

Arctic Survival—

Big Ship Impresses Eskimo Boy, He Impresses Sailors

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(Editor's Note: At the conclusion of the first installment of the story, the little boy had just been given a section of an orange which he ate for the first time in his life with great relish. "It was juicy succulent and wonderful." It was also the very first time he had ever been on a ship, and the vessel was none other than the famous U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bear. As soon as he was pulled up with a rope around his chest, the boy said, "Thank you, sir. How are you?" His unexpected remarks in English made a hit with the sailors at once, and they gathered in a circle around him.

My father came aboard and walked to where the Cutter Bear sailors had made a circle around me. He looked surprised, and then a pleased smile came on his face when he saw that I had attracted quite an audience.

"Suroatin uma, eengneorahng" ("What did you do, my little son?") father asked.

"I thanked this man and asked how he was in his language," I answered.

My father chuckled and patted me on the head. He turned to some of the men and said:

"My son."

"Oh, he is your son," the men said, surprised. "He's quite a boy. He surprised us when he spoke English."

"Yes, yes. He speak little," father acknowledged.

"What is his name?" the men asked.

"His name Howard."

"This little boy's name is Howard, men," said the man who pulled me aboard with the rope. There was a chorus of, "Hello, Howard," from the sailors.

"My name Sam," father said to the man.

"Hello, Sam," the man greeted father shaking his hand. "I would like to take your son and go see Cookie for a while."

"Yes," Sam said, chuckling.

He hastily handed me a small bag of artifacts, and I handed him my bag of oranges the sailors had given me.

"Come on, Howard. Let's go see Cookie," the man said.

He took me across the deck and

carried me down steps below. We went through a series of corridors and entered a room pleasantly permeated with the smell of food.

A Strange Man

"Hey, Cookie, I want you to meet Howard and give him something to eat!" my companion called in a loud voice.

"Yes, sir. Who is Howard and where is he?" a low, resonant voice answered.

"You have to look pretty far down here before you can see him, Cookie."

A huge man came forward. He was the strangest man I had ever seen. He had a very dark complexion. He was laughing, and his teeth, the whites of his eyes and his white coat gleamed in complete contrast to the color of his skin.

I had mixed emotions as to how I should act. I didn't know whether to be afraid of him or to laugh with him.

"So that's where you are, Howard. You're sticking right close to the deck, ain't you. You're a real tiny little fellow," the dark man observed.

"Hello, sir. How are you?" I ventured.

He broke into mirthful laughter. I felt like laughing with him.

"My goodness, this little fellow can also speak English!" the huge man exclaimed.

"He also surprised us on deck when I pulled him aboard," my companion said.

"Well, let's see what we can dig up for you to eat, little fellow," the dark man said.

I kept looking at him in awed fascination. He was the first Negro I had ever met in my life.

Happy Cookie

The Negro cook began to putter around in the galley talking and laughing at the same time. I began to like him because he had a huge smile and he seemed like a happy man. He came over to me with a big slice of bread with butter and jam on it.

"Here, Howard, see how you like this."

I laid the little bag of artifacts I had in my hands on the deck before I took the bread. Cookie noticed it.

"What's in that there, little Howard?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

"You don't know?"

"Yes, sir."

I ate the bread which was very good, and I was also anxious to show Cookie the artifacts I had in the bag. I fumbled in it with one hand and managed to pull out an arrowhead. I thought of what mother had wanted most as I held it up to my new acquaintance, chewing on the bread as I did.

The Trader

"Soap — Towel," I said hesitantly.

I wanted to tell him that I also wanted underwear but I didn't know how to ask for it. I didn't have one on to demonstrate what I wanted so I motioned my Negro friend to stoop down by crooking my forefinger at him. I pulled on his undershirt and he got the message at once.

He broke into laughter once again and he was joined by the man who brought me in.

"This little fellow knows what he wants," Cookie said as he guffawed. "Wait right here, Howard. I'll be right back."

The huge man ambled out of the galley. He was back in a short while. He had two cakes of soap, a towel and a suit of underwear. I dug into my bag and pulled out a complete harpoon head and gave it to him.

My companion had also gone out in the meanwhile and he came back with a pair of trousers and a cake of soap. I gave him a few assorted artifacts.

Spirited Conversation

When the trading was over, the two men began to carry on a spirited conversation frequently interrupted by laughter. They had apparently enjoyed what just happened in the galley — a trading session with a small Eskimo boy.

"Let's go now, Howard, and see what's going on outside," said my companion.

"Wait a minute, little fellow I have something else to give you," said Cookie.

He went to a large metal container and cut off something with a knife. It was a piece of cooked meat. It had a wonderful aroma. I found out later that it was roast beef.

I tried to gather up my trade goods but the piece of meat in my hand made it difficult. Cookie bundled them up for me.

"Good-bye, little fellow," Cookie's voice boomed. "It's been real nice knowing you."

"Thank you, sir," I said smiling

at him.

Worried Father

The decks of the Cutter Bear were alive with a large number of people as quite a number of villagers had come aboard. They were busy trading for small merchandise. I noticed that most of them had not done as well as I had, judging from the number of trade goods they were carrying.

Father suddenly came upon us

"Son, you have been gone so long I wondered what happened to you," he said anxiously.

"Where have you been?"

Without bothering to answer, I held up a piece of meat Cookie had given me. Father took a bite and smiled.

"Ahreega! Nakupeagsimaruq munna," ("Wonderful! This is so very good,") father said. "Where did you get it?"

"This nice man with the hat took me way down below and took me to a place where they cook, I guess," I told father excitedly. "I met a very dark man, and he gave the meat to me. He was a big man, and he was happy. I got some soap and other things from him for an arrowhead and harpoon head. I also got some things from this man."

"You did fine, my son. You did very well. Now I want you to try to trade for more things, and be careful. Don't fall off the ship."

"I won't fall off, father," I said hastily.

Exploration

I welcomed the suggestion and started out at once to do what I was told. I promptly forgot about trading. I walked around the ship, and everything I saw was new and wonderful. I looked here and there and explored. The experience was exciting.

What most interested me were the masts. I kept looking up at them and marvelled at their height. I watched them as they arched back and forth across the sky as the ship rolled easily. I looked at the base of one of the masts and it was vast, round and solid. I again wondered how the ship could stay upright and not be tipped over by the weight of them — especially when it was rolling.

I decided that nothing would happen to the ship and went about my way. I encountered many of the people I knew from the village and the sailors of the Bear. Most of them on both

sides were having difficulty understanding the other and much gesticulating and making signs and motions was in progress. There was frequent laughter and good fellowship especially when they apparently understood one another in spite of the language barrier.

Soon, trading slowed down to almost nothing, and the villagers began to get ready to go ashore. Many of them had already gone down the ladder to get into their umiaks.

Pangs of Regret

I went looking for my father and found him. He told me we were ready to go ashore. We went to the ladder and our umiak had been pulled right below it. The man with the distinctive hat was there and he had a rope in his hands. He gave me a small package. I found out later it was filled with chewing gum.

As my father was going down the ladder, the man wrapped one end of the rope around my chest and tied it securely.

"Here we go, Howard," he said, lifting me up. "Down we go."

He put me over the railing. I looked down at my father and he seemed way down below me. I was lowered to him, his strong hands took me by the waist and I was in the umiak.

I looked up at the railing of the ship and many of the sailors were looking down at us. I looked at the man with the hat.

"Good bye, little fellow," he said in a loud voice. He waved to me.

"Goodbye, sir. Thank you sir," I answered.

The other men waved and said goodbyes.

The rope at the bow of our umiak was disengaged and we pulled away from the Cutter Bear. I felt pangs of regret that I was leaving the ship on which I had a wonderful experience and which I would never forget.

I kept looking at it as it slowly receded into the distance. It was beautiful — balanced. Everything about it, the masts, spars, the bowsprit and the lines of the hull seemed to belong exactly where they should be. To a small boy, it was like a wonderful apparition — a soft gray ship with amber masts.

Waiting Crowd

I took my eyes reluctantly away from the ship and looked toward the village. Just about everyone was on the beach waiting for us and other umiaks to come ashore. As we came closer, I saw mother among the people. She was on the water's edge and she was smiling.

A look of expectancy came upon her face. I couldn't wait to get ashore to tell her the news. Even before the umiak hit the beach, I shouted:

"Mother! Mother! I got some soap for you, I got some towels, too, and I got underwear. I got trousers and I got oreo — oranges — and they're real good!"

"I made some real good friends, too — a nice man with a hat and a great big man who was very dark and he was real good to me!"

"I've never seen this boy so excited before," father thought aloud, chuckling. Mother did not say a word but there was a poignant smile on her face as she looked at me. I knew she was more than pleased.

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