

## The Treasure Punt # 9

Following defeat at the sails of Bluebird's *The Basilica*, Captain Blackbird and the other pirates of *The Bountiful* were forced ashore in Kalk Bay to make some repairs to their boat. The ordinary ratings ordered hake and chips at *Kalkies*, and sat in satisfaction outside at the wooden tables looking out over False Bay, whilst Blackbird and Long John Platinum tucked into mix and match crayfish and calamari platters at the white-collar restaurant alongside the waterfront. The two officer pirates also had a good view of the sea from their corner table, but not the gusty breeze perfumed by the fresh fish flopping this way and that on the quay. Only simple sailors can have their ordinary hake and eat it, so to speak, but never you mind for the officers also enjoyed double squadrans and coke with their meal, whilst Seve, Siphon, Steve, and Salamander, and all the many other simpletons made do with plain though tasty beer.

The quiet ambiance of the inner sanctum reserved for Blackbird and LJP was however rudely disturbed when a familiar raging, rich-red headed and bearded pirate burst through the door, and shoving aside any attempts to restrain him, rushed headlong towards the leaders of *The Bountiful*.

"Argh," the madman proclaimed insightfully, "I'll have two of your balls for breakfast."

Blackbird instinctively reached down with his good hand for his sabre, hidden in his trousers, whilst LJP rushed forward, with both hands placed before his groin, to protect his captain, both not sure to who the crazed pirate was referring.

Fortunately the simple sailors outside had noticed the raging and ranting of the aggressive rusty redhead, who they recognised, and some rushed from their seats to protect their officers, managing to restrain the aggressor, dagger-handed, from behind, as he lunged towards LJP. Disarming him, Blackbird, in a rare show of manners, showed his softer side.

"Sit down, Rupert Redbeard!" he ordered. "Eat and drink with us; tis far better to be convivial than conflictual."

Rupert Redbeard was immediately disempowered, for he had never heard such words before. But he understood eat and drink, and breathing deeply, chest heaving, hungry and thirsty he sat down with his adversaries.

"What's the problem, Rupee?" asked LJP fondly, as the simple sailors shuffled away, their work done for that part of the day.

"Argh," Rupert replied consistently. "Don't you try and charm me now, LJP, you make me sick."

"Never mind him, you old sea salt," Blackbird intervened. "Get on with it; we sail at dusk."

Rupert Redbeard drew another deep breath, and then told his tale of woe.

“You know I wasn’t even considered as your new navigator.”

Blackbird and LJP nodded. LJP had indeed chaired The Bountiful’s talent management committee, and prior to interviews had vetted all applicants and candidates with his captain.

“You’ve also long known,” Rupert Redbeard continued, “that my beard is a beard of many talents. It can mix with the best Peter the Goatees on the ocean. Right?”

“Right!” Blackbird affirmed rightfully.

“With my red beard I can also scale the highest masts, just like Peter the Goatee, can I not?” he asked rhetorically.

“Yip,” Blackbird and LJP replied collectively.

“My beard can also easily lasso a bird in full flight, huh?”

“We’ve seen it for ourselves,” the leaders of The Bountiful agreed.

“And I charge you now, blindfold me, go on, go on, do it,” Rupert Redbeard challenged enthusiastically, “and spin me around like a bleeding top, all day if you like, and through the night, and my whiskers will always gyrate to true north. RIGHT?”

“You’re right. You don’t need to prove it,” Blackbird confirmed. “You and I go back a long way. But what’s your point, Red Rover, I’m mean Redbeard? Sorry.”

“I want to know why I wasn’t considered for the position, as was Peter the Goatee. I’ve been twiddling my thumbs for months now, and can hardly pay the rent.”

“Ohhhhh, is that the problem then,” replied Blackbird, sitting back in relief. “Well, it’s simple really. We don’t like red beards on The Bountiful.”

Rupert Redbeard sat stewing in silence, as did LJP and Blackbird, who were clever birds. When it was clear that neither of The Bountiful’s pirates had anything more to add, Rupert Redbeard was obliged to continue.

“What the flipping hell do you mean, you don’t like red beards?” he countered pointlessly, trying to buy some thinking time.

“Well, just that,” LJP clarified needlessly. “We only like black beards, and brown beards, if they’re dark. Look for yourself,” he motioned through the white-collar window. “You see all the seated simple sailors, huh, and not one of them has a red beard, right.”

It was true. There was not even one exceptional redhead, or ordinary blonde for that matter, in The Bountiful’s entire crew. What could Rupert Redbeard say?

“That’s illegal!” he pounced.

“So what!” replied Blackbird angrily. “We’re proper pirates, and don’t give a rat’s tail, or any part of their anatomy for that matter, for the law. Now get out of our sight, Rupert Rednose, I mean Rupert Redhead. Oh hell, whatever! Redbeard,

checha!" Blackbird ordered, clicking his fingers for some of the slick and sly simple sailors to escort Rupert to Randfontein, far from the coast.

"Argh!" Rupert snarled, as he was led away for his long walk. "You haven't heard the end of this, Blackbird. Just you wait for the next chapter of this story, just you wait, you too, LJP."

"Get us another double squadron," Blackbird called over to the coloured waitron, "and in double-time. In other words, make it quick."

*Treasure Hunting Tip:* Every company has its own corporate culture, and sensible candidates, even with the law on their side, are well advised to consider why their candidature may not be as well received as others seemingly similarly qualified, and in that case, whether it should be pursued. Talented individuals look for opportunities in companies having inclusive rather than exclusive cultures, where they will be happier, and where, as we will later see, they can easily outperform their out-dated, outclassed, and antique old school rivals.

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