

GREMPKIN

Ted: To pass the time —

Prentiss: Hide beans in your blanket?

Prentiss: Faint at the merest whisper of — *(to MOLLY, gleeful)* get this — *(back to TED)* sticky pudding!

Ted: *(faints to his knees)* Sticky pudding, it's so good . . .

Prentiss: Like I said, food-obsessed. I'm Prentiss. I'm in charge here.

Molly: *(turns to TED)* Ever notice, Ted — the more you claim leadership, the more it eludes you?

Ted: *(to PRENTISS)* Oh, snap!

Molly: And what are you, boy?

Boy: *(rudely)* Leave me alone.

Molly: Sorry.

Ted: Don't take it personally.

Prentiss: He's rude to everybody.

Ted: It's why he gets beatings.

Prentiss: And why he's got no friends.

Ted: Go on. Tell her your name, why don't you?

PRENTISS and TED laugh cruelly.

Molly: What's so funny?

Boy: Thanks, Ted.

Ted: He doesn't have a name.

Prentiss: Been orphan'd too long to remember.

Ted: Grempinkin calls him —

Ted, Prentiss: *(mocking)* — mule!

Boy: Go on! You and your stupid names go follow some stupid girl.

Prentiss: Like we need your permission, friendless.

Molly: *(defending the BOY)* Doesn't cost any more to be nice, charmless.

Ted: What about the food?

Prentiss: *(to MOLLY)* You can be like temporary leader — but only 'til we eat.

Molly: *(to the BOY, fascinated)* Fair warning, boy — I shall expose you utterly.

Narrator Grempinkin: As no one had ever shown the slightest interest in him before, the boy's eyes began to sparkle and the lure of competition wiped some of the misery from his face.

Molly: Right. Follow me.

MOLLY exits the bilge dungeon.

Ted: Right. Follow Mother —

Boy: Molly.

Ted: That's what I said. Follow Molly.

TED and PRENTISS exit, leaving the BOY alone. The ship groans. The BOY quickly gets frightened, claustrophobic.

Narrator Boy: The boy may have wished to be alone, but he didn't really mean it. The sparkle in his eyes fades, and strange sounds in the dark make him remember the orphanage, make him think about —

Grempinkin: WHERE'S THAT MULE!!

Flashback: St. Norbert's Orphanage for Lost Boys. Many ORPHANS stand shivering in a cold, barren school yard. GREMPKIN holds sway, brandishing a wooden switch.

START
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GREMPKIN CONT.

Boy: Here, sir.

Gremplin: (*grabs the BOY by the scruff of the neck*) You are all shades of nasty, mule. Oi — lookit this filth!

Boy: (*knowing what's coming*) Don't hit me, sir! Cesspit's dirty work!

Gremplin: A mule afraid of his own shadow. Be a man!

Boy: Thank you, Mister Gremplin.

Gremplin: Uncover yourself, disgrace to the mother that left you!

~~Narrator Bumbake: (*singing gently*)~~

~~OH, FOR THE WINGS,
FOR THE WINGS OF A DOVE...~~

Gremplin: (*pointing viciously to another boy*) You watch, or you're next!

~~GREMPKIN freezes.~~

~~Narrator Aster: At the mention of Mother, the boy heard a wisp of a song he could barely remember -~~

~~Narrator Alf: - and saw a shadow of a home he hoped he might have.~~

~~Instantly, we see a tableau of a happy family: the BOY, embraced by a mother and father and brothers.~~

~~Narrator Stache: Father and son -~~

~~Narrator Molly: - mother and child~~

~~Narrator Smee: And even with so little ground for hope -~~

~~Narrator Boy: - still he believed -~~

~~Narrator Prentiss: - despite his distress and sorrow -~~

~~Narrator Ted: - that one day such a home would be his.~~

~~Boy: (*happy*) Home.~~

~~The tableau melts away, and the BOY has bared his back to GREMPKIN, who looms over him, wooden switch raised high.~~

Gremplin: Orphan Rule Number One!

Boy: Life is meant to be horrible.

GREMPKIN whips the boy hard!

Gremplin: Rule Number Two!

Boy: There are no orphans in heaven.

GREMPKIN whips the boy again!

Gremplin: Rule Number Three!

Boy: Missus Gremplin's ugly!

The other ORPHANS laugh rudely.

Gremplin: (*his fury knowing no bounds*) Anyone who laughs is dead!

GREMPKIN chases the ORPHANS away. The flashback fades, leaving the BOY alone and whimpering in the bulge dungeon.

Boy: Mother. Mother . . .

MOLLY opens the cabin door.

Molly: C'mon, you! Last chance! We Astels do not leave boys behind.

The BOY wipes his eyes and runs after MOLLY.

END

CONT.