



Chapter 1

A Terrible Discovery

Sam and Kate dragged the heavy basket of logs across the great hall. The great hall was the biggest room in Nottingham Castle. It needed a very big fire. Every morning, Sam and his sister got up very early to light it.

“I hate working for the Sheriff of Nottingham,” Kate groaned. “I wish we could run away. I wish we could join Robin Hood and his men.” Robin Hood was their hero. They’d heard lots of stories about him. He lived deep in Sherwood Forest with his band of outlaws.

They were thieves but they only stole from the rich. And they never kept the money. They gave it all to the poor.

“Shhh!” said Sam. He looked frightened.

“Supposing the sheriff hears you.”

“His face will turn purple and steam will come out of his ears,” laughed Kate.

But Sam didn’t laugh. “And then he’ll thrash you with his stick,” he said.

The door of the great hall crashed open. The Sheriff of Nottingham stormed in. His black cloak swirled round him, and his pointed nose looked even sharper in the candlelight. Sam

and Kate quickly piled the logs into the grate. Had he heard them?

Then they saw the captain of the castle guards sidle in after him. He was twisting his hat nervously in his hands.

“You and your guards are snivelling fools, Captain Crabtree!” the sheriff bellowed at him.

“You let Robin Hood’s men beat you again.”

Sam and Kate’s ears pricked up.

“And you let them steal my money!” the sheriff went on.

“It wasn’t our fault, sir,” whimpered Crabtree.

“There were lots of them. They jumped on us from the trees.”

The sheriff slammed his fist down on a nearby table. “I will not stand for this any longer!” he shouted. “Now, listen carefully. I am going to set a trap for Robin Hood.

Sam and Kate looked at each other in alarm.

“I will spread the word that a rich merchant will be on the road this Wednesday night.” The sheriff smiled a cold smile. “He will travel through Sherwood Forest. He will be carrying

a bag of gold. Hood and his bunch of thugs will be sure to attack him.”

Captain Crabtree looked puzzled. “But sir, that means Hood will have more of your money than ever.”

“You brainless idiot, Crabtree!” screeched the sheriff. “There won’t be any money. It’s a trick. You will pretend to be the rich merchant and you will carry a bag of stones.”

“Me, sir? But . . .” began Crabtree.

“Silence!” hissed the sheriff. “As soon as the outlaws jump out at you, your men will ambush them. And I will be there to see my

enemy finally caught! You have two days. Now go and get ready!"

"Yes sir. Very good, sir," said Crabtree weakly.

He gave a bow and hurried out of the room.

The sheriff followed. But he whipped round at the door. His mean little eyes bored into Sam and Kate. "Do not repeat one word of what you have heard!" he snapped. "Or you will regret it."

He swept out, slamming the door as he went.

Kate grabbed her brother's arm. "We have to get out of the castle," she said. "We must warn Robin Hood. He's in terrible danger."

"We can't," said Sam. "Remember what happened last time we tried to run away? We'll be thrown in the dungeon again."

"Then we won't get caught this time," said Kate firmly.

"But the road through Sherwood Forest is so long," said Sam. "We'd never find him."

"We have to try," said Kate.

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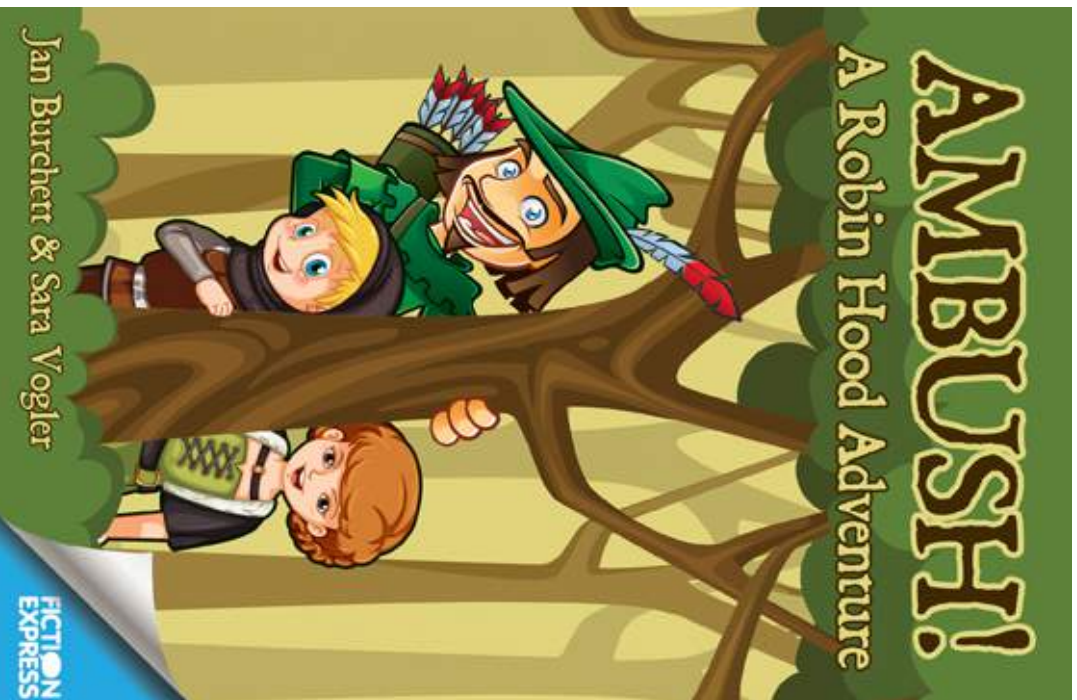
Sam didn't say anything for a moment. Then he nodded. "So how are we going to escape?"

Fiction Express voting options:

How do Sam and Kate escape from the castle?

- *They climb down from a tower.*
- *They hide in a cart of smelly straw that's leaving the castle.*
- *They try to steal the keys to the main doors.*

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Chapter 2

On the Run

“Escaping from the castle won’t be easy,” said Kate.

“The sheriff keeps everything locked,” agreed Sam.

They peered across the courtyard at the huge castle gates. Alfred the gatekeeper was sitting on a stool. He was fast asleep.

“Now’s our chance!” whispered Kate. “We’ll take his keys while he’s sleeping!”

At that moment Captain Crabtree appeared.

He hurried across the courtyard and gave

Alfred a prod.

“Open up,” he ordered. “I’m on important business.”

Grumbling, Alfred took the keys from his belt.

He opened a small door in one of the huge

gates. Crabtree pushed past and Alfred locked it again.

“Now what?” said Kate in despair. “He’s wide awake.”

“I’ve got a plan,” said Sam. He whispered in his sister’s ear.

Kate rushed off. Soon she was back with a tankard of ale. She took it to Alfred.

“I thought you’d be thirsty,” Kate told him.

Suddenly she ‘tripped’. The ale spilled all over the old man.

“Clumsy girl!” he shouted.

“Sorry,” cried Kate. She dabbed the front of the gatekeeper’s tunic with her apron.

Alfred’s back was to the small door. Silently, Sam crept up behind him and lifted the keys off his belt. He unlocked the door as quietly as he could.

But the key clunked in the lock.

Alfred whipped round. “What are you doing?” he demanded.

Kate dodged past him. She darted through the door after Sam. Sam slammed it shut, locked it again and threw the keys into the moat.

“That’ll stop them,” he said.

They raced away from the castle, glancing nervously back. But no one was following.

* * *

All through a hot afternoon, they trudged up hill and down. At last they saw Sherwood Forest in the distance.

“We’ll soon be there now,” said Kate.

They walked past a tumble-down cottage. Pigs were snuffling about in a nearby sty.

“What do we do after we’ve warned Robin Hood?” said Sam. “We can’t live at the castle any more and we’ve got no family.”

“Mum used to talk about her brother, our Uncle Jonathan,” said Kate. “We could try to find him and—”

Sam interrupted her. “Listen, I can hear hoofbeats!”

“Stop!” came a shout.

Sam looked back. “A castle guard!” he said, horrified.

They dived behind the sty. They heard the guard jump off his horse.

“He’ll find us!” whispered Sam.

“No, he won’t,” muttered Kate. “He’ll find two farmhands – and both of them boys.”

They climbed into the sty among the grunting pigs. Clothes had been laid to dry over a

nearby bush. Kate snatched two smocks and they pulled them on. She took Sam’s cap from him and stuffed her hair inside it. She stepped into a pair of damp breeches and tucked her skirt into them.

“We’re too clean,” said Sam.

He scooped something up from the straw and wiped brown smears across her cheeks. “I hope this is mud,” he said.

“It’s not!” spluttered Kate, holding her nose.

“The sheriff himself wouldn’t know us now,” said Sam. He slapped smelly dung into his hair.

“The pong would keep him away!” groaned Kate.

The guard came around the cottage and up to the pigsty.

“I’m after two runaways,” he growled. “Have you seen them?”

“Runaways, you say,” Kate replied, disguising her voice. “Now let me see. A boy and girl just ran by.” She pointed to a track leading back to town. “They went that way...I think.”

The guard stared at them for a long moment. Kate and Sam’s hearts raced. At last the man turned and stomped back to his horse.

When he was out of sight they sped for the distant trees.

They didn’t stop running until they were deep in Sherwood Forest.

It was dark and creepy. The only sounds were their panting breath and the wind whispering in the trees.

Kate shivered. “I feel as if we’re being watched,” she said.

“Wha— oh no!” they cried together....

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Fiction Express voting options:

What has happened to Kate and Sam?

- They've been caught in a net trap and are now suspended from a tree.*
- They are confronted by a wild boar charging at them.*
- Someone jumps on them from behind.*



Chapter 3

Captured!

Kate and Sam were suddenly knocked to the ground. They felt rough sacks being pulled over their heads. Their hands were tied behind their backs.

“Let us go!” yelled Kate. She thrashed about blindly.

“Not a chance,” growled a voice.

“You’re coming with us,” said another, dragging them both to their feet.

They were pushed forwards and made to walk.

That guard must have gone back to the castle for help, thought Kate. Now we're for it.

Terrified, they stumbled through the undergrowth. Their feet caught on roots, and brambles scratched their legs. At last they were pulled to a halt. Their sacks were whipped away.

Blinking, they stared around them. A group of men in dark green clothes sat by a blazing fire. Some were repairing bows. Others were sharpening arrows.

They all fell silent when they saw Kate and Sam.

One of the men got to his feet. He towered over them. Sam felt his heart thudding. "Who do we have here?" the man demanded. His voice was deep and commanding. "A couple of pig herders?"

"They certainly smell like them," called someone.

"They were sneaking through the forest," said one of their captors.

"Too close to the camp," said the other. "They could be spies for the sheriff."

“We’re not spies!” Sam dared to say. “We hate the sheriff.”

“Well said,” declared a man in monk’s clothing.

“So what are two children doing in Sherwood Forest?” asked the tall man. “It’s a dangerous place.”

Kate thought of the stories she’d heard about Robin Hood. He lived in a secret camp with his outlaws. They wore green so they wouldn’t be seen among the trees. And everybody knew that one of his band was a monk.

“We were searching for Robin Hood,” said Kate, staring boldly at the tall man. “And I think we’ve found him.”

Sam’s jaw dropped open. “You’re Robin Hood!” he gasped, gazing up at his hero.

“I am,” said Robin. He gave the order for their hands to be untied.

Just then a man burst into the camp. “Welcome back, Will Scarlett,” said Robin. “What news?”

“Good news,” said Will, throwing himself down by the fire. He didn’t seem to notice Kate and Sam. “A rich merchant will be travelling

through the forest tomorrow night. With a bag of gold.”

“More money for the poor,” said the monk, rubbing his hands.

“That’s right, Friar Tuck,” said Robin. “Here’s the plan. He’ll probably be changing horses at Hangman’s Oak. We’ll lie in wait there—”

“You mustn’t!” cried Sam. “It’s a trap.”

“Who are these two ruffians?” grinned Will in surprise.

“Sam and I work at the castle,” said Kate. “At least we did. But we overheard the sheriff

plotting. We escaped and came to warn Robin.”

Robin Hood’s dark eyes bored into them.

“Kate’s telling the truth,” insisted Sam.

“Kate?” Robin looked at her closely. “You’re a girl?”

“A good disguise,” said one of the outlaws. He pulled off his hat. Long hair tumbled out.

“Like mine.”

“Maid Marion!” gasped Sam. “We’ve heard how you ran away to join Robin and his men.”

“That’s so brave,” said Kate.

“Not as brave as you two,” said Marion. “You escaped from Nottingham Castle and the sheriff.”

“That was brave indeed,” said Robin. “Tell me what you know.”

Kate and Sam told him everything they’d heard the sheriff say.

“Thank you,” said Robin, when they’d finished. He took their hands in a warm grasp. “You’ve faced many dangers in order to help me. And now I must change my plan.”

“You’ll stay safe in the camp?” said Sam hopefully.

“Certainly not,” replied Robin. His eyes twinkled. “The sheriff’s out to trap me. Who am I to disappoint him?”

Kate and Sam were horrified.

“You can’t let yourself be caught,” cried Kate.

“Everyone knows the sheriff wants you dead.”

“Don’t worry,” said Marion. “Robin won’t get caught.”

“Can we stay and help?” Sam burst out.

Robin Hood thought for a moment. Kate and Sam held their breath. Then the outlaw grinned.

“What do you think?” he cried to his men (and woman). “Shall we see if they can pass the test?”

“Aye!” Robin’s band all agreed.

Fiction Express voting options:

What is Robin’s test?

- *They have to prove they can trail someone for half a mile without being seen or heard.*
- *An arrow is shot high into a tree and they have to prove their climbing skills to retrieve it.*
- *They have to work out how to cross a raging river without a boat.*

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Chapter 4

The Ambush

Robin Hood led Kate and Sam to a river.

“Fetch cones from that tree,” he said, pointing across the fast-flowing water.

“There’s no bridge,” said Kate. “Just slippery rocks.”

Sam’s eyes brightened. “Can I borrow a long rope and a bow and arrow?”

Marion handed them over. Sam tied the rope to the arrow. He tried to pull back the bowstring.

Will Scarlett laughed. “You’re doing it wrong.”

“I bet *you* can’t hit that tree,” said Sam.

“Just you watch this!” said Will.

The arrow sped across the river, the rope snaking behind. It fixed itself in the trunk.

“Thank you,” said Sam, tying the other end of the rope tightly around a nearby tree. Using the rocks as stepping stones, he and Kate began to cross, clutching the rope as the water swirled at their feet. Kate’s foot slipped and she fell to her knees. Sam hauled her back up. At last they reached the bank.

They plucked two cones. The outlaws cheered.

“Well done,” said Robin when they’d got back.

“Brave, and cunning too! Tomorrow night you’ll be look-outs.”

Kate and Sam glowed with pride.

“There’s one more task,” said Friar Tuck.

“What’s that?” asked Kate, worried.

“Change your clothes!” laughed the friar, holding his nose. “You still smell like a pigsty!”

* * *

The next day they searched for fruits, gathered firewood and trimmed feathers for arrows.

Will Scarlet taught them the birdcalls the outlaws used as signals.

At last Robin looked up at the darkening sky.

“Time to leave,” he said. “The moon will light our way.”

The outlaws slung their bows over their shoulders.

Sam’s heart raced at the thought of the adventure to come.

Will Scarlet pulled at a creeper hanging from a tree. Kate’s jaw dropped as a rope ladder unrolled.

“It’s our secret way through the forest,” said Marion. “Follow me.”

At the top, ropes criss-crossed amongst the trees. Kate and Sam swung from branch to branch with the outlaws. They came to a rope walkway high among the leaves. It led to a stout tree.

“Hangman’s Oak,” hissed Robin.

One by one the outlaws dropped down from the trees and disappeared. Only Maid Marion was left.

“Your look-out spot,” she whispered. “That branch above the road. Give your signal when the merchant appears.” Then she, too, was gone.

Kate and Sam hid among the leaves.

The empty road stretched away. They waited, not daring to move. “What was that?” whispered Kate.

Someone was riding slowly along. He held a lantern. He looked like a rich merchant. He

also looked like a very nervous Captain Crabtree.

Kate gave three owl hoots.

Robin Hood swung down and landed in front of the horse.

“What have we he—” before he could finish, a group of guards burst out from the trees. The outlaw struggled but they soon had him tied up.

A rider in black came galloping up. It was the sheriff of Nottingham. He poked the prisoner with his sword. “Looks like your ‘merry’ men have deserted you, Hood!” sniggered the

sheriff. The prisoner silently bent his head.
“You’re at my mercy. To the castle! Walk!”
Keeping out of sight, Kate and Sam tailed
them down the long road to Nottingham.

* * *

The sheriff’s men reached the castle walls as
dawn broke.
“Lower the drawbridge!” ordered the sheriff.
Nothing happened. The guards rushed
forward, puzzled.
Kate took her chance. She crept up behind the
prisoner and undid his bound hands.

Then she gasped as a tall figure appeared on
the battlements.
“Robin Hood!” blustered the sheriff. “Then
who—”
The freed prisoner threw off his cap. Long hair
tumbled out.
“Maid Marion!” exclaimed Kate.
Marion winked at Kate. Then she leapt at the
sheriff and snatched his sword.
“You tricked me, Hood!” bellowed the sheriff.
“You left the place unguarded,” called Robin.
His outlaws appeared beside him. “We’ve

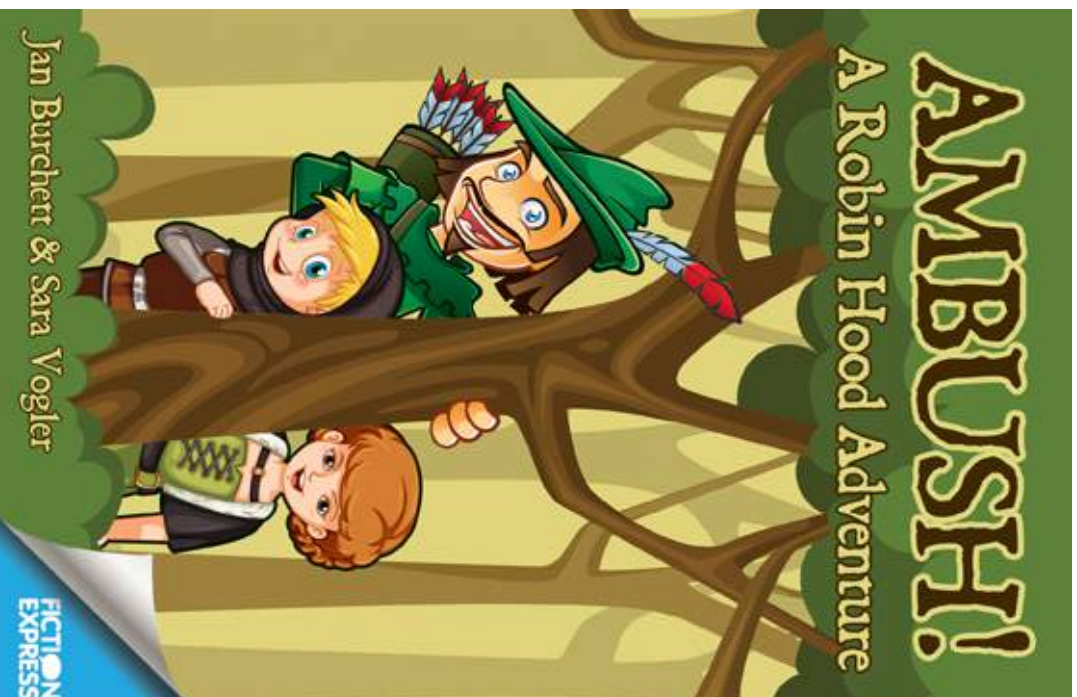
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helped ourselves to a few things. So here's a gift in return."

Fiction Express voting options:

What is Robin's gift to the sheriff?

- *He and his men pelt the sheriff with rotten eggs.*
- *They pour dirty dishwater over him.*
- *Robin fires an arrow at the sheriff's shield, his horse bucks and throws the sheriff into the moat.*



Chapter 5

Victory... and a Surprise!

Robin aimed an arrow from the castle battlements. It sped through the air and hit the sheriff's shield right in the centre. The sheriff gave a yelp. His horse neighed in terror. It kicked up its back legs and the sheriff went sailing over its head. Splash! He landed in the smelly moat.

“To the forest!” yelled Robin.

The outlaws raced from the ramparts. They let the drawbridge down and charged across it. The guards surged towards them, waving their

weapons. Robin Hood and his men leapt on them.

Marion turned the sheriff's sword on Captain Crabtree. "Tell your men to surrender!" she ordered him.

But Crabtree just quivered with fright. "Help!" he squeaked.

Three guards broke away from the fight and rushed to rescue their captain.

"Oh, no you don't!" muttered Sam. He picked up the rope that had bound Marion's hands. He held one end and Kate held the other.

Hiding from view they stretched it across the

guards' path. The guards didn't see the rope.

They fell in a tangle of chainmail and swords.

"Well done!" called Robin. He was fighting two men at once but he still had time to touch his cap to them.

Kate saw a guard creeping up on Will Scarlett.

"Look out, Will!" she cried.

Will whipped round. The guard's sword thudded against his stick. He pushed Will backwards. The sheriff was clambering up the slippery bank. He had a fish stuck in his hat and he was dripping with pondweed. "Finish him off!" he screamed to the guard.

But Kate wasn't going to let that happen. She crept up behind the guard and tapped him on the back. "Excuse me," she said politely. The guard turned. Will whacked him over the head with his stick.

The guard went stumbling away. He crashed into the sheriff. The sheriff fell back into the water again.

Friar Tuck came over the drawbridge. He was leading some horses.

"Time to go," called Robin. He swung into a saddle. "You're with me," he said, hauling Sam up behind him.

Marion booted Captain Crabtree into the moat beside his master. "Ride with me, Kate," she cried.

The outlaws galloped away from Nottingham Castle.

* * *

"The sheriff was very generous with his gold," laughed Robin as they all sat round the fire back at their camp. He scooped out a fistful of coins from an open chest. "We'll share this among the good people of Nottingham."

"And he was very generous with his food," said Friar Tuck, chewing a chicken bone.

Sam turned to his sister. “Do you think we can stay with the outlaws?” he whispered.

“I hope so,” Kate replied.

“Have I missed a raid?” bellowed a loud voice.

A newcomer strode into the camp. He was dressed like the outlaws. If Kate and Sam had thought Robin was tall, this man was a giant.

“Little John!” called Robin. “You’re just in time.

The sheriff has provided us with a feast.”

“Splendid!” Little John rubbed his hands

together. Then he spotted Kate and Sam and stopped in surprise. “Who have we got here?”

“New recruits,” said Robin, slapping them both on the back. “And brave with it.”

Kate squeezed Sam’s hand. Robin must mean that they could stay.

“Where have you two come from?” asked Little John. He peered from one to the other. He had a strange look on his face.

Kate told him that they’d lived at Nottingham Castle for almost as long as they could remember.

“Would you be called Katherine and Samuel, by any chance?” Little John seemed very keen to know the answer.

Kate and Sam nodded, wondering how he knew their names.

“Have you any relatives?” said Little John.

“We have an Uncle Jonathan somewhere,” said Sam. “But we don’t know where he is or what he looks li—”

“I am your Uncle Jonathan!” declared Little John. “I’ve been searching for you for years.”

Kate and Sam were stunned. For so long they’d dreamed of having a home and a family. Now they had both!

Little John held out his arms. They ran to him.

The outlaws gave a rousing cheer. Friar Tuck chuckled. “That’s what I call a happy ending.”

THE END

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Chapter 1

The Giant Reward

“Yo ho!” cried the pirates. It was a sunny day on board their sailing ship, the *Silly Sally*.

Their captain, Jessica Jellybeard, was the youngest pirate on the high seas. She wore a huge false beard and an eye patch, just to look more piratey. She turned to her first mate, Buccaneer Ben.

“Read us the newspaper again, me hearty!” she cried.

“Aye aye, Captain!” cried Ben. He held a copy of *The Pirate’s Daily News*. He read the front

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



page out loud to the pirates. “Ye Olde Ocean Zoo will pay 1000 doubloons to anyone who captures a Giant South Sea Prawn alive.”

“We’ll be rich, me hearties!” cried Captain Jellybeard. “Let’s set sail! We’ll capture a Giant South Sea Prawn, even though it’s deadly!”

“Yo ho!” cried the pirates.

“And it’s huge!”

“Yo... er... ho?” cried the pirates.

“And it smells awful!”

“Yo... eurgh!” cried the pirates.

“I thought prawns were tiny little things,” said Ben.

“Not the Giant South Sea Prawn!” said Captain Jellybeard. “It’s a scary monster as big as a house!”

The captain ordered one of the pirates to climb to the top of the ship’s mast. He was a lookout, on watch for the prawn.

“We’d better be careful,” said Ben. “If we’re after the prawn, our deadly enemy Captain Skullbone and his crew will be after it too.”

“Aye,” said Captain Jellybeard. “We can’t let that sneaky villain beat us to the prize!”

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



Skullbone and the crew of the *Nasty Nancy* are nearly as deadly as the prawn! Batten down the hatches, me hearties! Top speed! Head for the middle of the ocean, that's where the prawn lives."

Ben whispered to Captain Jellybeard. "What does 'batten down the hatches' mean?"

Captain Jellybeard shrugged. "I don't know," she whispered, "but I thought it sounded, well, piratey. Aharr."

The *Silly Sally* sailed out across the ocean. The sun shone down, hotter and hotter. Waves rolled against the sides of the ship.

Suddenly, there was a cry from the lookout.

"Look out!"

All the pirates turned.

"*Nasty Nancy* ahoy!"

All the pirates gasped.

"It's C-C-Captain Skullbone!"

All the pirates went pale with fear!

"I was right," said Ben. "Skullbone must be after the prawn too. The *Nasty Nancy* is going the same way as us."

"N-N-Not any more!" called the lookout. "It's turning towards us!"

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn

by Simon Cheshire



“They’re looking for a fight!” cried Captain Jellybeard. “Man the cannons! Prepare to fire!”

Ben gave a little cough. “Um, Captain,” he whispered, “we sold all the cannonballs on ePirate, remember? That’s how we got the doubloons to buy our new Jolly Roger flag.”

The *Nasty Nancy* sailed closer and closer. Jellybeard’s pirates could hear Captain Skullbone’s voice booming across the ocean. “Top speed, you sea dogs! Prepare to attack the *Silly Sally*!”

Captain Jellybeard’s crew started to run around in a panic.

“Captain, what can we do?” cried Ben. “Never fear, me hearty!” cried Captain Jellybeard. “We’re not beaten yet! I have a secret weapon....”

Fiction Express voting options:

What is Captain Jellybeard’s secret weapon?

- *A dressing up box, so that her pirates can disguise themselves as monsters and scare Skullbone’s crew away.*
- *A cannonball full of biting fleas to fire at the Nasty Nancy.*
- *A giant picture of an empty ocean for the Silly Sally to hide behind.*



Chapter 2

Boom!

Captain Jellybeard ran to her cabin. She came back holding a small wooden cannonball.

“One cannonball?” cried Ben. “That won’t do much good. It will break as soon as it hits the *Nasty Nancy*.”

“That’s the idea, me hearty!” replied the captain, mysteriously. “You just wait and see. Aim the cannon! Prepare to fire!”

The *Nasty Nancy* got closer and closer. Captain Skullbone roared with laughter. “See that lads? They’ve only got one cannonball!”

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And we've got loads!" he boomed. His crew roared with laughter too.

"Fire!" cried Captain Jellybeard.

BOOM! The cannonball was fired. Jellybeard's crew cheered.

Suddenly, the cannonball did a loop-the-loop in mid-air. Then it dropped down onto the deck of the *Nasty Nancy*.

KLUNK!

Jellybeard's crew groaned. "It's no good," said Ben. "It didn't work."

"Wait and see," said Captain Jellybeard.

Skullbone's crew roared with laughter again.

"Prepare to return fire!" boomed Captain Skullbone. "We'll blast the *Silly Sally* into tiny little bits!"

Jellybeard's crew gulped. They covered their eyes with their fingers. At that moment, the cannonball cracked open. Millions and millions of tiny fleas swarmed out! They swarmed all over the *Nasty Nancy*. They swarmed all over Skullbone's crew. They bit everyone and everything!

"Oooh!" squealed one of Skullbone's pirates.

"Ow!" cried another.

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“Yikes!” yelped a third.

They scratched and scratched.

“Into the sea you scurvy sea-snakes!” boomed Captain Skullbone. “It’s the only way we’ll be rid of them!”

The crew of the *Nasty Nancy* jumped into the water. The good thing was that the sea was very warm. The bad thing was that they forgot to leave anyone on board to steer the ship. It began to sail away.

“Come back!” screamed Skullbone, paddling furiously after his ship.

“I don’t think we’ll be seeing Skullbone for a while,” laughed Jellybeard. “Full steam ahead!”

“Steam?” queried Ben. “Don’t you mean, full sail ahead?”

“Oh, whatever,” Jellybeard replied, straightening her beard, which had been knocked sideways in all the excitement.

“Yo ho!” cried her crew.

The *Silly Sally* sailed on. Skullbone’s ship was soon a tiny dot in the distance.

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



“Head south-west,” said Jellybeard. “We’ll soon get to the area of ocean where the Giant South Sea Prawn lives.”

“Aye aye, Captain,” said Ben.

Suddenly, the lookout called down from the top of the mast. “Look out! Storm dead ahead!”

Captain Jellybeard flipped up her eye patch and looked through her telescope. She saw huge black clouds. She saw flashes of lightning.

“Steady as she goes, me hearties!” she cried.

Soon the storm was all around them! The ship was rocked from side to side. Rain lashed

down. The howling wind tore at the sails.

Huge waves crashed against the deck.

Thunder shook the sky.

BOOM!

KA-BOOOOOOM!

The crew kept falling over. They had to hold on tight, so they wouldn’t be swept overboard.

“Mummy!” yelled one of the pirates, as part of the mast came crashing down onto the deck.

“The ship can’t stand up to much more of this!” cried Ben. He had to shout above the noise of the storm.

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn

by Simon Cheshire



Jellybeard got out a soggy map.

“There’s land a few miles to the east,” pointed

Ben. “If we can get there, we’ll be safe.”

“Unless we meet more enemies,” said

Jellybeard. “They don’t like pirates much

around here. We’ll be way off course, too.”

Suddenly, strange sounds cut through the

storm. A weird, musical wailing, coming from the north.

“Mermaids?” cried Jellybeard. “They might be trying to help us.”

“Or they might be calling us to a watery doom!” replied Ben.

“Or it might a friendly ship, in trouble and needing our help,” said Jellybeard.

The crew looked at their captain. “Which way should we go?” cried Ben.

Fiction Express voting options:

What should Captain Jellybeard do?

- *Continue south-west through the storm, and stay on course*
- *Go east, to the nearest land, and risk meeting more enemies*
- *Go north, and follow the strange sounds*



Chapter 3

LLLaaaaAAAAI

“North, me hearties!” cried Captain Jellybeard above the noise of the storm. “Set... er... what’s left of our sails!”

The *Silly Sally* changed course. It turned and went north. It sailed towards the strange, wailing sound that Jellybeard and her crew had heard. Rain lashed the deck. Waves rocked the ship up and down and back and forth.

The sound came again. “LaaaaaAAAAI
Lalalalalaaaaa!”

“Is it just the howling of the wind?” asked Ben.

“LAAAaaaad! LalalaaaAAAI!”

“Hmm,” said Jellybeard. She cupped a hand to her ear. “No, not the wind. I think... I think it’s some sort of singing!”

Suddenly, there was a cry from the lookout.

“Look out! Mermaids! A whole shoal of them!”

Jellybeard and Ben looked out across the stormy ocean. Dozens of heads and fishy tails were bobbing up and down on the huge waves.

“Ahoy there!” cried Jellybeard. She waved and the mermaids waved back. “What’s all the noise about?”

“What do you mean *noise*?” replied one of the mermaids.

“We’re warming up our voices, ready for our annual singing contest!” cried another.

“Will you judge it?” asked a third.

“We need to get out of this storm first,” cried Jellybeard. “Our ship is falling apart. If you can help us, I promise we’ll judge your contest.”

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The mermaids whistled and cheered. Quickly, they dived under the ship and held it tight. Their fishy tails powered through the water. They pushed the *Silly Sally*, faster and faster! Soon the storm was far behind them! The sky was clear, the ocean was calm. Now Jellybeard's crew whistled and cheered. The mermaids swam back into view. "Thank you," said Jellybeard. "OK, a deal's a deal. Now we're away from the storm, we'll be able to hear you clearly. Er... sing away."

The mermaids cleared their throats. Then they all started singing at once! They wailed! They screeched! They made the worst noise Jellybeard and her crew had ever heard! Ben covered his ears. He did an impression of Simon Cowell: "Worst audition ever! I'm NOT putting them through to the next round." Jellybeard held up a hand for silence. At last, the terrible noise stopped. "It's no good," the captain called out. "We need to hear you sing one at a time if we're to judge this contest."

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



“Oh,” chorused the confused mermaids.

“That’s not a good idea!” hissed Ben. “There are hundreds of them.”

Don’t worry, me hearty,” the captain replied.

“I’ve a plan.”

“I’ll go first,” said one mermaid. She swam up to the ship, her dark hair flowing behind her.

Then she began to sing. The judges winced.

Jellybeard quickly ordered a pirate to carve numbers into some old pieces of wood. When the song finished, the judges agreed on a score.

“SEVEN,” called the lookout as Jellybeard held up the wooden number board. The mermaid smiled and high-fived a friend.

Then another mermaid swam forward to sing... SIX... and another... FOUR... and another...

“How long is this going to take?” Ben whispered. “They’re getting worse, and we’ve got to find the prawn before Skullbone does!”

“Quite right,” Jellybeard agreed, giving Ben a sly wink. “Shiver me timbers!” the captain cried as she jumped to her feet. “The contest is over – we’ve found our winner.”

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



“What?” gasped the mermaids.

“This is the best voice I’ve ever heard in all my years,” continued the captain. “None could possibly beat it.”

“Yes,” agreed the crew, taking their fingers out of their ears. “She’s the winner!”

“Whoopee!” cheered the mermaid.

“That’s not fair,” cried another.

“You have to listen to all six hundred and seventy two of us,” one screeched. “Because if you don’t, we’ll get very, very cross. We’ll drag your ship to the bottom of the ocean!”

“But I’m the WINNER!” shouted the winner.

The mermaids glared at her.

They glared at Jellybeard.

They glared at the rest of the crew.

“Oo-er. We’re in big trouble now,” whispered Ben. “These mermaids are not as friendly as they look.”

Jellybeard tapped Ben on the shoulder. “Noisy mermaids are the least of our worries,” she said. “Look!”

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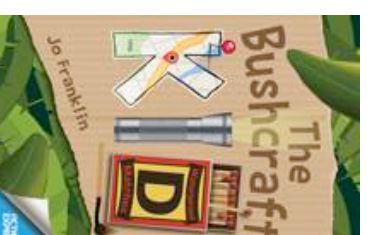
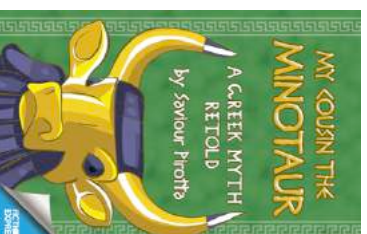


Fiction Express voting options:

What has Captain Jellybeard seen?

- An enormous whirlpool forming near the ship
- A huge flock of angry albatrosses
- The Nasty Nancy, with cannons blazing, heading directly for the Silly Sally

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Chapter 4

Sshhhhhh!

“Look out!” cried the lookout. “It’s Captain Skullbone and the *Nasty Nancy*!”

Captain Jellybeard’s crew spun around. They saw the *Nasty Nancy* heading straight for them! They all let out a yelp of fright.

“Fire the cannons!” cried Captain Skullbone. He picked the last of the fleas out of his beard and squished it.

BOOM!

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Cannonballs whizzed over the heads of Ben and Captain Jellybeard. The cannonballs shot into the water. They nearly hit the mermaids.

“Don’t you lot start a battle!” one of the mermaids screamed at Skullbone. “We haven’t finished the singing contest yet!”

“Reload the cannons!” was Skullbone’s reply.

“Get us out of here!” said Captain Jellybeard.

“Hoist the... er, have we actually got any sails left at all?”

“Just one,” said Ben. “We can’t move fast enough to outrun the *Nasty Nancy!* Captain,

have you got another secret weapon up your sleeve? A fold-out catapult, perhaps? An enormous net? A mirror to dazzle our enemies with the rays of the sun and so make our escape?”

“Yarr!” cried the crew.

“I’m afraid not,” said Jellybeard.

“Aaargh!” groaned the crew. Their captain blushed with embarrassment.

“Excuuuuuse me!” cried one the mermaids.

“We’re still here, you know. We don’t like being ignored!”

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“I’ve got an idea!” said Jellybeard. Quickly, she leaned over the side of the ship. She whispered to the mermaids.

Suddenly, the mermaids all began to giggle and grin. They all crowded around the *Nasty Nancy*. Then they all took a flying jump and landed on the deck! Their fishy tails gleamed in the sun.

“Away with ye!” cried Captain Skullbone.

“We’ve got a battle to fight!”

The mermaids all started singing at once! The noise was awful! Captain Skullbone and his crew clapped their hands over their ears.

The pirates ran to the front of the ship. The mermaids flipped and skipped after them. They ran to the back of the ship, but there was no escaping the dreadful din.

“Let’s go, me hearties!” grinned Captain Jellybeard. The *Silly Sally* slowly limped away.

“What happened?” Ben asked. “What did you whisper to the mermaids?”

“I told them that Skullbone and his crew are from a record company. I told them he could get them into the Sea Shanty Top 10, but that

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn by Simon Cheshire



first he'd need to hear *all* of them sing *all* their songs."

"Aha!" cried Ben. "That should keep them busy even longer than the fleas!"

"Yo ho... ho ho ho!" laughed the crew.

* * *

The *Silly Sally* sailed on. Soon, night fell. A full moon gleamed in the starry sky. Its silvery light shone brightly on the sea.

Captain Jellybeard took out her map. "This is it! This part of the sea is where the Giant

South Sea Prawn lives." She cried up to the lookout. "Any sign of it?"

"The sea is calm and flat!" cried the lookout.

"No sign of anything!"

"Quiet, lads" said Jellybeard. "Perhaps we'll hear it stirring in the deep. Shhhhhh!"

They listened.

Several minutes passed.

The only sound was the gentle lapping of water against the ship.

"Perhaps it's gone to cook its dinner," whispered Ben.

Captain Jellybeard and the Giant South Sea Prawn

by Simon Cheshire



Jellybeard frowned. “What does a sea monster cook for dinner?”

“Fish and ships?” Ben suggested.

Suddenly, there was a bubbling on the surface of the sea. The *Silly Sally* began to rock from side to side.

“Look out!” cried the lookout. “There’s something coming up out of the sea...”

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Fiction Express voting options:

What is it coming up out of the sea?

– *A huge, curling tentacle*

– *The ghostly wreck of an ancient ship*

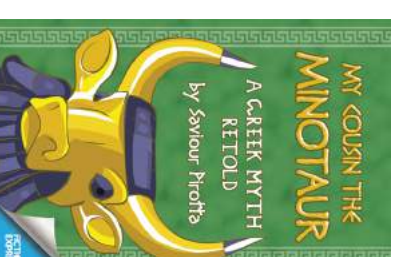
– *The biggest crab you’ve ever seen*

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Chapter 5

Whhooaaaaa!

There was a loud whooshing noise. The sea began to bubble and boil. There was a loud

SPLASH!

Out of the water came a giant claw! Then two giant eyes on stalks! The eyes looked around.

They looked at Jellybeard and her crew.

Then a giant shell appeared! It was the biggest crab any of them had ever seen!

There were two loud clicking noises. One was the crab's claws snapping together. The other

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came from the crew's knees, knocking in fright.

"We must sail away!" cried Ben. "Quick!"

"We can't," said Captain Jellybeard. "Look!"

The crab had got its claws caught in what was left of the ships' sails. They were torn to shreds. The crab began to get cross. It took hold of the *Silly Sally*. It raised the ship out of the water. The crew yelped with fright. The crab spun the *Silly Sally* around and around.

"Whhooaaaaa!" cried half of the crew. "We're getting seasick!"

"Ooooooooooh!" cried the other half. "We're getting dizzy!"

The ship creaked and groaned.

"If we keep spinning like this, the ship will fall apart!" cried Jellybeard. "Then we'll never find the Giant South Sea Prawn!"

Suddenly, something else began to rise up out of the sea! It was so big it made the crab look tiny! It was a strange, fishy-looking creature, covered in scales. It had eyes as big as a house. Its feelers were as long as a football

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field. It towered high above the crab. It was so big it blocked the light from the sun.

“Jonny, stop that, this instant!” it said in a booming voice. “If I’ve told you once, I’ve told you a thousand times, not to play with your food!”

The crab stopped spinning the ship and put it back on the water.

“Awww,” moaned the crab, “I was only messing about.”

“Well don’t!” boomed the creature. “Go back to the seabed and play nicely with the other giant crabs.”

The crab grumbled and moaned. With a deep sigh, it slipped back down under the sea.

“I’m so sorry,” said the creature. “Are you alright?”

“I think so,” said Jellybeard. The captain and her crew were so dizzy they couldn’t see straight. Everything looked as if it was spinning! “Who are you? We’re hunting for the Giant South Sea Prawn. Ye Olde Ocean

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Theme Park will pay 1000 doubloons to anyone who captures it.”

The creature gasped. “Why, that’s me! Why would anyone want to capture me?”

“It’s the prawn!” cried Ben. Captain Jellybeard and her crew quickly stopped feeling dizzy.

They looked up at the Giant South Sea Prawn.

“You really *are* the prawn,” gasped Jellybeard.

“Then our quest is finished. Would you mind just coming along with us...?”

“I can’t go and live in a theme park!” groaned the prawn. “What about all the giant crabs on

the seabed? If I’m gone, they’ll start fighting and upsetting the deep-sea fish! Then the fish will get all grumpy, and then... well, goodness knows what will happen!”

“Hmm,” said Jellybeard. “What can we do? The prawn isn’t a fearsome, deadly beast after all! It would be wrong to capture him after he saved us from the giant crab. On the other hand, our ship is damaged and we’re penniless.”

“Penniless, did you say?” cried the prawn. He dipped down under the waves. When he came back up, he carried a large chest full of gold!

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“This has been lying around in a shipwreck down there for three hundred years. I’ve got no use for it... but if you let me go, it might make up for the lost 1000 doubloons.”

“Yo ho, yes indeed!” cried the crew.

“But what about our sails?” groaned Ben.

“Without them, we won’t be going anywhere.”

“Hang on,” grinned the prawn, plunging into the water once more. He returned with the biggest piece of seaweed the crew had ever seen. “That should do the trick,” he said, draping it over the masts.

“Thank you,” said Jellybeard. “In return for your kindness, we’ll tell everyone that the Giant South Sea Prawn is nothing more than a story. We’ll say we’ve searched and searched, and found no sign of you. Even Skullbone will stop looking for you! That way, you’ll be safe.”

“It’s a deal!” boomed the prawn.

The Giant South Sea Prawn slowly vanished under the sea. He waved and Jellybeard’s crew waved back.

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The *Silly Sally* sailed home. It took Jellybeard
and Ben the whole voyage to count all the
gold!

THE END

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