

The crew of the pirate ship *The Widow's Lament* locates the wreck of the *Rélampago*, a sunken Spanish treasure ship laden with spoils to be plundered. Sailing away with their newfound treasure, a storm gathers and the Old Sea Hag appears. She angrily declares that the *Rélampago* and its treasures belong to her. Accusing the crew of having stolen from her, she puts them under a curse that will keep them tied to the planks of their ship for all eternity. The only way they can free themselves of the curse is to obtain a rose of ice, a heart of gold, and the blessing of a loved one...

Meanwhile, in New York, young sailor Johnny McEwan does his best to steer clear of treachery by following an older sailor's advice to sign on with a Limejuice Ship, a British merchant vessel where crews could expect adequate rations and reasonable treatment. Even as Johnny sets out to sea, he is already dreaming of his return to Sally Brown, a laundress who has captured his heart and lovingly awaits the day he comes back to her.

Johnny's journey has hardly begun when his ship is attacked by pirates and he is forced to make a desperate choice: sign on as a pirate with the crew of *The Widow's Lament* or die.

The pirates, now with Johnny in tow as new rigger, resume their quest for the Sea Hags' prizes. With Johnny's reluctant help, they succeed in obtaining the rose of ice off the coast of Greenland, after which the Sea Hag appears to claim it. Pursuit of the heart of gold takes the ship and its crew into dicey waters around Cape Horn. There, they encounter three singing sirens whose song powerfully enchants nearly everyone on the ship, including newly elected captain, Mary Killigrew. Striker Bridget Bailey, who is unaffected by the sirens, teams up with Nicholas Dempsey, a deck swab who also does not feel the pull of the sirens' song, to guide the ship beyond the treacherous waters towards Australia where the heart of gold is rumored to be. Once there, a helpful miner weasels information out of a coquettish innkeeper and he and Johnny succeed in retrieving the heart from deep in a hidden mine. The heart of gold in hand, the ship sets off and receives another visit from the Sea Hag. As she claims the heart of gold as her own, she points them homeward, suggesting that this is where her last prize is to be found.

Spirits among the crew are running high at having nearly accomplished their colossal task, but just before arriving back home, Johnny is visited in a dream by Sally and he awakens to the realization that she has died. Even in death, however, Sally's blessing of love is enough to break the curse and free the crew to go ashore. Heartbroken at the loss of his true love, a despondent Johnny sails with the crew on one last journey to Gibraltar, where he initially refuses to disembark, until Captain Mary and the crew finally succeed in convincing him that with the wisdom gained from having loved and lost (and his pockets full of gold!), he is ready for a new future.