

JONAH

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Dan Larsen



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Solve the Secret Code!

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a set of numbers—it's the code to a secret message throughout the book.

Each group of four numbers stands for a single letter in the message. Your job is to pinpoint each mystery letter with the codes, then write the letters above each four-digit number group. When you've finished solving each chapter's code, read the letters from chapter one through the end of the book to find out exactly what the secret message says!

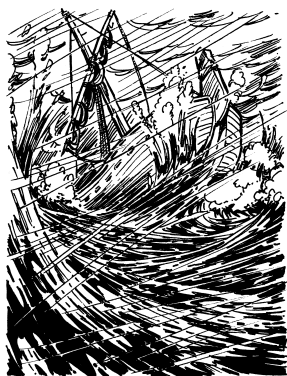
Here's how to use the codes:

- The first number is the page number—within that chapter.
- The second number is the paragraph on the page—count full paragraphs only.
- The third number is the word in the appropriate paragraph.
- The fourth number is the letter in the appropriate word—this is the letter you'll write above the number group.

Enjoy the story. . .and solving the secret message!

1

Tossed at Sea



The storm had come like a surprise attack. The only warning had been the uncanny sound of the wind. None of the mariners on board this ship had ever heard it like that before. These men had known this sea, the Mediterranean, all their lives. They made their living on it, carrying trade goods from port to port along the coast. They knew of

the pleasant breezes on this sea, of going under full sail for days and nights on end. They knew, too, of the fierce storms that could blow down suddenly from the hills and mountains—thick black clouds scudding across the waters like hordes from hell.

But this. . .this was something different. Today the wind had a voice. It came at first like a howling from somewhere off in the distant, unseen mountains. But that howling was from the throat of no earthly beast! Then the howling became a wail, and the wail became a shriek. And then the force of that wind followed its voice. It whipped up the sea like a cauldron and tossed the ship like a toy.

The waves broke against the ship, drenching everyone on board. The ship plunged and reared, its timbers straining to the point of cracking. And these mariners—men who knew, and did not fear, the worst this sea had ever shown them—were afraid.

These men were from many different lands. They believed in many different gods. They cried out to those gods now, for deliverance from this storm that was not of this world. Even as they cried to their gods, they began to throw the cargo overboard to lighten the load.

The ship was foundering, each dip of its prow seeming to be its last. As the waves came over the deck, the men clung to ropes, to chains, to masts. This was not just a storm, they were sure. This was the work of some angry god, or devil.

But one man was not on deck. One man did not know, or perhaps did not care, about the fury poured out on that ship. He was down below, curled up among bundles of cloths—asleep. The expression on the sleeper's face was. . . what? Not contentment, surely. Not mere exhaustion, even. No, there was something troubled in that face, even in sleep. If the man dreamed just then, his dreams were not a comfort to him.

Up above, the shipmaster clung to the bulwark with both hands as yet another wave broke over the deck. He had given up calling out orders—there was nothing any of them could do now, except pray. But pray to which god? Which of the many gods these men served was now trying to destroy them? Was there some other whom no one had



called upon yet? Who, or what. . .? Suddenly the shipmaster remembered. The man below. Was he there still? The shipmaster scanned the faces of the men on deck. No, that one was not there. Could he be sleeping yet, through all this?

Just then the shipmaster's heart quaked with a new fear. Could the man below be. . .? Was he a man at all, or. . .? No! The shipmaster shook his head and steeled his jaw. He would go below and see for himself. At the very least, the sleeping man must be made to know of his peril. And perhaps he. . . . Again, the shipmaster shook his head. He would not, he could not, fear the worst. Nor would he allow himself a false hope. But he must get to the man below!

The ship was plunging again, down, down, its prow spearing through the wall of seawater that stood up above the deck. Was this the last plunge? No, the prow came up again, the water washing over the deck. At any moment the ship would be almost level—only for a moment. Now! The shipmaster lunged for the hold.

The sleeping man awoke with a gasp. His dream had been no dream at all, then. Something did have him in its grip, was shaking him and laughing—a hideous laugh. So this was death! But, after all, he knew it would be

so. He had chosen this, had he not? But wait! What was this?

“What do you mean by this, sleeper?” The voice was a man’s. The hands that shook the sleeper were a man’s, too.

“Get up!” came the voice again. “Call on your god, if it might be that he will think of us. We are all going to die!”

The sleeper was awake now. He saw the shipmaster above him, calling him. He felt the rising and plunging of the ship. And outside—the wailing voices of thousands of demons?

“A storm!” the shipmaster shouted. “An evil storm. . .a devil. . .the doom of us all! Why are you down here all alone? All the others are above, crying out to their gods. Come up quickly. It may be that you, too, have a god you can call on.”

They went up together and came out on deck just as the ship was righting itself after a plunge. The crew were all clustered around the mainmast. They all stared now at the shipmaster and the sleeper. Now one of the crew motioned for the two men to join them. When they were all huddled together, the man who had motioned shouted, “Come, let us draw lots, that we may know who is to blame for this evil upon us.”



The shipmaster nodded grimly. The sleeper bowed his head.

The name they drew was “Jonah.” Every man now looked at the one whose head was bowed.

“You are Jonah?” they said.

“I am,” he said.

“Tell us, we pray, who is to blame for this.”

“I am.”

“What do you do? Where do you come from? Of what people are you?”

The man called Jonah answered:

“I am a Hebrew, and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land.”

Then, with his head still bowed, he went on. Even though he served the God he had just spoken of, had served and worshipped him all his life, he was now running from him, trying to escape.

“Escape!” the men cried. “Why?”

“Because,” Jonah said, “this time I cannot

obey. I can only fear. And so I have chosen to flee from my God, my Lord, rather than to obey. I have chosen, even, to die if I cannot escape.”

And, so it seemed, he would not escape after all.

Now the mariners were really afraid. So there was a God who had done this, just as they thought—the God of the Hebrew man called Jonah. And this God was angry with His servant!

“Will we all die now?” they asked Jonah. And they said, among themselves, “What kind of God is this that he serves?” At the least, they were certain, He was a God to be feared.

“What must we do with you,” they asked Jonah, “that your God might spare us?”

Then Jonah looked up at them. There was no fear in those eyes! And there was no tremor in the voice that said, “Take me and throw me into the sea, and it will be calm for you. It is because of me that this storm has come upon you.”

The men could only stare. There was something frightening about this strange man, Jonah, the way he stood there before them, calmly and deliberately telling them to throw him overboard! Yet what else was there about him? An authority, in his face, in his voice.

These men were pagans. They knew, or



thought they knew, many gods. They did not know the one God, the Lord this man Jonah spoke of. But they did not doubt that their lives were in this Lord's hands just now. They believed that Jonah was telling the truth, that he was to blame for this storm sent by this God. Yet they were not men without human feeling. Not one of them had any desire to throw a living man overboard at sea. Instead, a new desperation, a new determination, rose up among them. They swarmed below and strapped themselves to the rowing benches.

“To shore!” they cried. “To shore or die!”

But the ship would not obey the mariner's oars. It just plunged and rose on the waves, and its timbers began to splinter. The men could row no more.

Jonah was still above, clinging to the main-mast. The men came up to him, their eyes downcast. Jonah struggled to his feet. “You must take me,” he said, “and cast me into the sea. It must be so—my life for yours. Cast me

over or perish, one and all.”

Then they cried out to Jonah’s God:

“We beg You, O Lord, do not let us die for this man’s life. Do not lay innocent blood upon us—for You, O Lord, have done this as You pleased.”

And they threw Jonah overboard.

The frothy waves seemed to open jaws and swallow the man whole. Instantly the screaming winds—like myriad birds of prey—lifted from the sea and shrieked off into the sky. The next moment there was silence. The sea was calm.

And the mariners stood in awe on the now-gently rolling deck of their ship. And one by one they took from their pockets their little idols, the carved bone or wooden images of their gods, and threw them into the sea. And the men made vows, one to another. They would fear this God now and forever, they swore, this one true God—whose servant they had just sent to the bottom of the sea!

Secret Code:

3-2-4-3 5-3-4-2 6-2-3-3 4-2-4-2 6-3-3-5

2-2-6-4 7-5-3-3 1-1-3-2 7-5-5-1 2-1-2-4 5-2-4-2