



A New Beginning

It seemed as if Jim had only just gone to sleep when he was kicked awake again. Grimy Nick, yawning and coughing, pulled him to his feet.

“Move!” he shouted. “Tide’s turning!”

Jim staggered up. A fluttering of excitement lit up like a small candle flame inside him. It was time for them to move downstream.

Nick stood with his long oar dipping into the water and guided the Lily out, and along with her came a flock of barges and sailing boats. The watermen shouted abuse at each other, all racing to find work first. To Jim the Lily was like a water bird edging her quiet way along the brown river. Even Nick’s swearing and whistling didn’t take away from him the excitement he was feeling.

He looked back and saw the city, with its black pall of smoke hung over it, and he saw the arms of the bridges looping across it, and the slow traffic of sailing boats like dark swans. He heard the sheesh! of water against the sides of the Lily, and the steady splash! splash! of Nick’s long oar and above him, the heckling of gulls. Nothing, not all the misery of the last year, not the pain of the last two days, not his fear of Grimy Nick and Snipe, could take away from him the thrill of the journey. It felt like a new beginning.

Extract taken from ‘Street Child’ (Berlie Doherty)