

The Treasure Punt #26

“Darn!” Captain Blackbird blurted, at least in respectable literature. “That’s another one gone,” he lamented to himself whilst on his knees rummaging through The Bountiful’s treasure chest, stowed away underneath his bunk, behind the pungency of his colourful collection of worn socks and scants, before mustering the entire crew up on deck, and ordering the boat’s anchoring.

“Comrade pirates, we have a thief, a bleeding rapscallion in our midst,” he announced, and every man on board looked accusingly to his left and to his right, lifting both hands to the open air and muttering their own innocence.

“Long John Platinum will now himself search the entire boat, and search every one of ‘yer trunks,” the captain continued.

Simple sailors Simon, Seve, Sipho and Stephen, and the other s-men, looked down at their trousers, bemused, before pulling out their empty pockets.

“Not ‘yer bleeding trousers, potheads, your stowing trunks!” Blackbird corrected. “Now get on with it, LJP. This boat ain’t moving another metre till the guilty rascal walks the plank.”

First-mate LJP sauntered off the deck and down the mid-ships hatch with a more relaxed and casual gait than the situation demanded. Then, being on his own, he slipped into the galley and helped himself to some leftover grilled barracuda, drenched down with a flagon of the best, officers-only, Spanish sangria. When sufficient time had elapsed to fool Blackbird and the other crew that he had thoroughly searched every nook and cranny on the boat, he re-appeared on deck.

“Nothing, Blackbird, nothing,” he revealed, shrugging. “All I found were some nasty cheapies, flea market fakes for fluffy floozies.”

“Watch the men while I check up on ‘yer, LJP,” Blackbird resolved, spending the rest of the morning searching The Bountiful from the bottom of the bilges to the top of the main mast, and from the stern to the bows, including between the cavernous breasts of the figurehead, Barbie Blunderbusty, and everywhere in-between. Since he was a toddler, nothing quite focused Blackbird’s will more resolutely than diamonds, gold, rubies, emeralds and pearls. But Blackbird’s search was to no avail.

“I tell ‘yer, I’ll catch this bleedin’ bugger, if takes my last bad breath,” Blackbird announced with a steely timbre to his gruff voice, holding a gaze into the wide eyes of every single sailor.

So the beam was drawn and the anchor raised, and The Bountiful set sail southerly, though heavily, in tandem with its crew’s emotional burden of having a traitor in their midst.

Blackbird now took to sleeping underneath his bunk, and carrying the treasure chest on his rounds, only leaving its contents vulnerable when in paralytic stupors following shore-bound excursions on the many islands of the South Pacific.

Every time The Bountiful embarked on the next leg of its journey, Captain Blackbird re-checked the treasure chest, and every time one or more of the most valuable jewels was missing, and every time this happened he set about mustering the crew, sending LJP on a thorough inspection, and then undertaking one himself. It was always without success. So Blackbird became beside himself with paranoia, hardly ever sleeping, not eating, and never drinking whilst at sea, a sign of his miserable times.

“It’s terrible, the worst thing that has happened to me, much, much worse than rejection from Rosie Riproaring,” he admitted to fellow officers LJP and Rupert Redbeard, and One-Eyed Dick (OED), simple sailor under special dispensation, during a game of sober poker somewhere in the becalmed sea between Tonga and Samoa. “And I don’t understand why the rest of you seem so calm about it all. We work our bleedin’ butts off to lie, cheat and steal, to rape, pillage and plunder, and now what’ve we got to show for it? Some measly metal medals, and nothing much else besides. It’s a disaster.”

As One-Eyed Dick shuffled and dealt the five-card hands across the rectangular table, none of the officers were prepared for what happened next. A clan of wild men from Borneo, with sharpened warthog fangs protruding from their cheeks, their tongues severed down the centre like a viper’s, their voices screeching like howler monkeys, stormed through the porthole into the cabin, upended Blackbird’s bunk, stole the treasure chest, and like banshees in a melee, dived straight back out into the ocean.

“Shoo-wow!” the officers and One-Eyed Dick gasped in amazement, when silence had once more settled.

“We’re finished, finished I tell ‘yer,” Blackbird sighed pathetically, holding his head in his one good hand, and digging his hook into the table.

“No we’re not, are we boys, far from it,” argued LJP.

“We’ve only just begun,” Robert Redbeard, once a carpenter himself, crooned.

“Working together day by day, together,” OED continued singing.

“Hey, ‘yer blighters, what’s going on, ‘yer up to something?” Blackbird probed sadly, at the loss of his jewels, and by feeling left out.

“I’ve hidden all our diamonds and gold safely on Bora Bora,” revealed LJP.

“And I’ve hidden all our rubies and emeralds on Tahiti,” added Rupert Redbeard.

“We’ll find all our pearls on Moorea,” concluded OED.

Blackbird looked perplexed.

“None of us is as strong as all of us,” explained OED, on an accelerated development path for good reason. “Tis far better we share all our treasures amongst us, than to hoard them to ourselves.”

Treasure Hunting Tip: In the highly competitive culture of recruitment companies, there is a tendency for consultants to keep their talented candidates to themselves, but this is self-defeating. Making as many placements in the shortest time is the ultimate goal, a collective effort best achieved by sharing both the candidates and the rewards.

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