# Rescue from the Sea

The birds and monkeys heard Alec as he came running through the forest.

"Hey! My friends up there in the trees!" he shouted. "Do you know what day this is? It's my mother's birthday!"

The bright-colored, long-tailed parakeets twittered and the monkeys chattered, and Alexander Hamilton laughed as he jumped over a fallen log.

It was early morning on the island of St. Croix in the West Indies. St. Croix belonged to Denmark, unlike Nevis Island, where Alec was born, which belonged to England.

Alec watched as a long, greenish-brown snake uncoiled itself from the middle of the path and rattled away into the deep woods.

A land crab crawled across the path, and Alec sat down on the log to watch it. He began to sing, as he always did when he was excited. This morning he was

thinking about his mother's birthday, so this is what he sang:

"It is the month of August In seventeen sixty-five. It is my mother's birthday – I'm glad she is alive."

The crab kept pushing his heavy shell through the leaves.

"Goodbye," Alec called, "I'd like to follow you. But I don't have time today. I must find a piece of pink coral to tie on my mother's necklace. That will be my present for her."

As he spoke, a piece of coconut shell hit him on the ear. A family of monkeys was peeping down through the palm branches. They were throwing whatever their paws could reach.

Alec gave a shout and climbed up the nearest banana tree.

When he reached the branches just opposite the monkeys, he looked around for ammunition. Just above him was a giant bunch of ripe bananas.

"Hey!" he called to the little brown animals. "On guard, there! I'm fighting for the King."

The monkeys seemed to understand. Coconut pieces and bananas began to fly back and forth. It was a

hard but short war.

"Come on, lazy ones!" Alec shouted as he saw that the monkeys were hurrying away.

"Hi-ho!" he called again as he threw the last shot. "I have won the battle for King George. Now these trees and this island of St. Croix belong again to England."

The monkeys only chattered as they hurried away. Alec slid down the smooth tree trunk and ran happily up a steep path leading to a cliff overlooking the great, blue Atlantic Ocean.

Alec often came here just to watch the waves come tumbling in on the sandy beaches below. He liked to think about the time when he would take a boat across this ocean to the American Colonies.

His mother had told him that the American Colonies were so far away across the ocean that it took weeks to reach them. Alec knew that there were Indians living in the forests that covered much of the new land

He also knew that in a town called New York in the new country, there was a college. Alec thought that it would be more exciting than anything in the whole world to sail away on a boat to America. It was his biggest dream.

But today he had no time to think about anything but his errand to the coral beach beyond the cliff. He

ran down the path to the sandy shore. The wet sand oozed between his toes. He turned a handspring and walked into the sea.

He could hear the boom of the big ocean waves as they broke against the rocks at the entrance to the harbor. The water came higher and higher on his legs.

When it was up to his waist, Alec dove into the breakers. He swam with the waves into the deep, still water beyond.

Turning over on his back, he squinted at the soft clouds above him. Again he began to sing:

"The waves are soft and green and cold; The sea is salt and oh! so old. The fish that live beneath the water Swim and swim and swim And so do I."

He heard a gentle slapping of the water. It was very quiet. For a few minutes Alec forgot that he was on a special errand.

"Hurry-Up! Hurry-Up!" came the sound of a voice from close by.

Alec turned over on his side. He raised his head.

"Hurry-Up, Hurry-Up," the call came again.

#### RESCUE FROM THE SEA

"I'm coming," Alec shouted back. "Where are you?"

This time there was no answer. Alec swam around a point of land. He could see no one.

"Hi!" he called. "Where are you?"

Still he could see nothing but a few gulls flying close to the water looking for fish.

He shaded his eyes from the sun. Then he saw a small, dark object bobbing up and down on the waves, close to the coral rocks.

"Well!" Alec said. "I don't know what that can be. But I don't see anything else. The shout couldn't come from that, could it?"

"Hurry-Up. I say, matey," came the voice again.

"I'll go see what that is," Alec decided.

Alec was a fast swimmer. He was soon close beside the object. It was a cage-like box.

Alec pulled it toward him.

"Hi, matey!" came a voice from inside.

Alec was so surprised that he jerked back his arm.

There, peeping out at him, were two bright eyes. Looking at him from the corner of the box was a big green and red parrot.

"How did you get in there?" Alec asked as he pulled the box toward him.

The bird only blinked his eyes and ruffled his feathers.

Alec pushed the cage ahead of him toward the

shore. The bird scolded whenever the water came inside his house.

When Alec reached the shore he pushed the box high up on the sand. It was built to look like a small house. It had a slanted roof which was painted green. Alec saw some letters under the eaves of the roof.

# Hurry-Up His Majesty's Sailing Ship, *Altha*. London to Christiansted 1765

"Why, Hurry-Up must be your name! Do you want to get out?" he asked the bird.

The parrot snapped his bill and blinked his eyes. Alec pulled back the fastening which opened the door and Hurry-Up walked out on the sand. He waddled off down the shore, scolding and shaking his feathers.

Alec laughed and watched him go. Then, keeping one eye on the strange bird, he began to search among the piles of seaweed for a piece of pink coral.

After a while he decided to go around the point. Hurry-Up was sitting in the sun cleaning his feathers. Alec thought that the parrot was paying no attention to what he was doing. He started off down the shore.

"Hi, matey!" screamed the bird.

Alec turned. Hurry-Up was half flying and half

running down the sand toward him.

When the parrot reached Alec's side, he scolded and cawed. Alec stooped down to smooth his feathers, and the bird hopped up on his shoulder.

In a few minutes Hurry-Up flew down on the sand and began pushing and pulling the piles of seaweed about with his bill.

Alec laughed and laughed as he watched the busy bird.

"My! I hope that no one claims you! I want you for my pet. We could have a lot of fun together," he said.

The bird blinked and went on working.

It was getting late.

"I must find that coral. My present for Mother won't be pretty without it," Alec said with a frown.

"Hi, matey!" said the parrot. The bird had a piece of shell in his bill.

"No, that's not right. It has to be pink," Alec said as he took the shell and put it in his pocket.

Again the bird started hunting. Each time he found something, he brought it to Alec.

The sun was getting hot. Alec had a whole pocket full of things that Hurry-Up had found, but no pink coral.

"I won't give up," said Alec. "I won't."

"Hi, matey!" called Hurry-Up again from down the shore.



"We'll have to hurry if we want to get back to Uncle Peter's before lunch is ready," Alec said. . .

"What did you find this time?" Alec said. Hurry-Up came squawking toward him. He had something pink in his bill.

"Hey!" shouted Alec. "You've found it! You've found the pink coral! That's wonderful! We don't have to hunt any more. Now we can go home."

But the parrot liked the game that he thought they had been playing. He didn't want to stop, and when Alec put him back in his box, he scolded and fussed. He scolded all the way across the narrow waterway to the home shore.

When they reached the shore, Alec let Hurry-Up out of his box. Alec could tell by the sun that it was almost noon.

"We'll have to hurry if we want to get back to Uncle Peter's before lunch is ready," Alec said as he started off through the woods with his new pet on his shoulder and the box in his hand.