

The Treasure Punt # 6

There was a tremendous commotion above and below the decks of The Bountiful when Navi Kumar, the ship's Indian navigator, called out excitedly from behind the wheel.

"The magical magnificence of these mega-marvellous moments merely mesmerises the modalities of the moronic mercantile missions," he blurted in his best post-colonial, Queen Victorian mother-tongue, which, when translated to simple sailor-speak, meant greedy merchants could easily be fooled by the allure of fools' gold and other inauthentic treasures. The manner of Navi's verbosity was purposefully invoked to antagonise his Captain and fellow crew, but in a, 'You love me, and I love you,' comradely repartee with his fellow pirates. Truth be told, the diversity of pirates blessed by The Bountiful was, in deeds alone, the vessel's most valuable treasure by quite some distance.

"One-day I'll have your bleeding, literally-speaking, tongue with the cucumber slices on my sandwich," Captain Blackbird responded, who despite his reprobate status in more mannerly company, knew his part participles from his pronouns. As a leader of substance, Blackbird was also keenly aware that some of the less schooled sailors, many ratings in number, would appreciate a less elaborate way of speaking.

"I'm the one to check this out," first-mate Long John Platinum added, who if he were not a pirate of repute, would have been a geologist, mineralogist or gemmologist, perhaps all three. With great gusto he clambered right up to the top of the forward mast armed with nothing but his telescope, and pipe. LJP, as the other simple sailors called their second-in-command affectionately, loved nothing better than lighting up some tobacco when enjoying a solitary panoramic view. Never a social smoker, LJP seized such elevated opportunities with nicotine-inspired relish.

"I see nothing, well, not yet" he alerted, knowing not to demoralise the other madmen," most of whom had already long called the Golden Gate a hoax, and were growing tired of the shallow reaches of first the Orange, then the Vaal, and finally the Wilge Rivers, in some God-forsaken pioneering territories called the Cape Colonies, the Transvaal Republics, and ultimately the Orange Free State.

The Bountiful pulled a deep draught, and many were the occasions over the past months that its keel had scraped perilously close to tearing on these rivers' shallow beds. There were countless times it took the collective might of the simple sailors to carry the boat over the treacherous terrain, not to mention the difficulties of sailing into thin air, with nary a northerly, easterly, westerly, or even southerly wind behind them.

But Blackbird was an empiricist, and typically needed to check things out for himself. If the adventures were disproportionately challenging, he tackled these with a commensurately more resolute will, despite any protestations, no matter how

violent, from his crew. His, 'Remember, there's always the gangplank,' qualification, generally worked very well in keeping the simple sailors of The Bountiful in check.

To his great glee, Blackbird had recently received a beautiful breeze-blown postcard from his long-lost Aunty Gertrude, long believed dead on safari. The cover of the postcard was an original multi-coloured, hand-painted, signed by Gertrude herself, picture of the splendid Golden Gate of the Eastern Maluti Mountains. On the backside of the postcard was simply inscribed, 'To my ever-favourite nephew Blackbird, this - The Golden Gate - is where you'll find your treasures, with lots of love from Auntie Gertie,' who thoughtfully had also included the latitudinal and longitudinal co-ordinates of the region's nearest village, Clarens.

"More than anyone, I'd trust Aunty Gertie with my trousers, I mean my treasures," Blackbird had informed his followers some many months back, then instructing Navi to continue on the same course from the Northern Pacific to the Southern Atlantic.

When eventually it was clear to Long John Platinum that there was insufficient water in the Wilge to continue by ship, he alighted from the mast, and huddled together, he and his fellow officer pirates collectively decided to continue the quest on foot. Blackbird led the charge, and though not landlubbers, the pirates covered the ground with stealth and haste, spurred on by the postcard's gleaming glow, not to mention the aggressive attentions of some unruly Basotho ponies and their mentors. Some hours before sunset, the pirates passed stealthily around the sleepy town of Bethlehem, charged through the last valley past Clarens, and thereupon, as night was falling, were utterly mesmerized by a sight more wondrous than Xanadu, for these were surely the world's largest gold deposits. And on the surface of the earth, so ripe for the plucking, nay plundering!

"I told you so," whispered Blackbird, too tired to speak. 'Thank the lords above for Aunty Gertie,' he said before collapsing.

Thoroughly exhausted, with impending darkness the pirates immediately bedded down for the night, resolving that the next morning, long before sunrise, they would be up and about the Maluti Mountains. But when they did get up, search as they might, and all day mind, there was no gold to be discovered in the sandstone of the Golden Gate. Just another mirage near nightfall.

Treasure Hunting Tips: As a Treasure Hunter, don't be fooled by form over substance - the superficiality of a CV, a stunning interview impression, or sophisticated sophistry. Difficult as it may be, rather check things out about a candidate far more thoroughly. Ask to see the evidence, and get the real stories from the people to who they have previously reported. As a treasure to be hunted, don't over-sell yourself, or make false assertions, for you are sure to be found out by good recruiters.