

## The Treasure Punt #33

“No more than forty riels, and one ampule of high-grade heroin per assignment,” indicated Hot Pu Pong to Captain Blackbird, in a clandestine meeting on deck The Bountiful. The Cambodian drug smuggler, leader of The Hu Flung Dung, a traditional bamboo junk, needed a number of mules to carry his illicit booty off False Bay in the Cape of Good Hope to Woodstock in Cape Town.

“Never yer worry,” Blackbird replied, using advanced mental arithmetic to rapidly calculate the exchange rate, whilst factoring in the brokerage fee. “South African whites are good swimmers, desperate for lack of previously advantaged opportunity, and will do just about anything for almost nothing. I’ll get lots willing to work for twenty riels, yer just watch me.”

Blackbird, a cultural diversity devotee, mirrored Hot Poo Pong’s respectful greeting exactly, bringing his corporeal and hooked hands together, but bowing so enthusiastically that the two pirates’ heads clashed.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” Blackbird blurted, with the Cambodian captain clutching his forehead.

“It’s okay,” replied the Cambodian crackpot, fending off Blackbird’s ironclad caress. “Just get on with the job,” he concluded, before hoisting himself by rope from the one boat to the other like a simian Tarzan.

The Bountiful’s officers were immediately summoned to the captain’s cabin to be briefed, where after they deliberated on their new work.

“Go into the middle-class suburbs, where the pubs are plentiful,” Blackbird suggested to Long John Platinum (LJP), Rupert Redbeard and simple sailor Siphon, the latter enjoying the elevated status of Leading Seaman as part of the boat’s affirmative action strategy. “The petit-bourgeois have elevated expectations, and the new democracy has been hurtful to their sense of rightful privilege.”

“They also have expensive tastes and bad habits,” Siphon added insightfully, having observed the mischief from his early childhood as a domestic-quartered child in upper-class Constantia.

So our intrepid buccaneers set to work, all well used to cloak and dagger doings.

After their boat docked in darkness at Kalk Bay, LJP headed straight for the leafy Foresters Arms in Newlands. Similarly, Rupert Redbeard made for the appropriately named Pirates Pub in Plumstead, and Siphon for Peddlers on the Bend in Constantia.

LJP was immediately in luck, sidling up to a designer-labelled late adolescent sitting pertly at the bar.

“Do you swim?” he asked, knowing good small talk from conversation killers.

“Maybe, but what’s it to you?” replied Lucasta Labuschagne, pronounced as in French Champagne, intrigued by LJP’s surreptitious tone.

“I’ve an interesting proposition to make. But let’s talk somewhere private,” the first-mate advanced, smiling widely and winking.

Under the blooming bougainvillea, Lucasta’s creamily-Caucasian desperation was soon evident in accelerating the conversation to a pharmacological location.

“Not right now; when the job’s done,” LJP promised, putting a reassuring pirate’s hardy palm on his consort’s snow-white and silky-soft shoulder.

“I’m not doing it for less than four thousand bucks, and at least four ampules,” Lucasta demanded, well used to getting her way with her parents, teachers and other authority figures.

“I’m sure that will work for my client, yes, that’s a bargain,” LJP agreed, confounded by the rapid-fire exchange rate calculations, and keen to close the commitment.

Within a few kilometres, Rupert Redbeard argued as persuasively to Japie Varkoor, the latter being brow-beaten through lack of suitable career progression, and a smack-head junkie of some southern suburb notoriety.

“I can only doggy paddle, nothing fancy, hey,” cautioned Japie. “And for taking my life in my hands and feet, I’ll only do it for five thousand smackeroos, and a bucket load of atom bomb brown sugar,” he concluded.

“I agree wholeheartedly,” Rupert agreed, though clueless as to what Japie was actually talking about.

Within a cricket ball’s hit away, Siphon peddled a similarly influential proposition to Gitel Gundelfinckler, busy enjoying an inland evening respite from the salted sea-breeze and other unsavoury elements characteristic of Camps Bay.

“Siphon, I was born swimming,” she suggested. “We all are, if you think carefully about it, but I was especially advanced because my mother insisted on a water birth, not at home or a hospital, but in a five-star hotel. Apparently I swam straight off and the gynae had to pull me back by umbilical cord. Here, look at my belly button, it’s very unusual, but proof,” she added, pulling up her beautiful Belk blouse to reveal a distended navel the size of a ripened citrus fruit.

Siphon smiled in admiration.

“I’ll complete the task in record time,” assured Gitel, “but it’s at least five thousand, and my own month’s supply. That’s eight ampules. Just never call me a mule. I don’t mind pony. You’ve got me, haven’t you Siphon?”

“It’s a done deal. The client’s crafty, but this is a big bargain,” Siphon confirmed, before racing back to The Bountiful.

When in the dead of night the three delivery agents met Hot Pu Pong, to undertake their mission from The Hu Flung Dung, and details of the deal were discussed, a tremendous conflagration ensued, which Blackbird, as broker, found impossible to contain.

“You promised!” shouted the Cambodian drug lord.

“LJP promised!” screeched Lucasta Labuschagne.

“Rupert promised!” scolded Japie Varkoor.

“Siphon promised!” screamed Gitel Gundelfinckler.

The four disheartened knaves ran after Blackbird and the other buggers from The Bountiful, who dived into the water. Although they were chased by the mules, Hot Pu Pong didn’t bother, for there are many other pirates, and seahorses, on and in the sea.

**Treasure Hunting Tip:** Never raise false expectations with clients and / or candidates regarding the other party’s position. Being either overly effusive, exaggerating, or in any other way misrepresenting their fixed positions, not only breaks the trust they have in you as a fair go-between, but also backfires any potential deals.