

## The Treasure Punt #31

A terrible accident occurred one sunny morning on board The Bountiful. With the ship becalmed in deep-sea waters, One-Eyed Dick (OED), a simple though psychologically astute sailor with lofty aspirations, climbed up the main mast to enjoy the view, and yet another joint, from within the sanctity of the crow's nest. Mindful of officer-on-duty Long John Platinum's (LJP's) disapproval as a born-again anti-smoking fascist, OED puffed progressively on the chillum until it was a searing pencil of coals, cautious of the lack of wind, which would usually have carried the smoke away. Then, pausing to catch his breath, OED drew the offending article down to his side, unaware that the burning tip was searing into the canvas side netting. His consciousness stolen by a mild hallucinogenic torpor, a large cinder fell to the floor, setting alight the straw alongside OED's bare feet and a spontaneous combustion of his baggy breeches.

"Well, blow me down," OED exclaimed, suddenly aware of the flames licking his calf, the pain causing his leg to reactively kick out like a mule. His long toenails, sharper than a vulture's claws, tore through the canvas and his ankle became caught in the netting, amidst fanning flames. Throwing caution to the windless day, he disregarded the consequences of LJP's ire.

"HELP! I'M ON FIRE!" he shouted, engulfed in flames.

But it was too late. Mindful of the fire spreading down the main mast and threatening the ship, LJP instructed sailor Simon to urgently saw through the mast beneath its burning masthead, which fell to the deck like a dying Phoenix, its charred occupant roasted like a chestnut. A meagre funeral service was later conducted, sadly though suitably ending OED's smoking notoriety.

When a week later The Bountiful docked in Kalk Bay, Blackbird set immediately to replacement action.

"I want me a registered psychologist, not some amateur quack like OED," Blackbird instructed. Truth be known, the captain had developed a fondness for OED's elevated emotional intelligence, and his fellow pirates often unhinged from reality, making this a sensible appointment.

There was no shortage of Cape psychologists, an endemic breed commoner than Cape sparrows.

"Welcome," sailor Seve warmly greeted the first candidate, Severus Psychedelic, offering him a cup of hot tea, suitably sugared. Seve acted with the same non-characteristic decorum for all of the other headshrinkers shortlisted for the distinctively unusual position of managing psychotic pirates, before ushering them punctually and punctiliously to the officer's mess, which was not at all messy.

"Wonderful, yer're truly marvellous," Blackbird enthused to Severus Psychedelic, and then also to Bleeding-heart Bipolar, the second candidate, at the conclusion of their competency-based interviews, wherein they were required to mesmerise, but not hypnotise, Blackbird's pet hyena.

"Relax," instructed sailor Steve, before conducting the concocted psychometric testing, which included Dipstick Depression, the third candidate, dictating that each candidate experienced the deep trauma of walking the plank, though with a large piece of polystyrene disguised as granite tied to their feet, whilst their emotional reactions were observed and recorded.

“Another cup of tea, or perhaps some turtle noodle soup?” asked sailor Seve, again offering sustenance, when each dripping and wide-eyed psychologist had clambered back on deck.

“Take as long as you like on the documentation, and don’t hesitate to ask any questions,” smiled sailor Scott, handing the application forms and medical and dental council registration verification documents to Psycho Analytic, the fourth candidate, as he had to the previous three candidates, before copying each of their Anna Freud Centre or Tavistock Institute issued NQF level 8 qualification certificates, making sure to return the originals for the candidates’ safekeeping.

“Good news or bad, we’ll get back to you within a week,” assured coxswain Rupert Redbeard with a firm handshake to the four previous candidates, as well as to Nosedive Neurotic, the fifth candidate, and true to his word, Rupert Redbeard kept to all five of his future promises.

There was good debate around Blackbird’s square table when the officers gathered to make a final selection, for each candidate has much to recommend as a suitable therapeutic vagabond.

“I like Severus Psychedelic’s charming nervous twitches,” mused Blackbird.

“Bleeding-heart Bipolar’s emotions were worn on his sleeves. We’d always know where we stand with him,” concluded LJP.

“Dipstick Depression’s melancholia would be a useful attribute in calming liquor-fuelled over-exuberance,” suggested Rupert Redbeard.

“Did you notice how Psycho Analytic took himself more seriously than Sigmund Freud?” sailor Simon piped up from the galley alongside.

“Yes, but Nosedive Neurotic is the one for me. Instead of OED, we’d have OCD!” laughed sailor Sipho in delight. “Obsessive-compulsive disorder,” he elaborated for his psychologically naïve comrades.

Captain Blackbird ultimately agreed to appoint Nosedive Neurotic, to the bitter disappointment of the other applicants.

However, Psycho Analytic never forgot his positive experience of The Bountiful. When some years later he bumped into the ship’s officers at the local tavern in Simon’s Town, Psycho Analytic explained that he had given up his head-shrinking private practice in favour of the more profitable pursuit of head-hunting, being recently employed by the notorious Wild Men from Borneo Inc.

“If you’re interested, I have a number of current contracts.”

“Yer bet we are,” replied Blackbird with full conviction, never one to shirk his responsibilities.

**Treasure Hunting Tip:** Taking a long-term view, it is worthwhile treating every candidate as a future potential client. Whatever the position for which candidates are considered - human resources, technical, professional or general management – they will remember the manner, good or bad, in which they were treated by search consultants and other recruiters, and if the experience was positive, may well be in a position to profitably engage them at some stage in the future.

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