

Blackbeard's Hidden Heart



Outer Banks, North Carolina

Forward

This storybook was created by the Outer Banks Coastal Conservation (OBCC), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster environmental stewardship and a deeper connection to the Outer Banks of North Carolina through outreach, education, and conservation efforts.

We believe that small stories can spark big change. That is why we have made this book available as a free resource for parents, teachers, and community members.

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To learn more, access additional resources at: www.theobcc.org.





A Pirate with a Fearsome Look

Long ago, when tall ships sailed the Carolina coast, there lived a pirate named Edward Teach — though everyone knew him as Blackbeard.

He tied slow-burning ropes into his beard so smoke curled around his face like storm clouds. Sailors trembled when they saw his ship, the Queen Anne's Revenge, but Blackbeard wasn't what they expected.

He rarely fought unless he had to. Most times, when another ship saw his flag and surrendered, he let the sailors go home safely.

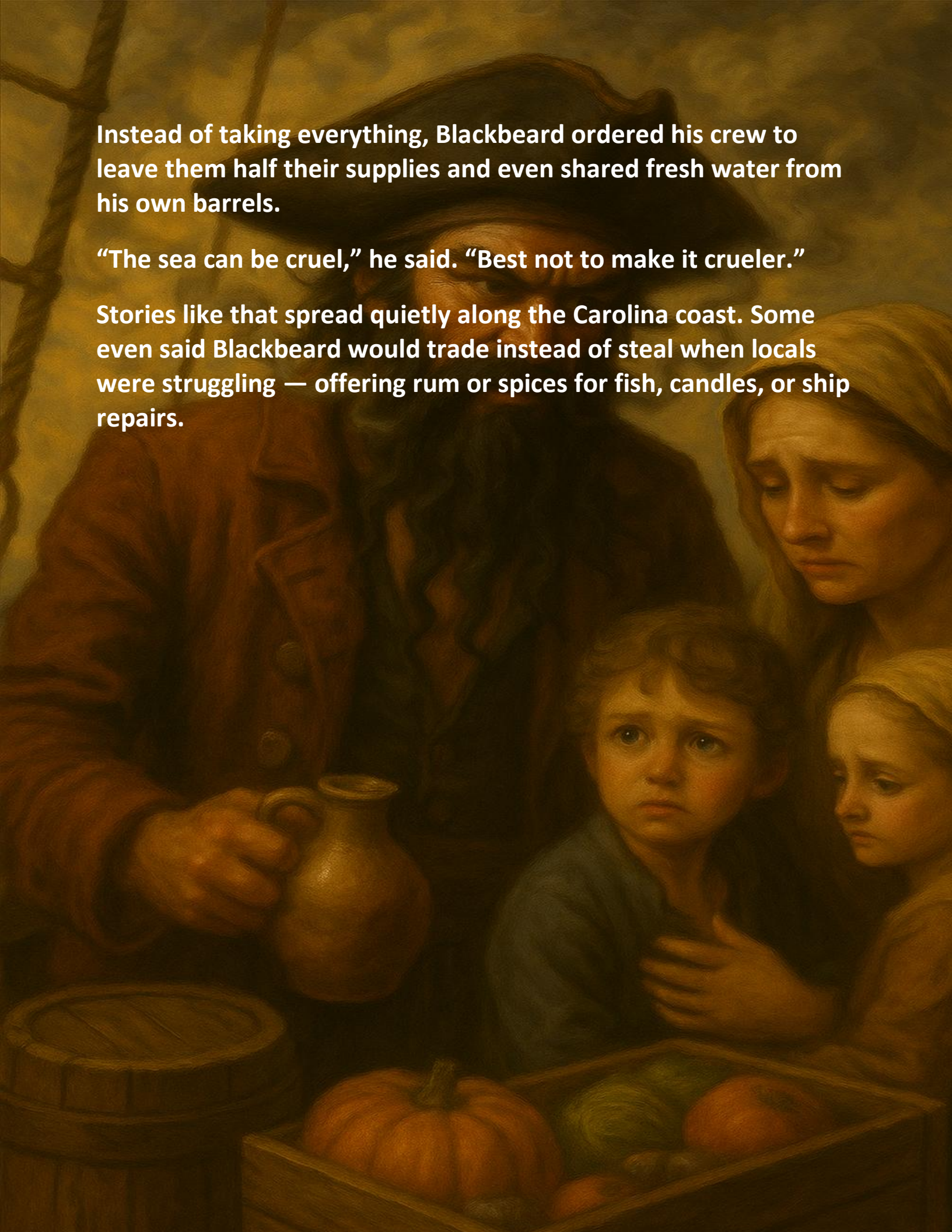
"No need for blood when fear will do," he'd say with a grin.

Kindness at Sea

One summer, Blackbeard captured a small merchant ship near Ocracoke Inlet. The captain was trembling as he handed over his goods — sugar, flour, and fruit.

But Blackbeard noticed something: a woman and two children were aboard, pale from hunger.



A painting depicting a scene where a man with a large black beard and a dark hat, identified as Blackbeard, is pouring water from a small earthenware jug. He is looking down at the jug. In front of him, a woman with a yellow headscarf and two young children are looking on with somber expressions. The woman is holding one of the children. In the foreground, there is a wooden crate containing several pumpkins and other vegetables. To the left, a wooden barrel is partially visible. The background is dark and indistinct, suggesting an interior or a ship's hold.

Instead of taking everything, Blackbeard ordered his crew to leave them half their supplies and even shared fresh water from his own barrels.

“The sea can be cruel,” he said. “Best not to make it crueler.”

Stories like that spread quietly along the Carolina coast. Some even said Blackbeard would trade instead of steal when locals were struggling — offering rum or spices for fish, candles, or ship repairs.

The Blockade of Charleston



In 1718, Blackbeard blockaded the port of Charleston, South Carolina — one of his most famous adventures. His men were sick, not greedy. They needed medicine.

When the governor refused to help, Blackbeard didn't fire a single cannon. He sent a polite letter asking only for a chest of medical supplies — and when it arrived, he released every prisoner unharmed.

Even the frightened townsfolk later admitted that the pirate had kept his word.

“A promise is worth more than gold,” Blackbeard said as he sailed away.

A painting depicting a scene on Ocracoke Island. In the background, a large, imposing figure of Blackbeard with a long, dark, wavy beard and a wide-brimmed hat looms over the scene. In the foreground, a group of villagers, including a man with a beard holding a long staff, a woman, and two children, are gathered around a bright campfire. The scene is set against a backdrop of a small village with thatched-roof houses and a body of water under a cloudy sky.

The Villagers of Ocracoke

After the Queen Anne's Revenge ran aground near Beaufort Inlet, Blackbeard spent his last months around Ocracoke Island. He befriended local fishermen and sometimes shared barrels of sugar or rum when storms destroyed their nets.

He never harmed them — in fact, many islanders thought of him as a rough but friendly neighbor who respected their way of life.

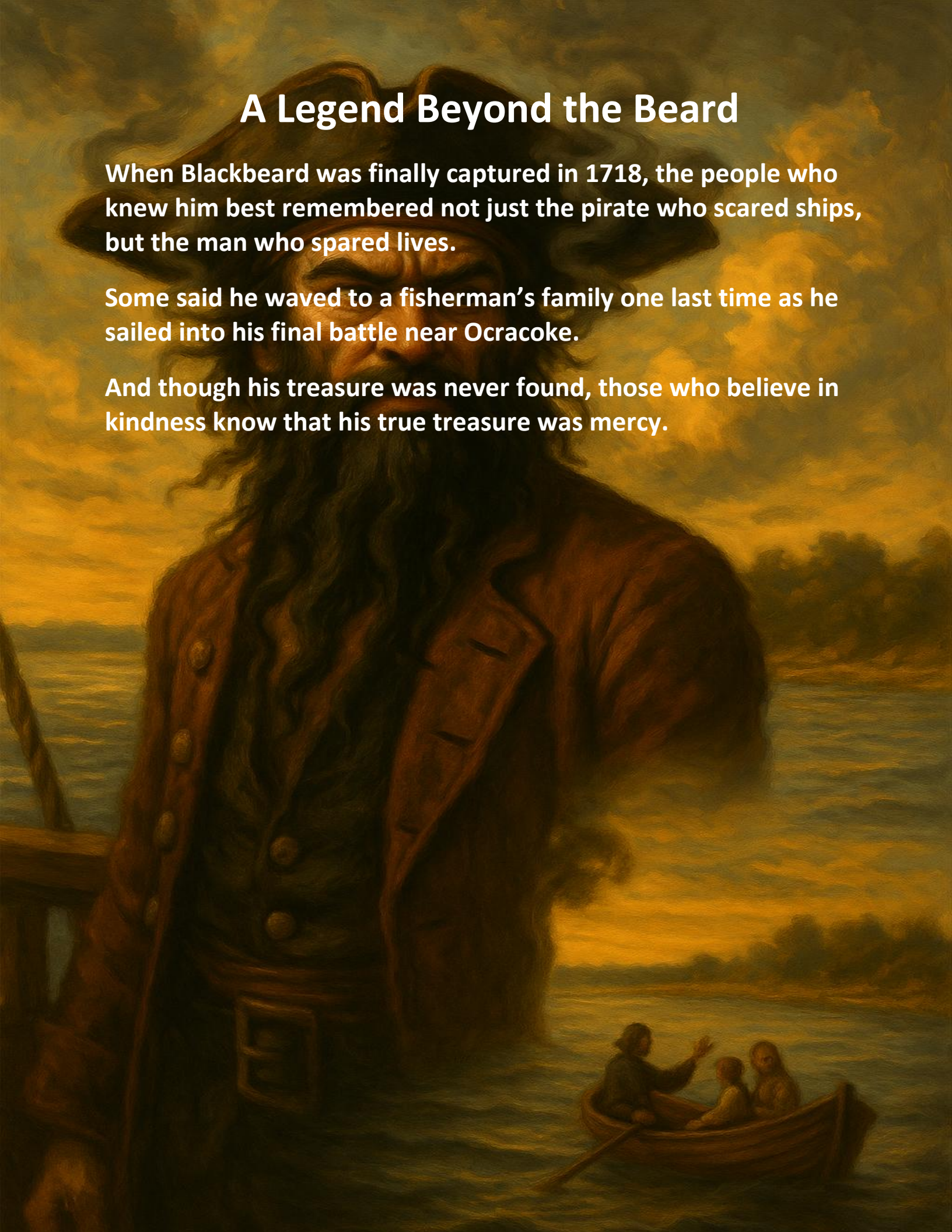
Even today, old stories say he helped repair boats and shared his food after a hurricane, telling children tales of the sea around campfires.

A Legend Beyond the Beard

When Blackbeard was finally captured in 1718, the people who knew him best remembered not just the pirate who scared ships, but the man who spared lives.

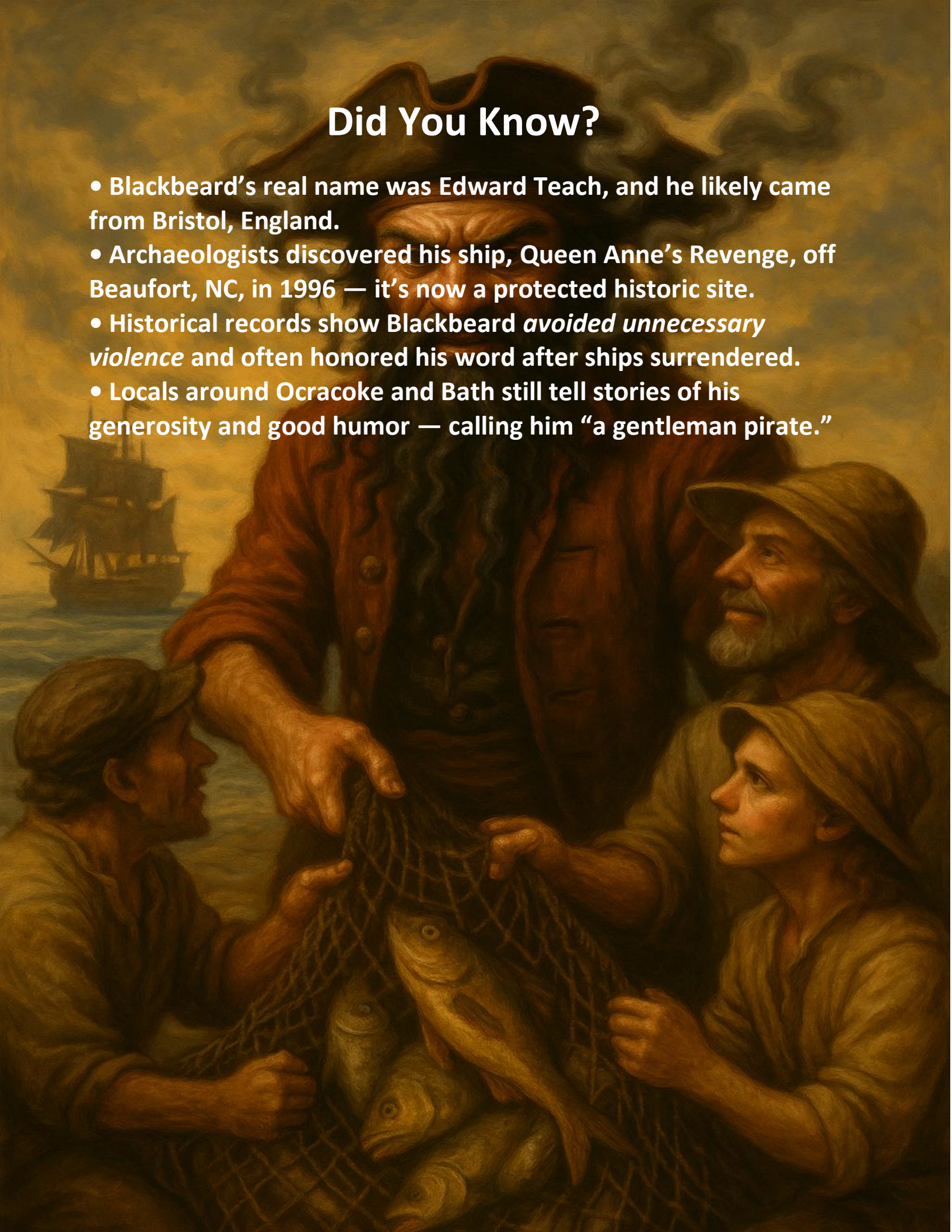
Some said he waved to a fisherman's family one last time as he sailed into his final battle near Ocracoke.

And though his treasure was never found, those who believe in kindness know that his true treasure was mercy.



Did You Know?

- Blackbeard's real name was Edward Teach, and he likely came from Bristol, England.
- Archaeologists discovered his ship, Queen Anne's Revenge, off Beaufort, NC, in 1996 — it's now a protected historic site.
- Historical records show Blackbeard *avoided unnecessary violence* and often honored his word after ships surrendered.
- Locals around Ocracoke and Bath still tell stories of his generosity and good humor — calling him “a gentleman pirate.”



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