

The Treasure Punt #13

“Yoi! Get on with your work, you lazy blighters,” Captain Blackbird instructed his new hands, Italian simple sailors Marco, Maggiorino, Maurizio, Manetto, Massimo, Modesto and Milo, lying down on the foreshore in the blazing summer heat following lunch. “What do you think this is? A pleasure resort on the Amalfi?”

“Yoi yoi!” Massimo replied in counter-concert with his new captain, in strongly-accented English take-off tones, ridiculing the Blackpool-born Blackbird. “It’s siesta time. Take off your panties, Black-birdie, and relax,” he continued, jumping up from his slumber, and pulling at his colourful breeches.

Massimo’s six Italian companions all laughed, as Blackbird stood transfixed in rage. It’s seldom that a Blackpool-born blighter is at a loss for words. Then the other M-men - Marco, Maggiorino, Maurizio, Manetto, Modesto and Milo - also all rose up from their sedentary stupor, pulled off their knee-lengths, and dressed only in their Dolce and Gabbana thong *‘intimos,’* joined Massimo in a frenzied Tarantella, their traditional folk dance.

“Black-birdie, black-birdie, don’t be such a nerdy limey,

“Take off your pretty panties; join the Eyetie ‘cor-blimeys.’”

They sang, circling and serenading their superior, until Blackbird could stand it no more and, feeling defeated, he stormed back inside the hull to the captain’s cabin. There he immediately summoned his first-mate Long John Platinum.

“I tell yer, LJP, I can’t stand those flipping Latinos,” Blackbird snapped. “They’d best be got rid of, and I want you to do it now.”

“I know, I find them troublesome too,” LJP replied affirmatively. “But my galloping galoshes, I’ve never seen better ship-building carpentry in my life. And you know it too. They can craft an old plank into Helen of Troy herself.”

“Tis true, and that’s the bad end of it,” Blackbird acknowledged. “But do you know, just now they called me Black-birdie, like I’m some measly sparrow or robin. Then they got into a troupe and crimped their way with a malicious ditty, telling me to take off me fancy panties.

“They didn’t!?” LJP blurted, aghast at the audacity of the M-men, who were after all, really just simple sailors, Italian or otherwise.

“And they took off their breeches, dressed only in their G’s and B’s,” Blackbird continued, chastened by the empathy of his jimmy, “and God strike me down with a lightning bolt on a blazing day, but true as Bob’s breath is bad, nearly naked as Adam in the Garden of Freedom, those scallywags did a stupid sun-dance,” he concluded, breathless.

“I’ll deal with them, Blackbird, aye-aye, oh yes, they’ll deal with me now, what an insult to the Queen, jeepers-creepers, I can’t believe it, no-no, don’t you worry,

captain, your first-mate is on his way,” resolved LJP, jumping to his feet, though the length of his sentence belied his cavalier confidence.

LJP strode off the gangplank straight into the stricken simple M-men, prostrate once more.

“Argh!” he snarled, clearing his throat, and spitting his gob in the midst of them.

The members of the M-men lifted their heads cursorily off the quay, and seeing who it was, promptly let them rest again.

“Listen to me, men,” he continued, lowering his voice for requisite authority, “I want you to get back to work.”

Nobody took any notice of LJP.

“Now!” he added.

When still his instruction was ignored, LJP tried a different tack.

“If you don’t get back to work right away, Blackbird wants you fired.”

This threat roused Massimo to speak, if only from a horizontal position.

“LJPP, remind Black-birdie we’re Italian, and take siestas. We’ll work the hour in later, like we always do.”

“Did you call me LJPP?” Long John challenged, bristling.

“No-no, aren’t you just LJP?”

LJP turned tail, as had Blackbird a little earlier, and went back to tell the captain of his failed endeavour. In the meantime the M-men discussed some potential new employment.

“A little birdie dropped a message in my ear,” said Maggiorino.

“What’s he say, what’s he say,” his mates responded fervently, like Meatloaf’s friends to his rocky horror.

“He says ...,” Maggiorino responded, pausing for dramatic effect, “that The Black Corsair, captained by Vincenzo Alessandri the twenty-ninth, she’s on her way to Roma.”

“Then, if that’s true,” replied Milo, “I think we must help Black-birdie finish getting The Bountiful ship-shape, and then abscond for the capital. With Vincenzo, and us, the Black Corsair will follow and take The Bountiful’s next booty. Hah, hah, hah,” he sniggered.

“Hah, hah, hah,” the M-men murmured together.

Treasure Hunting Tips: The pressure to make urgent placements sometimes leads to the appointment of cultural misfits, individuals well-qualified and competent for the work, but not aligned to ‘the way things are done around here.’ Ensuring a good

cultural fit leads to much more sustainable appointments, where both candidates and companies are comfortable and enjoy one another's company.