

The Legend of Buc Buccaneer

Story by
Daniel Bodenstein
Ronald Robrahn

Written by
Daniel Bodenstein

Illustrations by
Ronald Robrahn

Totem Tales Publishing
Royal Palm Beach, Florida

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Totem Tales Publishing

www.totemtales.com

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The Legend of Buc Buccaneer/ Daniel Bodenstein & Ronald Robrahn -- 1st ed.
ISBN 978-0-9843228-5-5

Dedication to everyone who inspired us and encouraged us.

Thank you.

***The true test of a fowl's merit be not in his
acquisition of wealth, but by the means in which it
benefits his crew and his family. Although at the end
o' the journey, 'tis not hurt to be rich.***

- The last written words of Captain Lucky Longfeather



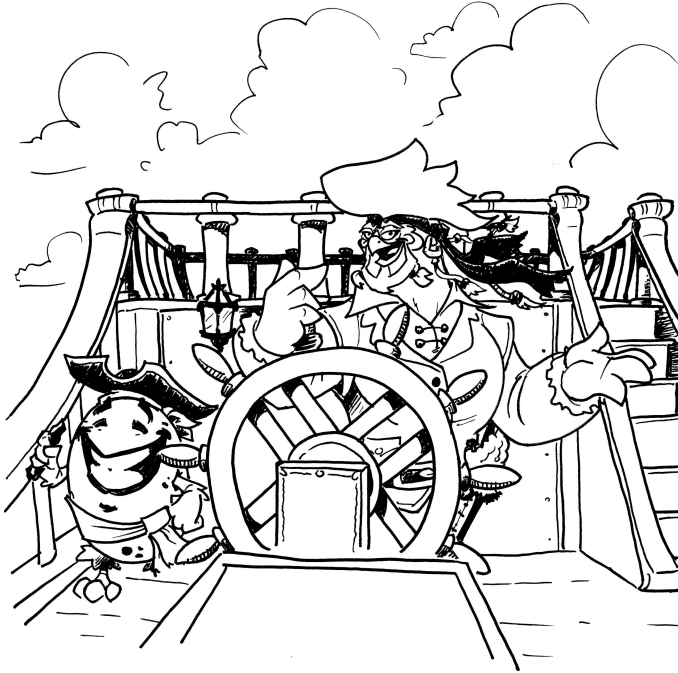
CHAPTER 1

The ocean water lapped against the hull of the majestic wooden vessel. The smell of the sea rolled over the deck and the spray leapt up to tickle the faces of anyone aboard. Bound tightly with cord, the mighty sails of the ship hugged the cross members of the stout main mast. The strong scent of linseed oil, mixed with the salt in the air, formed a pungent fog around the deck. Standing at the helm was a tall and proud rooster, his feathered hands wrapped around the wheel and the maroon tails of his long bandana flapping in the breeze. His eyes narrowed as he surveyed the scene.

“Stow the guns!” the rooster bellowed. “Hoist anchor! Set the main sail! Move like yer lives depend on it ya scurvy buzzards!” He looked over the empty deck of the ship with a critical eye. “Mister Ayg!” he cried. From behind him came the soft patter of bare feet, and the captain looked to see his first mate.

Mister Ayg was, in fact, a fully-grown fowl still trapped within his egg. Cracks had been formed to allow his legs and wings to move freely. For a trapped bird, he got on surprisingly well. Watching him operate in society was a surprising thing and seeing him bobble about the deck of a ship was hypnotic. He was able to perform any task the captain put forth, so long as you didn’t mind the way he bumped around and occasionally knocked something over inadvertently. He

was also a very expressive bird, who loved to draw faces on his shell. Today, Mister Ayg was all smiles.



The captain sneered down at his first mate and snapped, “Is that the face of a seasoned seaman?”

Mister Ayg shook his egg.

“Wipe that silly grin off your face!” the rooster ordered.

Mister Ayg dragged his sleeve across his front, literally wiping the smile from his face. He produced his coal stick and replaced the grin with a sneer.

“Better,” the rooster crowed, though his tone suggested dissatisfaction.

The rooster standing at the helm, barking orders, was Buckley Smythe, a local, yet sometimes misguided, captain of a cargo vessel. Buc, as he was often referred to, drew a deep breath and exhaled loudly. “Is this not the way it should be, Mister Ayg? Sailing the wild sea? Braving danger? Living as free birds?”

Mister Ayg pulled on the coat of his captain and pointed over the starboard side.

The two turned to see the dock and the vessel still safely tied up.

“You know what I mean,” the captain muttered, “besides, we have work to do.” Buc turned the helm wheel looking at each of the posts as they passed his eye. “Find the knot then seven count to the left,” he mumbled, finding the post bearing the knot. He then turned the wheel slowly to the left, allowing the posts to brush against his feathered fingers. Once he reached the count of seven, he stopped the wheel.

A tall gangly stork stepped from the main cabin and approached the two birds. His face had a wide smile, formed shamelessly by a twitch of his lower beak. “Well, Captain Smith?” he asked pleasantly, startling the rooster at the helm. “She be the finest galleon the Caribbean ever set eyes upon. What do you think?”

“Smythe,” Buc corrected.

“What?” asked the apparent owner of the ship.

“The name, mate. Pronounced Sm - eye - th,” Buc explained, drawing the words out into long notes.

“My apologies, Captain Smythe,” said the stork, carefully pronouncing each syllable and bowing his head in apology. From his humbled position, he was unable to see Buc remove the wooden spindle post from the ship’s helm, and discreetly slide it into his inner jacket pocket.

“Apology accepted,” he replied. Buc turned to Mister Ayg. “Got it, mate,” he whispered, “Now let us end this farcical fantasy.” Buc turned his attention back to the ship’s owner.

Slowly, the owner straightened himself, moaning a little as his back popped and cracked. He placed a hand upon the small of his back and stretched, generating one last pop and a long sigh. “She be shy of a little work,” the owner announced.

“Apparently, she’s not alone, mate,” Buc mumbled.

“But I assure you she’ll hold true at sea,” the stork promised with a large grin.

The captain turned in a circle, scrutinizing his surroundings with a narrow, suspicious gaze. He strolled to a rail and rested a feathered hand on the beam. "She's a beast of a ship," he announced, turning his gaze to the owner. "She's run down, full of rot, leaks, and she smells funny." He tilted his head close to the rail and began rapping upon its wooden surface vigorously. He closed his eyes and shook his head as though he were a doctor who had just made a hopeless prognosis.

The stork stared in disbelief as Buc moved down the rail, talking to the wood and apologizing that he was too late to save the ship. He looked back at the other bird with an angry expression as the owner scratched his head vigorously. Small, white feathers floated from his head as the stork scratched away, completely dumbfounded by Buc's actions. This ship was just as stout and clean a vessel as any that had sailed the sea. The owner raised a finger in protest but Captain Buc broke in.

"Alas," Buc declared, "I can see you are a man with deep passion for her." He dragged a loving hand over the rail. "So I tell you this: give me the next two days to ponder the offer. I'll meet you back here with my decision, and if luck is on your side, a pouch full of coin."

The ship's owner stood speechless. He remained dead still for a moment, a look of confusion still painted across his brow. Then, as though a light had been shone upon him, his face broke into a wide smile and he chuckled as feathers drifted about the stork's head.

"Right then," said the Buc, strolling past the owner with long, confident strides. "Come, Mister Ayg," he cried out. Merrily whistling a tune as he left, leaving the owner standing by the rail, completely unaware that his potential buyer was walking away with a piece of his ship.



CHAPTER 2

The marketplace of Port Royal sang a chorus of haggling, laughing, sales pitches and the jingling of coins. Birds flapped their feathers and clicked their beaks over baskets and barrels, cups and crates, spools and sacks. Some chicks ran through a maze of booths and carts, laughing and yelling to one another while aged birds looked on with disapproving scowls. In the heart of all the noise and hurry, Buc strolled casually with his hands in his pockets. He deeply pulled in the rich air and sighed a long blast.

“The sea, Ayg!” he cried to his companion toddling along beside him. “It’s the spray in the air and the salt in the wind. The tranquil rocking of a deck under your feet and a wide horizon in every direction. The ships and the ports and the men who give up a life upon land for the promise of adventure and the chance at a few gold pieces. Ahh!” he exclaimed. “This, I know, is what I am meant for!”

Looking over the masses moving about the market, Buc threw an arm over Mister Ayg and smiled broadly. His eyes dropped to the egg beside him and the smile faded.

“Mister Ayg?” Buc prompted.

Ayg looked back up with a fierce scowl still drawn upon his shell.

“Fix your face,” Buc advised.

Ayg jumped anxiously and wiped his expression clean. When he looked back at Buc’s face, it was with a contended expression.