

JULES VERNE – ON A SMALL BOAT

By Carole L. Cooney

Jules Verne was a famous writer. He is known as the Father of Science Fiction. He spent his childhood at the family's summer home on France's Atlantic coast. As a young boy, he and his brother, Paul, would rent a small boat for the day and row behind their summer house, dreaming up adventure stories.

Setting: A small boat

Characters:

Narrator

Jules

Paul, his brother

Narrator: Jules Verne and his brother, Paul rented a boat and rowed in the waters of France's Atlantic coast. Slowly, they rounded to the back of their family's summer house.

Jules: The water's very calm today. But there are some nasty black clouds hanging over there behind those hills.

Paul: Do you think it's going to rain, Jules? Should we head back?

Jules: No, Paul. Even if it does rain, we can row under that little pier. Now...let's make up a story.

Paul: Yes, but you start. You're better than I am at storytelling.

Jules: All right. Let's see... Once upon a time, in the deep dark of night, a little boy named Arthur rowed his small boat on the lake by his house. He had to get home quickly before anyone realized he was gone. Through the darkness, he heard a voice calling to him. Suddenly, a man's hand reached up through the murky water and grabbed the side of Arthur's boat. All right, Paul. What happened next?

Paul: He screamed, "STOP!"

Jules: No, no, Paul. He's too frightened to scream. Arthur has to *do* something.

Paul: What shall he do?

Jules: He'll *smash* the man's hand with his oar.

Paul: But the man will grab the oar with his other hand.

Jules: And hit Arthur in the head, knocking him to the floor of the boat.

Paul: What happens then, Jules?

Jules: Then, the man will climb into the boat and...

Paul: Stop, Jules. This story is too spooky

Jules: No – wait. I have an idea. Arthur has been working on experiments. He will take his newest experiment, The Inflatable Balloon, from his pocket. (whispers)

It's a huge balloon that blows up full size in two seconds. (He pulls the cord and ka-boom! The balloon expands and lifts Arthur into the air out of the man's clutches.)

Paul: Then what happens, Jules?

Jules: Well...

Narrator: As Jules was thinking of what would happen next, heavy rain burst from the sky.

Jules: Quick! Let's make our way to the pier! Give me the oars. How I wish I had a balloon like Arthur's. It could get us there in no time.

Narrator: Jules swiftly rowed the boat to the pier. Carefully they slid under it to escape the down-pouring water.

Paul: Whew! At last, we're out of the rain. Now...will you finish the story, Jules?

Jules: Well...Arthur sailed over his house holding onto the balloon tightly while trying to figure out how to land safely. "Aha!" he thought. "If I let the air out slowly, I'll drop down gently." And that's exactly what he did. The only trouble was that he landed on the top of a tall tree in his garden. (laughing)

Paul: (laughing) But...how did he get down from the tree top, Jules?

Jules: Why don't *you* tell me, Paul?

Paul: Well...I know! He had *another* experiment in his back pocket. It was his Flying Wings. He pulled them out and slipped them onto his arms. With one giant leap off of the tree top, he flew to the ground.

Jules: Great idea, Paul! What a good ending.

Narrator: The brothers spent a short time under the pier, for when the sun burst through the clouds, it was time to return home to some warm clothes and hot cocoa.