

The Kingdom of the East Angles – By Amy Gillingham

Endre had become accustomed to the rocking. The smell of salt and musty elm were fading in to his senses. He was aware that his kyrtil was becoming damp. It had been four days of consecutive rowing to reach what he was promised. England.

The blisters on his hands were bloody and weeping, he could sense a small soaked patch forming on his oar.

The English horizon was faint. If he squinted, Endre could make out the vague grey undulations appearing in the skyline. At just fifteen he was leaving his mother, her new husband and his two little sisters behind, following his father's death. The bruises on his lower back groaned deeper in to his body, a staunch reminder of the man he had left in charge of his family.

He was escaping to the Kingdom of the East Angles. His mother's younger brother, Fritjof had been one of the earlier travellers to this place, he had told Endre all about the land and its perfect farming conditions. Fritjof had never returned, so Endre thought he must have been right.

He was tired. The tiredness consumed every single bone in Endre's lank frame. He allowed his body to engulf further in to the comfort of his woollen cloak. His eyes began to glaze over at the thought of the acres of fertile cropland that would be at his pleasure. Moreover his mind wandered curiously to the native women. He wondered if it would be here he would find himself a wife.

He snapped from his reverie to hear the other men jeering at him, they must be cross. Ever since they had set sail he was deemed too weak to reach the far-off place. They reminded him of his step-father, the very man he sought to escape the wrath of. So, he slipped into the all-to familiar response, he gritted his teeth and pushed himself to continue. He suddenly became aware of the waves sloshing against the side of the boat and the smell of the salt entered his nostrils once more, a memory of an added flavour to his new life. It reminded him he must row on.

The potential of this country kept him rowing, the moist soil that would soon become tangible. His idea of this new life was hazy, but one thing he did know was that it couldn't be worse than the bitterly hostile one he was living in Borg.

Suddenly Endre heard the shouts of the men... had he been letting his mind run away with him again?

No. The shouts were of glee!

England was bounding towards them. He could see the slight curves of the land clearly now, meandering along the sky like a river running alongside land. This sight confirmed to Endre, he had made it to his promise land. The water became shallow and suddenly, the bottom of the boat jolted and lurched his body forward.

He was free.