

Captain brierly and jim: long lost brothers?

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



Captain Brierly and Jim: Long Lost Brothers? In reading Conrad's novel, the character of Captain Brierly is one whose story is minor in role but highly significant in the understanding and development of Jim. Shortly after the inquiry of the events that took place on the Patna, Brierly commits suicide, thus abandoning the ship of life. Even with his small and mysterious incorporation to the novel, I find that Captain Brierly not only helps me understand Jim much better, but more over I see a connection in the actions of Brierly and Jim. While in the court house, Brierly was "consumedly bored by the honour thrust upon him" (Conrad 38) when listening to the inquiry of the Patna. Brierly himself is a highly respected and well known ship captain and in listening to Jim's tale of the events and abandoning ship leaves him distraught, contemplating his own decisions in life that credit to this unknown "shame" that plagues him in his final hours. Brierly I think in a sense feels for Jim, like a big brother for his little brother when they are feeling down. Brierly understands the heat of the moment, your life flashing before your eyes, and above all he is fully aware of what it is like to go out and face the treacherous sea head on. Although it is your sworn duty to never abandon ship unless it is indeed sinking, you can't blame a man for doing such when all the alerting signs are before him: the lights going out, the boats being lowered, etc. It is with this understanding that Brierly proposes the option to Jim through Marlow to take a sum of money and leave the harbor area. He sees past the extreme amounts of scrutiny towards Jim for his decision to abandon ship and sees the strive for heroism in him. Brierly, a sea hero himself, knows of the troubles that lie at sea and in a sense can't blame Jim for his decision to leave. His offer of the money is not

just a way to escape his troubled past, but also to get a fresh start and continue to chase his dream. Both Brierly's and Jim's abandonment from their respective ships are extremely similar in the fact that both are not narrated. At the same time, both jumps are not just instantaneous acts of abandonment, but rather thought through intensely. When the Patna takes a turn for the worst, Jim ends up in a life boat with no description of his jump and what was going through his head. Jim throughout the novel is constantly thinking of what he can do to become a hero, to be remembered as one of the best sea captains in the world. He is so hung up on missing his chance on his first voyage that he is constantly on his toes waiting for his moment to shine. When the tragic events take place on the Patna, Jim is still fully focused on heroism. When he hears of the squall approaching, Jim puts his dreams of heroism (as well as his life) ahead of his duty and abandons ship, thinking that it is going to sink and further preserving his dream of heroism. He is rudely awakened by news that the Patna never sank and is in the harbor now, thus classifying Jim as a failure for abandoning his duty rather than a hero for evacuating the crew and pilgrims from the ship. In the case of Brierly, his jump was also highly thought out, going back to the trial where Brierly's chief mate reacts to Brierly's boredom saying " he was probably holding silent inquiry into his own case" (Conrad 39). There is something that isn't at all explained in the novel that still plagues the life of Brierly and it could have some similarities or significance to Jim's current situation. With this case, Brierly planned out his final hours, guiding the Ossa on its course, and after yelling at his dog to leave him alone, he shortly after jumps ship. Brierly, after hearing about the events of the Patna, was again haunted by

something from his past and he felt the only way to completely free himself of it was to commit suicide and abandon ship. With Brierly's suicide comes the comparison of Jim and Brierly abandoning their problems. After the inquiry of the Patna, Jim is faced with constant anger and hatred from seamen and townspeople alike for his decision to abandon a ship that did not sink. Everywhere he goes he is haunted about his decision and labeled as a failure. This constant verbal abuse is also getting in his way of keeping a job for everywhere he goes he is constantly reminded of the Patna. Though it isn't stated in the novel, we can assume that Brierly had some situation in his life where everyone was against him, much like Jim has now. Brierly proposes an offer to Jim through Marlow to take the money and get far away to find a fresh start, where no one can remind him of his past. Although it takes Jim a while to warm up to the idea, he eventually flees for Patusan, where no one knows of him or the Patna. Brierly on the underhand, sees that he has done his time and, although no one remembers his flaws, he himself still dwells on the past and can't live with his choices, committing suicide to once and for all run away from his problems. Although Captain Brierly and Jim differ drastically in experience(s), they are both forever connected with each other in this novel. With the case of the money as a way out, Brierly is looking out for Jim like a big brother and giving him the option to leave his past behind and start fresh. Although Brierly can't come to terms with his past, he feels that he can help Jim get over his. This connection as brothers is highly similar to the relationship between Lambert Strether and Little Bilham. Strether, on his own journey of self discovery, shares stories from his past with Little Bilham in an attempt to prevent him from making the same

mistakes that Strether made in his youth. Strether wants Little Bilham to reach his full potential, much like Captain Brierly wants Jim to leave so he can do as such. Through both characters actions and decisions comes an imbedded brotherly relationship between Brierly and Jim beyond their professions.