

## The Treasure Punt #21

Word in the international pirate community spread like wildfire when the Queen of England, brushing her teeth, dropped her royal crown during her 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the throne Jubilee celebrations, and Cullinan Two, the 317 carat Lesser Star of Africa jewel, popped out of the crown's casing and disappeared down the Buckingham Palace drainpipe.

"Drat!" Elizabeth exclaimed. "What a time to suffer from diamond dropsy."

Her husband was no help at all.

"You can't trust a foreigner, even from the colonies," he lamented. "Despite what old Mr Oppenheimer assured us, diamonds are not forever."

Rumours of the loss flowed through the confidential gates of Lloyds, the Windsor family's insurers, faster than water through a hydro-electric dam wall, and Captain Blackbird's nose, one of his last remaining intact appendages, was soon hot on the trail.

"It's foolhardy to try and find the original, I tell yer," Blackbird explained to fellow officers Long John Platinum and Rupert Redbeard in the privacy of the captain's cabin. "They'll never let us into London, let alone the palace. Our efforts would be more profitably spent copying it, don't you think?"

LJP and Rupert nodded sagely.

"After all, we have the advantage of local knowledge," Blackbird continued, his eyes misting over in fond memory of the short time he had spent in C-Max, Pretoria's high security prison, where he had been temporarily incarcerated in the early 1980s for stock theft from PW Botha's prize mixed Afrikaner-Nguni herd.

"The Cullinan mine is just around the corner," he explained further. "I had a view of it from my cell's window. I promise, cross my heart and hope to die."

So the pirates' *platteland* plan was hatched. The Bountiful was soon anchored in False Bay, and under the cover of darkness the boat's officers stole into the dark South African night, with athletic Rupert Redbeard in the lead, and LJP and Blackbird hot on his trail. Within a few days the three buccaneers had scaled the colossal *boerewors* curtain which surrounded Tshwane like a medieval moat, in search of Nigerian drug lords, who they were certain would help them in their quest.

In the meanwhile, Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip, all the royal family, and loyalists in the United Kingdom and indeed the world over, whinnied and wailed tearfully over the great loss. Scotland Yard were in a complete tizzy, and even Tintin and the Thompson brothers, called in from Brussels to assist, had no luck when scouring the sewers, and the murky undergrowth of the moors.

"We need to you to steal a rough diamond as big as a brick from the mine," Blackbird whispered through Abadom Igbo's ebony earring, during half-time of the Blue Bulls and Free State Cheetahs game at Loftus Versveld.

“And then find a Doornfontein diamond-cutter to fashion it just like the Lesser Star of Africa ... just Google it,” Blackbird explained to the perplexed West African. “Don’t worry about how many flaws it has. The Queen’s sight, in her dotage, is not what it once was.”

A man of few words, Abadom merely rubbed his thumbs and forefingers together, and our good captain assured the rogue, from one to another, that his efforts would be well-rewarded.

Within a month a stone of sheer magnificence was delivered, by Abadom Igbo himself, to The Bountiful. The diamond compared closely, almost exactly, to the image of the original Lesser Star on LJP’s iPad. So The Bountiful set to sail across the Atlantic, over the equator, entering the English Channel and docking in London’s Limehouse Basin. Throughout the course of the cruise Blackbird, LJP and Rupert Redbeard had briefed Abadom of the next stage of the mission, whilst ordinary sailors Simon, Siphon and Seve hand-stitched a traditional Grand Boubou gown for the upcoming occasion.

Dressed in such finery, Abadom easily convinced the British Protection Command security apparatchiks of his newfound royal Nigerian credentials, and before he could say the word ‘Mountbatten’ was sitting across the lounge from Her Royal highness herself.

“No, no, no,” Abadom explained to Elizabeth. “King of the Mafi-obo, long-lost in the Nigerian hinterland.”

“Oh, I’m so sorry. I see,” the Windsor matriarch apologised politely for wrongly assuming Adabom’s identity as an everyday West African, when actually he enjoyed a blue-blood lineage.

After exchanging pleasantries, Abadom apologised profusely on behalf of his scoundrel national compatriots, one of which, he explained, had delivered, on a ‘finders’ keepers’ basis, Her Majesty’s missing jewel.

“You can see for yourself, it’s the original,” Abadom asserted, looking so deeply into Elizabeth’s eyes he could see her very soul.

“Oh gosh and golly, I can see it is!” she replied, leaping to her feet and smothering Abadom in a hug so warm it was usually reserved only for her favourite Corgi.

“But Lizzie, I want us to keep this a private affair, please,” implored the Nigerian drug lord. “My country gets very bad press, and we can’t have this story out.”

“Adabom, I mean Abadom, my lips are sealed,” the queen reassured. “You have my word, which is more resolute than Brighton Rock, on that score. Now, can we reward you for having appropriated so valiantly my stone from your vagabond?”

“Oh, just perhaps my costs, that’s all, which I’ll happily, actually, prefer to take in jewels.”

“Oh, in that case, I insist you take the Lesser Star of Africa back,” retorted Elizabeth, who had not reigned over the British Empire for sixty years for nothing, and well knew a fool’s diamond when she saw one. “It will be missed, but can be replaced. We’re up to date on our insurance premiums, you know,” she said, pushing the fool’s diamond back into Abadom’s sweaty palm.

On leaving the palace’s gate, Abadom was arrested, and on reading the news in the Sunday Sun, Blackbird and his cohorts trekked back to False Bay.

**Treasure Hunting Tip:** As recruiters, our job is to be honest brokers. When we send candidates to clients in the knowledge that they don’t met the spec, our dishonesty will be found out, to our great detriment.

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