

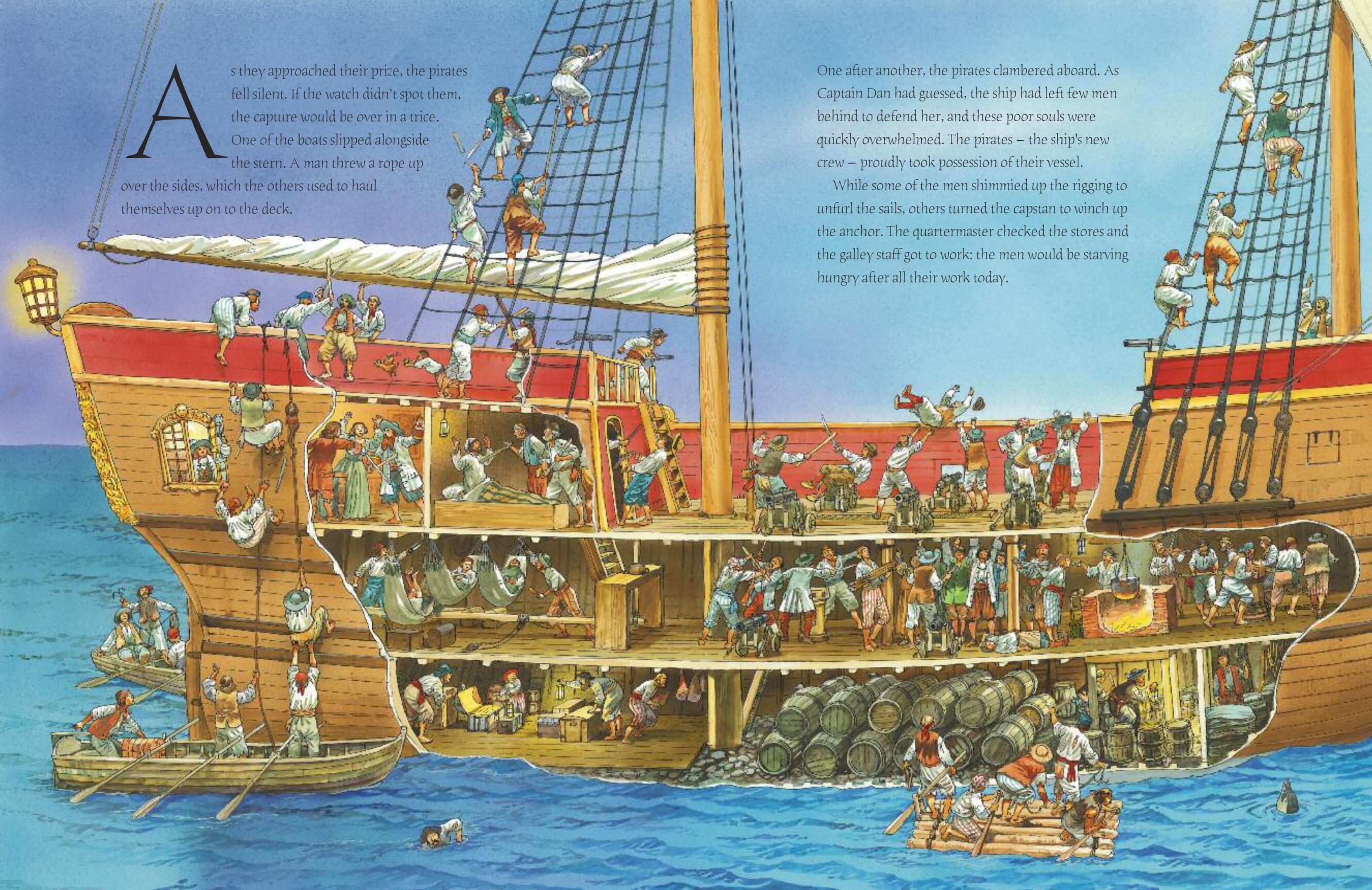
The pirates were on the move. They had jumped into whatever boats they could find – sailing dinghies, rowing boats and rafts – and quickly put to sea. As the sun set, the air was filled with singing and laughter. Captain Dan shook his head in disbelief. What fools those other pirates were to have left their ship so poorly defended! His men would easily be able to seize her now, and sail away before they even noticed she had gone. Poor fellows! They wouldn't find the treasure they had buried on the island, either: that belonged to Captain Dan and his men, too. He smiled to himself. He would soon be the Terror of the Seas once again.



As they approached their prize, the pirates fell silent. If the watch didn't spot them, the capture would be over in a trice. One of the boats slipped alongside the stern. A man threw a rope up over the sides, which the others used to haul themselves up on to the deck.

One after another, the pirates clambered aboard. As Captain Dan had guessed, the ship had left few men behind to defend her, and these poor souls were quickly overwhelmed. The pirates – the ship's new crew – proudly took possession of their vessel.

While some of the men shimmied up the rigging to unfurl the sails, others turned the capstan to winch up the anchor. The quartermaster checked the stores and the galley staff got to work: the men would be starving hungry after all their work today.





With her bowsprit sail unfurled, the pirate ship sped off on a following wind. No one would catch her now. The pirates were back in business! All they needed was to find some treasure ships laden with yet more silver, gold and precious jewels ...

Meanwhile, the pirates' first task was to top up their food supplies. Some of them tried to spear dolphins and turtles – with little luck! It was not long before they came across some fishing boats. Captain Dan knew they must be close to a harbour now. Surely they would find a treasure ship there, taking on supplies?



**T**hey did! Here were the mighty galleons of the Spanish Treasure Fleet, no less. They had just taken aboard a cargo of silver ingots from the ports of the Spanish Main. Now, one by one, the galleons were raising anchor and sailing out of the harbour. They were bound for Spain, thousands of kilometres away across the Atlantic Ocean. A long and dangerous journey lay ahead. The Caribbean Sea was especially notorious as the haunt of bloodthirsty pirates. The ship's guards always kept a keen look-out for any trouble in these waters.

Captain Dan and his men watched the galleons from a safe distance. Although the pirate ship he commanded was quicker through the water than the giant galleons, their guns were far superior to his own. If he were not careful, his ship would be blasted out of the water. He needed to pick out a galleon that had fewer guards on board. The pirates might be able to cut it off from the rest of the fleet, making it difficult for the other galleons to come to her aid.



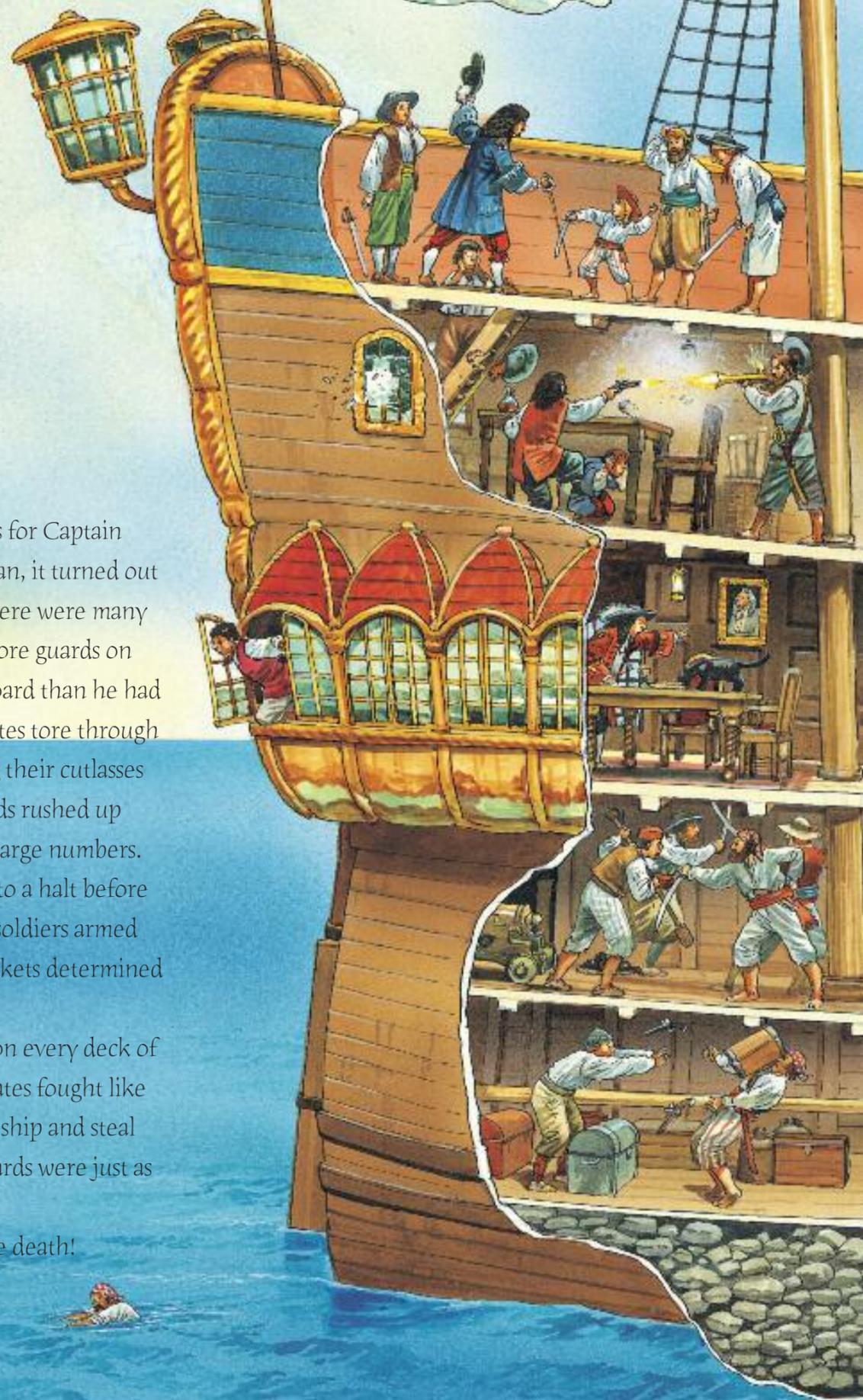
The last galleon to leave port dawdled behind the other ships. Captain Dan scanned her decks with his telescope. He could spot only a handful of guards. "Here's our prize me hearties!" he bellowed.

Up went the Jolly Roger, the dreaded skull and crossbones flag. Soon, the pirate ship drew alongside the galleon, her guns blazing. The pirates hurled their grappling irons over the galleon's side, pulled the two ships close together and leapt aboard.

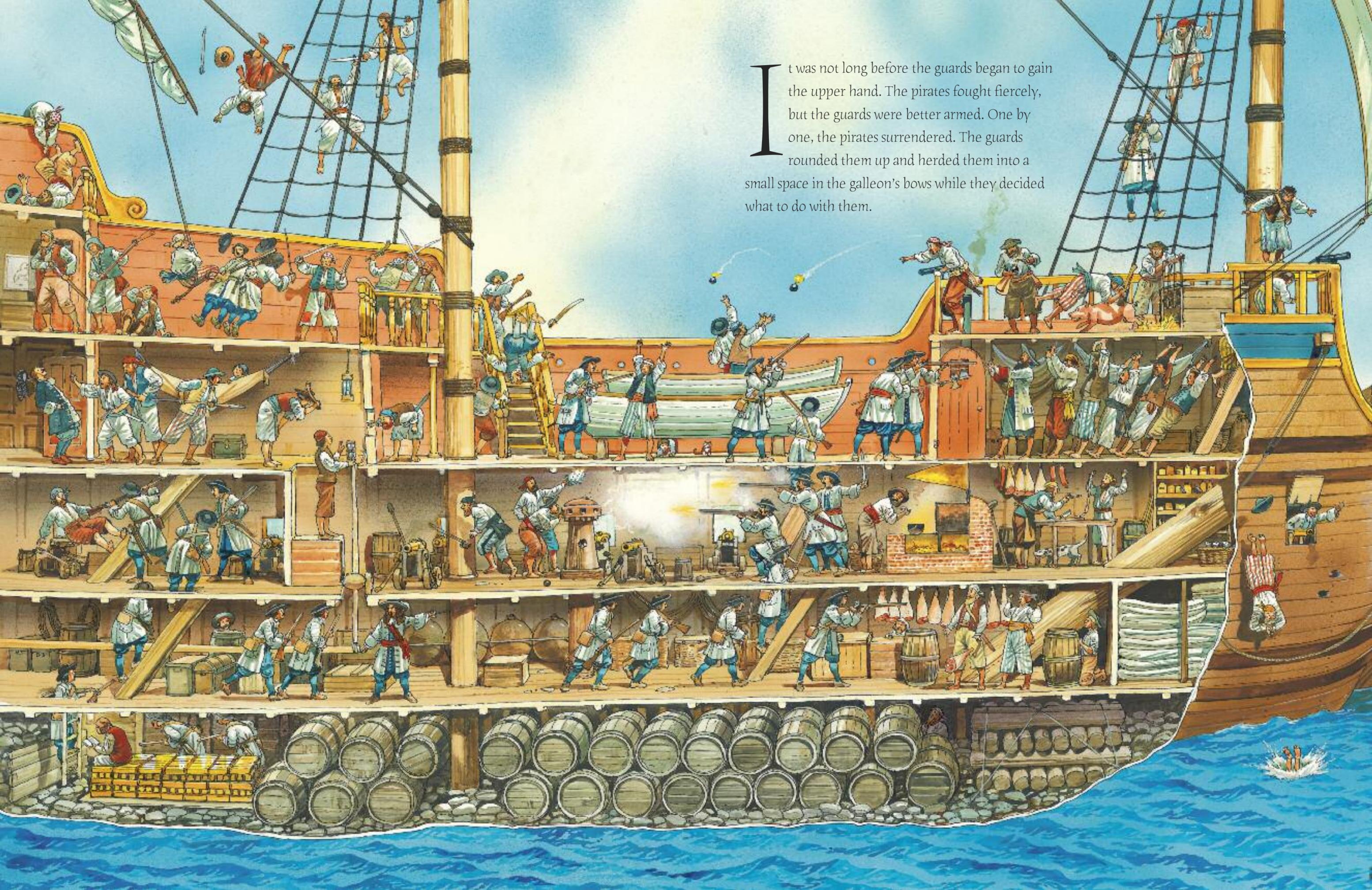
Alas for Captain Dan, it turned out there were many more guards on board than he had thought. As the pirates tore through the ship brandishing their cutlasses and pistols, the guards rushed up from below deck in large numbers. The pirates skidded to a halt before ranks of grim-faced soldiers armed with swords and muskets determined not to let them pass.

Battle was joined on every deck of the galleon. The pirates fought like tigers to capture the ship and steal her treasure; the guards were just as keen to stop them.

It was a fight to the death!



It was not long before the guards began to gain the upper hand. The pirates fought fiercely, but the guards were better armed. One by one, the pirates surrendered. The guards rounded them up and herded them into a small space in the galleon's bows while they decided what to do with them.





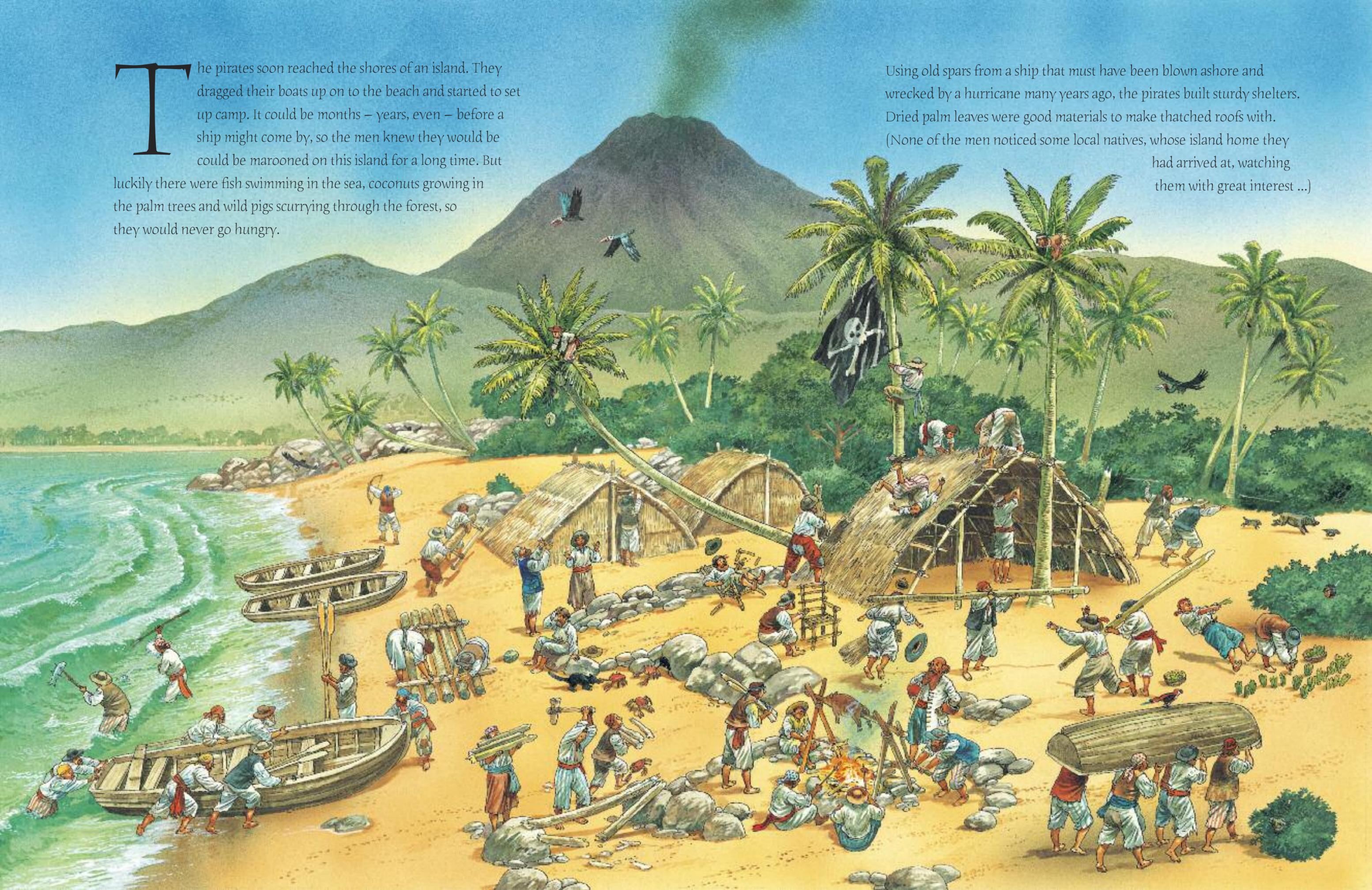
Captain Dan pleaded with the guards to have mercy on his crew. "Throw me to the sharks if it please 'ee, but spare my lads. They're honest men who'll work hard for ee' if ye'll have 'em."

But the master of the galleon insisted was no room on the galleon for a band of smelly, unruly thieves. He was a kind-hearted man, however, and decided to put all the pirates ashore. Let them see if they could survive on a remote island: *that'll* mend their pirate ways, he thought.

And so the pirates, along with their captain, were squeezed into boats and left to row away. The galleon's master then gave orders for the pirate ship to be set on fire.

The pirates soon reached the shores of an island. They dragged their boats up on to the beach and started to set up camp. It could be months – years, even – before a ship might come by, so the men knew they would be marooned on this island for a long time. But luckily there were fish swimming in the sea, coconuts growing in the palm trees and wild pigs scurrying through the forest, so they would never go hungry.

Using old spars from a ship that must have been blown ashore and wrecked by a hurricane many years ago, the pirates built sturdy shelters. Dried palm leaves were good materials to make thatched roofs with. (None of the men noticed some local natives, whose island home they had arrived at, watching them with great interest ...)



Good fortune at last came to the pirates. Some men were digging a hole to make a latrine (toilet) when a spade suddenly struck something made of metal. Quickly brushing away the sand, the men found a large chest buried in the ground.

They hauled it to the surface, smashed open the lock ... and found themselves staring at a spectacular treasure trove: hundreds of gold and silver coins, and piles of precious jewels. They danced for joy!

Just then, someone shouted: "A ship! A ship!" In the distance, the pirates could see a ship had moored in the next bay – and that some men were already rowing ashore.

"They've come for their treasure, I'll be bound!" laughed Captain Dan. "Well, they're in for a big surprise. Before they get to shore, we'll row out there and 'borrow' their vessel. And we'll take their box o' goodies with us. How 'bout that, me hearties? A double score!"

The men roared their approval and leapt into the boats.

