

The Treasure Punt #4

There was near mutiny on *The Bountiful* at Captain Blackbird's announcement of the promotion of simple sailor Simon to the elevated status of Able-Seaman. As much as Blackbird argued that Simon was a very rare and valuable bird, and needed special looking after, the other sailors were unimpressed. They felt they also deserved a chance to prove how valuable they were to the Captain and the crew, not to mention their potential promotion.

"I'm special, very special," announced ordinary seaman Siphon. "Watch here now," he said, making his way to the end of the walking plank, still in place after Able-Seaman Simon's aerobatics display. Siphon slowly and carefully let himself over the far edge of the plank, holding on tight by his fingertips. Then he clambered over again, and sat safely, waiting for some applause. None was forthcoming, and Blackbird admonished Siphon for his foolishness.

"You clearly don't you know the meaning of rare. Any old fool can do that," he said. "Even me."

The other sailors raised their eyebrows whilst Captain Blackbird limped to the edge of the plank.

"Not that I'm saying I'm a fool, mind," he added on reflection.

Despite his disabilities, Blackbird was well able to do the very thing he had just witnessed. At one point he even let his hook-hand off the plank and waved it in the air, holding on with the other, and sang a short ditty for good measure. Swinging himself like a veritable Vervet monkey in a tree, he swung perilously, with the point of the hook-hand deeply embedded into the timber, before achieving enough centrifugal motion to half-somersault safely back onto his buttocks. Although the momentum nearly carried him over the other side, when Blackbird had achieved a good balance, all of the sailors, including Siphon, applauded.

"But I'm special, really very special," declared another very ordinary sailor, Stephen. "Watch this."

At the far edge of the plank Stephen proceeded to humiliate himself. Letting himself off the edge of the wood, holding on by his hands, he bit the plank between the two sets of his teeth. Then he let his hands go, and hung onto his life by his mandibles and molars.

"Argh, get away with you," shouted Blackbird, as a number of the other simple sailors raised their hands up and down, all saying at once, 'But I can also do that.'

"Can you really do that, Sizwe?" asked Blackbird, and Sizwe confirmed his abilities.

"And you, Seve, tell me now, do you think you can really do that?" continued the captain, to which his crew member also answered in the affirmative.

"Then you, Sycamore," asked Blackbird. "Looking into your heart, and looking into my one eye, can you also do what Siphon, what Stephen, and what Seve, can all do?"

"Aye, aye, Captain," confirmed Sycamore sailor, whose jaws and teeth were the softest part of his body, "I can definitely do that too."

"Well then, let me ask a question of Able-Seaman Simon," indicated Blackbird.

“If sailors Stephen, Sizwe, Seve and Sycamore can all do the same thing, are they like treasures then?”

Simon no longer needed to worry about breaking ranks with the other ordinary seamen, now that his status as an extra-ordinarily skilful Able-Seaman had been confirmed.

“No, they are not,” he replied.

“Exactly,” Blackbird concluded. “How can something shared by so many other sailors be rare and valuable, like the others treasures we seek?”

Once more, the simple sailors of *The Bountiful* bowed their heads in embarrassment.