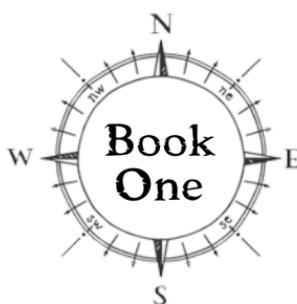


The Adventures of  
**WHITEBEARD**



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Illustrated by Olivia Ong

# Introducing ...



Dasher



Prancer



Dancer



Vixen



Comet



Donner



Cupid



Blitzen



# Chapter 1

Packed full of gunpowder, the giant Christmas pudding was about to explode.

This part of the plan had gone perfectly for the pirates. It was a triumph.

There was just one small problem. A tiny detail really, but one they couldn't escape ...

The pirates were still inside!

'Why on earth did we agree to this?' asked a teenage pirate dressed in black. 'This was never going to work.'

'We're not done for yet, Dasher,' replied the cabin boy. His cherub-like face lit up. 'The captain will save us!'

'Don't be stupid, Cupid,' said Dasher. 'We're doomed. Honestly, you're such an optometrist!'

‘I think you mean optimist,’ corrected a dusky girl pirate. ‘Optimists are hopeful people who look on the bright side of life. Optometrists are doctors who look at people’s eyes. Maybe you should see one, to save us all from your unbearable hindsight.’

‘Very funny, Vixen. You know what’s not funny? How you got us into this horrible mess in the first place. I don’t know why we ever let a girl on the *Rudolph’s Revenge* anyway.’

‘Cool it, Dasher,’ said Dancer, who appeared to be wearing a patchwork of colourful flags. ‘How were we supposed to know they’d set fire to the pudding? Ain’t no use in blaming anyone now.’

‘I blame the mermaids,’ said Comet, screwing up his nose.

‘I blame the trolls,’ blurted the bulky Blitzen, taking up most of the room inside the pudding.

‘I blame the witch,’ said Prancer, smoothing his immaculate hair.

‘No, Dasher’s right,’ said Vixen, frowning. ‘This *is* my fault. Now let me think. There’s a way out of this yet.’

But time was not on the pirates' side. Trapped in the belly of the giant Christmas pudding, with its deadly use-by-date almost up, their hearts hammered away to the beat of a ticking clock ...



Given the nightmare the pirates now found themselves in, it was hard to believe that just 24 hours earlier they were happily celebrating Christmas Eve the best way pirates know how ... with a daring raid on another ship.

From his favourite spot on the *Rudolph's Revenge*, high up in the crow's nest, Cupid was first to see it sailing across the turquoise waters of the Caribbean.

The joy of finally spotting a ship to attack raced through every inch of his scrawny frame.

'Sails ahoy!' he shouted.

Cupid's shipmates looked up as he leapt down, the wind rushing through his mop of blonde curls as he swung like a monkey to land on deck.



In his excitement he sprinted past Prancer and Vixen at the sails, jumped over one of Blitzen's cannon and bumped Comet at the ship's wheel, almost knocking off Comet's spectacles.

'I say, old chap, do be careful,' said Comet, peering over the rim of his half-moon glasses.

'Sorry, Mister Comet, but there are sails!'

The door to the captain's cabin burst open and out stepped an ancient mariner with a magnificent white beard.

'Sails you say, me lad?' he boomed.

The jolly-looking fellow smiled more with his eyes than his mouth, which was hidden by white whiskers. The old man had done so much sailing in his time that his sunburnt skin was covered in wrinkles, each line mapping another adventure. Upon his wavy white hair sat a tricorne hat, which matched his brown buccaneer boots. A splendid red jacket buttoned up over his well-fed belly, but only just. Tucked into his belt he carried two shining flintlock pistols and at his side hung a large cutlass.

‘Well, my boy,’ said Captain Whitebeard, taking out his spyglass. ‘What d’ya see now?’

Cupid pointed and there, as the sun began to sink in the late afternoon sky, was a tall ship.

The captain lifted his spyglass to his eye, grinned and snapped it shut.

‘Two shares to our young Cupid here for spotting her,’ he said, ruffling the boy’s hair. ‘It appears we’ve a Spanish ship in our sights, and don’t she look like pretty prey? Aye, it’s Christmas Eve and with the sailors swimming in grog, she’ll be easy enough to take. They’ll be feasting on all kinds of delicious Spanish food. Tasty tapas. Roast turkey. Smoked pork. They really lay it on, you know. I think nutty nougat is their speciality at Christmas, but we may even get a mince pie too if we’re lucky. No more sprouts for us!’

The pirates cheered as their tummies rumbled. They hadn’t spotted a ship to attack for weeks and all they had left to eat was a barrel of smelly old Brussels sprouts. Even worse, the diet meant the crew’s bottoms were tooting out

some of the nastiest smells known to man. It was so gassy below deck, they couldn't even light candles for fear of blowing a hole in the side of the ship.

'Ho, ho, ho,' laughed Whitebeard, licking his lips. 'Oh yes, our Christmas will be merry indeed!'

Little did the captain know, the attack that night would spark a chain of events to change Christmas as we know it, forever.