

THE PIRATES OF POQUOSON

GRAYBEARD:

Ahoy there! I am Captain Albert Kendall Hall, otherwise known as Graybeard – master of HMS BlueCrab, scourge of the Chesapeake Bay. Some folks call us the Pirates of Poquoson – those who live long enough to speak of us.

It was in the year of our Lord 1717 that we last sailed into these treacherous waters. Late October it was, near the feast of Samhain. There was a fierce storm that night – winds that came straight from Hell. My sturdy ship was forced aground right here – most of it crushed on the rocks, tossed about on the waves. I implored the heavens for mercy, but it was the devil that heard me.

SEA WITCH:

You were drunk and misjudged your helm. Ran yourself aground in your stupor. But I've always had a soft spot for drunks and small animals, *(to the audience)* so I offered him a deal. Instead of hurrying off to hell, as he deserved, I granted this scurvy pirate and his motley crew a chance for redemption. They didn't die, but neither did they live -- except for one day every fifty years. They have the chance to confess to the killing of Sir Thomas Wood – the fairest, noblest man who ever lived –and to tell me where they hid the priceless treasure he was carrying when he was most foully murdered.

MOSES:

Don't let this old SEA WITCH lead you astray, ladies and gentlemen! We haven't confessed because we didn't kill that fancy boy of hers. And besides, he didn't have the treasure with him when he died. He tried

often enough to steal it from us, but never did he succeed. If he was kilt, it was the Dollies what did it, although for what reason I have no idea. He was last seen, however, here in this very tavern, The One Eyed Rat, being “entertained” by the Belles of Bull Island – a pox be upon them.

SEA WITCH:

Silence! We have this quarrel for 300 years now. My patience is wearing thin and my magic is fading. Tonight I’m allowing these good people – these living people—to see you and hear you. Let them be your judges. You and the Belles can present your cases and I will abide by their decision. Agree?

GRAYBEARD:

And we’ll split the treasure?

SEA WITCH:

Which you claim doesn’t exist?

GRAYBEARD:

Just in case it does?

SEA WITCH: Agreed. Belles? Is this agreeable to you?

BELLA: Anything to get out of here! But first... we only get to eat and drink every fifty years and many of those years there was nothing here but seaweed and scrawny fish. Tonight there is beer and there is meat and there are pastries ... Can we adjourn for a meal before the trial commences?

GRAYBEARD: I know what you’re up to – you want to influence these good people. Turn them against my stalwart men.

BELLA: And you and your men can do the same. Do you fear the persuasive powers of a handful of wenches?

GRAYBEARD: I fear no one! Especially not a woman. Eat and drink your fill and we will reassemble in one hour's time. Bring me a pint!

DINNER

SEA WITCH: Enough, enough. It's time for this trial to begin. Captain Albert Kendall Hall – I accuse you of the murder of Sir Thomas Wood, late of this place. How do you plead?

GRAYBEARD: Guilty, Madam. Guilty.

SEA WITCH: What? After all these years, you are finally ready to confess?

GRAYBEARD: It's time for me to take my place in history. I am, I'm proud to say, the foulest, most treacherous pirate in the Chesapeake Bay! Do you know that these fine people – people who live in this self same community – have never even heard of me? My name should strike fear into their very bones. They tell me of that scurvy Blackbeard, whose only crime was getting caught by the King's sentries; and Bluebeard, who was too busy marrying and beheading women to pose any hazard to navigation! They should be telling tales of the adventures of Graybeard – a dastardly Pirate who disappeared after slaying the noble Thomas Wood.

He stealthily boarded my ship and made his way to my cabin. I, of course, saw him and heard him as he searched my quarters – looking no doubt for the precious Pearl of the Chesapeake. I challenged him, he savagely attacked me and we fought to the death. I ran him through with my cutlass and, though wounded myself, dragged him to the main

deck and threw him to the sea. I know not where his body washed ashore, but, I assure you, I vanquished him aboard my sturdy ship, single handedly. Then I joined my crew for a pint or two in this lovely establishment!

SEA WITCH: Codswallop! You try this each time! You are a braggart and a blowhard and a liar, sir. His body was found in his dory, pulled ashore in that marsh nearby, surrounded by a heap of oysters. It looked like he was searching them for your precious pearl – not your cabin.

BELLA: Pearl? What pearl!

PETE: Does that mean you found it, sir? Where is the pearl? Maybe it can help us get out from under this curse!

SEA WITCH: The Pearl of the Chesapeake, ladies and gentlemen, was what drove Captain Hall, here, to leave merry old England and bring his unsavory bunch of cut-throats to our shores. Legend has it that there is a pearl of such great beauty and magic, that whoever possesses it will have an eternity of pleasant living.

BELLA: Then, for sure he never found it. These last three hundred years have felt like an eternity, for sure. But there's been nothing pleasant about them.

SADIE: That's for sure. Hanging around, just us – no one for company except them! Invisible. Unable to talk. Or ask for help. Hell, if that's where we're going, can't be any worse.

JOCK: 'Cept, remember that night we materialized in the middle of that camp of Injuns who'd been fishing out here? Scared the bejessus out of them, didn't we?

MOSES: Or those crab-pickers, back when this was a seafood place? Never seen anyone clear out of work so quickly. They didn't even hang around to get paid, did they? That was kinda fun.

JOSIE: These past few years have been fun, though. I've kinda enjoyed hanging out here when there's been people and beer and food and music. Some of the weddings have brought tears to my eyes. It's better tonight since we can eat and drink and talk to the folks ... but even when we just hang about in the rafters we can dance to the music. Strange music, however. I'd like to talk to whoever is in charge of that ...

SEA WITCH: This is getting us nowhere! Reminisce among yourselves later. I'm trying to find a killer! Proprietress! What have you to say?

BELLA: Well, if you really want me thoughts on the matter – I think you need to ask Mattie, over there. She showed up that night and started wiping down tables and pouring drinks. I never hired her. Never even saw her before, but it was so busy in here I was just grateful for the help. Where did she come from? Why was she here? She got stuck in your blasted curse with the rest of us, but after 300 years I still don't know who she is and why she was here. Mattie – come up here and explain yourself.

MATTIE: You never asked, did you? Just treated me like a serving wench. Me! Lady Matilda Woods. Wife of Sir Thomas.

SEA WITCH: You? He told me he was married to a harridan. A horrible old lady who controlled his land and made his life sheer hellish.

MATTIE: And you believed him? You are as foolish as you are evil. It's almost true about the land ... he married me when my first husband died. My son was too young to take over, so he took control of

everything. None of his wealth actually belonged to him as long as my son lived. I was in mortal fear for my boy's life every minute I was married to Thomas. I knew he had other women. Lots of them. But that year, when he told me he was going to Williamsburg to confer with the Governor, I decided to take my life back into my own hands. I followed him out here to learn enough to be able to rid myself of him. I pretended to be one of your serving wenches and he never even noticed me. I saw him get drunk and flirt and argue. After he left I prepared myself to leave also, but then you showed up. And cursed us all and I've been doomed with the rest of these ... these ... women.

BELLA: I saw you leave several times, though, I think. I remember Sir Thomas leaving and I looked around to find you. Some of the tankards needed washing. I couldn't find you. Not until later.

MATTIE: I went to the necessary, but ...

BELLA: Are you sure you didn't follow him and kill him?

MATTIE: Don't speak to me that way. I am a respectable lady. You were the one who had a loud argument with my husband that night. What did you quarrel with him about?

SADIE: I can tell you that! The same thing they were constantly arguing about. Sir Thomas claimed that he owned this land and Belle owed him rent. She would never pay him.

BELLA: That's because he didn't own it. He claimed he'd gotten a charter from the Governor, but he never would show it to me. He claimed that he filed a complaint with the Major up in Yorktown, but I knew that Major Hastings would never evict me. His men enjoyed their excursions here too much.

SADIE: But he showed you the papers that night, didn't he?

BELLA: How do I know what them papers said. Do you think I can read legal stuff like that? Can you?

SADIE: No, but ... I did notice that you changed your gown that night. I sure wish you hadn't. I liked the blue one so much better – if you kept it on I wouldn't have had to look at that rag for 300 years.

BELLA: Can you think of nothing but clothes? Such a fluff brain. I should have fired you long ago.

SADIE: I wish you had. Then I wouldn't be stuck here for all eternity. If only Thomas had been doomed with us. Why did he have to die first? I could have taken care of him all these years.

SEA WITCH: You were in love with him, too! You foolish women! He was mine. All mine. I was going to take him with me to a place where we could be together forever. He kept delaying ... he was so obsessed with that damned pearl! He said he wanted to bring me something of great value to our life together. The poor fool...

JOSIE: You honestly think he loved you! Either of you? He was a disgusting pig. Anything in a skirt was his one, true love, to hear him speak. Many the night I had to fight him off. If he paid me a coin for a drink, he thought he was buying some "private time" with me, too. I would have killed him myself if I'd had a knife. But I didn't. He wasn't a poor fool – you were.

POLLY: No, I think I was the biggest fool. For ten years he promised me he'd take care of our son, little Tommy. I begged and pleaded for money to feed the lad. That night he told me he'd finally come up with a "solution to our problem". He sold Tommy to Graybeard in payment of a poker debt. Tommy was to be a cabin boy for that scurvy monster!

PETE: You know I would never have let that happen, Polly, If only I had found that pearl I could have given you and the lad the life you deserved. I would have gotten it – or died trying.

SCURVY SAM: You were all poor fools! Thinking that any single pearl – no matter how big or how perfect – could begin to be valuable enough to offer eternal happiness – or, what does the legend say – eternal pleasant living? Pshaw!

MATTIE: You ... I know you, don't I?

SAM: I guess there's no sense hiding any more. Yes, Ma'am, you should know me. I served in your house for fourteen long, miserable years. Both of your husbands were terrible masters. They kept extending my indenture – treating me worse than they treated their horses. A pox on both of them.

MATTIE: I always thought our servants were well treated. That's what I was told ...

SAM: You were lied to, Madam. Lied to. I finally ran away and joined this ship. Life as a pirate was hard. Miserably hard. But we had fun, too. Didn't we, lads?

PIRATES: Aye.

MATTIE: Did Thomas recognize you? Was he hunting you down? Did you kill him to avoid being dragged back to the estate? Is that what happened?

SAM: Nay. I avoided him like the plague that he was, but no matter how much I hated him, I would never kill him.

JOCK: Then why were you out in the dinghy that night? I saw you slip back into the tavern from the dock. Heard the dinghy bang against the pier. And noticed that your short sword was missing. It was

you, wasn't it? You stabbed him and brought his body back so that the SEA WITCH could find him out there.

SAM: You were so drunk that night you could have seen anything of the sort. I admit I was out on the dock – watching the moonrise – getting away from the smoke and the noise. But my short sword is right here. Right where it's always been. But I don't see yours. Where is it, Jock? Thrust in the chest of Sir Thomas? He was always making fun of you, wasn't he? Insulting your homeland? Jestings about your small stature? Being generally obnoxious? Did too much to drink loosen your temper to the point where you ran him through? Admit it, man, so we can all finally find our rest.

JOCK: You know very well that I broke my sword that night we raided the Queen Charlotte. I was sure I could get a new one from that cowardly crew when we defeated them, but we had to retreat too quickly. Next time, I'll pick up a couple of weapons, but for now I have to rely on me cutlass and cunning.

MOSES: There won't be a next time, you wee fool. Our pirating days have been over for 300 years. The world is totally changed out there. As soon as somebody – anybody—confesses we can move on, too. I've been talking to some of these good people here about the world they are living in, and I think I'm finally glad I'm dead. Did you hear about this thing they call tweets? Can you imagine a king who tweets? And they have carriages that drive themselves. No horses! And thinking machines! And these little devices they carry in their pockets that can paint your picture in less than a minute. And if you push another button, you can talk to someone miles away!

GRAYBEARD: You would have liked that one, Moses, wouldn't you? It would have saved you a trip to Yorktown to talk to the King's soldiers,

wouldn't it? I know you betrayed us to the Commander up there, didn't you?

MOSES: No! Not me! That was Sir Thomas! I intercepted the letter he was sending to Yorktown. I bribed his messenger to let me see it. When I read it, I knew I had to do something. I was sore afraid ... But, wait. How did you know?

GRAYBEARD: That messenger worked for me, you idiot! I knew what was planned and fully intended to put to sea before the navy could have gotten here. I was watching you. Wondering what you were going to do with that information once you'd gotten it.

MOSES: Nothing, sir. I swear it. I was still mulling over my options. I wanted to find you in a good mood so I could tell you that the message never made it to Yorktown and you'd reward me for taking the initiative.

GRAYBEARD: Instead you killed a valuable messenger – poor lad – and then you killed Sir Thomas, too. Didn't you? Did he ask you where his servant was? Did you overhear him talking about going to Yorktown himself to let them know where our good ship was hiding? Are you the one responsible for us being in this predicament?

SEA WITCH: I can't stand it any longer! My magic is growing weak. The spell will soon be broken. Someone killed him and I mean to know who it was. You people out there – you decide who was responsible for tearing my sweet Thomas from my breast.

Was it one of the wenches? Perhaps Bella, who disputed the ownership of the establishment with him?

Or perhaps Mattie, the harridan wife, who was enraged that he'd strayed from her?

Or Sadie, who foolishly thought that he loved her best?

Or Polly, who had a son by him – one he refused to support?

Or maybe Josie, who merely grew tired of his bottom pinching, vulgar behavior?

Or was it one the merry band of pirates?

Scurvy Sam didn't want to be dragged back into indentured servitude. Did he kill him?

Or did little Jock grow angry at being taunted and abused?

Was is Pete? Who would do anything to protect his pretty Polly?

Moses was afraid brave Sir Thomas was going to betray this motley crew and their wretched ship.

Or was it Captain Graybeard? I know he didn't kill him the way he bragged he did ... but it is possible that Thomas found the Pearl of the Chesapeake and died defending himself from a sneak attack.

Let's have one of those "election" things I keep hearing about. Fill out your ballots and we'll meet here after dessert.

GRAYBEARD: Thank you for setting us free. The hex wears off at daybreak, so we will not remain among you much longer. But the deal was that whatever treasure was uncovered would be shared around. Well, it turns out there is a Pearl of the Chesapeake. Poquoson. I've had three hundred years to think about it and I realized that we have had it all along. The prize that brings eternally pleasant living (and even happiness) is the company of friends and family and a beautiful place to enjoy your lives. Good evening to you, gentle people.

END