



Captain Snatchit's Parrot:

Three Pirate Stories

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The Pirate's Parrot

Chapter One

“Shiver me timbers!” roared Captain Snatchit, swinging his cutlass around his head.

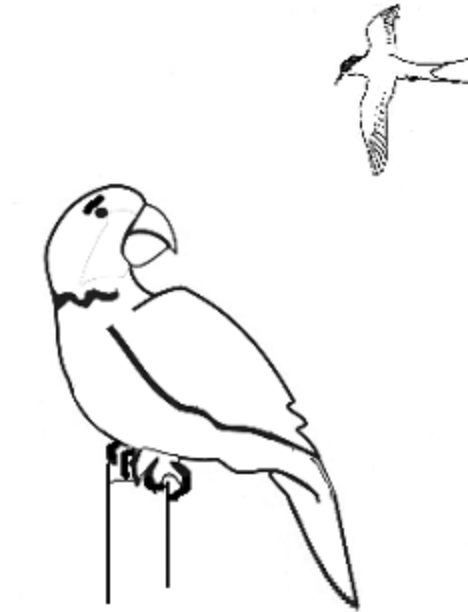
“Shiver me timbers!” squawked Neptune from the Captain's shoulder, ducking to avoid the cutlass.

“There's a ship on the horizon. Raise the anchor, you scabby guttersnipes!” bellowed the Captain at his crew.

“Jump to it, shark-bait!” screeched Neptune.

Swearing and cursing, the pirate crew pulled up the anchor. Their boat, the *Seaslug*, began to lurch through the waves.

Neptune flew to the top of the tallest mast to look for the other ship.



“It's a big one!” he squawked down to Captain Snatchit. “It's the biggest scabby ship in the whole scabby sea!”

“Hoist the sails, you plug-ugly rabble!” yelled the Captain at his crew. “We'll be rich by tea-time!”

“Speed up, you lazy lobsters!” screamed Neptune.

The pirates began to hoist the sails. Neptune swayed on his high perch as the *Seaslug* tossed and rolled.

Neptune had always been a pirate's parrot. He'd sailed the high seas ever since he was a chick.

Captain Snatchit gave him nothing to eat but maggoty ship's biscuits; and taught him no words except horrible threats and curses. It wasn't much of a life for a parrot. But it was the only life that Neptune had ever known.

Now he watched the distant ship draw nearer and nearer. It was the biggest ship he'd ever seen.

"Stone the crows!" he squawked. "It's a blinking, stinking monster!"

"Excellent," growled Captain Snatchit. "All the more loot for us to snatch!"

"Stone the ravens," gasped Neptune. "It's got a thousand blinking, stinking sailors!"

"Excellent," roared Captain Snatchit. "All the more men for us to rob!"

Neptune stared at the ship. Beneath his feathers, he turned pale. "Stone the albatross," he screeched. "It's got a hundred blinking, stinking cannons!"

"Shut up, you lily-livered bird-brain!" bellowed Captain Snatchit. "Men – get ready to attack!"

The pirates grabbed their cutlasses and pistols. They waved them wildly, roaring dreadful oaths.

"Wait!" screamed Neptune. "Stop! Turn round! It's a scabby battleship!"

But nobody could hear Neptune.

All of a sudden, there was a **BOOM!** Cannon-fire roared out like thunder. Smoke billowed from the cannons on the battleship.

CRUNCH! went the *Seaslug*. It had been hit by a hundred cannonballs.

BOOM! went the cannons a second time.

SPLOSH! went a dozen pirates into the sea.

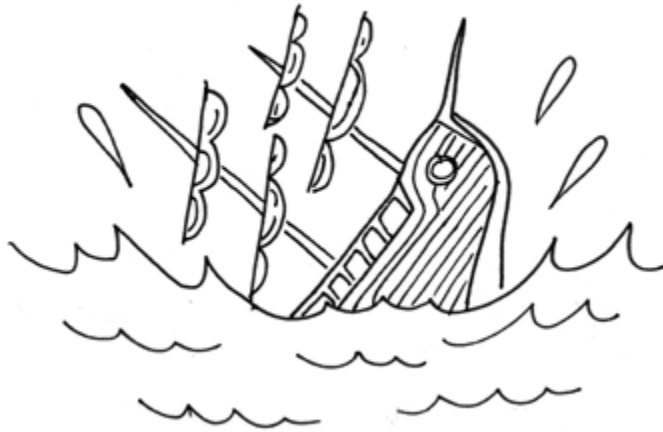
"Man the scabby lifeboat!" shouted Captain Snatchit. "Jump to it, you gormless guppies!"

The remaining pirates barged into each other as they scrambled to the lifeboat.

BOOM! went the cannons for a third time.

SNAP! went the tallest mast. Neptune was nearly thrown into the surging ocean. The waves leapt up to grasp him. Just in time, he managed to flap upwards and away.

The cannons were still booming. The *Seaslug* was sinking fast. Captain Snatchit and his pirates all squeezed into the lifeboat, cursing. They rowed away as swiftly as they could.



“Wait for me!” screeched Neptune. But when he tried to land on the lifeboat, Captain Snatchit whacked him with an oar.

“Get lost, you scabby stowaway!” he yelled. “There’s no room for you here.”

Hurt and bewildered, Neptune flapped away. He flew up, higher and higher, above the noise and smoke, looking frantically for a place of safety.

All he could see for miles around was grey, cold, churning water. He was just about to give up hope when, far away, he saw a small green island.

With weary wings, he set off towards it.

Chapter Two

Neptune was nearly exhausted by the time he reached the island. It took the last of his strength to flutter over the beach and collapse onto the nearest tree.

After a while he recovered enough to look around.

The island was covered in tall, lush, dripping jungle. It rang with howls and screeches.

The howls came from monkeys dangling and swinging in the trees. But the screeches came from parrots – bright green, red and yellow. A flock of them flew past Neptune.

“Who are you?” cried one.

“I’m Neptune. I’ve just landed.”

“Well, don’t hang about here!” the parrot said. “The figs are ripe!”

“Pieces of eight!” squawked Neptune.

“Pieces of what?”

“I mean, pieces of fig!” said Neptune quickly.

“Sure. Let’s get there before the monkeys do!”

Neptune joined the flock of parrots. Soon he was feasting on ripe figs. Not just figs – there were mangoes, dates and pawpaw. He couldn’t believe his luck.

No more maggoty ship’s biscuits! He could eat his fill of ripe fruit.

No more dodging careless cutlasses! The monkeys were easy to dodge.

No more kicks and curses from Captain Snatchit!

For the other parrots were a friendly bunch and welcomed Neptune. This was a parrots’ paradise!

When he met a beautiful female parrot called Liana, his happiness was complete.

He never mentioned his former pirate life to the other parrots. He stopped saying “pieces of eight,” and “shiver me timbers” and talked proper parrot language instead.

Life was wonderful. He even began to think about setting up a nest.

Then, one day, a battered boat washed up on shore. Out jumped Captain Snatchit and his men.

They'd spent three weeks rowing around in circles, living off ship's biscuits and raw fish. They were starving, smelly, and in a very bad mood.

"Come on, you scabby centipedes!" yelled Captain Snatchit at his crew. "I want a cabin! I want a fire! And I want food! Hop to it!"

The pirates grabbed their cutlasses and stampeded into the jungle. They slashed fruit off the trees, gobbled half of it up, and trampled the rest into the ground.

Then they fetched an axe and began to chop down trees to build cabins. They lit fires and shot monkeys and roasted them for tea.

The parrots heard the commotion. They flew down to the shore to find out what was going on.

Neptune perched in a tree and peered through the leaves. He was horrified when he saw Captain Snatchit.

"Shiver me timbers! It's scabby Snatchit!" he squawked.

All the other parrots turned and looked at him in surprise.

"What?" said Liana.

"Er - shiver me timbers. It's pirate language."

"You speak pirate language?" asked Liana in astonishment.

"It just slipped out. Sorry." Neptune shuffled on his perch, feeling quite ashamed.

"You mean you used to live on a pirate ship?"

"I'm afraid so," said Neptune.

"So what else can you say in pirate language?"

"Walk the plank, fish-food," mumbled Neptune. "Hand over the loot or I'll shave your ear-lugs with a rusty razor. Lots of stuff like that." He hid his head under his wing with embarrassment.

Down below, they heard the Captain bellow:

“Those scabby trees are in our way! Chop them down, and throw them on the flaming fire.”



“This is terrible!” cried the parrots. “These pirates are dreadful people. First they killed those poor monkeys, and now they’re going to destroy the whole jungle!”

Neptune was overcome with shame to think he had been one of the ship’s crew. The other parrots would all hate him now...

“We’ve got to get rid of them!” announced Liana.

“Agreed!” the parrots squawked.

“I suppose that means you’ll have to get rid of me as well,” said Neptune miserably.

“Certainly not!” Liana said. “We need your help.”

“My help? What can I do? They’ve got cutlasses and pistols! You’ve no idea how nasty they can be!” wailed Neptune.

“They’ve no idea how clever we can be,” said Liana calmly. “Everybody gather round and listen. This is what we do...”

Chapter Three

An hour later, the parrots flew up from the trees. They formed a huge, bright flock, with Neptune at its head.

On silent wings, without a single squawk, they glided downwards to the pirates' camp. They settled in the trees on every side. The pirates were too busy chopping logs and making fires to notice them.

Captain Snatchit didn't see them either. He was busy tucking into roast monkey.

Neptune took a deep breath. Then he began to screech.

But this wasn't an ordinary parrot's screech. This was pirate language.

"Drop your scabby weapons, you yellow-bellied earwig-eating toads!" he shrieked. "Or I'll chop you into more slices than a cucumber!"

"Who's that?" Captain Snatchit's mouth fell open.

Then hundred of parrots joined in from all sides, screaming at the tops of their voices.

"Scram, you horrible lot, or we'll pickle your eyeballs and toast your toes for breakfast!"

The pirates stared around wildly. They could hear hundreds of vicious pirate voices all around— yet there was no-one to be seen!

"There's no-one here, Cap'n!" they quavered, terrified.

"Walk the plank, fish-food!" screeched the parrots, hidden in the trees. "Go jump in the scabby sea, you turnip-headed twits!"

"Who is it? Who's there?" cried Captain Snatchit.

"We're the ghosts of a hundred hideous heartless pirates, you knobbly-nosed nincompoop!"

Captain Snatchit's eyes bulged. "Ghosts? We're on a haunted island! I'm off!" And he sprinted to the lifeboat.

At once the other pirates all raced after him. They tumbled into the boat on top of each other, swearing and cursing. No-one wanted to be left behind.

“Row, you jabbering jellyfish! Row!” yelled Captain Snatchit.

The boat pulled away from shore. The sound of the pirates’ curses slowly faded. At last the lifeboat was a distant black smudge on the deep blue sea.

The island was peaceful once more. In fact, it was more peaceful than it had ever been. All the parrots were so hoarse that they could barely squawk.

But they were delighted.

“They’ve gone!” croaked Neptune. “We did it!”

“We certainly did,” Liana wheezed. “Yo ho ho and shiver me timbers, matey!”

The End

But that’s not the end of Captain Snatchit. Turn the page for the next pirate story...

Captain Snatchit's Revenge

Chapter One

Captain Snatchit was not a happy pirate.

His ship, the *Seaslug*, had gone gurgling down to the bottom of the ocean.

Then, just when he'd found a nice green island to stay on, it turned out to be haunted! The ghosts of a hundred horrible pirates screamed and shrieked at him until he jumped back in the lifeboat and escaped.

So now he was squashed in the lifeboat with his smelly, squabbling crew. There was nothing to eat but raw fish and a barrel of ship's biscuits. They had just spent three days rowing round in circles, when suddenly.....

“Ship ahoy!”

Captain Snatchit peered across the waves.

“That's only a scabby little fishing boat,” he growled. “Never mind. It's better than this lifeboat. Hide your hats and shout for help!”

So the crew hid their pirate hats and cutlasses and pistols. Then they all howled like lost puppies in a snowstorm, until the fishing boat came alongside.

“Can we help? Are you in trouble?” asked the head fisherman, whose name was Afa.

“*We're* not in trouble. *You* are!” snarled Captain Snatchit.

And the pirates whipped out their cutlasses, leapt on board, and overpowered the startled fishermen.

“This is *my* boat now!” announced the Captain gleefully. “I name her the *Seaslug 2*. As for you, you crummy cod-catchers – you can walk the plank!”

“You can't do that!” cried Afa.

“Just watch me,” jeered Captain Snatchit. “Anyway, what's the problem? You can swim to that horrible haunted island!” And he laughed a wicked laugh.

Afa looked puzzled. “What haunted island?”

The Captain pointed. “That one over there, of course, with all the pirate ghosts screaming in the treetops!”

“Do you mean Parrot Island?” said Afa. “There’s nothing there but parrots and monkeys.”

“Well, who was screaming terrible curses at us, then?” roared Captain Snatchit. “Monkeys don’t talk, and parrots—”

He stopped with his mouth open.

His eyes bulged in fury.

Then he turned purple and bellowed like an elephant with toothache.

“There were no ghosts there at all!” he roared. “It was that puffed-up pudding of a pointless parrot! *Neptune!*”

He jumped up and down and shook his fist at Parrot Island. “You made a fool out of me, you odious over-grown budgie!” he yelled. “Well, I’m coming back to get you. Revenge!”

And all the pirates waved their cutlasses so wildly they nearly cut each others’ ears off, as they echoed their captain’s furious cry:

“*Revenge!*”

Chapter Two

Neptune was a very happy parrot.

He had escaped from his wind-whipped sea-sprayed life on Captain Snatchit’s ship. He had a beautiful green island to live on. He had exchanged a diet of maggoty ship’s biscuits for berries, figs and mangoes.

Now and then, it’s true, he did long for a taste of ship’s biscuit. And he missed his roller-coaster ride on top of the ship’s mast. It was only the pirates and their curses that he didn’t miss.

Neptune never told the other parrots this – least of all his lady-love, Liana. He hoped they would forget he’d once sailed on a pirate ship.

But he still liked to sit on top of the tallest tree and feel it sway in the wind like the old *Seaslug*'s mast. He would close his eyes and pretend he was far out at sea.

“Neptune!” called Liana. “It’s dinnertime! Figs or mango?”

What Neptune really wanted was a ship’s biscuit. He opened his eyes with a sigh – and spotted something on the horizon.

“Ship ahoy!” he squawked.

“That’s just the fishermen’s boat,” said Liana.

Neptune looked harder. “Then why has it got the Jolly Roger flying from its mast?”

“The Jolly Roger?”

“It’s a scabby skull and crossbones!” squawked Neptune in alarm. “They’re not fishermen at all. They’re blinking, stinking pirates!”

“They can’t be. We scared all the pirates away,” Liana said.

“Well, now they’re back. Oh, no! They’re making the fishermen walk the plank!”

Neptune flapped his wings in horror as he saw the fishermen go SPLISH, SPLASH, SPLOSH, one by one, into the sea.



And then his feathers all stood up on end. He had spotted a familiar figure stamping up and down the deck.

“Shiver me tiny timbers and stone the cranky crows,” screeched Neptune, quite forgetting his new manners. “It’s Captain Scabby Snatchit!”

“Don’t worry!” Liana reassured him. “We scared the pirates away easily before. We can do the same again.”

“I hope so!” muttered Neptune; but he was very worried.

Last time, the pirates had killed monkeys and chopped down dozens of trees before the parrots frightened them away.

But he had a feeling the pirates weren’t scared any more. Or why else would they be heading straight for Parrot Island?

Chapter Three

The pirates jumped out of the *Seaslug 2* and waded to shore.

“Shall we chop down trees?” they asked the Captain. “Shall we start a fire? Or cook a monkey?”

“None of those!” growled Captain Snatchit. “We’re not staying long. All I want to do is catch that pesky parrot Neptune. Then we’ll be off! Well? What are you waiting for, you lazy lugworms? Get catching!”

But the pirates scratched their heads as they stared up at a flock of parrots flying overhead.

“How do we know which one is Neptune, Cap’n? There are hundreds of parrots – and they all look exactly the same!”

“Then catch them all!” roared Captain Snatchit.

“How?”

“With the fishing-net, of course! Do I have to do everything for you, you empty-headed bubble-brains?”

So the pirates took the fishing-net out of the boat, while the Captain sat around eating ship's biscuits and shouting at them. Soon the net was spread between the trees ready to catch careless parrots.

But the parrots were too careful and clever to be caught. They just flew over the net, screeching at the pirates.

"Blistering bumptious birds!" yelled Captain Snatchit. "Take down the scabby net. Pick lots of fruit instead. We'll lure those parrots down!"

So the pirates climbed the trees, picking fruit and falling off while the Captain ate more biscuits and shouted at them even louder. They piled the fruit up on the beach and waited for the parrots to descend on it.

"Don't eat it!" screamed Liana in the trees. "Everyone stay where you are!" And all the parrots stayed up in the trees.

"Curse those pimply parrots!" snarled Captain Snatchit. He threw down his ship's biscuit in disgust and stamped off.

Neptune, perched up in a fig tree, saw the biscuit on the ground. His mouth began to water.

It was ages since he'd tasted a ship's biscuit. Figs and berries were all very well, but he'd been brought up on jaw-cracking maggot-ridden biscuit. He really, *really* wanted some...

He couldn't resist. Swooping down, he grabbed the biscuit in his beak. He was just about to take off again when a big, black, smelly pirate's hat was slapped on top of him.

"Aha!" yelled Captain Snatchit. "Not so clever just then, were you? *Gotcha!*"



Chapter Four

Neptune was in despair.

He was a prisoner on the *Seaslug 2*. Captain Snatchit had thrown him down through a trapdoor and shut him in the hold with a thousand dead fish.

It was very dark in there, and very stinky. The fish smelt even worse than Captain Snatchit did.

But even more unpleasant than the dead fish were the crabs. They were very much alive – and in a dreadful temper. Usually the fishermen threw them back into the sea. They did not like being stuck in the hold. They crawled angrily around and nipped at Neptune’s toes.

“Get off, you scabby crabbies!” he yelled.

He huddled unhappily on top of the slimy heap of fish, and hid his head under his wing in sorrow. How could he have thrown away his wonderful life on Parrot Island for the sake of a maggoty ship’s biscuit?

Meanwhile, back on the island, Liana was dismayed. She had seen Neptune being captured and carried to the *Seaslug 2*. Then the pirate ship had sailed away.

“We’ve got to rescue him!” she cried.

But the other parrots were doubtful.

“Do you think he wants to be rescued?” asked the oldest one, Monu.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, Neptune used to be a pirate. He talks pirate language. He loves pirate food. And he’s always sitting in the treetops gazing out to sea,” Monu pointed out. “Maybe he’s happier on board the pirate ship! After all, if he wanted to fly back here, he could.”

They did not know that Neptune was shut in the ship’s hold. With a heavy heart, Liana decided that Monu might be right.

“Maybe,” she said at last, “and maybe not. What if Neptune’s hurt and can’t fly? At least we should go there and find out!”

The parrots agreed to this. They took off in a huge, brightly-coloured flock.

As they flew across the beach, Liana spotted the fishing net which the pirates had left lying on the sand.

“Bring the net!” she cried. “If Neptune’s hurt, we can carry him in it.”

So she and twenty of the parrots swooped down to pick the net up in their claws, and flew with it across the waves.

The pirate ship had not gone far. Soon they were close enough to see the pirates setting the sails and tightening the rigging. Captain Snatchit lay on the deck sunbathing.

“Hop to it, you clueless cockroaches!” he yelled at his crew, without even bothering to open his eyes. If he had, he would have seen the parrots overhead.

The parrot flock wheeled high over the boat, searching for any sign of Neptune. But he was nowhere to be seen.

Liana sighed. “Maybe he’s hiding from us,” she thought. “Maybe Monu’s right. He doesn’t want to be rescued. We should turn round and go home!”

Just then Captain Snatchit yawned. He opened his eyes wide, and looked up at the sky.

Chapter Five

“YAARGH!” screamed Captain Snatchit, leaping to his feet. “*Parrots!!* Get your guns, men! Get your pistols! We’ll shoot those scabby parrots down!”

And he dived behind the wheel to find his blunderbuss.

“*Yaargh!*” snarled the pirates, as they all picked up their pistols.

“Now!” screeched Liana. The parrots dropped their net.

It landed on the group of pirates with a WHUMP and wrapped itself around them.

When the pirates tried to fight it off, their hands and feet and pistols all got tangled in it. The more they struggled, the more tangled they became. They lurched to and fro across the boat in a huge, staggering, swearing bundle.

But Captain Snatchit was not caught in the net. He was still scrabbling for his blunderbuss. He found it, stood up – and the parrots dived on him.

They scratched him with their claws and nipped him with their beaks. “Put down the gun!” they shrieked, pulling his hair and flapping at his nose.

The Captain couldn’t aim his blunderbuss. He hated being nipped and scratched and flapped. He was desperate to escape.

But there was nowhere for him to hide – except down in the hold.

In an instant the Captain yanked the trapdoor open and dived in.

An instant later, Neptune fluttered out.

And an instant after that, Liana and twenty other parrots flung themselves against the trapdoor and slammed it shut again.

And two or three instants after *that*, the lurching, cursing bundle of pirates lurched a bit too far and tumbled over the ship’s side with an enormous **SPLOSH.**

And four or five instants after *that*, a huge and happy flock of parrots was winging its way back to Parrot Island.

From the sea below them came wails and gurgles from the pirates, who were trying to swim...

But they weren’t half as loud as the hammerings on the trapdoor, as Captain Snatchit yowled for help.

He had thought the nips and scratches from the parrots were annoying – but that was before he fell into the hold, and landed on a heap of several hundred very angry crabs.

Chapter Six

Afa was a happy fisherman.

After he and his friends walked the pirates' plank and went splash into the sea, they swam to the pirates' old lifeboat.

They huddled inside it to rest for a while, and then began to row towards their home. They were wondering how long it would take them, when they saw a flock of parrots wheeling through the sky, with something trailing from their claws.

"That's our net!" cried Afa. He watched the parrots fly to the pirate ship. He saw them drop the net.

And, many instants later, he saw them fly up into the air again and flap away.

"Let's see if we can get our net back!" Afa said. So the fishermen rowed towards the *Seaslug 2*. They were puzzled to see nobody on board.

As they drew close, they heard the gulps and gurgles of the despairing pirates. Taking pity on them, the fishermen hauled them up into the lifeboat in a great quivering, soggy heap.

The pirates were still all tied together in the net. They were too cold and wet to even swear, but just sat looking very sorry for themselves.

"Where's your Captain?" Afa asked them. They pointed at the *Seaslug 2*.

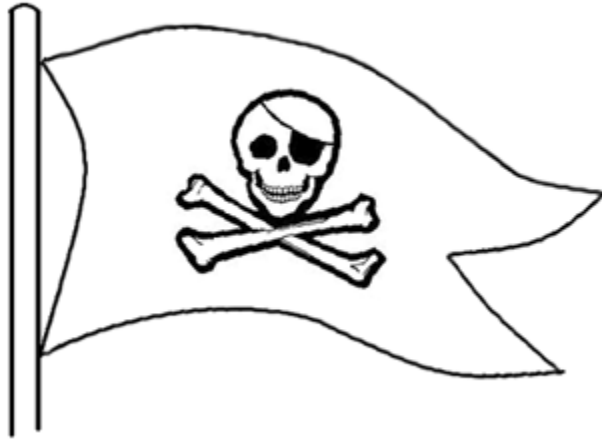
So the fishermen climbed on board. The ship seemed to be deserted... until they heard a horrible yelping and yowling coming from the hold.

They opened the trapdoor and looked down. There was Captain Snatchit, up to his knees in bad-tempered crabs. He had crabs in his hair, crabs clinging to his sleeves, and a crab dangling from each ear.

"Get me out of here!" he howled.

The fishermen pulled him out, de-crabbed him and put him in the lifeboat with his crew.

Then they took down the Jolly Roger from the mast and put back their own flag (which showed two crossed herrings and an oyster).



They sailed away and left the Captain and the pirates in the lifeboat. Captain Snatchit was already starting to shout and curse his men.

“Why didn’t you rescue me, you lily-livered layabouts? Start rowing, you hopeless haddocks!”

When Afa looked back, the tiny pirate boat was rowing round in circles. He laughed and set a course past Parrot Island.

Perched up in his favourite tree, Neptune saw the fishing boat draw near.

“Look! They got their boat back from those pesky pirates,” he said, gazing at it wistfully.

“Are you sure you’re happy to be back on land?” Liana asked him.

“Oh, yes...” But Neptune sighed a heavy sigh.

Suddenly Liana took off from the tree, glided to the fishing-boat and landed on the mast.

“Liana!” squawked Neptune in alarm, setting off to follow her. “What are you doing?” he panted as he landed next to her.

“I just wondered what it feels like. It *is* nice, isn’t it? You can feel the ship swaying and the sea-breeze in your feathers.”

“It’s wonderful,” said Neptune. “But *now* what are you doing?”

Liana had taken off again. She landed on the deck where Afa was eating a ship’s biscuit. She sidled towards him and nibbled at the crumbs.

“Liana!” Neptune squealed in horror as he plunged down after her. “You’ll get caught! Come back!”

“I just want to see what it tastes like,” said Liana.

Afa did not try to catch her. Instead, he smiled. He broke off half his biscuit and tossed it to the parrots.

“Here – have as much as you like!” he said. “You parrots have brought me good luck. You got my boat back for me. I don’t know how you did it, but you’re always welcome here!”

“What a nice man,” Liana commented to Neptune. “And ship’s biscuit is really rather good.”

“This one’s even better than the pirates’ biscuit,” said Neptune dreamily. “It’s hardly maggoty at all!”

“I think a voyage on a fishing boat would be fun,” Liana said. “How about it, Neptune?”

“Really?”

“There’s room for two up on that mast.”

“Yo ho ho!” squawked Neptune in delight.

The End

...but Captain Snatchit hasn’t given up yet! Turn the page to read the third story about Neptune.

The Wreck of the *Seaslug*

Chapter One

“This is the life!” squawked Neptune the parrot.

He perched on top of the mast, swaying happily as the fishing-boat rocked on the waves. The sun was shining, the fishermen were singing and he had a belly full of ship’s biscuit.

“Stone the scabby crows, you’re right there, matey!” said Liana, his parrot partner. She had learnt pirate language from Neptune.

Once Neptune had been a pirate’s parrot, sailing the high seas. Then the pirate ship, the *Seaslug*, was hit by cannonballs and went gurgling down to the bottom of the ocean.

So now he lived on Parrot Island, but he and Liana often went for trips on a friendly fishing-boat.

Suddenly Afa the fisherman stood up and peered into the distance. “Ship ahoy!” he called.

Neptune stared.

“That’s a funny ship!” he said. “What are all those strange things on its deck?”

“It’s a salvage boat,” said Liana. “Those are pulleys and winches. They pull up shipwrecks from the bottom of the ocean.”

“Really? I must go and take a look!” exclaimed Neptune.

He flew across the sea and fluttered high over the salvage boat.

Down below, he saw divers carrying ropes and hooks. They jumped into the waves and disappeared.

He saw sailors getting ready to wind up the winches.

And then he spotted somebody who made his blood run cold.

Neptune nearly fell out of the sky with shock.

“Pieces of eight!” he gasped. “It’s blinking, stinking Captain Snatchit!”

The Captain looked unusually clean and respectable. He wasn't wearing his pirate hat – but it was him all right. He was standing next to a sea-chest full of gold pieces.

“He must have robbed the sailors!” Neptune thought.

But then he heard the Captain bellowing at the salvage crew.

“Get a move on, you mouldy molluscs!” he roared. “Haul my ship up! What am I paying you for, you weedy worms? Pull harder!”

“Don't swear at my men like that!” the salvage captain told him.

“Er, sorry,” grunted Captain Snatchit. “I'm just so excited at the thought of seeing my dear old ship again.”

The men pulled and heaved on the winches.

The sea surged.

And very, very slowly, Captain Snatchit's pirate ship, the old *Seaslug*, was hauled up to the surface.

It was draped in seaweed. Water poured out of the holes that the cannonballs had blown in it. An octopus that had been living there wriggled out and splashed into the sea.

“At last!” Captain Snatchit rubbed his hands. “Now, tow it to land for me!”

“That'll cost you extra,” warned the salvage captain.

“I've got a sea-chest full of gold, you scurvy sausage!” roared Captain Snatchit, turning as red as rhubarb.

Then he took a deep breath, wiped his brow and added, “Sorry. I'm just upset at the state of my dear old ship. If you'd be so kind, please sell me two of your delightful cannons.”

“What do you need cannons for?”

“Oh, er – just in case I meet any pirates,” said Captain Snatchit. “If you'll give me the cannons and take my ship to Parrot Island, then all this gold is yours!”

“Parrot Island?” squawked Neptune. “Oh, no!” For that was where he lived with all the other parrots.

As the salvage ship began to move, he flew behind it. The ship towed the soggy wreck of the *Seaslug* into a small bay on Parrot Island.

Neptune hid in a tree to watch. Once the *Seaslug* was safely anchored in shallow water, the sailors unloaded two shiny brass cannons and left them on the beach.

“Here’s your gold!” cried Captain Snatchit. He emptied his sea-chest, pouring piles of coins onto the deck. Then he quickly jumped ashore and the salvage ship sailed away.

No sooner was it out of sight than he pulled his pirate hat out of his pocket and rammed it on his head.

He yelled, “I know you’re there, you snivelly sardines! Come out of hiding!”

Neptune jumped. For a moment, he thought the Captain meant *him*.

But then, creeping out from behind the rocks, came pirate after pirate.

“Shiver me terrible timbers!” wailed Neptune. The whole pirate crew was there. They had arrived secretly at night in their little lifeboat and waited for their Captain.

“Well, get to work, you lousy limpets!” roared Captain Snatchit. “We’ve got a blistering boat to mend. Once it’s ready to set sail, we’ll use this island as our base.”

“Base for what, Cap’n?” asked one of the crew timidly.

“For pirating, of course! We’ll hide here and lie in wait for passing ships. Then we’ll sail out and rob them. Boys – we’re back in business!”



Chapter Two

“We’ll have to get rid of them!” said Neptune.

The parrots were holding a meeting in the trees. Down on the beach, the pirates were busy sawing and hammering as they mended the *Seaslug*.

Captain Snatchit was yelling as usual.

“Hurry up and chop more wood, you rotten radishes! Build me a cabin! Cook me a monkey!”

Half a dozen pirates dashed into the forest and began to chop down trees. Luckily, the monkeys had already vanished to the far end of the island.

So the Captain had to eat pilchards and ship’s biscuit for his tea. It did not improve his temper. Even Neptune blushed to hear his curses.

“We’ve got to drive away these awful pirates!” he squawked.

“Don’t worry. We’ll do the same as we did last time,” said Monu, the oldest parrot. “We’ll shriek and swear at them until we frighten them away.”

“That won’t work!” groaned Neptune. “Captain Snatchit knows it was me who taught you how to swear. He won’t fall for it a second time.”

“Then we’ll scupper the pirates’ boat,” said Monu. “We’ll fill it with holes so it’ll never sail again.”

“That won’t work either!” squealed Neptune unhappily. “If we do that, they’ll *never* leave! We’ll be stuck with them for ever!”

“Anyway, we can’t peck holes in a boat,” Liana added. “It took cannonballs to sink it last time. We don’t have any cannons – but *they* do!”

Monu shrugged. “Then we’ll let the pirates mend their boat, and sail away.”

“Don’t you understand?” shrieked Neptune. “They’ll keep coming back! This is their pirate base now! Shiver me timbers and swallow a squid. We’re really stuck!”

He began to jump up and down on his perch and flap his wings in his dismay.

“Calm down, Neptune,” Liana said. “You solved the pirate problem for us last time. You can do it again.”

“How?”

“Well, let me see...You must have met lots of human women and children on your travels,” she said.

Neptune thought about it. In his pirate life on the high seas, he had hardly met any women, and no children at all apart from a Cockney cabin boy.

But he didn't want to admit this to Liana. So he said, “Oh, yes! Loads!”

“So you know what they sound like?”

“Of course,” said Neptune.

“Excellent! Now follow me.”

Liana took off and fluttered into the jungle. The other parrots flew after her, bewildered.

“What on earth are you doing?” asked Neptune, as she landed on a dead tree and stuck her head into a hole in the trunk.

“I'm looking for some very small friends of mine,” came her muffled voice. “They're going to help us get rid of those pesky pirates.”

“Friends? In there? She's going crazy,” said Monu.

“Oh, and we also need to gather lots of leaves,” Liana added.

“Totally crazy!” Monu shook his head.

“Liana's not crazy,” Neptune squawked. He stuck his head into the hole to see what she was looking for.

“*Ooooh*,” he said. “Hallo...”

Chapter Three

Captain Snatchit was snoring in his newly-built log cabin.

All the other pirates were snoring on the beach. What with mending the *Seaslug*, and building the Captain's hut, they had no chance to make any cabins for themselves.

So in the middle of the night, when cries for help rang out, they were woken up at once.

They all jumped up and looked out to sea. The cries were coming from across the waves. They could see lights flickering out there in the darkness.

"It must be a scabby boat! We'd better wake the Cap'n."

They banged on the cabin door.

"What is it, you droopy dishrags?" yawned Captain Snatchit.

"There's a ship in trouble, Cap'n! We can see lights out to sea, and hear shouts for help!"

"Hurrah!" cried the Captain as he bounded up. "Man the *Seaslug*! Get ready to set sail!"

The pirates hauled the newly-mended ship into the water. They jumped on board and sailed out of the bay.

Leaning over the side, they strained their eyes to see the ship. Sure enough, there were faint flickering lights ahead in the outline of a boat.

"Excellent! It's a big one!" said the Captain greedily.

Then they heard high voices crying out for help.

"Oh, woe is me! Oh fiddle de dee! Our silly old ship is sinking and my lovely lace gown is getting all damp!"

"Oh, piff and puddle! My gold necklace is about to fall into the nasty horrid water!"

"Oh boo and hoo! Have pity on a rich lady! Who will save my beautiful strings of pearls from drowning?"

"Rich ladies!" gasped Captain Snatchit. Like Neptune, he had never met many ladies of any sort.

“Cor blimey, guvnor, we’re all done for!”

“And a cabin boy!” grinned the Captain, totally convinced. “They’ll be easy pickings. There’s treasure a-plenty for us on that ship! We’ll go on board and rob the lot!”

The *Seaslug* sailed towards the lights.

“Don’t worry, ladies!” yelled the Captain. “We’re coming to rescue you!”

But then, to his alarm, they screamed back shrilly.

“Who’s there? I bet you’re horrid pirates! Don’t come any closer or we’ll fire!”

“Curses!” snarled Captain Snatchit. He began to chew his beard. “They’re armed. But I want that jewellery. We’ll smash their blistering boat to bits – and then pick up the pieces! Fire the cannons!”

Chapter Four

The parrots were nearly exhausted.

They were fluttering above the waves in the outline of a ship, carefully carrying glow-worms in their claws.



They were hoarse from screeching like rich ladies, just as Neptune had taught them.

And now they were worried that they were about to get blown up.

“They’re going to fire the cannons at us!” wheezed Neptune.

“Good,” said Liana. “That’s exactly what I want to happen. The other parrots should have done their job by now.”

“I hope so!” muttered Neptune, as he waited anxiously...

The pirates pounded across the deck to the cannons, which were loaded and ready to fire.

But in the darkness, nobody had noticed dozens of parrots landing on the *Seaslug* with leaves in their beaks.

No-one had seen the parrots stuffing the leaves down the barrels of the brand new cannons.

They had not glimpsed the parrots as they flew away again.

“Fire the scabby cannons!” yelled the Captain.

The pirates lit the fuses. They hissed and sparkled, and then...

KABOOM!! KABOOM!!

There were two enormous explosions. All the pirates fell over.

With their barrels blocked, the cannons had backfired. They blasted a huge, ragged hole in each side of the *Seaslug*.

With a groan and a glug, the ship rolled slowly over and began to sink for a second time. And ten minutes later, it was back down at the bottom of the sea.

Neptune flew over to inspect the wreckage.

“Your plan worked, Liana!” he squawked.

The pirates were swimming around in the dark. Captain Snatchit was clinging to a piece of driftwood and cursing horribly.

“Can’t you even fire a pair of cannons properly, you goofy gumboils?”

“It’s all right, Cap’n,” spluttered a pirate. “Here comes a scabby ship! We’re rescued!”

“What?” squawked Neptune. “Rescued? Oh, bother!”

Another ship was ploughing through the waves towards them. And this one was a real ship, lit up by torches, not a pretend one made of glow-worms.

“That’s the salvage ship!” exclaimed Liana. “What’s it doing here?”

“It must have heard the cannons,” Neptune said.

The salvage captain shouted, “Get those men on board!”

Neptune groaned. “Fry my feathers and griddle my gizzard! Now they’ll pull the *Seaslug* back up to the top again. All our effort was for nothing.”

Soon Captain Snatchit and his crew had been hauled out of the water. They stood dripping on the deck.

“Good timing!” grinned Captain Snatchit. “My boat’s down at the bottom of the scabby sea. You can bring it up again!”

But the salvage captain glared at him. “We’ve been looking everywhere for you,” he growled. “You know that gold you paid us?”

“What about it?” said Captain Snatchit, looking shifty.

“Fake – every last coin!” roared the salvage captain. “We’re not rescuing your ship this time. We’re clapping you in irons and taking you to jail!”

And they began to tie the pirates up in chains.

As the ship sailed away, the parrots could hear Captain Snatchit shrieking.

“Oh, woe! Boo hoo! Have pity on a poor old pirate!”

Slowly his shouts faded into the distance.

“Now that’s what I call a good night’s work,” said Liana, as the weary parrots flew home to their island.

They carried the glow-worms back to the hole in the dead tree. Then they settled down to rest, just as the sun was thinking about rising. It laid a shimmering golden path across the peaceful sea.

And far beneath the waves, a happy octopus was moving in to a comfortable new home in the wreck of the *Seaslug*.

The End

And that really is the end of Captain Snatchit... for now, at least.