

The Treasure Punt #25

The Bountiful was making steady progress twenty nautical miles off the uppermost Mozambique coastline, its pirates engaged in a variety of leisurely pursuits. The senior crew - Captain Blackbird, Long John Platinum, and Rupert Redbeard - and one ordinary rating, Forked Tongue Fred, invited for his sporting prowess, were animatedly enjoying a game of poker in the captain's cabin, fuelled by a gallon of straw rum. Simple sailors Simon, Siphon, Seve and Socrates, and the other s-men were soaking up the sun in games of tenniquoits, shuffleboard and other frivolous shipboard games, whilst the other more refined pirates were practicing for the annual INPIMODACO, the International Pirate Morris Dancing Competition, for which The Bountiful was the current cup-holder in the heavyweight division.

"Yippa-di-doo-da, yippa-di-day, my, oh my, what a wonderful day," the dancers chanted as they stepped rhythmically this way and that on the top deck.

As the ship crested the gentle swells, none of its pirates noticed that on the northern horizon a veritable garrison of small Somaliland ships had surrounded The Merkelschmerkel, Germany's biggest battleship, in peacetime now used for hoarding ancient Hellenic treasures - mostly a variety of antique pots, pans, crockery and cutlery, but also many rarer pieces - that the Germans had secured for its bad Greek government loans.

Even One-Eyed Dick, manning The Bountiful's crow's-nest, was distracted, sitting down whilst reading an old copy of *Psychology Today*, and puffing on a chillum. When at last OED bored entirely of the article on new psychotic trends, this month addressing catatonic schizophrenia, he stood up to witness the strange sight of The Merkelschmerkel being overrun by an army of red Somali ants.

"Gobble me turkey gizzards," OED gasped, looking down myopically with his one good eye at his pipe in admiration. Then blinking repeatedly, he looked over yonder once more, and disbelieving, his head shook frenetically in Tardive Dyskinesia, subject of the magazine's cover article. The psychology journal had baldly copied a portrait of an ear-flapping Alfred E Newman with the headline question beneath, "MAD! Born or raised?"

"SHIPS AHOY, SHIPS AHOY, SHIPS AHOY ...," OED shouted.

"SHUT 'YER GOB," shouted Robert Redbeard, coming up to check the cause of the commotion. "Why are 'yer repeating yer'self, yer' bloody blockhead."

"I can't help it," explained One-Eyed Dick, "I've got me'self a bad case of Tourette's Syndrome. I think I caught it from Rosy Riproaring."

"You'll have much more serious injuries if you don't get down here at once, OED," Rupert reprimanded.

By now the many men of The Bountiful (excepting the officers playing poker, and the Morris dancers, and the shuffleboard and tenniquoit players), numbering three in total, all stood forward at the bow, the Somali insurgency clearly in view. Six thousand Somali sailors, dressed only in fire-engine red bandanas, were alighting from rowing boats with two-and-a-half horse-power Yamaha outboard motors, storming the pride of the German fleet, and throwing its entire crew overboard, all except Captain Hamburger and Mrs Hillary Clinton, who had been on a secret Somali mission, as ransom. As watery wails of '*schweinehund*' were muffled by the warm waves, the German sailors legs tied to modest blocks of East African granite,

the stealthy Somalis swarmed over its gunmetal grey hull and stole into the hold, retrieving pieces of the Parthenon and endless Athenian and other antiquities.

“There’s plentiful enough rich and ripe pickings for us all,” remarked Rupert Redbeard. “Many are the museums that’ll pay millions for those miserable marvels.

“Oi! S-men sailors!” he shouted sternly. “Get ‘yer selves ready for battle.”

“Don’t interrupt, Rupie,” Simon replied, adjusting the tenniquoit held in his hand. “It’s an important stage of the game.”

“Hey, shuffle-cockers!” Rupert commanded. “Shift your butts to the muskets.”

“In a while, Crocodile,” replied Siphon. “Can’t you see we’re busy?”

Rupert Redbeard, being a responsible pirate, went berserk. Sprinting frenetically across the deck, he kicked out crazily at the tenniquoits, some spinning like discus into the air and one decapitating the resident albatross, its beheaded torso dropping from the perch and telepathically running after Rupert and jumping up with claws clasp onto his shoulder. Rupert spun in amongst the shuffle-boarders, his arms whizzing like a helicopter’s rotor-blades and his hands slapping all the numbskulls in their way, until every last one lay prostrate on the deck. Then the rusty redhead mowed like a torpedo into the many Morris dancers, knocking them off their feet as rhythmically and routinely as their rhymes. Leaping down the stairwell, Rupert smashed through the bulkhead into the captain’s cabin, shouting at his comatose comrades.

“It’s the biggest bleeding haul in history, ‘yer scallywags, and look at ‘yer,” Rupert wailed, spirit was broken by the shenanigans, and falling to the floor, weeping.

“I can’t find me leg,” slurred Blackbird, slowly stirring. “And who took me arm?”

“Not me,” defended a sleep LJP. “I’m able-bodied.”

“Not me neither, no sir,” added Forked Tongue Fred, laying over and covering a few dismembered bodily parts.

“Well, it’s too late now, baby, it’s too late now,” Rupert Redbeard, in a foetal position, hummed himself to sleep.

Treasure Hunting Tip: Recruiters can get slack, like all other working people, and unprepared, can fail to deliver big job orders. Clients are unforgiving in expecting head-hunters to quickly secure the most valuable talent. Wise recruiters are as ready to receive multiple concurrent job assignments as they are for a simple single order.

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