



Pirate Grace and the Mermaid Medicine

Adapted from a universal traditional tale by Janina Vigurs

Illustration by Erica Trinity Rose

There was once a pirate ship – the largest ship ever.

Nobody knew exactly how many crew lived on board, only that there were a lot of them. Below deck there were sweaty men who did lots of hard work: Cooks, Carpenters, Gunners, and Riggers. On the top deck lived the important people: First and Second Mates, and of course the Captain.

The Captain was in charge of the whole ship. He made the rules. Because he made the rules, he decided that he would be the only person allowed to have his family onboard.

The Captain lived with his wife and young daughter Grace. Much to his dislike, Grace loved making her dress dirty with gunpowder,

climbing the rigging, and sharing her biscuit crumbs with the ship's rats.

But what she loved best of all was playing chase with her best friend Donal, the youngest member of the crew.

Donal lived below deck with the sweaty men. His name was Donal, but the sweaty men called him Swabbie because his job was to wash the decks with a type of thick cloth called a "swab".

One night, one of the sweaty men began coughing horribly. Because they lived so close together, it wasn't very long before one man with a cough became two men with a cough... Two men became four... Four became eight... And soon everyone below deck was coughing horribly – including Donal.

Then the crew who lived on the top deck began coughing too. Now the Captain called the ship's doctor – but all the men were so ill, the doctor just could not heal

them. In fact, the doctor started coughing too!

Soon Grace began to cough. Now the Captain became extra worried – so he walked to the front of the ship and asked the Queen of the Mer People for help.

The Queen appeared from beneath the waves, and listened calmly as the worried Captain told her the problem. Once he had finished, the Queen disappeared under the water, and came back a little while later with a large jug of magical healing water.

The Queen passed the jug to the Captain and said, "Everyone on the ship must drink this. But make sure everyone only takes a small sip," she added. Then she swam away.

The Captain took the jug straight to those who lived above deck – his wife and all his Mates. They were all so worried about getting better that they all began greedily guzzling the healing water.

There wasn't much water to go round everyone. Grace saw the important men being greedy and thinking only of themselves. It looked like the healing water would run out before any of the men below deck would get some. Grace didn't think there would be any left for the Cooks, Carpenters, Gunners, Riggers – or Donal.

The Captain gave a cup to Grace and said, "Drink up!"

Grace tipped the cup up to her lips – but she kept her lips closed.

"Thank you Father," she said. Then, when he wasn't looking, she took the cup below deck.

Grace quickly found her friend, and told him, "Donal! I have something for your cough!"

She took two tiny shells from her pocket and placed them on the ground. From her cup she poured two drops of healing water into Donal's shell, and two drops into her own.

They both drank their small sips.

Over the next few hours the coughing from above deck became really loud. One man even fell over and died.

The Captain called for the Queen of the Mer People again. He was furious! He shouted, "This magic water of yours is making things worse! It isn't healing at all!"

Grace and Donal heard the shouting and rushed above deck to see what was happening.

"But I don't understand," the Queen said. "Why would your men become more ill? I made this healing water with my own hands!"

Then the Queen spotted Donal hiding behind a pile of rope. She called to him and said, "Young boy! You look so healthy, you are almost glowing. Did you not drink my healing water?"

"Oh yes," replied Donal, "and so did my best friend – she shared hers with me. We only had a small sip each."

"Ahhhhhh," said the Queen.

“Captain, did your men have just a small sip each?”

The Captain said nothing.

The Queen shook her head sadly. “This magical water is too strong to be glugged in such a large quantity. Too much power at once can be very, very bad indeed.”

Grace and Donal made sure that all the other men who lived below deck had a sip from Grace’s cup – and they all and carried on living healthily for many years.

Grace went on to be an even more famous pirate captain than her father – you can even find her in history books. And when they grew up, both Grace and Donal enjoyed telling their children about how they saved many lives that day – not through powerful magic or healing water, but through kindness, sharing, and true friendship.

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