

CHRYSSOULA BOUKOUVALA

the Pirates of the Cyclades

A NOVEL

INCLUDES
FUN QUIZZES
ABOUT SAILING,
GREEK MYTHOLOGY,
GEOGRAPHY,
HISTORY AND
THE CYCLADES!



An amazing **SAILING** adventure for all ages

The Pirates of the Cyclades

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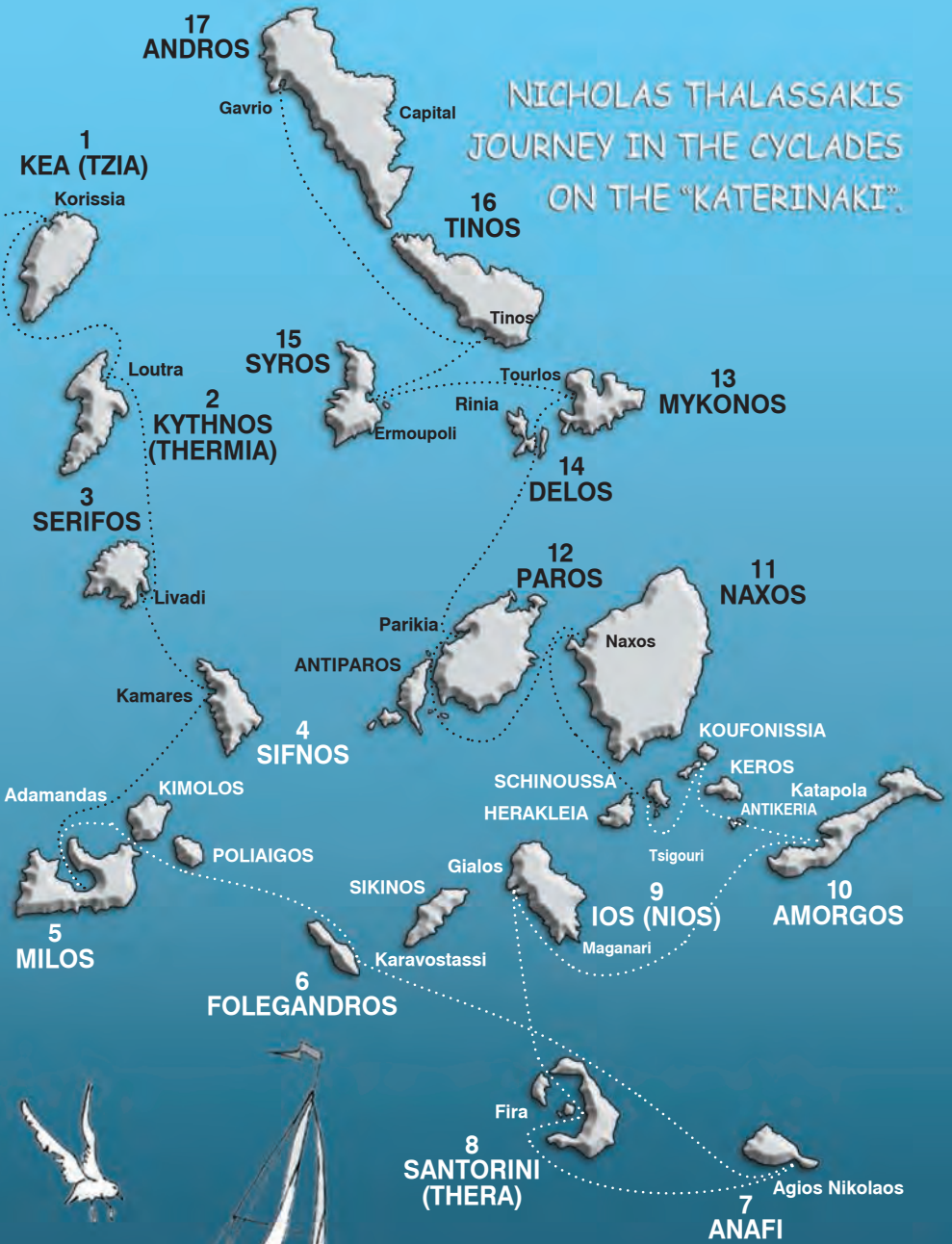
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CHRYSSOULA BOUKOUVALA

the **Pirates**
of the
Cyclades



NICHOLAS THALASSAKIS JOURNEY IN THE CYCLADES ON THE "KATERINAKI".



A E G E A N S E A

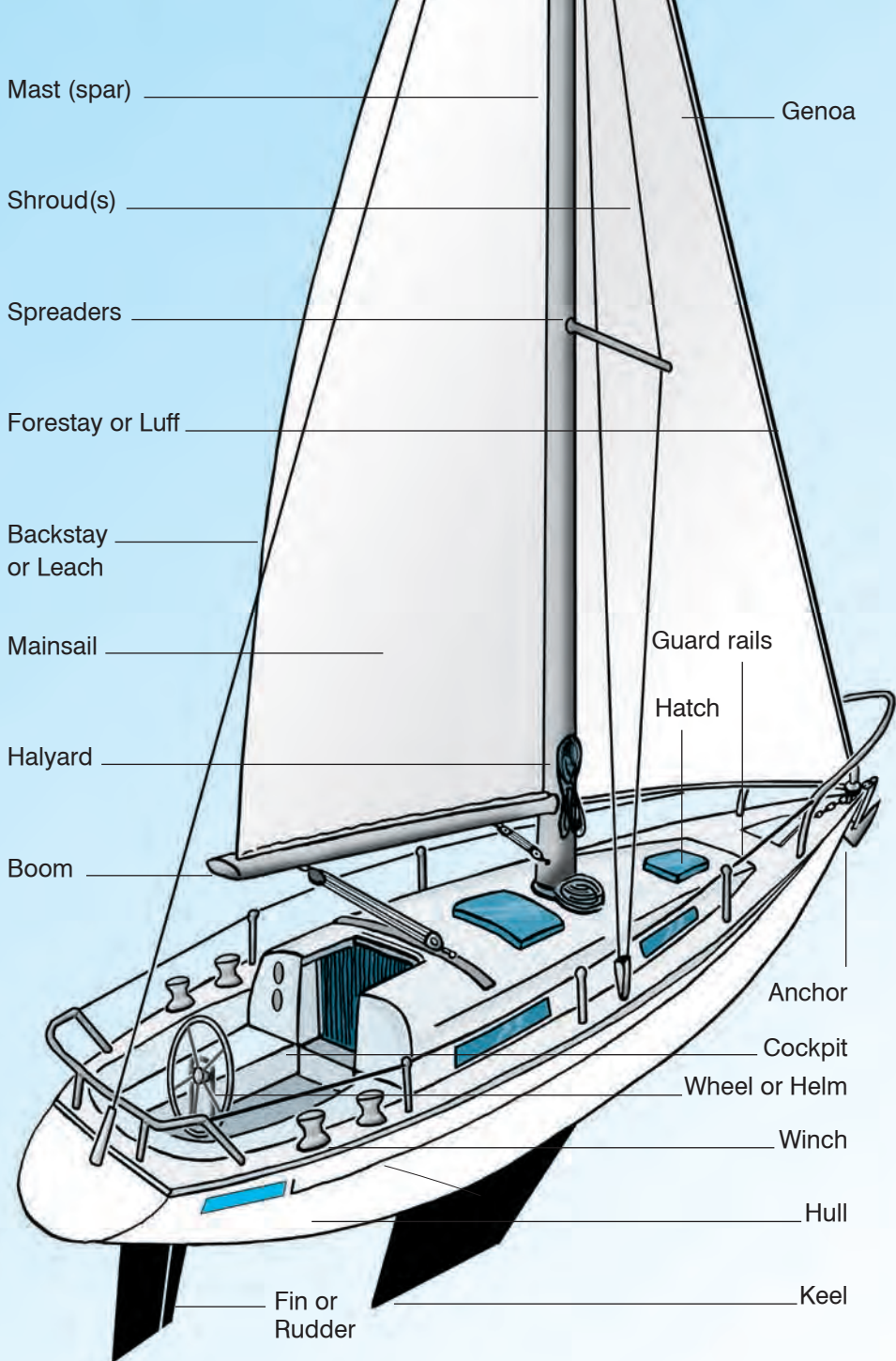


Diagram of a sailing yacht



ON SANTORINI (THERA)

It was already evening when we arrived in Fira, the port of the famous island of Santorini. The passengers were keen to visit it the next day. They said that it was the most beautiful island in the Cyclades, and so they'd decided to stay there for two nights.

“Every island has its own beauty, but this one genuinely moves a lot of people to tears!” sighed Meni.

I wanted to say that on Milos I, too, was moved to tears when I said goodbye to my beautiful Aphrodite, but I didn't breathe a word.

In Fira, once again, no matter how hard the skipper looked, there was no space for the *Katerinaki*.

“We'll **raft up** to another boat and as sure as anything there'll be a third by tonight. I can't see us getting much sleep,” he said, a bit annoyed.

to raft up = to tie a boat alongside another.

So we didn't drop anchor. Meni and I stood gaping at the lights twinkling like little stars up in Oia, the old capital of Santorini. By the time the skipper had docked the *Katerinaki* between two other yachts and tied it up securely so that it wouldn't drift away, my friend and I were repeating the riddle of Santorini:

***The last white wing
has me hiding
on its top.
And the sun will drop
in the Aegean Sea
where you find me.***

This riddle didn't strike me as being too difficult.

Meni and I were trying to understand what it meant when, suddenly, everything around us became blurred. What was going on? Had something happened to my eyes? Maybe I was beginning to go blind? Even Meni couldn't see properly. Oia had vanished. We couldn't see it anymore. Or the rest of the island, that is.

"Mist! A mist's coming in," called Meni. "It happens sometimes. I've seen mists like this in Santorini even in high summer."

It seemed to take forever and I couldn't see the end of my beak, but at last the wind rose and, little by little, the mist began to lift and the moon peeped out from behind the clouds. I was almost halfway through my mission. In a matter of days my time would run out.

“Oh, heaven help us!” screamed Meni suddenly. “Do you see what I see or am I hallucinating? What’s that above the clouds?”

I turned to look where she was pointing. Hazy human figures, illuminated by the moonlight, wreathed in a purple mist, were clearly visible amongst the clouds. They seemed to be carrying something, moving backward and forward on a ship.

“Oh, no! They’re arming themselves and getting ready. It’s the pirates! The terrible pirates of the Cyclades, Gargarossa’s crew!”

“We’re finished! I see them too.”

“I hear a booming voice issuing commands. Do you hear it too? It must be Gargarossa. This is our worst nightmare. The pirates have begun to come back to life and are getting everything ready,” said Meni, her voice shaking.

Just as she finished speaking, the purple tableau vanished in front of our eyes as if someone had switched off a television with a remote control.

The mist dissolved completely and the moon continued on its course in the Santorini sky.

I was trembling all over after such a fright.

“You must do your best, Nicholas. I have a feeling that, with every passing day, the pirates of the Cyclades are growing stronger and stronger. You’ve no room for error and time is of the essence.”

“As if I’m scared of a few shadows in the clouds,” I said, trying to encourage Meni. “We’re still alive and they’re just shadowy scraps of mist. And I, bold Nicholas Thalassakis, will lock them away forever in their chest.”

I was saying this out loud, but inside, in my heart of hearts, I was still shaking with fear.

Then we fell silent. We couldn't do anything else for the time being. Much later, we fell asleep.

If you could call it sleep, that is. If nightmares weren't wracking us, there were other pests. Every so often someone would stomp across the *Katerinaki* with their big feet, on their way to the boats which, sure enough, had been tied up beside us.

15th day before the full moon

The next morning, Meni woke up earlier than usual and said, "You're still here? So, bold seagulls lie in, do they? The eighth key is waiting for you. Get on your way quickly now and start your search at the volcano. You can tell me whether it's still smoking or not!"

The riddle came back into my mind:

*And the sun will drop
in the Aegean Sea
where you find me.*

It was time to take off. In the distance, I could just make out Nea and Palaia Kameni, two little islands that formed the volcano. I flew towards them. Lots of little boats were scudding about beneath me, ferrying tourists from all over the world who wanted to see the volcano. What was I looking for and where was I going? I didn't even know how I'd

gotten myself mixed up in all this. I couldn't get the image of the Flying Pariani out of my head.

As soon as I landed on one of the islands inside the volcano, I was almost burnt to a crisp. Meni had told me to be especially careful of the smoking vents if I didn't want to get frazzled. Lots of people were walking about under the blazing sun; they all had a bottle of water in their rucksacks. Everyone said that the volcano was dormant now and that no-one knew when it would become active again. What if it stirred at that very moment? I didn't even want to think about it.

And what if I'd gotten it all wrong again? If the white wings were windmills, they certainly wouldn't be on a volcano. Obviously there was no clue here. I'd wasted my time again.

I flew as far as I could from those fiendish vents. The place I was looking for had to be in the north of the island. And come what may, I had to find it.

What if it actually meant the opposite in order to confuse us? Like with the Golden Cave on Folegandros? I'd noticed that the highest mountain on Santorini is in the south. I headed in that direction, hoping I was right.

White wings, white wings... That pesky old witch means windmills! I thought as I flew over Kamari, a lovely long beach in the south of the island, with strange dark-colored sand. But there were no windmills to be seen.

The passengers had read in their guidebooks that up on a nearby mountain were the ruins of Thera, a famous ancient Greek town which had been very important about six thousand years ago. But there weren't any white wings there either.

I continued to circle the island looking for clues that would help me solve the riddle. But to no avail. Time was passing and I was getting worried. The thought of the previous day's vision in the mist was always on my mind.

I headed straight for Akrotiri, an ancient city which had lain buried for thousands of years under volcanic ash. It was discovered by Spyros Marinatos, a Greek archaeologist. Maybe I'd find my magic key there, I thought.

I managed to slip into the archaeological site. Two-and three-story ancient houses loomed into view. Bewitched by what I saw, I went up to one of the houses. Suddenly, on the wall, apparently out of nowhere, there appeared a picture, an ancient wall painting. It was of a fisherman with blue hair whose body was painted red and who was holding two bunches of fish. Oh my, how beautiful this painting was, you'd almost think it could talk!

Then I heard a voice saying, "Hey, you, seagull. I'm talking to you."

I was dumbfounded. I wondered who could be addressing me. I'd learned that anchors, adders, bats and rats could talk, but ancient paintings too, little did I know!

"I'm talking to you. Don't be afraid," said the fisherman with the octopus in his hair.

"Oh my goodness," I said and made the sign of the cross with my wings. An ancient painting was talking to me!

"I've been living here for four and a half thousand years. I'll never die as long as there are people and gulls like you to admire me. But here's my story: in my time we got along very nicely. We had lovely houses with baths, skilled craftsmen and shipwrights who built strong ships that traveled

all over the Mediterranean. We had kings with magnificent palaces and great artists who decorated them. We lived off fishing, hunting and trading. We had a great civilization. We were the Lost City of Atlantis.”



“Atlantis? What was that?”

“You know, the legendary and fabled kingdom that sank...”

“Okay, all right. But how did it happen?” I blurted out.

“You don’t know? From a big volcanic eruption. Once our island was shaped like a circle, but about thirty-seven hundred years ago there was a great eruption and half of it was plunged into the sea. Everything was covered with lava and ash. Many people died, buried under the lava, and those who survived were drowned by the huge waves that reached as far as Crete.”

“That’s amazing, but tell me the rest of the story. I want to hear it all,” I said, fascinated, forgetting all about Garga-rossa and Suffokate for a short while.

“It would take an entire lifetime to tell you my story – and even that wouldn’t suffice. But as regards yourself, I know what you’re looking for. And I’m sure you’ll find it. Creatures whose heart is in the right place and who are determined to succeed always achieve their goal. What you’re doing is very important and touches us all. I’ve been buried under ash for thousands of years; I don’t want to be buried again because of that terrible Gargarossa. So I’ll help you. I’ll tell you where to find your eighth key.”

“But how do you know that?”

“I know everything and I see everything. Even if I’m painted on a wall. Isn’t Santorini supposed to be a magical island? Well I’m a magical painting too. Now listen and don’t ask any questions. What you’re looking for is hanging in the roof of the last windmill in Oia, in the north of the island. The place where tourists go to admire the sunset.”

“Thank you so much. Thank you from the bottom of my heart,” I said gratefully, and tears welled up in my seagull eyes. So the windmill that looked out on the sunset really was in the north!

“Go now, because I have to return to where I’ve been living for the last few years, the Archaeological Museum of Athens. But I’ll always belong here, in Akrotiri. I came into being here, at the hand of an ancient artist, and so I often like to return here to my place of birth,” said the young fisherman, and all at once, the painting vanished from the wall.

I left as quickly as I could, without giving him a second glance.

The afternoon had arrived. I'd had nothing in my beak since morning and I was beginning to get hungry. I had to get some strength to continue my mission.

So I went back to Fira to tell Meni the good news and peck at some snack or other. So many boats were coming in, from big liners to little skiffs, there was bound to be something for me!

As I finished off my meal under the quay at Fira, I tried to work out aloud how high I'd have to fly in order to get to Oia, where my key was located.

"Don't worry, seagull! Climb on my back and I'll take you," I heard a young donkey bray who was waiting patiently to be loaded with tourists.

Not again! First the painting, now donkeys! This island really was magical!

"My name is Theroulis and I love my island dearly. I go up and down five hundred and eighty steps several times a day bringing tourists to Fira on my back. I don't mind, though, as it makes my island famous all over the world and I help to make our visitors happy. Climb up on my back, if you like, and I'll take you."

If I liked? There was nothing I liked more and, without another word, I hopped onto Theroulis' back and my new friend carried me up to Fira. When we arrived, I thanked him with all my heart and, as soon as he'd left, carrying a lady tourist, I took a long look at the stunning view.

The caldera, or what remains of a volcano after the eruption, looked magnificent. I'd never seen anything so beau-

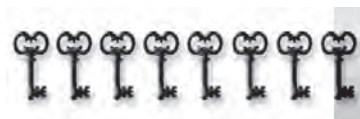
tiful in my entire little life. And I vowed to do my utmost to protect this paradise. People and gulls must forever be able to admire such glory and I wasn't about to let any pirate ghost, or pirate ship, no matter how frightening, destroy it.

Leaving Fira, I continued my flight over Imerovigli, a beautiful Santorini village. I was enthralled by the little houses which looked as if they'd been dug into the rock. Someone told me they're known as "cave" houses.

The sun was sinking low on the horizon when I reached Oia. I spotted the last windmill and headed for its roof. I didn't need to look very far. My magic key was waiting for me there, just as my friend, the blue-haired fisherman, had foretold!

A lot of people had begun to gather in a narrow street with a view toward the sea. Calm again, I perched on a roof, holding my precious trophy tightly in my beak, curious to see what they'd all come for.

When the disc of the setting sun plunged into the sea there was complete silence. No one said a word. No-one even moved. I wondered what had come over them. Once the sun vanished beneath the Aegean sea, some began to weep, some with restraint, others sobbing out loud. Everyone, though, and I mean everyone, applauded. The sunset was so beautiful it moved people to tears!





Meanwhile, on the Flying Pariani...

Captain Gargarossa was sitting on deck trying to remember... but he couldn't recall anything very well. How strange! It was all a bit of a haze. Where they'd gone down, what had happened after that terrifying day. In the name of Beelzebub, maybe they'd gone to hell.

They'd been chased relentlessly and had been cornered in the Strait of Antiparos. They'd been trying to escape, but it had become dark and the wind had been blowing furiously. That ruffian of a helmsman was so drunk. The Turkish **brig** fired its first cannon, then a second. The Pariani listed, it neared the Gates dangerously (the sharp reefs outside Paros), and then... everything went dark.

He remembered nothing after that, only the foaming waves and the howling of the crew.

But wait! Something was coming back to him now and

by all the spirits of his Maniot ancestors, he would take revenge (a vendetta, as they call it in the Mani*).

He was back now, that was all that mattered. His Pariani and its crew were here. Although everything around him might be blurred and shapeless, they were gradually becoming themselves again.

He'd show them. They thought they'd gotten rid of him when he'd been smashed against the Gates.

At first everyone thought they were dealing with a Saracen, but they were mistaken. He was one hundred percent Greek, and a Maniot to boot. When the Turks had captured his childhood friend Limberakis Gerakaris, the great and powerful pirate captain of the Cyclades, he'd sworn revenge on all who had betrayed him: those dirty rotten islanders.

Gargarossa had gone to visit Limberakis in prison, to see him one last time. Before he died, he revealed to Gargarossa that he'd hidden his treasure and all his loot in the islands:

“Give me your word, my faithful friend, that you'll continue my work and take revenge on them for their treachery. You're the only one who's been true to me. And only you know how. You're a good sailor. Don't forget the years we spent together in the Venetian galleys. Take the map I've hidden in my belt. Find my treasure and my gold and build a **galleon**, fit it out and then show them. Teach them a lesson so that my spirit will be at peace.”

* A southern peninsula region of the Peloponnese known for its inhabitants hardness and their observance of traditional customs.

Captain Gargarossa had never known his father, not even as a very young child, and he'd had a difficult childhood. Limberakis, though, born into a good family, was the only one with any time for him, the only one who gave him money or encouragement.

"You'll see, Mitso," he told him –for that was his name–, "one day we'll leave here, you and I, and then you'll show everyone what you're worth."

He'd been waiting for this opportunity for years. And so, when he returned, he took a boat and, map in hand, sailed to the Cyclades, to the desert island shown on it. Limberakis had hidden his treasure on Drima, one of the two Antikeria, high up on a hill, in a dried-up spring which only he knew existed.

Gargarossa loaded the treasure onto the boat and that was how he built his first ship, a speedy **fusta**.

He'd show them what he was made of. He'd sworn an oath to his friend Limberakis.

He looted and pillaged every one of the Cycladic islands. And, with each victory, his satisfaction grew.

His last boat, the Flying Pariani, was a real gem of a pirate ship, with sixty cannons!

Until that accursed moment, when everything became a blur.

He didn't know where he was or what had happened. But he suspected that he had returned again. That he was back in the Aegean and the Cyclades along with his gang and his beloved Pariani. By Lucifer, how invincible he felt again!

He didn't know if they belonged to this world or not.

Maybe they'd passed into another, where only those who want something very badly manage to enter.

He saw strange boats plying the Aegean, at great speed. But he couldn't care less. There'd be no more monkey business from those darned islanders!

“Right, lads?” called Gargarossa. “Are you ready?”

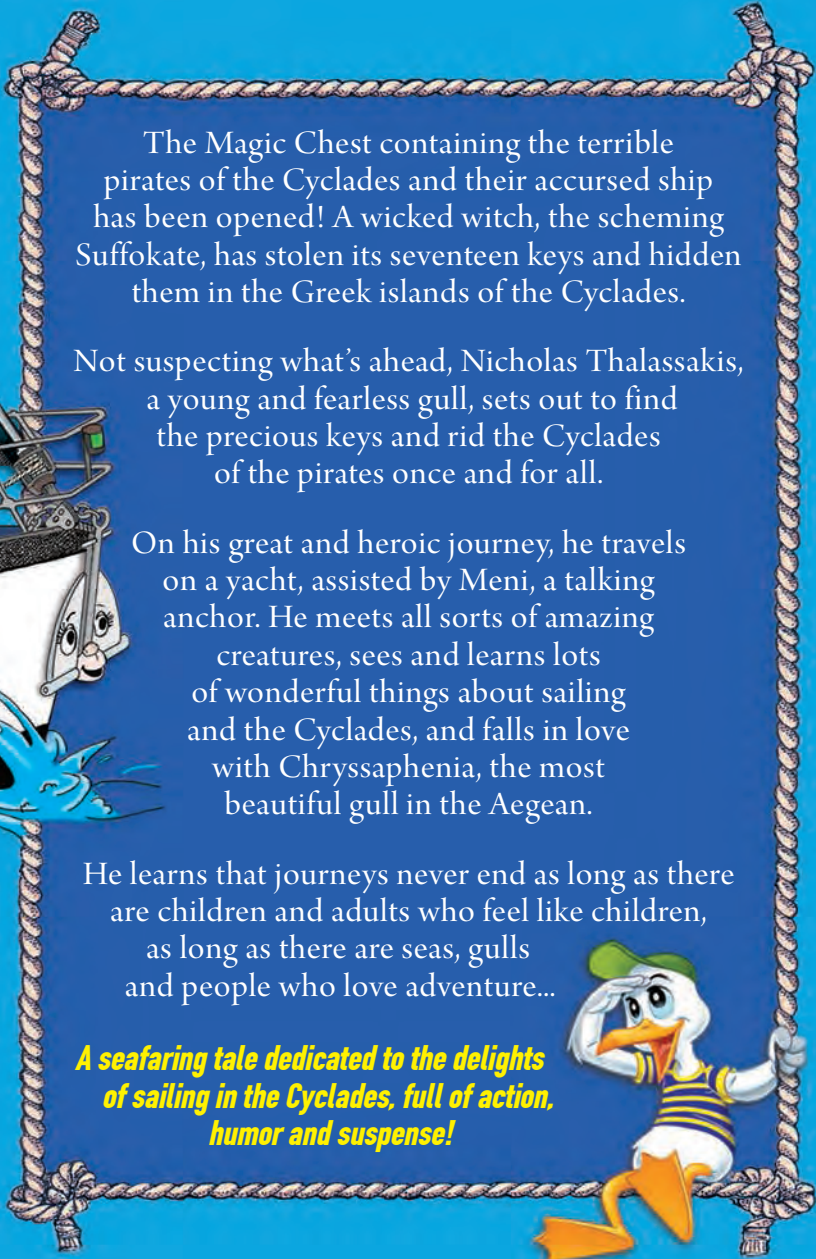
“Ready, Captain,” answered the filthy toothless crew in unison. Then, in a flash, they hoisted the sails of the Flying Pariani, which was standing motionless in the sky over Santorini, wreathed in an eerie purple glow.



Brig = a big sailing boat, often used by Turkish and Venetian fleets.


Galleon = a type of sailing boat which was used in the 17th and 18th centuries: it carried up to thirty big cannons and as many small ones and had a crew of over eighty men.

Fusta, foist or galliot = a smaller type of sailing ship, used a lot by pirates.



The Magic Chest containing the terrible pirates of the Cyclades and their accursed ship has been opened! A wicked witch, the scheming Suffokate, has stolen its seventeen keys and hidden them in the Greek islands of the Cyclades.

Not suspecting what's ahead, Nicholas Thalassakis, a young and fearless gull, sets out to find the precious keys and rid the Cyclades of the pirates once and for all.



On his great and heroic journey, he travels on a yacht, assisted by Meni, a talking anchor. He meets all sorts of amazing creatures, sees and learns lots of wonderful things about sailing and the Cyclades, and falls in love with Chryssaphenia, the most beautiful gull in the Aegean.

He learns that journeys never end as long as there are children and adults who feel like children, as long as there are seas, gulls and people who love adventure...

A seafaring tale dedicated to the delights of sailing in the Cyclades, full of action, humor and suspense!



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