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Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Dr. Dolittle and the Barbary Dragon (15/21)

Everything would have gone well if the pig Gub-Gub hadn't caught a cold while eating the damp sugarcane on the island.

This is what happened: After silently raising the anchor and very carefully maneuvering the ship out of the bay, Gub-Gub the pig suddenly sneezed so hard that the pirates came to investigate the noise. As soon as they saw that the doctor was trying to escape, they positioned their other boat in front of the entrance to the bay so the doctor couldn't sail out to open sea.

Then the leader of the pirates, named Ben Ali the Barbary Dragon, shook his fist at the doctor and shouted over the water, "Ha ha, we've got you my friend. You wanted to steal my ship, didn't you? But you're not good enough to defeat Ben Ali the Barbary Dragon. And I want that duck and pig too. We're going to have delicious pork chops and roasted duck tonight! But before I let you go home, you must make your friends send me a trunk full of gold."

The poor Gub-Gub began to cry and Dab-Dab prepared to fly away to save her life. But the owl, Too-Too, whispered to the doctor, "Keep him talking, doctor. Be friendly to him. Our old ship will certainly sink soon. The rats predicted that it would be on the bottom of the

sea tomorrow evening. The rats are always right. Be friendly to him until the ship sinks. Keep him talking."

"What, until tomorrow evening?" asked the doctor.

"Well, I'll try my best... Let's see... What shall I talk about?"

"Let them come here," said Jip the dog. "We'll fight them. There are only six of them. Let them come. I want to tell that Collie who lives next to me that I bit a real pirate. Let them come, I'm not afraid of them."

"But they have pistols and swords," said the doctor. "No, that will never work. I must talk to him... Listen, Ben Ali..."

But before the doctor could say anything else, the pirates sailed closer in their ship. They laughed with joy and said to each other, "Who will catch the pig first?" The poor Gub-Gub became terribly afraid. The Pushmi-Pullyu animal began to sharpen its horns for a fight. Jip kept jumping and barking in the air and saying the most terrible things to Ben Ali in dog language. But suddenly something seemed to go wrong with the pirates. They stopped laughing and joking. They seemed worried about something. Then Ben Ali, who was looking down at his feet, suddenly roared, "Thunder and Lightning! Men, the boat is leaking!"

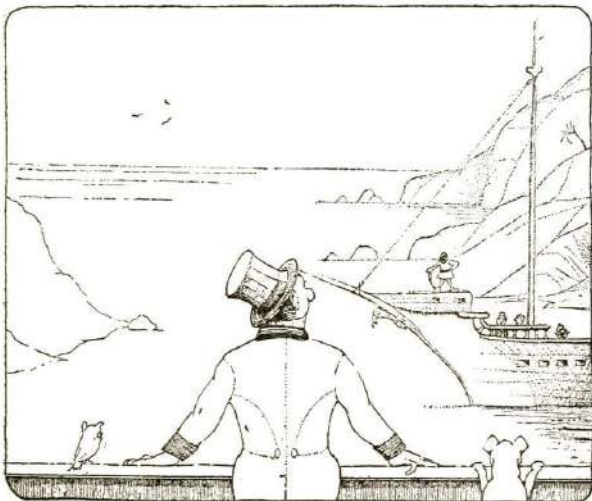
Then the other pirates looked over the edge and saw that the boat was indeed getting lower in the water. And one of them said to Ben Ali, "But if this old boat really sinks, we should see the rats leaving."

And Jip shouted from the other ship, "You're all big fools, there are no rats left to leave! They left two hours ago! Ha ha, have fun on that boat, my friends!"

The men didn't believe it. But soon the front of the ship began to sink, faster and faster until it seemed like the boat was upside down. The pirates had to cling to the railing and masts to avoid falling into the water. Then the sea crashed through all the windows and doors. Finally, with a terrible sound, the ship dived straight to the bottom of the sea. And the six pirates floated around in the deep water of the bay.

Some of the pirates tried to swim to the shore. Others tried to reach the boat where the doctor was. But Jip

growled and snarled, making them too scared to climb along the side of the ship.



Then suddenly they all cried out in fear: "The sharks! The sharks are coming! Let's get to the boat before they eat us! Help, help! - The sharks! The sharks!"

And now the doctor could see the backs of big sharks swimming quickly through the water all around the bay. A large shark approached the boat and stuck its nose out of the water, saying to the doctor: "Are you John Dolittle, the famous animal doctor?"

"Yes," said Doctor Dolittle. "That's my name."

The shark said: "We know these pirates are bad men, especially Ben Ali. If you want to get rid of them, we'll gladly eat them for you, then you won't have to deal with them anymore."

"Thank you, that's very kind. But I don't think it's necessary to eat them. Just make sure they don't swim along the coast, but don't eat them, okay? And make sure Ben Ali swims over here so I can talk to him," said the doctor.

So the shark went away and drove Ben Ali towards the doctor.

"Listen, Ben Ali," said John Dolittle, leaning over the railing, "you've been a very bad man and I've heard that you've killed many people. These good sharks have just offered to eat all of you. But if you promise to do what I say, I will let you go."

"What do I have to do?" asked the pirate, looking sideways at the big shark that was sniffing at his leg underwater.

"You must not kill people anymore," said the doctor.

"You must stop stealing, never sink another ship, and completely give up your pirate life."

"But what will I do then?" asked Ben Ali. "How will I live?"

"You and all your men must become birdseed farmers on this island," replied the doctor. "You must grow birdseed for the canaries."

Ben Ali, the Barbarian Dragon, turned pale with anger.

"Grow birdseed," he groaned in disgust. "Can't I be a sailor?"

"No," said the doctor. "You've been a sailor long enough, and you've sunk many ships and drowned good men. For the rest of your life, you must be a peaceful farmer. The shark is waiting. Don't waste any more time. Make a decision."

"Well, all Thunder and Lightning!" muttered Ben Ali.

"Grow birdseed." Then he looked back into the water and saw the big shark also sniffing at his other leg.

"Then we'll be farmers," he said sadly.

"And remember," said the doctor, "if you don't keep your promise, if you return to piracy, I will know it, because the canaries will come and tell me. And rest assured, I will find a way to punish you. Because although I can't sail as well as you, I don't have to be afraid of a pirate as long as the birds, fish, and other animals are my friends. Not even a pirate who calls himself 'The Dragon of Barbary.' Go now and be a good birdseed farmer and live in peace."

Then the doctor turned to the big shark and waved his hand, saying, "Okay. Let them swim safely to the land."