

The Treasure Punt #20

It was time, decided Captain Blackbird of The Bountiful, to apply for membership of the Annie Bonnie Buccaneer Bluster (ABBB), that esteemed and exclusive professional club for only the boldest and bravest filibusters. So his ship sailed towards Margate on the Eastern seaboard of South Africa, in search of a Trunko, the legendary sea monster with a body the size of an elephant and a fearsome trunk and tusks to match. Membership of the ABBB required the hauling and delivery of a live Trunko all the way to the Chichester Yacht Club off the coast of West Sussex, as well as meeting one or two other reputational aspects so necessary for exclusivity. It would never do for the ABBB to admit just any old any old pirate riffraff.

"There's a blowing ahoy," simple sailor Siphon shouted out from The Bountiful's crow's nest just before dawn, with the lights and frights of the south coast dimly in view, and Blackbird rose from his slumber faster than Johnny Depp had signed up for the Jack Sparrow role in Pirates of the Caribbean. 'I'm a blockbuster myself,' Blackbird mused as he wiped the night from his sight, clearing out his eye-sockets, and popping his glass eyeball back in place. Feeling fresher than one of first-mate Long John Platinum's formidable armpits, our steely captain pulled himself by his hook-arm effortlessly up the ship's ladder, and veritably sprinted, as only one-good-legged pirates can, across to the bow.

"Tis one of those Trunko blighter's, that's for sure!" Blackbird exclaimed excitedly. "Good on yer,' Siphon. There's more to you Zulu warriors than meets my one eye, that's for sure, me matey."

It was rare for Blackbird to praise one of his crew before midday, and Siphon bristled with African pride, his chest and other bits puffing out of his leopard skin leotard.

The battle that followed was a fortnight sight to behold, as Blackbird first tricked the Trunko into arms reach, by telling the flappy fish some of his best yarns, then softening up the slippery fighter with some tasty titbits from the galley, before sliding his hook-arm through the Piscean pirate's fleshy lower lip. Then after releasing the bolts that fastened the metal appendage to his muscular elbow, Blackbird made a reef-knot of the ship's anchor rope through the hook's bracket, and Trunko was ensnared!

The beast first sounded, heading into the depths, and although The Bountiful tipped perilously in the air at a ninety degree angle, all the pirates to a man hung from the stern, and the boat righted before the risk of flooding. Then Trunko torpedoed into the ship's wooden hull, his tusks embedding themselves deep into the teak, and although he thrashed around maniacally, could not free himself from the timber's tight grip. So the fish tail-finned first across the Indian Ocean, then out across the breadth of the entire Pacific Ocean, eventually rounding Cape Horn, and heading across the Equator towards the Northern Atlantic, unwisely right into the close vicinity of Europe. The passengers and crews on other boats gazed in amazement as The Bountiful criss-crossed their passages like a powerful Ecstasy-

fuelled speedboat with sails, though these were naturally torn to shreds by the high gales that trailed behind the boat like cirrus clouds, truly confounding all observers.

Blackbird, Long John Platinum, Siphon and the other sailors could not believe their fortune in having brought the bucking Trunko so close to their destination, the fish now flip-floppy from its fury. When eventually The Bountiful sailed into Chichester bay, Trunko had no more energy left. Hearty cheers were heard all the way from the decks to the English capital, but when, some days later, Blackbird received the result of his application from Annie Bonnie, Chair-Pirate of the ABBB membership committee, his head drooped in disappointment and despair, for it was rejected. No reasons were given. But if you were fortunate to hear their deliberations, you would know the reasons why, for the following had been said.

“Did you hear the story about Blackbird. Apparently, some years ago ...,” offered Grace O’Malley.

“Yes indeed,” added Stikla, the great Scandinavian feminist for female pirate rights. “And do you know I heard ...”

And when Lady Mary Kelligrew, another formidable female, added to the rumours of Blackbird’s apparently chequered career, Blackbird’s fate of not being an ABBB was sealed.

Treasure Hunting Tip: It has been said that it’s easier to kill a dragon than to slay a myth, so don’t allow your past actions to create rumours that will haunt your future. The world is smaller than we think, and landing that desirable job depends a lot on reputation.

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