

Percy the Pirate's Next Adventure

(by Mrs Sproulle with thanks to
Mr Sproulle)

Percy the Pirate was on his ship, The Jolly Desmond, trying to escape. He was trying to escape from Captain Bushybeard, the fiercest pirate of them all. Percy had stolen the captain's plan to rob a treasure ship carrying a million gold doubloons and Percy was sure Bushybeard wasn't happy about it.

It had worked out well for Percy and his crew because they'd managed to sell the plan to Bushybeard's enemy, Captain Billboard. Actually Sophia, a master of disguise, had managed that. But Percy and his crew did get quite a few gold doubloons out of the deal.

As he looked out to sea, Percy wondered if he'd ever see Sophia again. He sighed, then told his first mate to fish those maggots out of the stew. The crew were complaining again.

By morning The Jolly Desmond had neared the Cinnamon Islands. Percy had heard that some of his former pirate friends had become spice traders and given up being pirates.

"Too dangerous," said one. "All that swashbuckling and 'avast me hearties!'. Who needs it?"

"So much better - and easier - to trade in spices," said another. "The pay is good and you get time off for good behaviour."

"Stay with us, Percy," said a third. "You'll be safe here."

Percy persuaded his crew that they could make a better living buying spices from the islanders and trading cinnamon and nutmeg and pepper back home. Safer and more profitable, he said.

His crew weren't totally convinced. They enjoyed the swashbuckling life, waving their cutlasses about and looking fierce. But they had to follow captain's orders and Percy was their captain.

As they sailed into harbour, the islanders paddled out in their canoes to greet them. They were happy to trade their spices, especially if they got paid. What they didn't like were pirates who would steal from them or scare off other trading vessels.

Lately, there had been a very scary Ghost Ship which, on moonless nights, floated out of the shadows and scared the trading ships away. The crews jumped overboard in terror and abandoned their cargo which also disappeared. Fewer and fewer ships were willing to risk trading with the islanders and their crops were going to waste.

Percy, once he had heard their story, resolved to help them. After all if a pirate couldn't fight a Ghost Ship, then what were pirates good for? Besides his crew were begging him to engage in one last battle before they settled down to become peaceful traders.

One night, while they were waiting for the Ghost Ship to appear, Percy's first mate Pimley and second mate, Plumbob, saw a mysterious figure swimming towards their ship.

"Permission to come aboard," said the sailor floating on the water.

"Permission to come aboard, permission to come aboard," squawked Pinky the Parrot, a very annoying bird.

Their captain was called and Percy gave permission. He also told Pinky to shut his beak, please, and fly back to his perch.

"Captain Percy," said the sailor who had mysteriously dried, "I know you are a man of courage."

"You do?"

"Yes, you are fearless and brave and you demand respect."

"Wait a minute," said Percy. "I've heard those words before."

"Of course, you have. You've heard them from me. Don't you recognise me?" The sailor winked and smiled.

"Sophia! What are you doing here?" Percy could not believe his eyes but then, Sophia was a master of disguise.

"I am here to find and destroy the Ghost Ship. These islanders are my friends and they are struggling to sell their spices to the traders who are being frightened away."

“Yes, I’ve heard about the Ghost Ship and we would like to help,” said Percy. “But we need a plan and I haven’t come up with one yet. Besides, I’m a bit worried that this Ghost Ship will also scare my crew and I’ll be the only one left onboard!”

“Trust me,” said Sophia. “That won’t happen. For you see, there is no ghost ship and I will tell you what I have found out.”

They sat down around the dinner table, eating some stew - after the maggots had been fished out - and Sophia told Percy what she had discovered.

“I was on a trading ship when the so-called Ghost Ship appeared out of the mist. It did look very frightening with skeletons swaying from the yardarm and spooky, glowing figures rowing towards us. They were dressed in luminous green and blue with flashing necklaces. That was enough to send our crew jumping overboard!”

Percy felt shivers running up and down his spine just hearing about it.

“But I hid,” continued Sophia. “And I saw the ghostly sailors come on board and take the spices, load them into their rowboats and row back to their ship. I disguised myself and went with them. They took off their fluorescent jackets and their firefly necklaces which had given them such an eerie light. They had also trapped bioluminescent firefly squid and dangled them off the ship, those poor creatures! You’ve never seen anything so spooky! And the mist that always surrounds the Ghost Ship? It’s created by steam! From the water thrown onto their coal fires!”

“That is amazing!” said Percy. “And really, really, awfully spooky.”

“But we can defeat them.”

“We? How?”

“They are going to try again tomorrow night. While they are attacking our trading ship, you and I will board the Ghost Ship. Then we’ll give your crew the signal so they can help us sabotage it.”

Percy wasn’t sure that he - or his crew - were ready for this but Sophia carried on.

“We’ll cut down the skeletons on their yardarms and set off firecrackers and shout ‘fire’! When the Ghost Ship’s crew see their skeletons scattered around the deck and hear explosions, they will think there really is a fire and that they are doomed!”

“Who is their captain?”

“I think you might have met him before. Captain Bushybeard?”

Percy turned as white as the skeletons on board the Ghost Ship. “Captain Bushybeard! What is he doing here?”

“Looking for you. He was pretty upset after you stole that plan of his.”

“But - but I was trying to escape from him!”

“I’m afraid you didn’t manage that. But don’t worry, I’m sure we can defeat him.”

Percy was glad that Sophia was sure because he wasn’t. Still, he couldn’t let her see that, especially after she had called him “fearless and brave”. He gathered his crew together and told them of the plan.

They were more excited than he expected. The life of a spice trader was all very well, said his crew, but they were pirates and pirates defeated other pirates! Otherwise what was the point?

The next night it was as dark as treacle, not even the stars twinkled. Out of the mist loomed the Ghost Ship. Percy’s crew had disguised the Jolly Desmond as a trading vessel and were moored close to shore. Percy and Sophia, along with Pimley and Plumbob, were in their rowboat waiting under the pier.

They saw the Ghost Ship attack the Jolly Desmond, they saw their crew jump overboard. Luckily most of the crew could swim and those that couldn’t were glad they’d parked so close to shore.

Percy and Sophia heard Bushybeard’s crew mutter and complain when they could only find one box of spices on board. Then Percy heard a voice he was sure he recognised.

“Whoever tricked me into attacking this useless ship is going to walk the plank! We’ll be heading back, me lads. But first I’m having me tea.”

Six rowboats eventually headed back to the Ghost Ship. What they didn’t know was that Percy, Sophia and friends had rowed there before them. And they had set to work.

Bushybeard’s crew heard loud noises and saw sparks flashing . Luminescent skeletons were hitting the water and flames were shooting up in the air. Percy, Sophia and the two mates had managed to create an equally frightening scene on the famous Ghost Ship!

The spices had been hurled overboard and were floating to shore on the incoming tide. The Jolly Desmond’s crew had been instructed to fish them out of the water and return the spices to the villagers or to the traders who had bought them.

All that was left was for Percy and his gang to leave without being observed. Bushybeard was busy shouting at his crew to clear up and clear out. They obviously weren’t coming back in a hurry.

Sophia, Pimley and Plumbob had managed to slide over the side into their rowboat when a hairy hand reached out for Percy.

“Not so fast, me lad!” shouted Captain Bushybeard. “I know you! Where have I seen you before?”

“What, me?”

The Captain studied Percy carefully.

“Oh yes!” laughed Percy. “Now I remember. We met at the Pirate’s Club. I was your waiter.” He was trying not to shake.

“What are you doing here then?” Bushybeard kept glaring at him.

“I - I was bringing your tea. You ordered it this evening. Sorry, I’m late.”

As if by magic, a tray appeared at Percy’s elbow with a teapot, a cup and a bowl of sugar on it. A hand had reached up from the rowboat beside the ship and prodded the frightened captain of the Jolly Desmond.

“Hmm,” growled Bushybeard. “Don’t let it happen again!” He turned with the tray to go back to his cabin while shouting at his crew to tidy up properly.

Percy quickly slipped overboard into the rowboat and they rowed back to their ship.

“How did you manage that?” he asked Sophia.

“Well, I am a master of disguise,” she said. “I can make anything appear and disappear.”

They were all relieved they had escaped and they didn’t think Bushybeard and his Ghost Ship would be bothering anybody again ever. Not when he realised that proper pirates were out there who could do battle with them.

“So,” asked Sophia. “Are you going to become a spice trader like your other pirate friends?”

Percy thought and looked at his first and second mate. In the background his crew were also shaking their heads.

“I think we’d better remain pirates,” replied the Captain of the Jolly Desmond. “That’s what we’re good at!”

A loud cheer went up and echoed throughout the harbour.