

## The Treasure Punt #10

Captain Blackbird was distraught at the very idea, but had little choice. Word within the extended pirate community suggested that a large Spanish galleon, the hold of which was filled with sovereign gold, had sunk in a storm off the San Fernandez Islands.

“Of course I know the way,” Long John Platinum snapped uncharacteristically. “Past the Falklands, and around Cape Horn. But I don’t know one end of a sextant from another, and neither do you. It’s a bleeding long way, and a perilous crossing.”

Blackbird gripped the familiar brass contraption to his nose and looked through it stupidly, as if it were a telescope. The problem of The Bountiful being without a navigator, since Navi Kumar’s untimely demise, was brought into sharp relief by this new pirating opportunity.

“I should have taken heed of me mother’s advice, and gone to naval college,” the Captain muttered.

“I tell ‘yer, Blackbird,” LJP implored, “Rupert Redbeard would run back from Randfontein faster than a Robin could fly, if we offered him a temporary assignment. He’s desperate, and has been plying that very passage since Pa fell off the main mast, or even longer.”

Never impulsive, Blackbird mulled momentarily over his predicament, and always decisive, eventually, despite his numerous reservations of red beards, concurred with his second-in-command.

“All righty then,” he agreed, immediately issuing a command to simple sailors Simon and Siphon to properly prepare and instruct the boat’s carrier albatross, much less familiar with the Highveld than the Seven Seas, to send message to Rupert Redbeard.

LJP was right, for Rupert Redbeard was back at Kalk Bay, enjoying fried hake and chips at *Kalkies*, well before nightfall of the following day.

“I owe you one, Blackbird, and this is how I’ll do it,” Rupert Redbeard proffered, quaffing down his first ale. “We’ll take the southernmost passage, and veritably fly along the Antarctic coastline with the great easterly winds at our back. I guarantee you we’ll beat the pirates of the Caribbean to the wreck.”

“Madness!” retorted Blackbird. “Think of all those nasty growlers. The only ice I want is in my tumbler,” he instructed, swallowing down his scotch at suitable sailor speed.

“Navi Kumar would never have taken a southern route,” LJP added in support of his captain. “And that Indian, bless his cotton socks, could outrun anyone, he knew his winds so well.”

The three pirates all laughed, breaking the tension between the black beard, brown beard and red beard, and Blackbird ordered another round.

“Trust me,” asked Rupert Redbeard. “Truly, I have the utmost respect for Navi Kumar, but he was a brown beard, and cautious. He would have sailed safely north between Tristan da Cunha and St Helena, I know, but it’s far too slow. Something I failed to tell you last week is that my red hairy nostrils can sniff out underwater growlers, grunTERS, barkers and howlers, indeed all manner of iceberg, known or unknown, long before they’re a danger to the boat.”

Rupert Redbeard, who was, beyond his other strengths, also talkative, then painted an evocative picture to his new colleagues of the sight of Spanish sovereign gold, and they were convinced to set sail immediately.

“Simple sailors, to the south!” shouted Blackbird to his crew.

“Aye, aye, Captain,” shouted Rupert Redbeard enthusiastically from behind the helm.

Well, to say that The Bountiful made record time to the Spanish treasure is an understatement. Our favourite pirates were there at least a week before any pirates from the nearby Caribbean, and a fortnight before any others.

“You know, Rupert,” said Blackbird endearingly, when divvying out a small portion of the sovereign gold to his temporary navigator, “I have newfound respect for you as the only red-bearded sailor on my ship. Get us back to *Kalkies* in the same record time you got us here, and I’ll offer you a permanent position.”

*Treasure Hunting Tip:* Don’t let prejudice or hypocrisy get in the way of making the right appointments. People from whom we expect the least, often offer us the most. Nor allow necessity to drive attempts towards a more diverse workforce, but rather act proactively to find people different from the crowd.

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