



“Watch out, boy!”

William Freeman froze.

“Doctor Saw Bones is on the prowl,” Jenkins continued. “With your foot in that state, he’ll have you above deck and thrown overboard!”

The mad old convict scratched some lice from his matted hair and grinned, revealing dirty black gaps where teeth had been, before he had started the long journey to the colony of New South Wales.

At Jenkins’ hissed warning, William shrank against the hull he was chained to. Every convict knew that those who were unlucky enough to go above deck to see Dr Barber swiftly became sharks’ dinner.

Perhaps that wouldn’t be so bad. At least it would be quick...and to think that he had once wanted to be a doctor!

Freemans' Feats



Pressing his face against splintery wood, William ignored the familiar smell of seasickness. His foot throbbed where the iron cuff and salt water had chafed and scored his skin over the months. His ankle was so swollen that, with every roll of the ship, he felt as if he would scream. What he wanted more than anything else was to wake up from this endless nightmare—to be warm and safe and have a full belly.

As he'd learned to do so many times before, William retreated into his head to escape the pain. He imagined his old life where he was safe from being beaten and pushed around. A life where no claw-like hands snatched foul



water and weevil-infested biscuits away before they had touched his parched lips. The time when his father was still alive and William was not yet a convict...

William's family had been poor, but not hungry like all the beggars who pleaded with William for a **ha'penny** as he ran errands for his father along the crowded docks. The docks were full of bare-footed, red-eyed girls selling wilted posies of violets, and mothers in tattered shawls, holding limp, pale babies and crying, "Please help me feed my child." Sharp-eyed tricksters tried to part people from their precious silver with a chestnut beneath half-coconut shells and other shabby magic tricks.