

## The Kraken

“Listen, lad, can you hear that?” The captain’s voice was unusually quiet. Normally, he’d be barking orders at us. Now, he stood at the bow of the ship and said little.

“I can’t hear anything,” I said.

“Exactly!”

There was something about the excitement in the captain’s voice that worried me. What was so special about silence? Then, it struck me. He was right, it was as silent as a graveyard. Even on the darkest night, there is the sound of the waves crashing against the side of the ship. There’s the groaning of the masts in the wind. Tonight, there was nothing.

Salt-spray whipped against my face and stung my lips, and the boat rocked with the action of the waves, but there was no sound. It was as though all noise was being sucked away into the inky ocean.

“Land, ahoy!” came the cry from the top of the mast. We all spun around. The captain hollered back up to the man that this was impossible. We were miles from land. The lookout was adamant. He could see land.

We all raced to the port-side of the deck and strained our eyes to see further into the darkness. We could all see it now. There was the glint of a speck of moonlight bouncing back from a towering rock. It seemed to rise up out of the water, taller than our highest mast. Suddenly, the rocky island opened an eye, and the silence was shattered by a deep bellow of anger.

A long, tentacled beast slithered slowly out of the surf and curled in the air above us. Enormous suckers the size of a man’s head covered the underside. One giant eye blinked slowly and so close to our boat that I could see the glistening moisture around the pupil.

“Kraken!” yelled one of the men somewhere on the deck. I didn’t have time to figure out who it was, the snake-like limb of the beast was crashing down towards me.



I threw myself to the side just in time. I heard the wood splinter behind me. Fresh waves crashed over the side of the boat and soaked me to my skin. I shivered and stood up. Several of the monster's arms were wrapped around the ship by this point. It had us ensnared. I glanced around for any sign of the captain. He wasn't on the deck, but then I spotted his deep blue jacket and red hat in the water. He'd abandoned ship and was swimming for it! The coward! As I watched, one of the tentacles slapped down into the ocean and dragged him under.

For a moment, I stood frozen to the spot. Wood cracked and splintered around me as the kraken tried to tear the boat in half. I watched in a dream as an empty barrel rolled past me. An idea struck.

Quickly, I grabbed the barrel and rolled it towards the far side of the deck, as far away from the Kraken as possible. Once I was sure I was alone, I clambered inside and pulled the lid tightly back on to the top. I rocked my body until I felt the strange sensation of falling, followed by the heavy smack as I hit the water. The barrel bobbed for a moment before righting itself like a cork. All I had to hope now was that the tide took me somewhere friendly.

## VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Which word describes how the captain would usually speak to the sailors?
2. Find and copy a phrase that tells you that the author suddenly thought something.
3. Copy a word that tells you that the captain shouted at the man on watch.
4. What does the phrase "strained our eyes" mean?
5. When the captain "abandoned ship", what did he do?

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

**R**

What stung the author's lips?

**R**

How big were the kraken's suckers?

**I**

How did the author feel about the captain jumping overboard? How do you know?

**S**

What did the author do after they had climbed into the barrel?

**P**

Where do you think the barrel ended up? Write a paragraph describing it washing up on shore.

Answers:

1. Barking
2. (Then) it struck me
3. Hollered
4. Tried hard to see something
5. Jumped overboard into the sea

R: Salt-spray/seawater

R: The size of a man's head

I: Cross/angry. They called him a coward

S: Rocked it until it tipped overboard