

## The Treasure Punt #17

“Righty oh then, let’s get down to business, me hearties,” Captain Blackbird instructed the other members of The Bountiful’s Talent Management Committee, as he dramatically and deeply impaled the steel hook of his right arm into the round teak table of the officers’ mess, like a strong judge with an iron gavel.

“I can’t remind us enough of the importance of hiring a fully-sighted lookout,” he continued, twisting the hook in an attempt to release it from the table’s firm grip. “There’ll be no more charity in getting one-eyed, blind and otherwise unfocused sailors leading us down the veritable ocean current, into sea-watery cul-de-sacs, or where they mistake anchored galleons for islands, or albatrosses for flying stars.”

“Aye-aye, captain,” first-mate Long John Platinum cleverly agreed on behalf of the other members of the committee, most of whom laughed at his quick wit and inventiveness, though LJP poked his two index fingers into his eye sockets for the sake of his intellectually slower colleague pirates.

The happy hubbub was quietened by Blackbird, taking his committee chairpersonship as seriously as he did his captaincy.

“So, let’s hear your individual opinions then,” said Blackbird, “starting with you, simple sailor Siphon.”

Siphon sat silently, surprised that he was first to venture an opinion.

“Well, sir, okay then,” Siphon eventually responded, when the intense gaze of the other pirates became unbearable. “You know, I must say that I do like the look of Richie Rockbottom. He definitely looks at things differently, though accurately. I think you’ll all agree ...”

The other pirates of the round teak table nodded sagely, encouraging Siphon to continue.

“But there again, so do Ryan Runcible-Spoon and Ricky Rapsallion, so it’s hard to choose, very hard,” continued Siphon, as Blackbird shifted in his chair, his muscular upper-arm arm still awkwardly wrestling with his steel hook-hand.

“What about you then, simple sailor Simon?” proceeded Blackbird, mindful of moving the discussion forward. “What’s your view?”

“Mmmnn, yes-yes, Siphon is quite correct. It’s very hard,” Simon replied. “I like Ryan and Ricky, but there again, I also like Richie. And neither, mind you, have I forgotten Peace Olivebranch. I especially liked the way he winked. And we mustn’t forget James Jameson-Bottle; he’s knows his seamanship, and his sight is sharper than the captain’s hook,” said Simon, invoking a metaphor not appreciated by Blackbird.

As simple sailor Simon continued, Blackbird wrenched hard on his arm, upsetting the table and spilling some of the drinks, but his hand remained steadfastly embedded in the timber.

“What’s your view, simple sailor Seve?” enquired the captain chairperson, shifting his chair in the hope of getting a better angle to free his arm.

“My opinion, personally,” responded the simple Spanish sailor. “Whew, that’s hard. I’d like to agree actually, with Simon and Siphon. I really do like James Jameson-Bottle, and Peace Olivebranch is quite some fellow, that is true. But so too are Ryan, Ricky and Richie ...” he trailed, resting his chin on his clenched fist, in a thoughtful repose, an unusual gesture for a pirate. “Actually, I’d like to think they could all do the job, absolutely,” Seve blurted, seeing Blackbird puffing his cheeks in and out, like a steam engine under pressure.

“Do you really?” responded Blackbird. “That’s very insightful,” he added, to the great mirth and merriment of those pirates who loved a good pun when it poked them in the eye. “Now, excuse me,” said the man in charge of The Bountiful, as he violently wrenched his iron fist free of the table, the table landing upended on the floor.

All the members of the Talent Management Committee immediately helped to resettle the round table, clean up the broken tumblers, and generally get shipshape for a critical decision. Although they had all noticed that the force of Blackbird’s wrenching had unfortunately left a large splintered piece of teak on the tip of his steel hook, none made mention of it, as Siphon silently covered the new gaping gap in the table’s surface.

“You’re last up then, simple sailor Steve,” Blackbird continued quickly, inspecting the troublesome splinter with his good hand and trying to pull it free, though unsuccessfully.

“I’ll do my best to help, Captain,” Steve answered with the willingness customary of subordination to a superior. “Really, what I think,” he said, raising the volume of his voice to denote decisiveness, “is that Richie, Ryan, Rickie, and Peace, and James for that matter, are all made from the right stuff. But ...”

“Do you think we might do better to extend our search, until we have a standout lookout?” the sometimes wise old Blackbird interjected, looking around to all of those seated at the table.

“YES!” all four talent seekers, including LJP, responded in unison.

“There are bound to be better ones out there, somewhere,” said Siphon.

“I don’t think we’ve looked far and wide enough,” said Simon.

“Standout lookouts are hard to find; we can’t be too careful,” said Seve.

“The men are right, I think,” added LJP for good measure. “It’s sensible to find the one-and-only, the cream-of-the-crop, the cherry-on-the-top; well, you know what I mean,” he concluded bashfully.

“NO!” concluded Blackbird, as he finally successfully extricated his hook from the splinter, which he stuck in his mouth like a toothpick. “The coxswain, who leads the lookouts, will decide the best of the bunch.”

**Treasure Hunting Tip:** Individual members of talent management committees and other selection panels are often reluctant to state their preferences strongly, and will often hide behind the view that more work needs to be done in finding 'the perfect match,' which seldom if ever exists. Where such dynamics occur, it's best for the leader to invoke the line manager's authority in making a clear selection decision.

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