

Tears glistened in his eyes. He loved me and meant well to me.



I felt sorry for the old man, I firmly decided to stay in my parents' house and not think about sea voyages anymore. But alas! — a few days have passed, and nothing remains of my good intentions. I was drawn to the seashores again. I began to dream of masts, waves, sails, seagulls, unknown countries, lighthouse lights.

Two or three weeks after my conversation with my father, I decided to run away. Choosing a time when my mother was cheerful and calm, I approached her and respectfully said:

— I am already eighteen years old, and in these years it is too late to study judicial business. Even if I entered the service somewhere, I would still run away to distant countries in a few days. I so want to see foreign lands, to visit Africa and Asia! Even if I stick to a case, I still don't have the patience to finish it. I ask you to persuade my father to let me go to sea at least for a short time, for a trial; if I do not like the life of a sailor, I will return home and will not go anywhere else. Let the father let go me voluntarily, because otherwise I will be forced to leave home without his permission.

My mother was very angry with me and said:

— I wonder how you can think about sea voyages after your conversation with your father! After all, your father demanded that you forget about foreign lands once and for all. And he understands better than you what kind of business you should do. Of course, if you want to ruin yourself, leave at least this minute, but you can be sure that my father and I will never consent to your journey. And in vain you hoped that I would help you. No, I won't say a word to my father about your meaningless dreams. I don't want you to be able to reproach your mother for indulging you later, when life at sea brings you to need and suffering.

Then, many years later, I found out that my mother still told my father our entire conversation, from word to word. The father was saddened and said to her with a sigh:

— I don't understand what he wants? At home, he could easily achieve success and happiness. We are not rich people, but we have some means. He can live with us without needing anything. If he starts wandering, he will experience severe hardships and regret that he didn't listen to his father. No, I can't let him go to sea. Far from his homeland, he will be lonely, and if trouble happens to him, he will not have a friend who could comfort him. And then he will repent of his folly, but it will be too late!

And yet, a few months later, I ran away from my home. It happened like this. Once I went to the city of Hull for a few days. There I met a friend who was going to go to London on his father's ship. He began to persuade me to go with him, tempting me with the fact that the passage on the ship would be free.

And so, without asking either father or mother, — in an evil hour! — September 1, 1651. In my nineteenth year, I boarded a ship bound for London.

It was a bad act: I shamelessly abandoned my elderly parents, disregarded their advice and violated my filial duty. And I very soon had to repent of what I had done.



## Chapter Two

### The first adventures at sea

No sooner had our ship left the mouth of the Humber than a cold wind blew from the north. The sky was covered with clouds. The strongest pitching began.

I had never been to sea before, and I felt sick. My head was spinning, my legs were shaking, I felt sick, I almost fell. Whenever a big wave hit the ship, I thought we were going to drown right now. Every time the ship fell from the high crest of the wave, I was sure that it would never rise again.

A thousand times I swore that if I stayed alive, if my foot set foot on solid ground again, I would immediately return home to my father and never in my whole life would I climb on the deck of a ship again.

These prudent thoughts were enough for me only for a while while the storm was raging.

But the wind died down, the excitement subsided, and it became much easier for me. Little by little I began to get used to the sea. True, I haven't completely got rid of seasickness yet, but by the end of the day the weather it cleared up, the wind completely subsided, a delightful evening came.

I slept soundly all night. The next day the sky was just as clear. The calm sea with no wind, all lit up by the sun, presented such a beautiful picture as I have never seen before. There was no trace of my seasickness left. I immediately calmed down, and I was having fun. With surprise I looked around the sea, which yesterday seemed violent, cruel and menacing, but today it was so gentle, affectionate.

Then, as if on purpose, my friend, who tempted me to go with him, comes up to me, slaps me on the shoulder and says:

"How are you feeling, Bob?" I bet you were scared. Admit it: after all, you were very scared yesterday when the breeze blew?

— A breeze? Good breeze! It was a furious squall. I could not imagine such a terrible storm!

— Storms? Oh, you fool! Do you think it's a storm? Well, you're still new to the sea: no wonder you were scared... Let's go and order some punch, drink a glass and let's talk about the storm. Look at what a clear day it is! Wonderful weather, isn't it?

To shorten this sad part of my story, I will only say that it went like usually among sailors: I got drunk and drowned in wine all my promises and vows, all my laudable thoughts about returning home immediately. As soon as the calm came and I stopped being afraid that the waves would swallow me, I immediately forgot all my good intentions.





On the sixth day we saw the city of Yarmouth in the distance. The wind was contrary after the storm, so we moved forward very slowly. We had to anchor at Yarmouth. We stood there waiting for a fair wind for seven or eight days.

During this time, many ships from Newcastle also came here. However, we would not have stood for so long and would have entered the river with the tide, but the wind was getting fresher, and after five days it blew with all its might.

Since the anchors and anchor ropes on our ship were strong, our sailors did not show the slightest alarm. They were sure that the ship was completely safe, and, according to the custom of sailors, they gave all their free time to fun and amusements.

However, by the morning of the ninth day, the wind was still fresher, and soon a terrible storm broke out. Even the experienced sailors were very scared. Several times I heard our captain, as he passed me in and out of the cabin, muttering in an undertone: "We are lost! We're lost! The end!"

Nevertheless, he did not lose his head, keenly watched the work of the sailors and took all measures to save his ship.

Until now, I had not felt fear: I was sure that this storm would pass as safely as the first one. But when the captain himself declared that the end had come for all of us, I was terribly scared. He got up and ran out of the cabin onto the deck. I have never seen such a terrible sight in my life. Huge waves were moving on the sea like high mountains, and every three or four minutes such a mountain was falling on us.

At first I was numb with fright and could not look around. When at last I dared to look back, I realized what a calamity had broken out over us. On two heavily loaded ships, which were anchored nearby, the sailors were cutting masts so that the ships were at least a little freed from the weight.

Someone shouted in a desperate voice that the ship ahead of us, half a mile away, had disappeared under the water this minute.



Two more vessels broke from their anchors, the storm carried them into the open sea. What awaited them there? All their masts were knocked down by the hurricane.

The smaller vessels held up better, but some of them also had to suffer: two or three small vessels swept past our sides directly into the open sea.

In the evening, the navigator and the boatswain came to the captain and told him that in order to save the ship, it was necessary to cut down the foremast.<sup>1</sup>

— You can't delay a minute! — they said. — Order it, and we'll cut down the fuck.

"We'll wait a little longer," the captain objected. — Maybe the storm will calm down.

He really did not want to cut the mast, but the boatswain began to prove that if the mast was left, the ship would sink, and the captain involuntarily agreed.

And when the foremast was cut down, the mainmast<sup>2</sup> she began to swing and rock the ship so much that she had to be cut down as well.

Night came, and suddenly one of the sailors, descending into the hold, shouted that the ship had sprung a leak. Another sailor was sent into the hold, and he reported that the water had already risen four feet.

Then the captain commanded:

— Pump out the water! All to the pumps!<sup>4</sup>

When I heard this command, my heart stopped in horror: it seemed to me that I was dying, my legs gave way, and I fell backwards on the cot. But the sailors shook me awake and demanded that I not shirk from work.

— You've been idle enough, it's time to work hard! — they said.

There was nothing to do, I went to the pump and began to pump out the water diligently.

At this time, small cargo ships, which could not resist the wind, lifted anchors and went out to sea.

When our captain saw them, he ordered them to fire a cannon to let them know that we were in mortal danger. Hearing a cannon salvo and not understanding what was the matter, I imagined that our ship had crashed. I was so scared that I fainted and fell down. But at that time, everyone was concerned about saving their own lives, and they didn't pay attention to me. No one asked to know what happened to me. One of the sailors took my place at the pump, pushing me aside with his foot. Everyone was sure that I was already dead. I lay there for a very long time. When I woke up, I went back to work. We worked tirelessly, but the water in the hold rose higher and higher.

It was obvious that the ship was going to sink. True, the storm was beginning to subside a little, but there was not the slightest possibility for us to stay on the water until we will enter the harbor. Therefore, the captain did not stop firing guns, hoping that someone would save us from death.

Finally, the small vessel closest to us ventured to lower a boat to give us help. The boat could capsize at any moment, but it still approached us. Alas, we could not get into it, as there was no way to dock to our ship, although people rowed with all their might, risking their lives to save ours. We threw them a rope. It took them a long time to catch him, as the storm carried him away. But, fortunately, one of the daredevils managed and, after many unsuccessful attempts, grabbed the rope by the very end. Then we pulled the boat under our stern and all of us went down into it.

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<sup>1</sup> Foremast — foremast.

<sup>2</sup> Mainmast — middle mast.

<sup>3</sup> Foot is an English measure of length, about a third of a meter.

<sup>4</sup> Pump — a pump for pumping out water.



We wanted to get to their ship, but we could not resist the waves, and the waves carried us to the shore. It turned out that it was only in this direction that it was possible to row.

In less than a quarter of an hour, our ship began to sink into the water.

The waves tossing our boat were so high that we couldn't see the shore because of them. Only in the shortest moment, when our boat was tossed on the crest of a wave, we could see that a large crowd had gathered on the shore: people were running back and forth, getting ready to give us help when we get closer. But we were moving towards the shore very slowly.

It was only in the evening that we managed to get ashore, and even then with the greatest difficulties.

We had to walk to Yarmouth. There we were warmly welcomed: the residents of the city, who already knew about our misfortune, gave us good lodgings, treated us to an excellent dinner and provided us with money so that we could get wherever we wanted — to London or to Hull.

Not far from Hull was York, where my parents lived, and, of course, I should have returned to them. They would have forgiven me for running away on my own, and we would all have been so happy!

But the crazy dream of sea adventures did not leave me even now. Although the sober voice of reason told me that new dangers and troubles were waiting for me at sea, I began to think again about how I could get on a ship and travel around the seas and oceans of the whole world.

My friend (the one whose father owned the lost ship) was now gloomy and sad. The calamity that had happened oppressed him. He introduced me to his father, who also did not stop grieving about the sunken ship. Having learned from my son about my passion for sea travel, the old man looked at me sternly and said:

"Young man, you should never go to sea again. I have heard that you are cowardly, spoiled, and lose heart at the slightest danger. Such people are not fit to be sailors. Come home soon and make peace with your family. You have experienced for yourself how dangerous it is to travel by sea.

I felt that he was right, and I could not object to anything. But still I did not return home, because I was ashamed to show myself to my loved ones. It seemed to me that all our neighbors would mock me; I was sure that my failures would make me the laughing stock of all my friends and acquaintances.

Subsequently, I often noticed that people, especially in their youth, consider shameful not those shameless acts for which we call them fools, but those kind and noble deeds that they do in moments of repentance, although only for these deeds can they be called reasonable. So was I at that time. The memories of the disasters I experienced during the shipwreck gradually faded away, and after living in Yarmouth for two or three weeks, I did not go to Hull, and to London.