



“Gaaargh, ‘tis not brain surgery Billy,” I spat derisively as I cheerily spun me shiny new wheel to the left (or port as he insists). ‘Twere a lovely wheel, and it came with a free barrel o’ pickled limes. Perhaps ye shininess had affected me thinkin’, for over the next few days the air grew chill and me ship frosty. Gaargh, I’d probably meant me other left.

Twass the danger in urinatin’ outside what tipped off the lads to the error in steerin’. I arranged me pens and flipcharts so as to diagrammatically explain that our weight o’ gold were drawin’ us off course on account o’ the magnetic lustin’ of ye pole. Ahar, another lynchin’ avoided. There were no appetite for tossin’ ye bounty overboard, though by the time we were agreed it were too late.

It were as cold as a snowman’s tears, too cold for even Mick’s sweaty palms, and they’d frozen tight to ye wheel - our course were fixed. At least it spared me own arms from hours at the helm. We could hardly leave him there though, ye increasin’ly bitter weather turned him blue despite the cuddlin’. Gaargh, ye tuggin’ were too hearty and his mitts snapped off at the wrist

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earnin' him the witty 'No Hands Mick'. Twere a shame but we cheered up when his hands proved to be ideal pucks for ice hockey.

As I were about to score me third goal, the Grim Bastard rang like a bell and tossed me mates hither and thither. I hoped we'd struck land, but it were merely me stern bein' ravished by a courtin' whale. Ye humpin' whale's lusty thrusts bumped us onto a sheet of ice afore he were sated. Now we were truly buggered, even ye rollin' seas could not dislodge us.

The prolonged moanin' of ye whale were taken up by Herr Doktor Gunther's lobotomised plaything, a lad he'd borrowed from a circus to expand his medical repertoire. His lowin' brought forth a pair o' narwhals – unicorns of ye sea – to compete for me ship's booty. Their nasal swords clashed in freezin' spray, occasionally plowin' into ye Grim Bastard, callin for much pluggin o' holes. It be a risky matter, and ye lads came out with as many holes as they'd stoppered.

'Twere then we conceived of danglin' the howlin' half-wit over ye bows to distract the narwhals whilst we seized their ivory. Mick were unable to hold the line and the mooncalf plunged into the sea. The divertin' sport of bobbin' for the lad gave the narwhals the chance to mortally wound each other. Bravely I ordered me lads to mount the dyin' beasts and relieve them of their horns before they sank.

Gaaargh, twere a day for misadventure. The circus fool found himself wearing the narwhal horn as an internal necktie; tt took some while to cleanse ye spirals. Nonetheless, we'd ivory of the ocean and whalemeat to prolong our lives in ye icy wasteland.

An ice floe be a tedious place. I were despairin' of ever eatin' somethin' other than blubber. We'd tried a lime marinade only to discover that it were the source o' the whales' lust – the knaves of ye Piratical Catalogue had chosen

to pickle ye ricket-haltin' limes in the urine of a lady whale. Our predicament were almost outweighed by the sweet and tangy addition to our diet.

For want o' diversion and supplies, I encouraged me men to wander ye ice, especially Billy No Mates. He came slidin' back one day, with news of strange fish beasts dressed as nuns. Yarr, that explained why me polar bear patrols'd been so bored so I quietly inverted me compass while reassurin' the lads they'd now no reason to fear ye dreaded arctic hare.

The discovery of ye penguin-folk ignited a worryin' gleam in the tiny dark glasses upon me sawbones nose. "I haf ein plan mein Herren, first ve must capture ze flippen-flappen-fischen-birden." Ordinarily I'd press Gunther for details, but I were tired o' countin' icicles, so I led a team o' burly mates out upon ye ice meself. Ye ice seems not to be designed with a peg leg in mind and it were a perilous journey.

We motivated ye penguins by puntin' their eggs towards ye Bastard and tyin' 'em to ye mast. They were relaxed once we'd stuffed their eggs beneath them again though the next generation were to be the least o' their worries.

Gunther unveiled his new contraption with a feverish grin: "Viz zis device ve vill hollow out ze penkvin und ve vill escapen ze ice." I weren't followin' entirely, but when the psychotic Teutonic asked for volunteers I took a closer peek. Gaargh, if ye can imagine a vast melon baller studded with more blades than a blind barber, then ye'll understand why I volunteered me first mate, Billy No Mates.

The machine screamed horribly while it did its evisceratin'. A sheet o' frozen blood mist cascaded to the deck an' before us stood a dazed penguin and a heap o' steamin' gore. Arr, we were a bit shocked, more so when Gunther opened the penguins beak to reveal Billy inside. Aaargh, he looked a bit surprised too.

Gunther's zoological surgery were interestin' but hopefully had a purpose unlike the unfortunate incident with ye dwarves. He aimed to graft the least popular of me crew into manguins thus givin' us the aquatic equivalent of donkeys to haul us off the ice. It seemed a tad extreme, but Gunther swore it'd be a reversible procedure and were our sole hope. With some vicious votin' we got another five hybrid pengmen into ye water. But before we could even test ye Doktor's thesis, black fins arose from ye waves.

There was naught we could do – the killer whales each picked up a penguin, and wolfed them down. Gunther looked oddly triumphant at ye eruptin' foam of blood. I were not best pleased and told him so, though be bade me hush. I soon saw his reasonin' - havin' munched on me mates, the orcas were firmly hooked (I'd wondered what all the cutlasses were for). The enraged fish whipped us off our ice floe and back into ye ocean.

It were a noble, if excessive sacrifice that saved most of our lives. I were about to offer a few heartfelt words in memory of Billy when a flipper slapped wetly on ye gangplank. Even though Billy's survival spoiled me eulogy I'd not the heart to throw him back, despite his fishy scent he were far less irritatin'. Since I'd forgot the names of our other saviours there were little else to do but celebrate our escape from ye south pole with mugs of whale beer; all ye blubber turns to alcohol - or a thick floatin' scum.