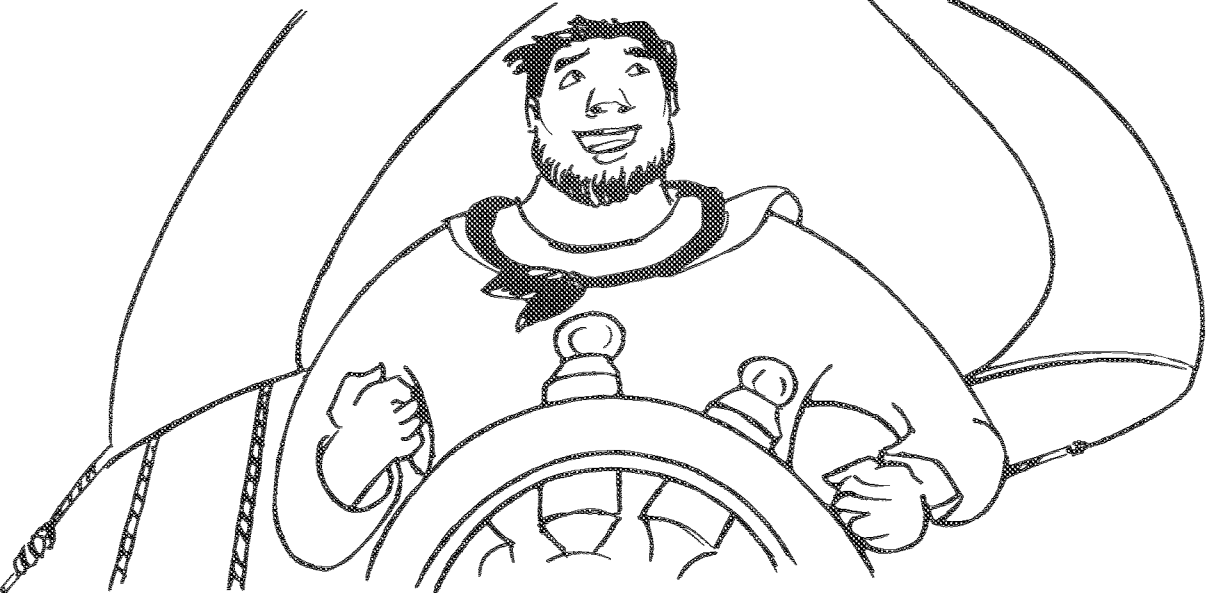


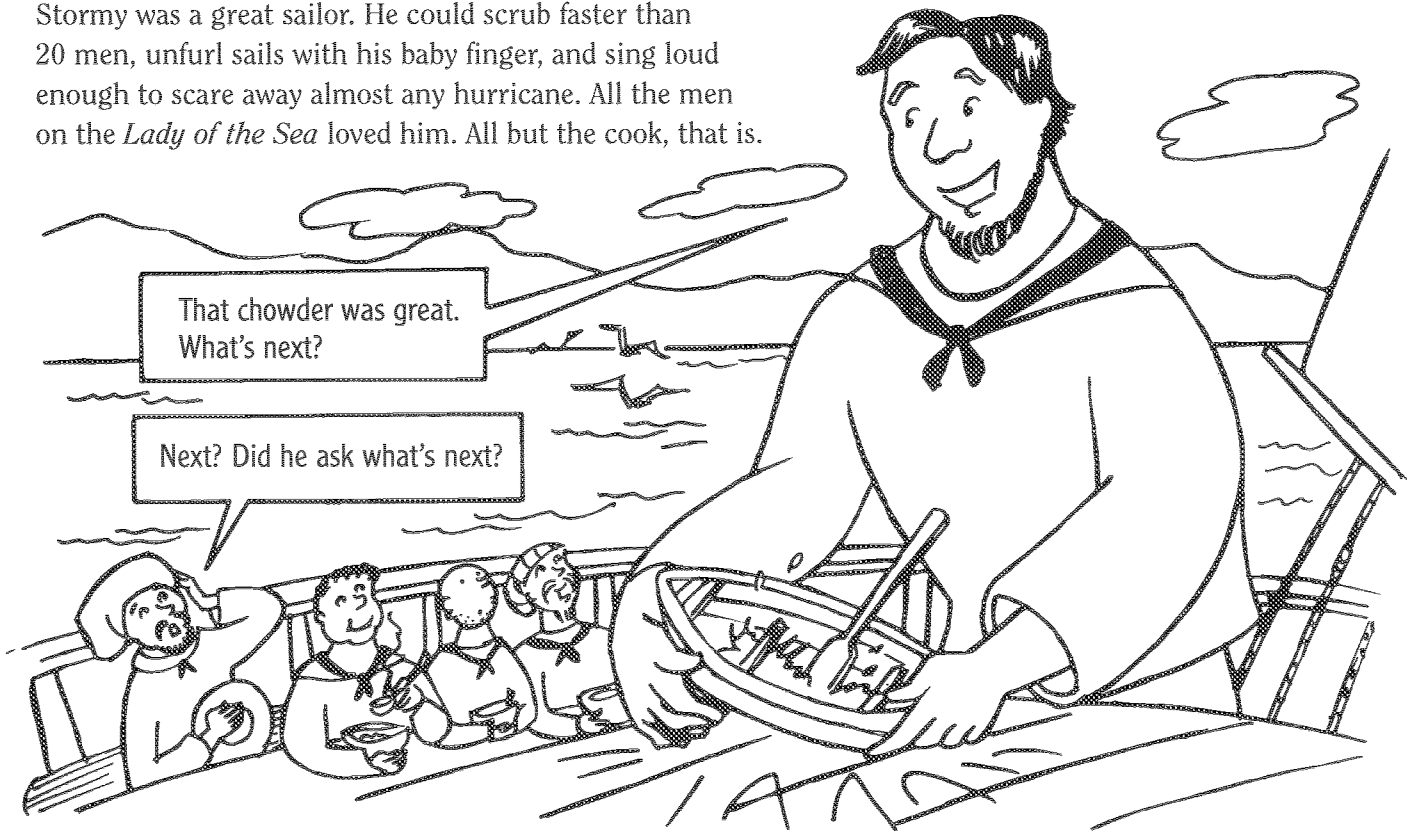
# Alfred Bulltop Stormalong



When sailors put "A.B.S." after their names, it doesn't mean "Able-Bodied Seaman," as most people think. Sailors use the letters to honor the greatest sailor who ever lived—Alfred Bulltop Stormalong.

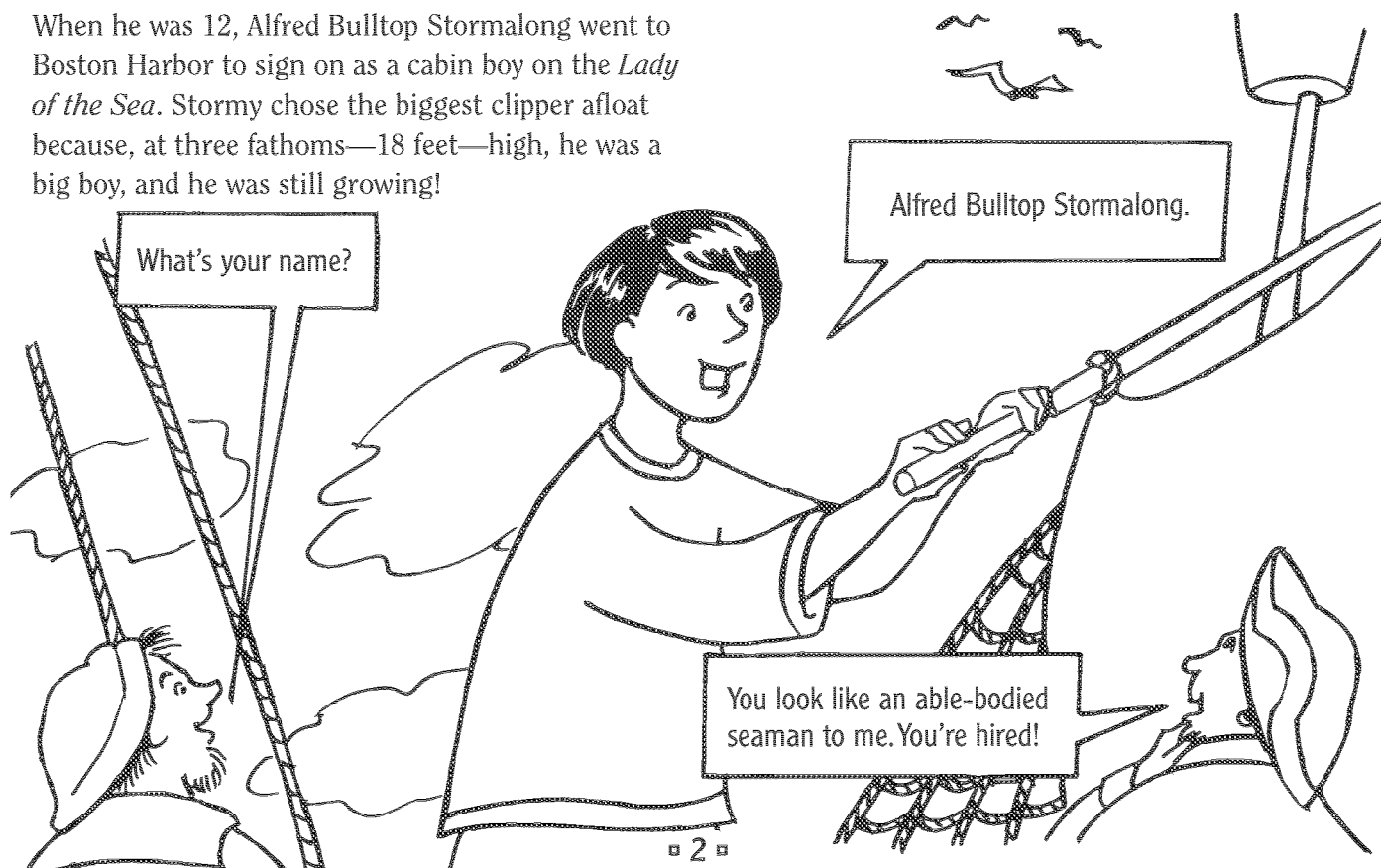
□ 1 □

Stormy was a great sailor. He could scrub faster than 20 men, unfurl sails with his baby finger, and sing loud enough to scare away almost any hurricane. All the men on the *Lady of the Sea* loved him. All but the cook, that is.

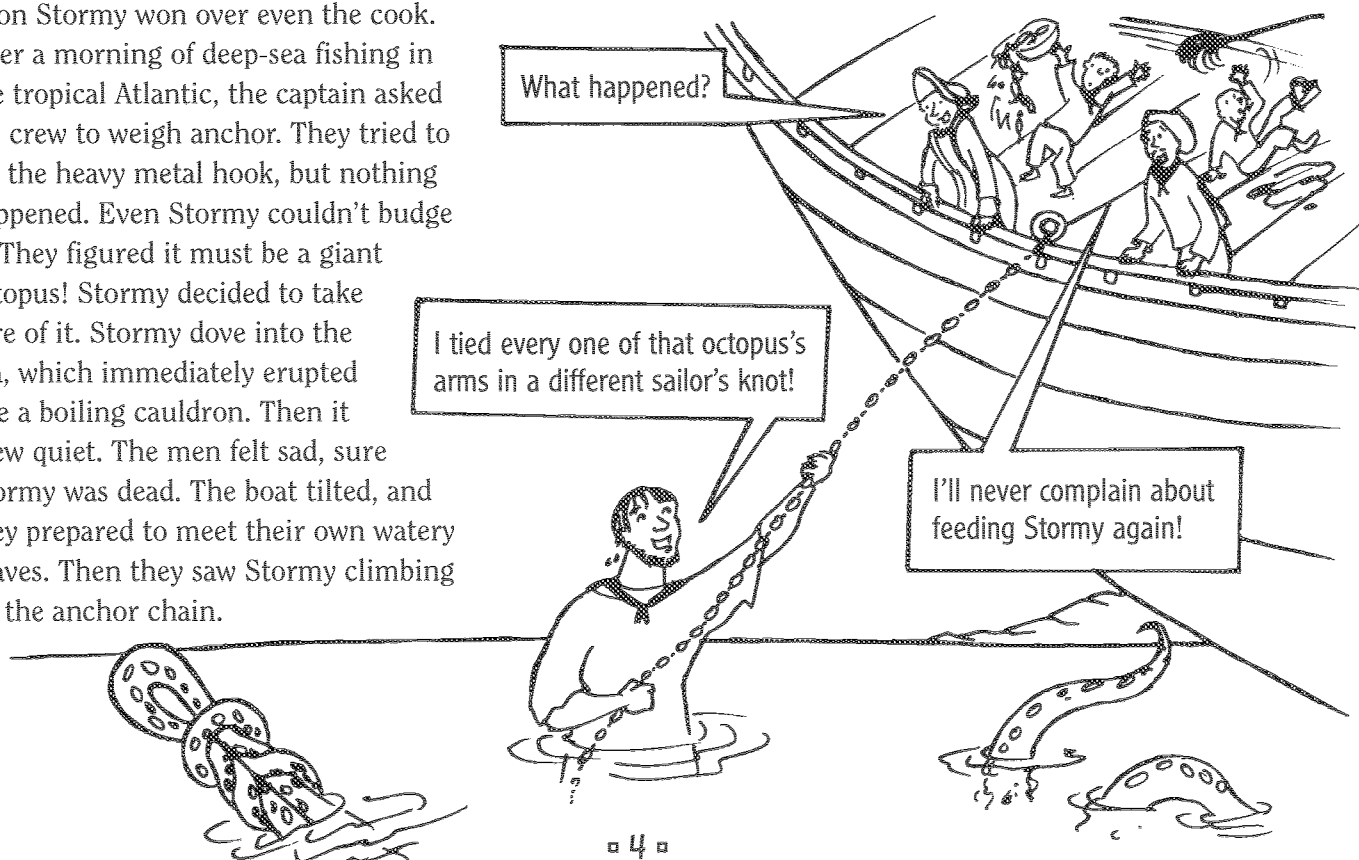


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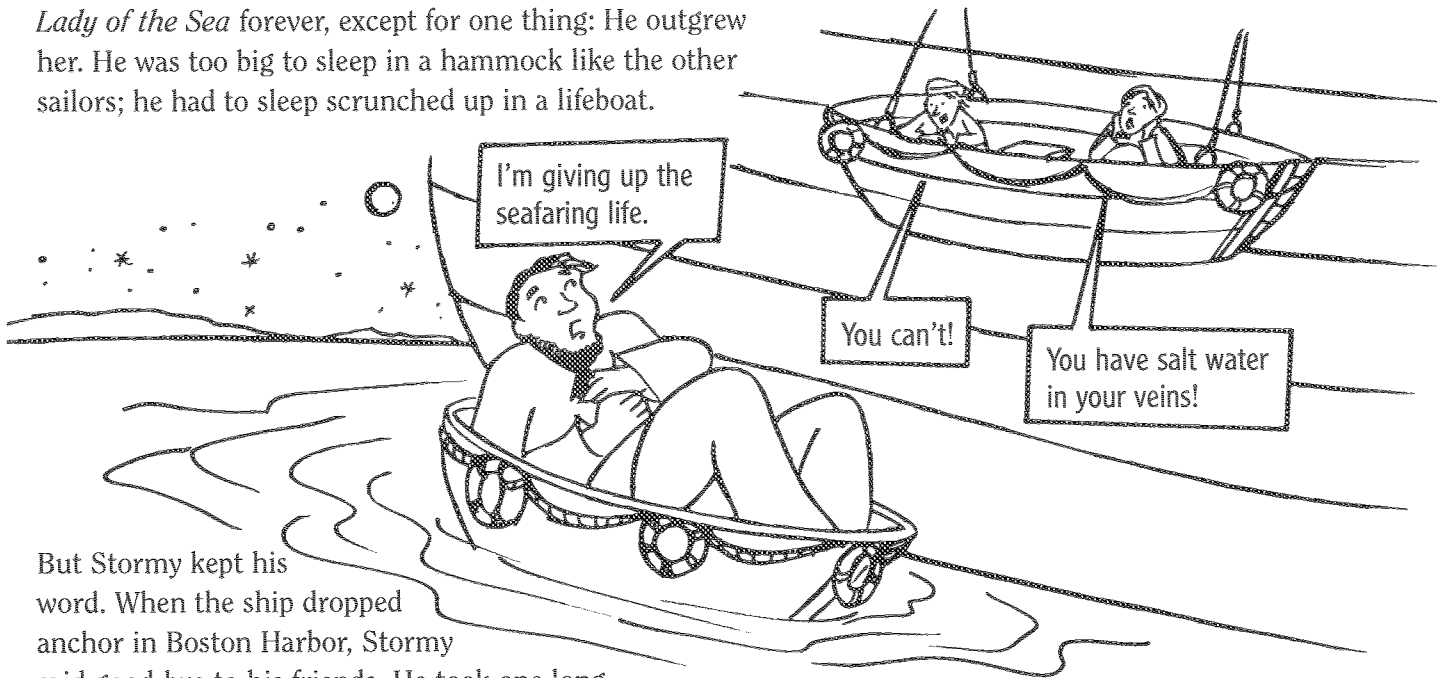
When he was 12, Alfred Bulltop Stormalong went to Boston Harbor to sign on as a cabin boy on the *Lady of the Sea*. Stormy chose the biggest clipper afloat because, at three fathoms—18 feet—high, he was a big boy, and he was still growing!



Soon Stormy won over even the cook. After a morning of deep-sea fishing in the tropical Atlantic, the captain asked his crew to weigh anchor. They tried to lift the heavy metal hook, but nothing happened. Even Stormy couldn't budge it. They figured it must be a giant octopus! Stormy decided to take care of it. Stormy dove into the sea, which immediately erupted like a boiling cauldron. Then it grew quiet. The men felt sad, sure Stormy was dead. The boat tilted, and they prepared to meet their own watery graves. Then they saw Stormy climbing up the anchor chain.



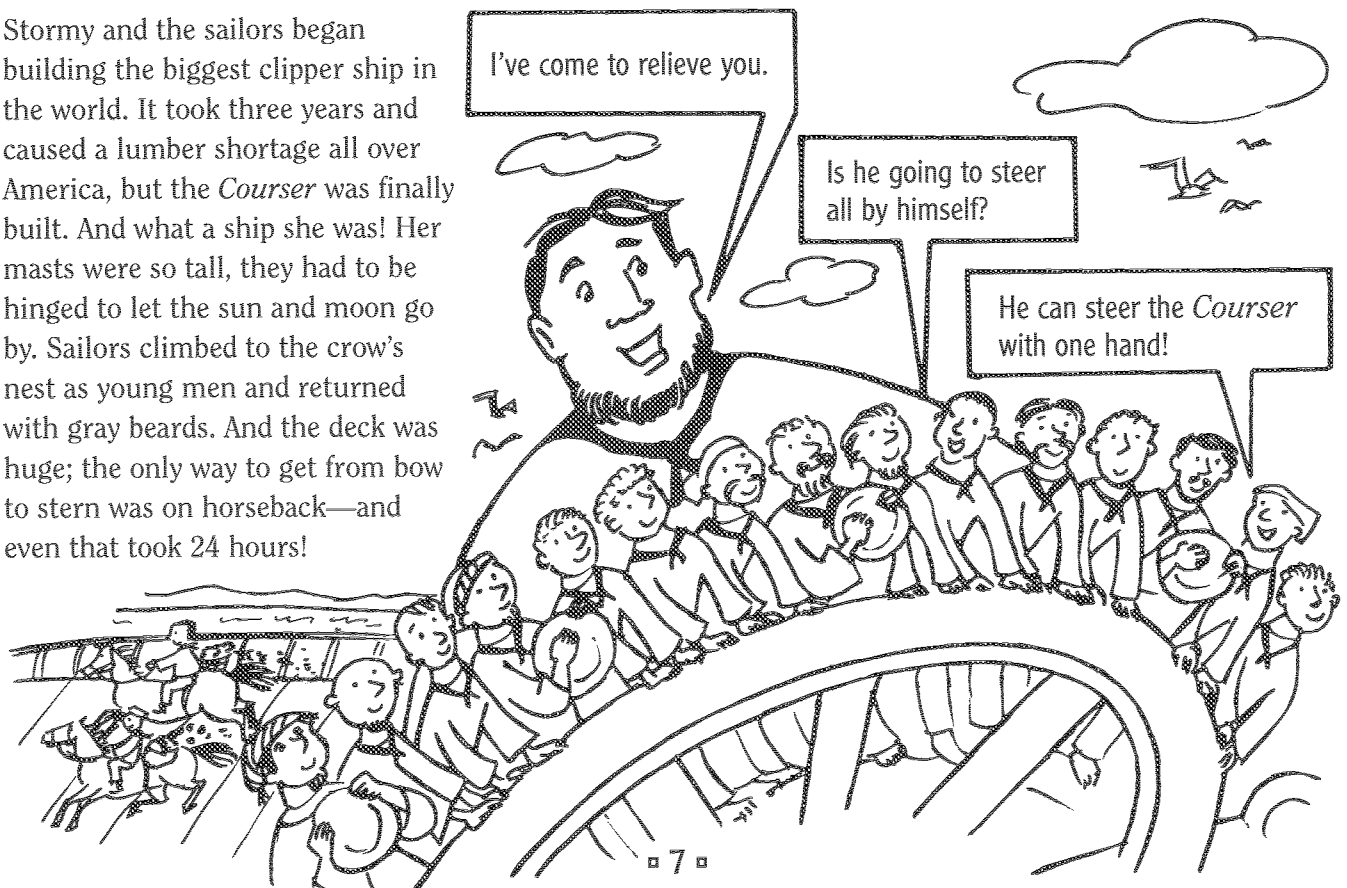
Stormy loved the seafaring life. He would have stayed on the *Lady of the Sea* forever, except for one thing: He outgrew her. He was too big to sleep in a hammock like the other sailors; he had to sleep scrunched up in a lifeboat.



But Stormy kept his word. When the ship dropped anchor in Boston Harbor, Stormy said good-bye to his friends. He took one long, last look at the sea. Then, hoisting an oar over his shoulder, he headed west. He hoped the West was as big as he'd been told it was.

▣ 5 ▣

Stormy and the sailors began building the biggest clipper ship in the world. It took three years and caused a lumber shortage all over America, but the *Courser* was finally built. And what a ship she was! Her masts were so tall, they had to be hinged to let the sun and moon go by. Sailors climbed to the crow's nest as young men and returned with gray beards. And the deck was huge; the only way to get from bow to stern was on horseback—and even that took 24 hours!

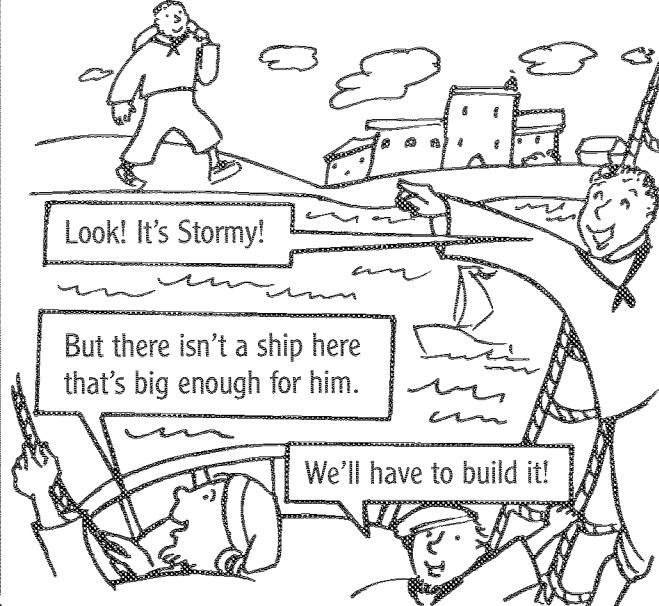


▣ 7 ▣

When Stormy reached the great open spaces of Kansas, he settled down and became a potato farmer. That first year there was an awful drought. Stormy worked doubly hard, watering his crops with the sweat of his brow. He became the best farmer in Kansas.

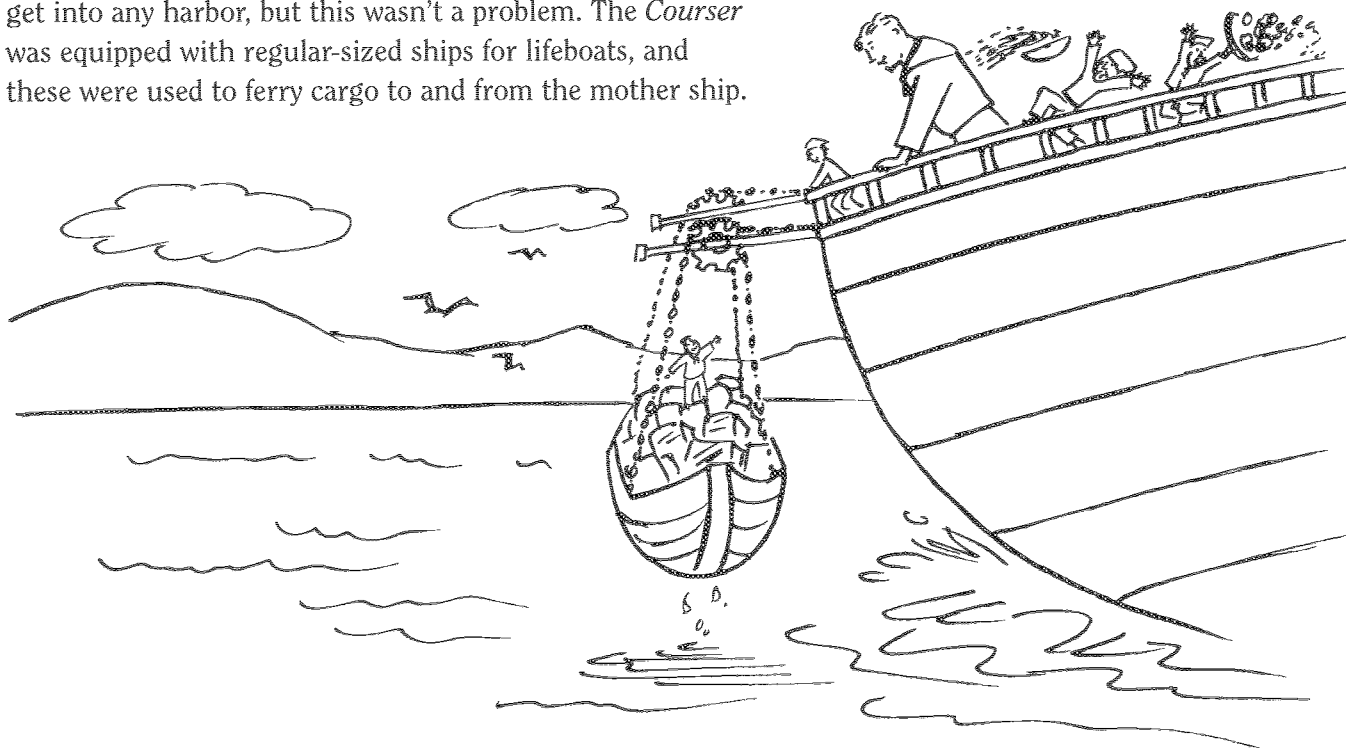


Despite his success as a farmer, Stormy couldn't stop thinking about the sea. He missed the smell of the salt air, the sound of the surf, the feel of the ocean breeze. The sea was his home; he couldn't stay away any longer. He sold his farm and returned to Boston.



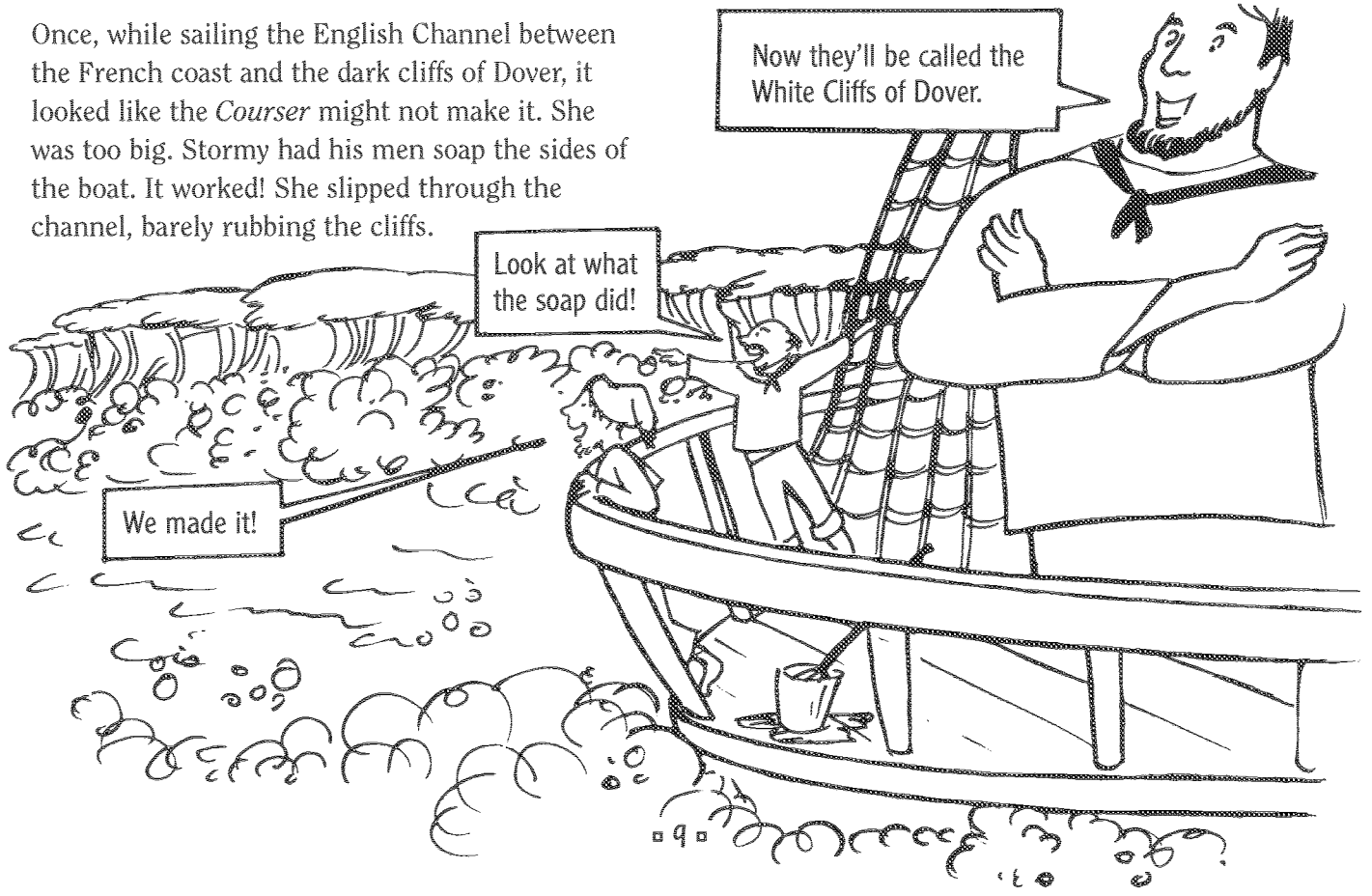
□ 6 □

The *Courser* sailed the world over. The ship was too big to get into any harbor, but this wasn't a problem. The *Courser* was equipped with regular-sized ships for lifeboats, and these were used to ferry cargo to and from the mother ship.

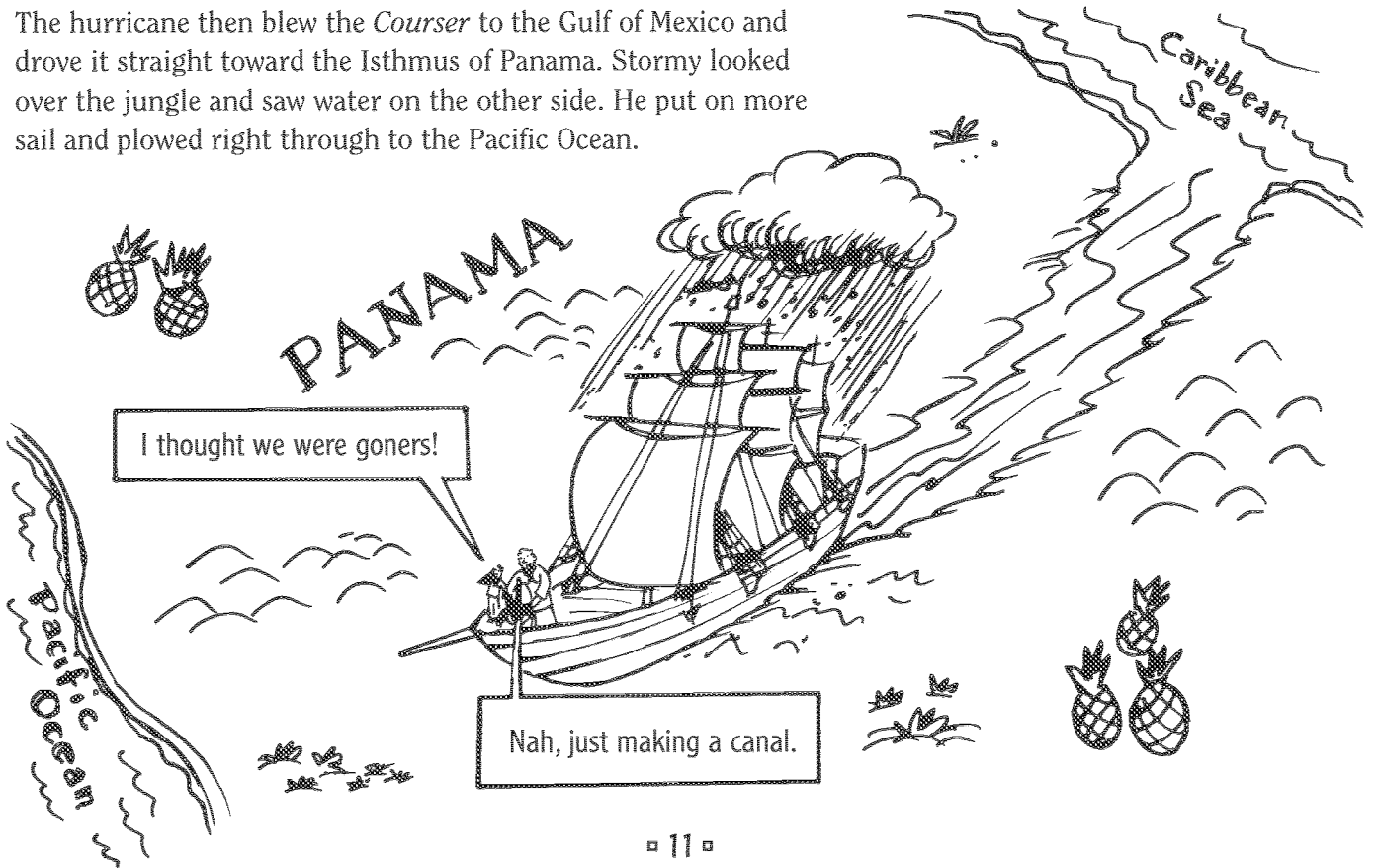


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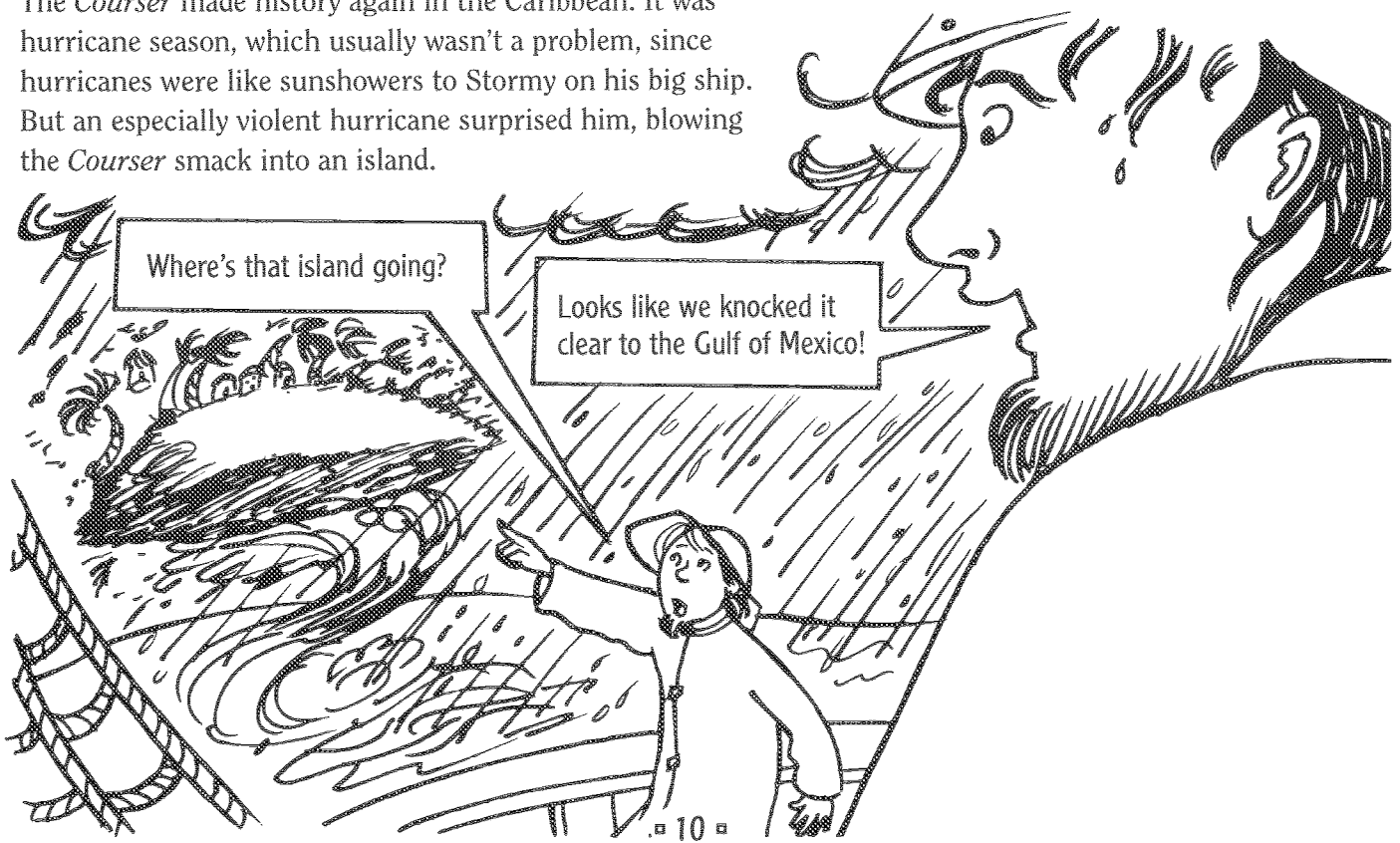
Once, while sailing the English Channel between the French coast and the dark cliffs of Dover, it looked like the *Courser* might not make it. She was too big. Stormy had his men soap the sides of the boat. It worked! She slipped through the channel, barely rubbing the cliffs.



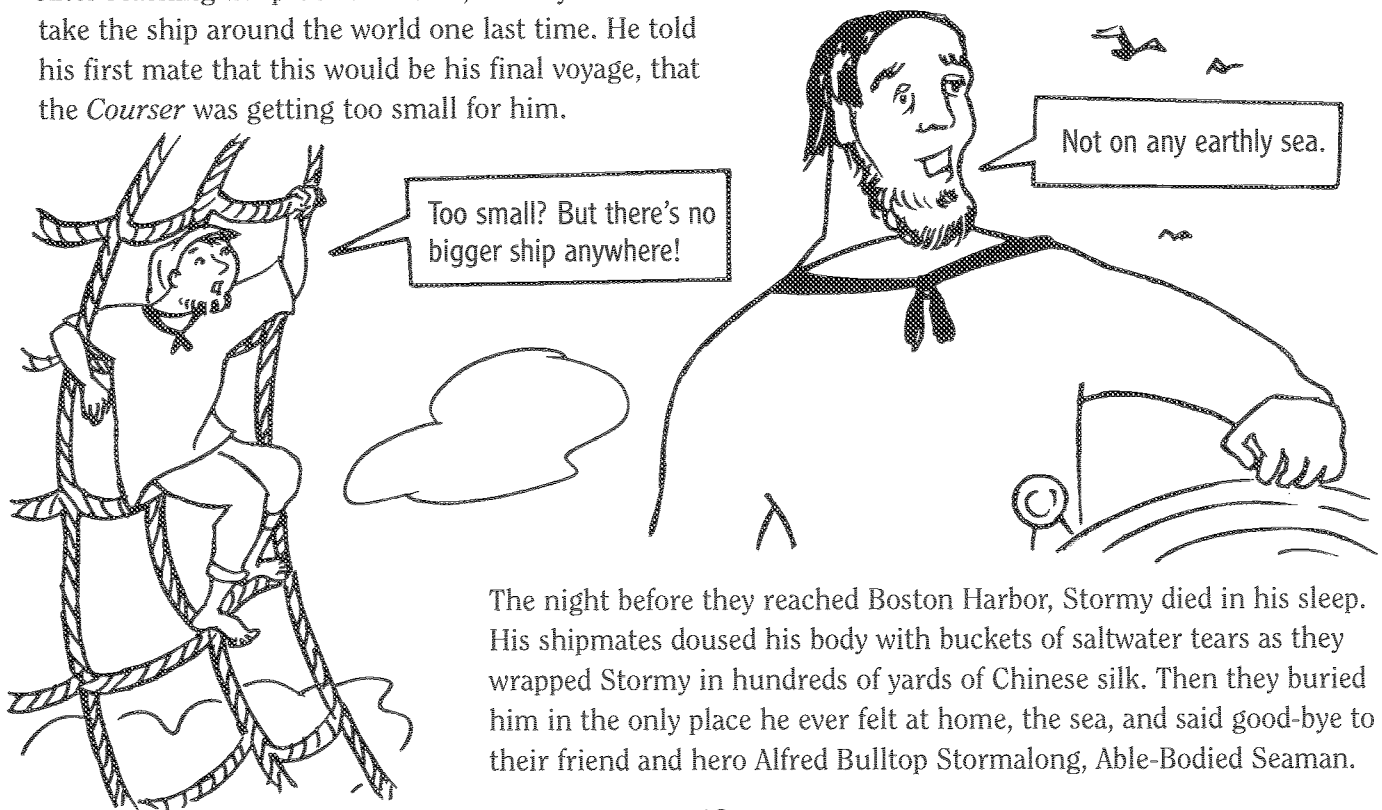
The hurricane then blew the *Courser* to the Gulf of Mexico and drove it straight toward the Isthmus of Panama. Stormy looked over the jungle and saw water on the other side. He put on more sail and plowed right through to the Pacific Ocean.



The *Courser* made history again in the Caribbean. It was hurricane season, which usually wasn't a problem, since hurricanes were like sunshowers to Stormy on his big ship. But an especially violent hurricane surprised him, blowing the *Courser* smack into an island.



After reaching the peaceful Pacific, Stormy decided to take the ship around the world one last time. He told his first mate that this would be his final voyage, that the *Courser* was getting too small for him.



The night before they reached Boston Harbor, Stormy died in his sleep. His shipmates doused his body with buckets of saltwater tears as they wrapped Stormy in hundreds of yards of Chinese silk. Then they buried him in the only place he ever felt at home, the sea, and said good-bye to their friend and hero Alfred Bulltop Stormalong, Able-Bodied Seaman.