

## PERCY THE PIRATE

“Get up! Get up, lazy bones!”

Percy peeped out from under the covers. The sun was already over the yard arm of his ship, the Jolly Desmond, which was rocking gently at its mooring.

Pinky the parrot would not stop until Percy got up. His last owner would sleep all day so Pinky had learnt to shout. And shout he did.

“Get up! There’s work to do! I want breakfast!”

Percy got up, fed Pinky and walked off to the Pirate Captain’s Club. He would often go there even though the other pirate captains laughed at him.

“It’s Percy the land lubber!”

“It’s Percy the mini-pirate with the mini ship!”

“When they see Percy they laugh so hard they drop all their gold!”

The last insult had actually happened and Percy did get some gold. But since then he had had no luck at all.

The other pirate captains soon ignored him. They were all listening to Captain Bushybeard, the most feared pirate captain of them all. His ship, the Skull and Crossbones, was the largest and fiercest pirate ship afloat.

“Listen up, lads! The Golden Fleece will soon be sailing past. This time I’ll be ready!”

They all knew the Golden Fleece’s captain, Captain Billboard, scoffed at pirates because he had the biggest and fastest treasure ship ever. No one could catch him.

“He will have a million gold doubloons on board,” said the captain of the Skull and Crossbones, “and it will all be mine!”

The others chortled heartily.

“I have a plan,” continued Bushybeard, “and this time I’ll get Billboard!”

“What’s your plan, Captain Bushybeard and how can we help?”

“Ah! Not so fast, me hearties! If I tell you, I’ll have to make you walk the plank. I’ve written it down here, see!” He waved a piece of paper at them. I don’t need any help and I’m keeping this safe! The gold will be all mine!”

Percy sat at the back and watched, no one was taking any notice of him. Even his parrot Pinky seemed ashamed of his master. He waited by the door with the other parrots. Of course, Captain Bushybeard’s parrot was the biggest of them all and the other parrots kept their heads down when he was around.

Captain Bushybeard went up to get another cup of tea and Percy noticed he had dropped something. When he got the chance, he walked calmly over and picked it up. It was the Captain’s plan!

Percy quickly hid it in his pocket. As he turned round, he saw a floor sweeper looking intently at him. Percy hadn’t seen this person before, was it someone who might tell Bushybeard? He’d better leave quickly.

“Come on, Pinky! We need to get back to the Jolly Desmond.”

The floor sweeper watched him go. What would he do?

When Percy got back to the Jolly Desmond he called in his first mate, Pimley, and his second mate, Plumbob.

“They laughed at me again,” he said.

“They laughed at us at the Mates Club as well,” said Pimley.

“Well, they won’t be laughing soon!” said Percy.

“Why?”

“I have Bushybeard’s secret plan to rob the Golden Fleece!”

“But nobody’s ever done that!” said Plumbob.

“Bushybeard thinks he can. The question, lads, is what do we do?”

“Well, we can’t catch the Golden Fleece and we’re much too small to rob it,” said Pimley.

“There’s a million gold doubloons for the taking!”

Both Pimley and Plumbob’s jaws dropped.

“Did you say ‘a million’?!?”

“That’s right, lads! If only we could get our hands on even a small part of it.”

Just then the floor sweeper from the Pirate Captain’s Club appeared and asked for permission to come aboard.

“Permission granted,” said Percy.

“Excuse me, Captain Percy,” he said. “The other pirates make fun of you but I know you are a man of courage!”

“You do?” asked Percy.

“Yes! True courage! The others are all wind but you demand respect.”

“I do?” Percy wondered. Who was this person who certainly didn’t sound like a floor sweeper.

“Yes, you do! Now, I respect you and I am willing to pay you a good price for the secret plan that you have in your pocket.”

“What secret plan?” asked Percy.

“The secret plan that is worth 10,000 gold doubloons!”

“Oh, that secret plan!”

“First, you will have to take me out to Skull Island. There I am meeting someone. He will pay you.”

They sent the floor sweeper outside. He obviously wasn’t a floor sweeper but who was he? Percy and his two mates went into a huddle.

“We can get 10,000 doubloons out of this! We’ve never had a chance like it before!”

The mates agreed so they called in the floor sweeper, who turned out to be not a floor sweeper but a woman!

“So you accept!” she said. “I knew you would. I am Sophia, that’s all you need to know. I am also a ‘Master of Disguise!’ ”

“You are?” asked the three men.

“You remember the old peg-legged pirate you helped across the road the other day?”

“That was you?”

“I can’t tell you what else I’ve done but I have been watching you. You are not as mean as the others. I know I can trust you.”

So it was agreed. They weighed anchor and sailed out to the far side of Skull Island where they found another small ship similar to theirs.

Sophia said, “I will signal the captain so you can board and ‘capture’ the gold. This captain wants to know what Bushybeard is up to. You can slip him the plan while no one is looking. It must look like a real robbery because your crew mustn’t suspect anything!”

“Is it Captain Billboard?” asked Percy.

“He has sent someone else. Do you agree to the plan?”

He agreed. Sophia was not the sort of person who took ‘No’ for an answer.

She signalled the other ship and they were able to board without any resistance.

“Oh no! Pirates!” cried its crew. They were trying to look as worried as possible.

Their captain stepped forward. “Spare our lives and we will pay you well!” he said.

Percy agreed. The chest was carried over and the lid was opened.

“Gold!” gasped the men of the Jolly Desmond. They were almost blinded by the glitter of all that lovely gold.

Sophia was nowhere to be seen. She had gone back to the Jolly Desmond and had reappeared as a deckhand when the crew returned carrying the gold.

“Who are you?” asked another deckhand.

“I’m Captain Percy’s younger brother,” she lied, once again.

As their ship sailed back to harbour, the crew of the Jolly Desmond celebrated. They didn’t suspect what had really happened. They thought they were so fearsome that the other ship’s captain had just paid up. They did not realise that the captain of the other ship was working for Captain Billboard.

Once they had docked, the crew left to celebrate some more while Percy and his two mates sat in his cabin.

“A good day’s work, Captain!” said Pimley the first mate.

“A good day’s work! A good day’s work!” echoed Pinky the parrot.

A deckhand appeared and stood to attention.

“Captain, sir! I didn’t get my bounty, sir!”

“Here you are, me lad!” said Percy. He handed over some golden doubloons.

Percy didn’t recognise Sophia who left the ship and disappeared into town, clutching her bounty.

Later, at the Pirate Captain’s Club, everyone was talking about Percy’s triumph.

“Caught them napping, he did!” they chorussed.

Captain Bushybeard came up and looked him in the eye. Percy tried not to look scared. Did he know?

“Well done, me lad!” he said and slapped him on the back.

Percy noticed Pinky was still sitting on his shoulder. He was proud of his master now. “Well done, me lad! Well done, me lad!” the parrot echoed.

Everybody laughed.

“Master of disguise! Master of disguise!” sang Pinky.

The whole club looked at Percy.

“Oh no!” he thought. “I promised I’d keep Sophia’s secret. What will she think? She’s probably here somewhere!”

She was there. Dressed as a pirate, looking even more like a pirate than most of the real pirates.

She waited, then shouted out, “That’s how he did it! They thought he was a fishing boat and didn’t suspect he was Percy the Pirate!”

“A fishing boat! A fishing boat!” sang Pinky.

Percy heard the voice and thought he recognised it. She was still there somewhere. She was safe.

He was glad of that.