



# JERICHO WRITERS

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She thinks. *I will never come back.*

Poor Diana Abrams ~~— s.~~ She ~~couldn~~’t escape. It’ ~~was~~ too late for her, ~~but,~~ ~~n~~Never mind. ~~M.~~ Mabel will write to her. She turns on the bench towards the steamer’s bow. ~~S.~~ She won’t ~~turn her face~~ look back any ~~more.~~

~~-T~~They’re already approaching Kirkwall Island. ~~:-~~

~~a~~A real land, this one, with a real town. The steamer finds its way ~~within~~ amid a fleet of fishing boats. Union Jacks sparkle all over the quays. ~~:-~~ at last, civilization. Look, ~~:-~~ there they are, the giant nets, rolled around metal planks. They say they can cover miles of waves. And ~~t~~here they are, salmon and cod and tunny. ~~:-~~ mountains of them. They too have fled the waters of Luffham.

Unknown faces turn towards the newcomers. They shoot up from behind sails and masts, ~~:-~~ vanish, shoot up again. Men.

The war song dies away. Abrams stands up and ~~spreads his look~~ casts his gaze over the crowd as they dock. Abrams, the stranger who came to Luffham. ~~h.~~ He will ~~make~~ cause the Kirkwall stares ~~look down to lower~~ men. Abrams, the mainlander who ~~christianised~~ brought Christianity to Luffham. ~~h.~~ He will silence Kirkwall’s whispers.

Mabel lifts her head, looking out for the young men. ~~l.~~ Looking out for caps thrown on cheeky brows, for dirty collars and quivering throats, like hers. There are less than ten boys her age on Luffham, and she knows them all already. ~~Whereas, but elsewhere~~ there’s a whole world waiting for her, full of heroes not yet known with whom she will share the universe. She ~~can feel~~ feels their presence. ~~:-~~ as something new, something powerful ~~that,~~ is driving them all to Flanders. A promise. If only the war could last long enough.

A dozen Kirkwall lads climb onto the steamer ~~and are,~~ greeted by Abrams and the boys. They’re young men who will lie to the recruiters about their age, like ~~herself~~ she did, like Gregory, her little brother who sits beside her. Her own mother built the impressive chignon on the back of Mabel’s head that will deceive the nurses.

They leave Kirkwall Island, and ~~on~~ to the mainland the steamer goes.

The sun ~~declines~~dips in the sky. They sail south along the barrier of the English shores, searching for a passage in. Blue-green fields breaking ~~ing~~ on grey rocks, down into a relentlessly ~~gnawing~~ sea. Bays, gasping like mouths, ~~with~~have small harbours lodged in their throats. Shingle beaches lie behind peaks crowned with dark ruins, gazed upon by ~~Hundreds-year-old~~ancient abbeys ~~looking down on them~~. And then, there are more and more sails ~~peopling~~populating the sea. There is w~~White~~ smoke, black smoke, flags flying, and the windowless, red ~~brick~~ walls of long warehouses, of factories carving out the new world, rows of tall chimneys like a platoon of giants. There is the glow of a huge harbour pulsating with life.

Yes, the future is all that matters. The past, Luffham, she will soon forget.

As they approach, night stretches over the sky. Why, in this moment, does she glance at Abrams ~~then~~? Right from the other end of the group of men, she can ~~see~~see him. ~~He's~~ staring ahead at the chilled air, with white-hot eyes, ~~b~~Burning and s ~~Sharpening~~.