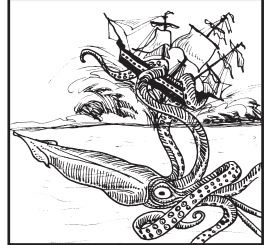


You're too young to have heard this old curse, but it began with the Moors, and not a sailor the world over did not know it by heart. "May you live in interesting times," say the Muhammadiyahs, wishing turmoil and revolt in the lives of those they despise. By now you may have guessed that old Cappy Dick had known a Moor, and that perhaps he had crossed this fellow, such that Dick himself had been the object of these words. My lot in life was to see much more exciting times. It was going to get a lot more interesting, and it would start no sooner than the day we sailed past the straits of Gibraltar.

Oh, to be sure, I still chased a blousy skirt when one came into view, but the young upstart with the downy chin had given way to a man whose thoughts were turning towards the middle of life, with an eye towards my dogage. Comfort, devices, and pleasures would be my reward for a life of service to Her Majesty - the result of having worked myself up from nothing.

Yes, look at me now, rummy hads, and grin while ye may. Whist! ye still have your strong backs, your teeth, your



If there had been any bad omen about we would have jumped at the chance to stall our departure. But skies were blue, the seas were calm, and it seemed as though the Holy Father himself was to bless this voyage. Aye, the folly of men who think they know the will of the Almighty! We set sail from Bristol, a convoy of three ships, as per her Majesty's Orders: The Madeline, The Garfish, and The Noble Scotsman, all fitted and filled for the great voyage beyond, none of us even suspecting what was to come.

Indeed, our voyage began with smooth sailing. Perhaps the Holy Father has dominion over civilized lands, and we enjoyed his protection so long as we were within sight of his shores. Nary a toothache, a bunion, or even the piles amongst our group, all healthy and happy, straight as reeds and ready to greet each day. The legendary storms and choppy waves of the Atlantic were not in evidence, and our spirits were high. The skies were calm, and the nights cool and clear. By sextant and stars we made a straight course for the Americas.

Chapter Eight: Stormy Seas

golden locks... I had your dreams before you came to know them, and I loved them far more than you know is possible yet.

Chapter Seven: Fear

As we packed hardtack and limes we wondered amongst ourselves. The dangers were there, to be sure. Brigands at every turn. Pirate ships would spot a vessel such as ours before we could even identify their colors. Some had cannons twice the size of ours, and they'd make short work of the Madeline for sport if not for spoils.

I see you chuckling even now, wondering why we would be worried about such things - how we could have imagined ourselves important enough for pirate attack. But it's only in sea stories that bandits go after Spanish galleons loaded with dubloons. Real ruffians are not so well equipped. A little ship like the Madeline is perfect quarry for brigands and blackguards of every stripe - not large enough to adequately defend herself, but large enough to carry some kind of useful spoils. Did you think that pirates roam the seas looking for the nearest Man-O-War, armed to the teeth and manned by able-bodied men who are ready to sail into Hell itself before submitting to the Outlaw's whim? Perhaps you think these pirates are hearty and hale, possessed of great tall ships themselves, with which to crush the Titans of the waters - surely not a whelp like the "Madelaine." We must be beneath the notice of such figures! Aye, and it shows how little you know of the Sea and the Ways of Men.

But these fears belonged to the realm of possibility. Some we entertained were not even likely. In those days there was still talk of beasts out there, fantastic monsters no man had seen and lived. Giant squid, and whales the size of whole islands, animals that could crack our stern and send us all to the Lord of the Deep. These tales were no more or less than we had all heard before, but as this was my maiden voyage across the Atlantic, I began to dream dark and terrible things now, envisioning the dread Eye of Leviathan himself, staring out at me from his briny hole, making a place for me at his hellish table.

But I am too far out of my tale! That fateful day! That final mission Madeline should sail her last when we left the continent that day? That a full ten years of service we had given her so that she would eventually rest on the bottom of the sea?

We were not too far out into the Atlantic when we came upon a terrible storm, such as we had never seen. Heavy black clouds appeared on the horizon, and we charted a new course to take us from her, but the storm had a mind of her own. We prayed below deck, some of the lads fumbling their beads, and each man blessing himself with his luckiest talismans.

But that storm, she had a taste for us. We hoped her winds would keep us ahead of the trouble, but we soon found ourselves sailing on a grey, heavy calm - sea like dark glass and just enough glimmer and dimmer. It was an eerie quiet, no beast nor bird to be seen.

As the first peals of thunder cracked we saw forks sparking before us! Neptune's beard! Thick as trunks and close enough we could smell them, that oily fresh smell it makes when you're close enough to be blinded by the flash! Our helmsman was cunning, but not enough to crew stayed above deck, two of them dragging the wheel and trying to maintain control.

Below, we waited. The thunder was so loud we thought for sure we had been swept up by a waterspout. The rain pounded our deck and tore at our sails. We had lost sight of our other vessels so long ago, we had no idea if they were still with us or not. I cried out like a babe in the howling winds, promising the Lord Almighty everything I thought he might want from me, hoping to bargain for another year.

Still, I made no move to assume authority. I waited to see what might occur. But when I saw the faces of the men - confused, bewildered, lost - I knew that someone must lead. As bosun, I had to know every part of the Madeline - inside and out, through and through. Who better to run the ship? At whose voice and at whose whistle each day?

There was no crew left on deck, no evidence they had even been there. None, save old Nathan, lashed to the wheel by a stout piece of rope, limp and lifeless, his hands bony white with a death-grip. Old Nate had saved us, all right, and even after he left this mortal world he kept our course straight and true. The Captain was missing, as well. As was the first mate. Dicky here was the only one left who held any kind of rank. I had always wanted my own ship - what sailor hasn't? - but never under these circumstances!

Those of us in the hold, that is.

And the cries of the crew above! Shouts and screams from the men as they scudded the ship! What horrors to be below deck and hear the throya yungles of our companions, fighting with their last breaths to save our hides! Hours went by, but somehow the Madeline survived it all. When we stopped rocking, and the waves died down to a slow lapping against the beam hull, we opened the hatch. We were amazed how well we had come through.

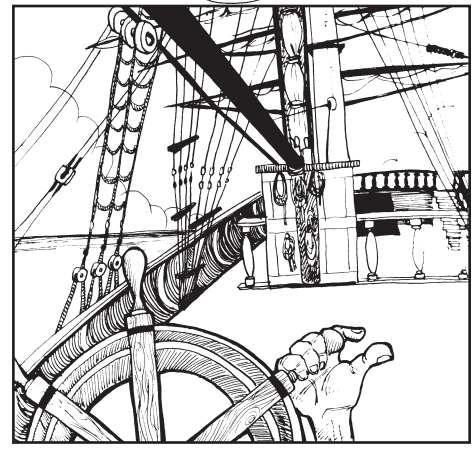
What deals we make when we see it all being taken away. What wouldn't I have promised that night? If I had seen Old Search in that storm, and he had prepared a bargain for me, would I have signed in blood, then and there? If you can't answer that question for yourself, then you've never seen into your own heart beyond the thinnest surrounding membrane. We are no angels, none of us.

a chance to get back to where I might call home. Spare us! Spare us this once, and I'll give you everything!

"CAPTAIN DICK'S PIRATE STORY" IN THIS NUMBER

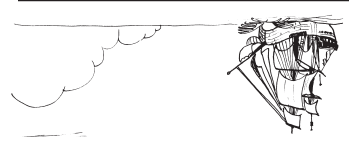
Pirate Adventures

THRILLING TALES IN EACH ISSUE NO. 4.



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TO BE CONTINUED IN "PIRATE ADVENTURES" No. 5.



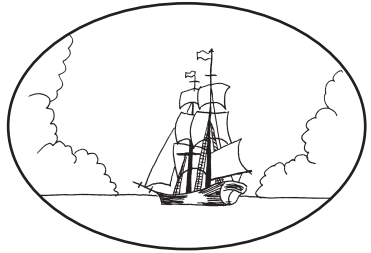
We picked up the pieces best we could. The masts were undamaged, but sails had to be repaired. Two men from the other ships, which had been ripped asunder, were found floating on wreckage and were juddled up on deck. We had planned to return home, but we found there was just one problem. Our maps were all gone, washed away by the storm and the stress. Oh, we could all navigate by the stars. But where were we going? And could we get there without going back into the storm? We made the decision to continue the journey. Supplies had all been safe in the hold - and with fewer crew we had been put in good stead for the rest of the way.

We knew the colonies could be reached in a matter of weeks if we could just keep sailing west.

And now all we had to do was to keep up our morale. It wouldn't do to have an atmosphere entirely lacking in gaiety and optimism. I was determined to get us all through blow, but we could survive with dignity and civility, and arrive in one piece, emissaries of Her Majesty's Royal Navy.

were the men accustomed to? With whom had they worked, who had taken them to task, who had been in charge?

This number contains part four of "Captain Dick's Pirate Story," a serial tale of Spirited Adventure on the High Seas for All to Enjoy.



Naked Rabbit
 P.O. Box 36673
 Los Angeles, CA 90036
<http://www.nakedrabbit.com>