

The Treasure Punt #1

Captain Blackbird of *The Bountiful* spread the map out on his navigation table, and gathered together his Coxswain and other fellow pirates into his cabin.

“Shiver me timbers,” growled the Captain. “When times are tough, it’s time for treasure! Now, me hearties, where’s that bleeding loot?” As he finished his sentence, he lent back on his seat, with his remaining right eyeball popping perilously close to bursting from its socket.

The other sailors looked at each other, helplessly and haplessly. The only sound to be heard was the water lapping gently against the wooden hull, and Blackbird’s heavy and laboured breathing. A few of the men pulled studiously at their beards with their thumbs and forefingers, as if to extract a good idea from their square-jawed chins. Some others looked away distantly, beyond the porthole, expectantly hoping that an answer was written in the waves. The remaining crew all studiously, an unusual pose for salty seafarers, avoided eye contact with their captain, looking vacuously into the grainy teak beneath their feet, and wondering, and worrying.

“It’s out there somewhere, that’s for sure!” the Coxswain blurted enthusiastically, to the great relief of the ordinary ratings, but further raising the ire of Blackbird, on good authority reputed throughout the seven seas as the world’s greatest living treasure hunter.

Seeing his captain’s chest heaving ever more heavily, not to mention the flicker of a twitch beneath that self-same socket, prompted the Coxswain to continue.

“It might be North,” he proffered fatuously, looking anxiously at Blackbird, who raised his right eyebrow in response, “and there again, it might be South!” This lateral and progressive contribution cheerily chastened an ordinary sailor to continue in the same, yet opposite, horizontal direction.

“It might be East,” the sailor Simon shouted confidently, dramatically thrusting out his right arm and pointing his finger in an easterly direction, then pausing in his speech for greater effect. “Or there again, it may be West!” he concluded triumphantly, pulling his right arm into his chest and thrusting out his left arm, for the non-verbal benefit of the other simple sailors.

Blackbird’s patience could wait no longer. Jumping up from where he sat, with his intact hand he tugged hard on Simon’s left earlobe, and pushed the sharp point of his steel hook-arm clean through the flesh. Blackbird then ceremoniously marched the simple sailor, leading with his earlobe, out of the cabin, and then tore the hook free, shouting an instruction down into the hold.

“Seize this sailor,” he snarled, “and prepare a plank for the walking.”

Re-entering his cabin, Blackbird madly mumbled and muttered to himself, before re-assuming his seat. Banging his good hand down on the table so hard that fibrillations rumbled across the water as far as the distant shore, he finally invoked his influential and notorious leadership with a key treasure hunting question.

“HOW CAN WE FIND THE TREASURE,” he enquired insightfully, though aggressively, “WHEN WE DON’T KNOW WHERE TO LOOK?”