

UNCHARTED WATERS

STORY



All my life I've worked on the docks of Lisbon, Portugal. My forefathers made their fortunes exploring the seas, yet side by side with my own father, I grew up a deckhand to seafarers. They taught me the hazards and rewards of living the seafaring life.



In 1498, Vasco da Gama returned to Portugal after a glorious adventure to India. His successful voyage inspired my father. He began preparations to navigate the trip to India himself. My one hope was that his success would restore our family to nobility.



Out of the crowd gathered to welcome da Gama back, I spotted Princess Christiana. She enchanted me from the moment I first saw her. But I was reminded of her father's plan to marry her to a Spanish prince. Some day, I thought, I would be the one she would welcome back to her country.



Later, as my father prepared his fleet, I dreamed of the adventures we would have in distant lands and the riches I would return with for the Princess. However, before setting sail my father persuaded me to stay in Lisbon. "While I'm at sea, you'll learn other useful trades," he said. "And, if I fail to return, you will be the only hope for our family."



I tried to protest, but the First Mate interrupted me. "Pipe down, lad! The blunder of one fool can sink a whole crew. What wisdom 'ave ye got for sailing rough waters?" I could not deny that I had no real experience on the seas. Reluctantly, I turned to my father and wished him well.



In the days before the fleet set sail I helped purchase sails and supplies for the long voyage ahead. Finally my deckhand experience showed through. And the crew treated me well. They even bought me the best rum at the tavern. Then, with ships stocked and ready, my father and his fleet set sail for India.



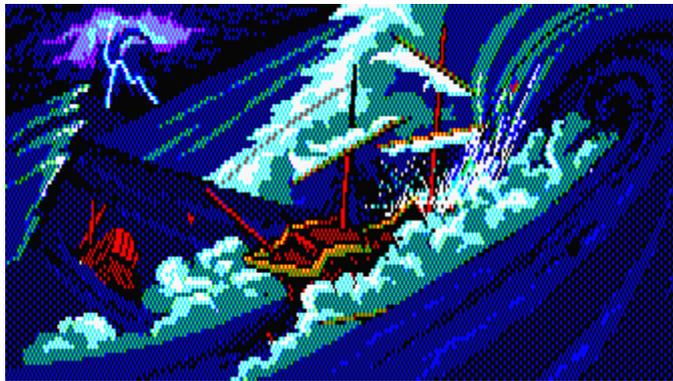
From the time he left port, a year had passed, and still there was no word of my father's fleet. I had since opened a stall at the market. I was profiting from the Turkish merchants who passed through Lisbon. Then one day, as I drove to market, a strained voice called out my name. Right away I recognized the man before me as my father's First Mate!



I took him back to my house as quickly as I could. He was so starved and worn with fatigue that he could hardly speak a word. After eating a hearty meal, he dropped off into a deep slumber. I was beside myself with anxiety, waiting throughout the night for news of my father.



Finally he awoke to recount his story. Six months after they departed from Lisbon, my father sailed his fleet safely to dock in India. They spent just enough time on land to rest and purchase spices and supplies to carry back to Portugal. But their success was short-lived.



Though the weather had been fair all the way to India, a storm hit as they rounded Cape Bojador. Waves crashed down on the fleet as the crew wrestled with the sails. Four days later the heavy seas calmed, but not a soul was left alive except for the First Mate. Two months later the rudderless vessel drifted into the waters near Lisbon, bringing the grueling journey to an end. But my father was lost.



The First Mate stayed with me until his strength returned. Together we laid an empty coffin in the ground for my father. Then one day he opened a box recovered from the wreck of the flagship. From inside he withdrew a letter with my name blurred across the top.



It was my father's final message to me. It had been so drenched by the storm that I could barely read it. Yet the words I managed to read filled my heart with inspiration. "Each day brings us closer to home and the end of our successful voyage. Through it all, I am glad we never gave up our dreams."



I realized that my father's worst fears had come true. I was the only one left who could restore my family name. Now my father's words renewed my courage to seek distant lands. The very next day I started making plans to journey to India. I checked at port and found a small vessel I could purchase. But I would need more gold to outfit it with supplies and to hire a crew. I turned to the First Mate for advice.



"Don't be so hasty, lad," he said with a smile. "Ye can raise the gold ye needs with some clever trading and I'll round up a hardy crew to sail ye through. ".."The waters between here and India are rough, but with my help we'll discover ports even beyond!"



I knew that the seas to India were the worst to be travelled, but with the help of my First Mate the future looked bright. I envisioned returning to Lisbon with exotic treasures for the King.

There was nothing to stop me. I was determined to succeed.

This opening is on the disk version of the game.