

## The Treasure Punt # 8

Oh, a terrible thing happened one perilous morning when The Bountiful rounded the Cape of Storms, and that southern aspect of the Atlantic Ocean resolved to live up to its name. The small white horses, prancing and dancing on the cusps of the swells, signalled the first signs of bad weather to come.

“Sea state three!” simple though able sailor Simon shouted from the bird’s nest, as the boat rolled over in sixty degree barrel turns, forcing Simon to tie his torso to the mast, for fear of flying from his lofty perch like an Albatross in boots.

The horses then transformed into gurgling, frothy cauldrons, as Bertha, the Sea Monster, consumed ever more coals into her fiery belly, the water boiling beneath the boat, threatening to swallow it also into her fetid stomach.

“Sea state five!” Simon screamed above the ghastly gales and the gargantuan gurgles, thankful of his knowledge of reef knots, one of which held him fast to the mast.

“What happened to four?” Captain Blackbird shouted up to his paltry pirate. As we know, Blackbird was not the captain for nothing, always armed with killer questions, and a musket. And an iron will.

“It got lost between three and five,” Simon answered smartly. “Ooooooh, golly me!” he continued without any further banter. “Bleeding Bertha’s burped, and unleashed a tsunami. Batten down the hatches, you blighters.”

Those were the last words heard on the decks from up on high, as the mighty wave crashed over the bow, and the sailors to a man held on with whitened knuckles to cleats, clasps, cracks and crevices, indeed anything starting with a c, or any other letter for that matter, would do. Blackbird and his flock actually liked being submerged, when they together sang songs like Yellow Submarine in concert, but preferably when snorkelling for treasure. In the melee the Captain’s right eye rolled over in its salty socket to see what it could see, but all around was only sea. Sea this way and that, until, as if in a slow motion dream, Blackbird’s eye focused on the unfolding tragedy, as coxswain Navi Kumar’s tight grip on the helm was loosed by the pressure of water across his considerable chest, his body bursting away in the bubbly breath of Bertha.

As the wave subsided, The Bountiful burst through the surface of the water like a flooding submarine, ballasts full and safety weights released, to escape a subterranean cemetery. Blackbird was thankful for having plundered his rare, amphibian vessel, especially for occasions such as these.

As quickly as the storm had appeared, it disappeared, and in calmer waters Blackbird called all sailors up on deck to account for themselves. Long John Platinum was there, and sailors Seve, Steve, Siphon, Simon, and Stuart were also there, as was sailor Cedric, who had been in a deep sleep through all the other treasure punts.

But Navi, naturally, was not there, a sad occasion indeed. Although the captain ordered a thorough search, and the ship continuously circled concentrically, all eyes on the sea surface, not even a coxswain's cap could be seen floating in the flotsam and jetsam. Blackbird convened a solemn ceremony, and then set about, as focused captains do, to find Navi's replacement.

The pirates were glad to be in familiar waters, where word in the pirate community spread more quickly than Penguins' guano. The very first pirate interviewed for the important post by The Bountiful's Talent Management Committee, which used to be the ship's simple selection committee, was the portly but precious Peter the Goat, a name's play on the Russian king, for the former's considerable goatee. Pirate Peter had pulled on the hairs of his chin since pubescence, and during the interview he demonstrated how he could attach them to the mast as a rope, and pull himself up to the top. He showed the amazed members of the committee how he could use his beard to lasso a gull in full flight, a very distinctive skill indeed. And Peter the Goat proved his navigational competency by being voluntarily blindfolded, spun around like a gyroscope, and then when he had regained his balance, using the end of his whiskers to always gyrate towards a true northerly direction. There was not a compass on that committee which did not confirm his considerable competence, and Peter the Goat immediately emerged from the stocks as frontrunner.

"Oh, don't dilly-dally, you dumb clucks," Blackbird despaired, as the Talent Management Committee insisted on interviewing a representative sample of suitable sailors. They interviewed sailors Sally, Stella, Silvia, Sophia and Simone, and sailors Silvio, Sycamore, Syracuse, Cervantes and Solomon. Sesame, Serpentine, Scribante, Scrabster and Spoggom were also put to the test, as were Siam, Salami, Slim, Sortie and Salad. None of these competitors came anywhere near beating the candidature of his fabulousness, Peter the Goat. But when a suitable shortlist had finally been compiled, the committee members collectively leant back in their chairs, proud of their produce.

Carrier albatrosses were immediately dispatched to the favoured few, for the placement was urgent, the Bountiful having meandered aimlessly for many months, with not even a bad carrot circadian diamond to add to the bowels of The Bountiful.

But when Peter the Goat's reply was received, it simply said, "Thanks, but no thanks."

Merely one week later, Blackbird's The Bountiful was roundly beaten in a skirmish with the legendary boat's greatest adversary, Bluebird's The Basilica, and Peter the Goat, Navigator Supreme, was hoisted onto the enemy boat's bow in victory.

*Treasure Hunting Tip:* Time is a great deal-breaker, especially so in executive search. When a favoured candidate has been found, complete the individual's selection process in double-quick time and promptly get an offer on the table.

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