
ENGLISH

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Paper 2 Fiction

October 2018

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1 hour plus 10 minutes' reading time



This document consists of **3** printed pages and **1** blank page.

Text for Section A, an extract from 'The Lie Tree' by Frances Hardinge

The boat moved with a nauseous, relentless rhythm, like someone chewing on a rotten tooth. The islands just visible through the mist also looked like teeth, Faith decided. Not fine, clean Dover teeth, but jaded, broken teeth, jutting crookedly amid the wash of the choppy grey sea. The mailboat chugged its dogged way through the waves, greasing the sky with smoke.

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'Osprey,' said Faith through chattering teeth, and pointed.

Her six-year-old brother Howard twisted round, too slow to see the great bird, as its pale body and dark-fringed wings vanished into the mist. Faith winced as he shifted his weight on her lap. At least he had stopped demanding the nursemaid.

'Is that where we are going?' Howard squinted at the ghostly islands ahead.

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'Yes.' Rain thudded against the thin wooden roof above their heads. The cold wind blew in from the deck, stinging Faith's face.

In spite of the noise around her, Faith was sure that she could hear faint sounds coming from the crate on which she sat. Rasps of movement, breathy slithers of scale on scale. It pained Faith to think of her father's little Chinese snake inside, weak with the cold, coiling and uncoiling itself in panic with every tilt of the deck.

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Behind her, raised voices competed with the keening of the gulls and the *phud-phud-phud* of the boat's great paddles. Now that the rain was setting in, everybody on board was squabbling over the small sheltered area towards the stern. There was room for the passengers, but not for all of the trunks. Faith's mother Myrtle was doing her best to claim a large share for her family's luggage, with considerable success.

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Sneaking a quick glance over her shoulder, Faith saw Myrtle waving her arms like a conductor while two deckhands moved the Sunderly trunks and crates into place. Today Myrtle was waxen with tiredness and shrouded to the chin with shawls, but as usual she talked through and over everybody else, warm, bland and unabashed, with a pretty woman's faith in others' helpless chivalry.

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'Thank you, there, right there – well, I am heartily sorry to hear that, but it cannot be helped – on its side, if you do not mind – well, your case looks very durable to me – I am afraid my husband's papers and projects will not endure the weather so – the Reverend Erasmus Sunderly, the renowned naturalist – how very kind! I am so glad that you do not mind ...'

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Beyond her, round-faced Uncle Miles was napping in his seat, blithely and easily as a puppy on a rug. Faith's gaze slipped past him, to the tall, silent figure beyond. Faith's father, in his black priestly coat, his broad-brimmed hat overshadowing his high brow and hooked nose.

He always filled Faith with awe. Even now he stared out towards the grey horizons with his unyielding stare, distancing himself from the chilly downpour, the reek of bilge and coal-smoke and the ignominious arguing and jostling. Most weeks she saw more of him in the pulpit than she did in the house, so it was peculiar to look across and see him sitting there. Today she felt a prickle of pained sympathy. He was out of his element, a lion in a rain-lashed sideshow.

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On Myrtle's orders, Faith was sitting on the family's largest crate, to stop anybody dragging it out again. Usually she managed to fade into the background, since nobody had attention to spare for a fourteen-year-old girl with wooden features and a mud-brown plait. Now she

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wincing under resentful glares, seared by all the embarrassment that Myrtle never felt.

Myrtle's petite figure was positioned to impede anybody else trying to insert their own luggage under cover. A tall, broad man with a knuckly nose seemed about to push past her with his trunk, but she cut him short by turning to smile.

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Myrtle blinked twice, and her big, blue eyes widened, taking on an earnest shine as if she had only just noticed the person before her with clarity. Despite her pink-nipped nose and weary pallor, her smile still managed to be sweet and confiding.

'Thank you for being so understanding,' she said. There was the tiniest, tired break in her voice.

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It was one of Myrtle's tricks for handling men, a little coquetry she summoned as easily and reflexively as opening her fan. Every time it worked, Faith's stomach twisted. It worked now. The gentleman flushed, gave a curt bow and withdrew, but Faith could see he was still carrying his resentment with him. In fact, Faith suspected that her family had antagonised nearly everybody on the boat.

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