

# Ye sure ye wanna know?

A tale by Capt. Jazz Barrow

"Holy ship!" said Nick Spitalung. And I knew that every time Nick Spitalung would say "Holy ship!", there was only one thing to do: run! Those were hard times to be pirates, especially for us, on board of the Ship Creek.

Commercial routes were all heading to a different spot in the New World and... you know, the best thing would have been sailing and finding them. But that was stuff for the ascetic or the abstemious ones.

Why? That's easy. In Tortuga you could find the best rum in the universe, and it wouldn't have been worth all the gold of the West India Company.

Well, that wasn't the best of time, for us. I realized that when I ransacked another pirate vessel. Yes, without cargo ships, we had to steal our colleagues' load, otherwise we would have become somewhat rusty... And we didn't want to wind up in some Caribbean hospice, weaving lianas.

The thing is, when we approached the vessel and threw ourselves on the bridge with ropes and boards, we found no one but the cabin boy. And you know what he told us? "Well, suit yourself. You know the way." Isn't that crazy? "You know the way," said the skinny old man! There were no younger ship-boys than him. That was a telltale sign of the average age of the crew.

So, since we "knew the way," we went to get that rotting casket that, as usually, was filled of



already-founded-treasure maps and lots of rubbish.

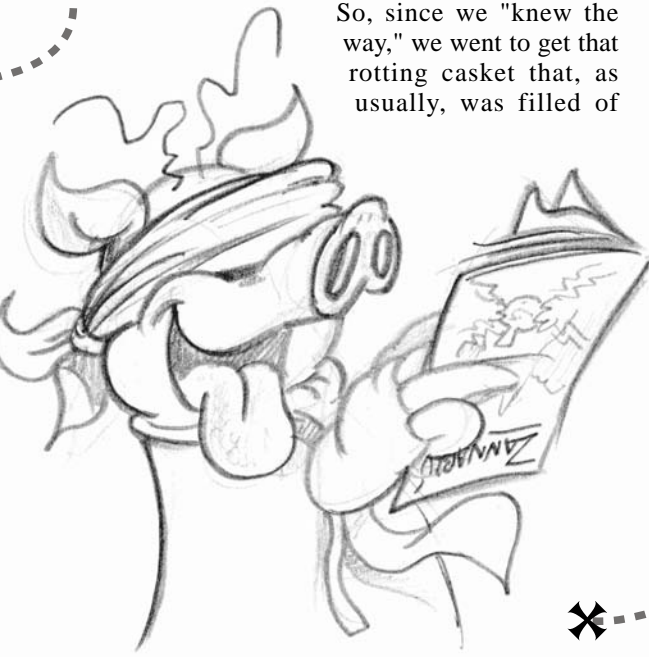
But what really knocked me out was that between those trifles, I found my Grandma's earrings. Good heavens, those earrings! That was the sixth time I found them on board of some sea-barrow, after as many times they were stolen from me by some decrepit buccaneer.

I didn't want to give up... sooner or later, gold would have sailed on that route.

"My fellow friends," I said. "By now, everyone would think that we have left these part of the sea, therefore soon they'll think it'll be secure enough to sail on 'em again, and with their loads. Wait just two months and you'll see." And... twelve thousand thundering typhoons, I was awfully right!

Nick Spitalung, the lookout envied by the entire Tortuga, spotted them from many miles away: a West India Company galleon filled with gold, merchandise and God only knows what else! Unfortunately, a prolonged cough seizure delayed his announcement of that sighting... a delay that cost us the first and second place to the boarding. Two vessels of our - ehm - colleagues had already sided our ship: one larboard, the other starboard. They started a dangerous overtaking on our same prey. But I wouldn't let them reach that gold, no no.

Those decrepit fellows would have spent every penny in nappies or pudding.



And still, it was a draw: no one could gain speed. From then on, some blank cannonballs would have decided who would have boarded the ship. Old Captain Buttcheek shouted, from the larboard vessel: "Hey, Jazz Barrow, you really want us to fish you up from your wreckage and lock you with the hogs, once again?" That "once again," surely caused me bad memories, while I didn't understand the "hogs" reference at all. "We all are hogs, Buttcheek," was my only reply. From starboard, Captain Caption, that moron, just grunted some order to his crew. Oh, yes, he was called "the Tortuga's tongue," but nowadays no one calls him anymore, because his tongue is in formalin, lost in the belly of some ship.

One from this side, one from that side... and we were closer and closer to the gold-loaded vessel. "Men! Mind the portholes!" I shouted just enough to let me hear from the competitors. Then I took aside my assistant captain, Barbecue, and I whispered another plan in his ear. Luckily, he was smart enough not to burst shouting: "What?!

Strike now?!" No, no, on the contrary: he was actually too much talented.

So, as soon as the portholes were opened, and

both larboard and starboards cannons were aimed, I alerted our colleagues.

"Men! Mind the cannons!" ordered Buttcheek. "Grk... hk... hk..." ordered Caption.

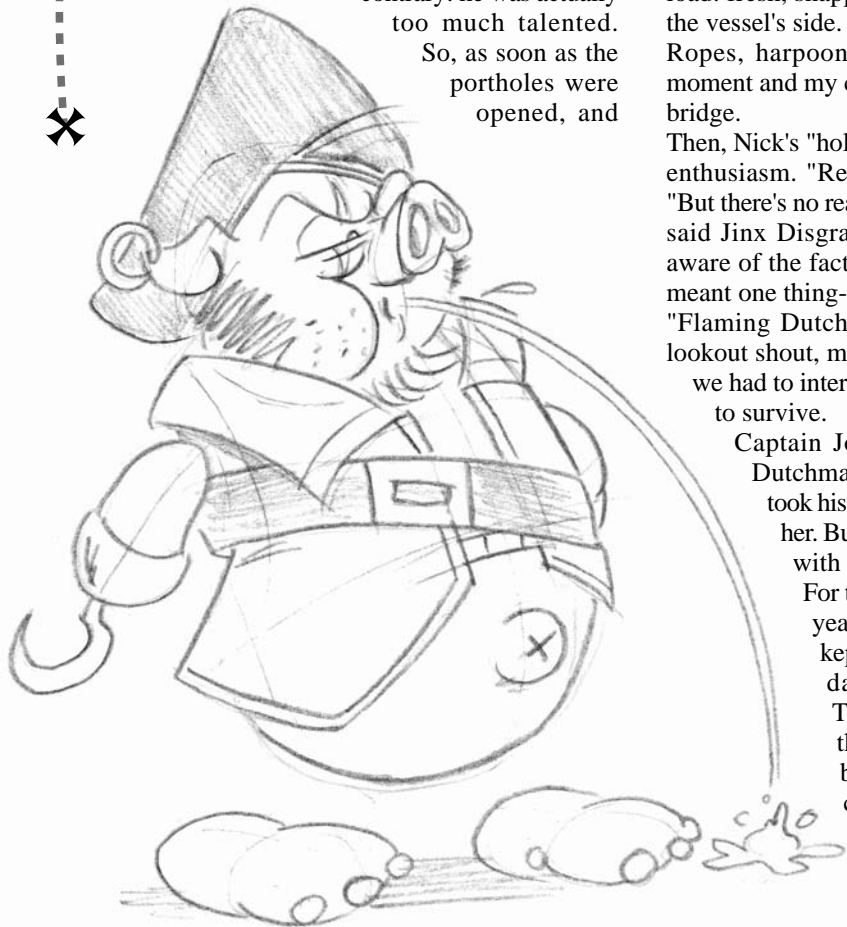
Immediately their cannons were aimed at me: one row here, one row there. The old men of the two crews were arming those barrels a little too much lively, when Barbecue pronounced a soft but firm "now" to the rest of his crew. In the blink of an eye, our sails were shut and the anchor lowered. Buttcheek and Caption didn't even notice that we were no more between them, and they were shooting cannonballs at each other. I enjoyed very much seeing those two vessels sinking slowly. After that, the anchor was pulled up and the sails unfolded. "Buttcheek," I said. "I'll be back soon. Meanwhile, I'll ask the hogs whether or not your company bothers them." "Grk... hk... hk," answered poor Buttcheek, while clutching at the foremast, floating mournfully. Caption felt that he's been involved in the whole story, and so I saw him swimming straight to Buttcheek and reproaching him for his mockery. Now we were alone, approaching the golden load: fresh, snappy and ready, we jumped onto the vessel's side.

Ropes, harpoons and boards were out in a moment and my crew was immediately on their bridge.

Then, Nick's "holy ship!" rapidly shut down my enthusiasm. "Retreat!" I ordered to the crew. "But there's no reason to interrupt the boarding!" said Jinx Disgrace's parrot. That bird wasn't aware of the fact that Nick's "holy ship!" only meant one thing--

"Flaming Dutchman at stern!" That was the lookout shout, meaning without any doubt that we had to interrupt the boarding if we wanted to survive.

Captain John Davies, on his Flaming Dutchman, was still mad at me since I took his Ship Wreck, fixed and renamed her. But more than that, he didn't agree with my intentions of keeping her. For this reason, during the last three years, the Flaming Dutchman had kept following our trails day after day, up until that morning. That wasn't the first boarding that we had to interrupt not to become living targets for his cannons. That, despite the fact



that John Davies' cannons were substantially bigger than ours, they threw a larger diameter lead pills, and with a much bigger power. No, surely that wasn't the first one. But... damn, this time it wasn't my grandma's earrings - there was enough gold for us to buy all of Tortuga's rum factories.

That's why my crew wasn't very happy hearing the "holy ship!" and what followed it. But what can you do about it?

It was difficult to run leaving all that gold behind us, but fortunately the Ship Creek had more cruise speed than the Flaming Dutchman's. That's because we were always penniless and our holds were always empty, while the Dutch was ballasted with pints and pints of sublime rotgut. With all the doubloons John Davies had, the only reason for him to want back the Ship Creek was only his pride.

But in that occasion, something strange happened... the distance between us and the Flaming Dutchman increased more rapidly than we expected. In other words, John Davies slowed down and... stopped.

Twenty-four thousand thundering typhoons! I'm a pirate, but I'm also fair. It wouldn't be honest to gain distance because of someone else's failure, or a bellyache or who knows what other damned inconvenient the Flaming Dutchman had. No, no: it's either the same weapons or nothing. At least that was what I was thinking then... Oh, what the hell, I'll admit it: going away like that was no fun. I ran on stern and shouted: "Davies! What's up?" I heard his distant voice: "Take her, Barrow." "What?!" I answered. "You hear me, Barrow. Just take that bloody ship, I don't give a damn!" Maybe it was a trap, I thought. "Why?" I shouted, eventually. Davies asked, "Ye sure ye wanna know?" "Yep," I answered. Well, trap or no trap, maybe that tangle of tentacles coming out from the sea wasn't in John Davies' plans, nor even that sinister noise coming out of the jaws of the sea secrets' guardian. That was the first time I've ever seen Octavius and so the Ship Creek was, finally, and officially, mine. My relief was so big that I didn't notice Barbecue's glance, nor the crew's sly grins... I said it earlier, that rascal was too much talented! In fact, a few hours later I was on the crystalline sand on a dry land small spot, just off of the coast of Tortuga, while I saw them sailing away

on my Ship Creek. Mine, at last, but only for the time of one last, and fatal, Tortuga's bottle of rum.

That's why I'll never have peace, until I'll be once again behind that ship's rudder. Alone, on a small island, for the next two month my diet consisted of bananas and cocoanuts... That's until I found that, on the other side of the Island there was a Tour-Tooga tourist village. Well, as soon as I got a rented boat, here I am! Following that damned buccaneer of Barbecue. Now, I don't even want to think how much I owe in rent...

And that's all, me matey.  
Now you know it.

