

It was two years since Thomas had arrived at Norfolk Island, at the age of ten, after saying goodbye -and good riddance - to the *HMS Supply*.

It had been similar to home at first. Cool, windy and damp. Despite being early Autumn, it was pleasant, the soft sunshine giving him hope that maybe this place wouldn't be so bad. Then winter had come, and the coast was lashed with fierce rainstorms and violent winds.

Food was running out. The *Guardian* should have arrived months ago, bringing food and livestock, anything different from the salted meat and brittle biscuits. Despite the fangs of hunger clawing at him, Thomas was become alarming accustomed to the emptiness inside him.

On Friday the thirteenth of March, Thomas heard shouting on the beach. He was knee-deep in horse droppings, using a spade head and a lopsided barrow to clean out the stables. Leaving the spade, he poked his head out of the stable door, looking towards the beachfront.

There was a crowd gathering. Two ships shimmered on the horizon, one slightly bigger than the other. Was this the appearance of the *Guardian*? A dark storm was brewing behind the ships on the horizon, dragging itself towards land.

Hours later, As the ships sailed past the mouth of the bay, Thomas saw the *Supply* slip away behind the other ship, the *HMS Sirius*. The storm had chased them in. The next day, the fierce swell and howling wind stopped them from coming into shore again.

A black mood settled in the colony, both convicts and guards walked around with faces like thunderclouds. There was food on that ship, and the weather was keeping it from them.

On the third day, the *Sirius* made a break for it. The *Sirius* and her sails were being grabbed at by the wind. The crowd gasped as she was tugged into the reef. There was a groaning sound as her hull caved in, the sea lapping upwards as she sank.

The crew dived into the waves, knocked about like dust in the wind. People ran to the other side of the shore, taking a thick rope with them. They tied it to a large tree and threw one end into the sea. Eventually, the entire crew of the boat were pulled out of the bay, like fish on a line.

Men hurried to the *Sirius* and her slowly sinking supplies. Thomas could hear the terrified bawling of animals and could see dark shapes of lost sheep and cows kicking out for shore. Thomas saw a bedraggled sheep climb out of the water like a dirty cloud and ran over to it.

As he grabbed hold of the shaking animal, he saw a flash of orange on the deck of the ship, as fire bloomed along her side. He saw the men leaping off of the dying vessel and leaving her precious cargo; and all he could think about was how important this sheep would be when winter came again.