

## Pepper Nose and the stolen presents

By Martin S. Beckley

It was Christmas Eve; all the villagers were busy getting the great hall ready for the Christmas party. Mrs. Bun and the Onion family were preparing the food. The wizard was in charge of decorating the hall and the tree. Pepper Nose and Lemon Head collected all the presents and placed them under the tree in the great hall.

Nobody was up on the hill, so nobody saw the ship with the black pirate's flag getting closer and closer.

Finally, everything was ready. The villagers were very tired after working hard, so they went home and fell asleep.

The sound of crying woke Pepper Nose up. It was Lemon Head. He was sitting in the doorway of the hall. 'They've all gone,' sobbed Lemon Head. 'What have?' asked Pepper Nose. 'The presents!' wailed Lemon Head, 'They've been stolen.' He was especially upset because his Santa costume had gone missing as well. Soon, a crowd gathered to see what all the crying was about. Pepper Nose asked, 'Who knows what happened?' Nobody knew; but being a tiny invisible fairy she was too small to tell Pepper Nose about the pirates. Pepper Nose said, 'We won't let this spoil our party; we can still have a good time!' But he could tell by all the sad faces it would not be easy.

Nobody flew off to the pirate ship and found Black Eye Thunder sharing out the presents with his two pirate friends. He gave a bag of chocolate coins to Fearsome Fred and a bag of chocolate coins to Sneaky Steve, who had already hidden some in his pocket. Black Eye Thunder kept the other presents all for himself. Nobody was angry and flapped

her wings very fast until she got hot. Then she flew onto Black Eye Thunder's face. 'Ouch, who did that?' he screamed. The other pirates looked at each other, shrugged their shoulders and said 'Nobody.' Black Eye Thunder said, 'My face stings, it can't have been nobody, it must have been one of you.' Nobody stung his face again. 'Oi, stop that,' he shouted. Again, Nobody stung him. Fearsome Fred said, 'The presents must be cursed, quick take them back.' 'NEVER!' shouted Black Eye Thunder. Nobody stung him again. 'Ouch!' cried the naughty pirate. Fearsome Fred fled, screaming, 'It's a curse, I want my Mummy.' Sneaky Steve slipped away. Black Eye Thunder decided to take the presents back, but he would disguise himself in the red dressing up cloths he found amongst the presents.

That evening in the great hall, Pepper Nose and his friends were eating their Christmas dinner when the door opened. Standing in the doorway with a bag of presents was Santa. Little Charlotte Onion screamed 'Yippee, Santa's here.' Santa called back 'Yo-ho-ho.' 'Hooray!' shouted Lemon Head jumping up and knocking over the pepper. Pepper Nose sneezed so hard he blew Santa's beard off. 'It's Black Eye Thunder!' everybody cried. The naughty pirate felt guilty. 'Err, Merry Christmas?' he said.

