



Captain William Ransome held his stance as the freshly scrubbed deck rolled with the gentle rhythm of the harbor under his feet. . . . Ten o'clock and the *Alexandra* still rested at anchor. When Commodore Northrop sent word he needed transport from Yarmouth to Portsmouth, William responded with a request the commodore arrive no later than three bells in the morning watch. Now, four and a half hours later, William wished he could leave a message with the dock master for the commodore to find another means of transportation. . . .

Through the spyglass, the small transport came into focus. A stout woman held a useless lace parasol over a mound of dark hair. Trouble. Beside her he could make out the slim figure of another woman, light curls cascading under a frill of a hat. Double trouble. Grinding his teeth to keep his thoughts from spilling out, he passed the glass back to the midshipman. . . .



Once clear of the harbor, he started to relax. *Please Lord, give us a mission worthy of this excellent crew and our ship. Bless us with a safe journey. . . .*

The wind picked up, filling the sails. Smooth as an eel, the *Alexandra* slipped through the water southeast toward Dover Strait. Eight bells and the afternoon watch began. He took a deep breath as salt air embraced him. *Lord God, thank you for bestowing upon us the blessing of good wind and fine weather. Speed our journey . . .*