

# Old Riley and the Lost Gold of Itapa



being another adventure for those brave cabin boys

Miss Katie and Miss Emily Bland

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By Old Grandad.



This story is inspired by many things. The bravery of the Coast Watchers who remained behind the lines to report on Japanese naval movements in Papua New Guinea is legendary. Less well known is the courage of the New Guinea Martyrs - the Anglican missionaries, nursing sisters and catechists who remained at their posts when all other Australian expatriates were evacuated ahead of the Japanese invasion. These wonderfully faithful people [here represented by Fr Richard at Itapa Mission] were murdered by the Japanese in the first weeks of the invasion. Yes, the banks of Singapore and Malaya were looted by the Japanese and the gold has never been recovered. One suggestion is that the fortune went to the bottom of the China Sea when the submarine carrying it was hit by an American bomb. The idea that it remained at Itapa is just as logical.

I love the characters of Tiny, Tracey Scribble and Solomon himself. The worship in the church at St Peter's is inspired by the lovely singing of the 7 am congregation at St John's in Cairns.

Once again, the theme of redemption is strong in this story. The Japanese thugs make a full recovery of their moral sensibilities, even if the wicked Colonel Tanaka is beyond the reach of mercy.



## Chapter 1: Old Riley's Sea Chest

Katie and Emily, the cabin boys on the beautiful pirate ship the *Saucy Nancy*, knew that they shouldn't have favourites among the crew. They loved all the brave sailors on board ship as if they were their brothers; in fact, the crew of the *Saucy Nancy* were the only family they knew. They tried to give the same loving kindness to everyone on board -whether it were making a special pudding for Vince the Bosun when it was his birthday or remembering to rub sun tan oil on red haired Tiny, the ship's famous all-in wrestler. [He was terribly neglectful of sun safe stuff.] Of course their great hero was Captain Blackheart himself. The girls would have done anything for him - he was so brave and plucky. But without ever discussing it between themselves, both of the girls had the softest spot for Old Riley - the oldest pirate on board.

Katie had asked Captain Blackheart once if Old Riley had any other name - and whether Riley were his family name [so he should be called Mr Riley] or his Christian name. Captain Blackheart had been stumped. "Do you know, Katie, that I've only ever called him Old Riley. I don't know if he has any other name. When I bought the *Saucy Nancy* many years ago, Old Riley came with the boat. He was old then; I can't tell you anything more than that."

Old Riley certainly was old. His skin was the colour of mahogany wood and just as tough. His hair was grey but still nice and thick. The girls got the job every second Saturday of cutting the crew's hair and they knew that many of the sailors much younger than Old Riley had lost quite a lot of their hair. The girls loved this Saturday morning routine, by the way. Captain Blackheart would drop anchor in some quiet lagoon so that the girls could concentrate and no one would lose an ear in an unexpected wave once the sharp scissors started to work. One of the crew had made two little stools so that the girls could reach up to the tallest pirate. The girls put two big chairs in a shaded spot up on the deck and went to work.

Now the girls wanted to do this chore properly. Once, after a very successful voyage, Captain Blackheart had given the girls a special treat and taken them to a posh salon with a real hairdresser when they had been in port in Cairns. The shop was in the foyer of the Cairns International Hotel and the sign in the window said that it was the most exclusive hairdressing salon in the North. A very swish young man had styled and coloured their hair and told them amazing stories about what he did on the weekend. The girls hardly recognised themselves in the mirror when it was all finished. Saddam, Captain Blackheart's beautiful parrot, had squawked and made a terrible fuss over their new hair dos - and I think that everyone was pleased when the colour had washed out and the girls went back to looking their old selves. They actually looked rather good in their old styles. It set them thinking, however, and they quietly made a few changes to the fairly rough and ready ways they had been following.

One day when the pirates had attacked a luxury yacht in the Whitsundays the girls found some wonderful smelling stuff in the ensuite of the main cabin. There were bottles of scent, various mousses and creams and gels and sprays in a range called *Macho Marine*. And all of this for gentlemen! Well, you couldn't get much more macho or any more marine than the pirate crew so the girls took away the whole supply. The crew just loved it. The girls kept a small stock of sensational celebrity magazines they had bought in the last port especially for this purpose and while Emily snipped away, Katie made the appointments and offered cups of cappuccino and glasses of water to the pirates assembled on the deck waiting their turn. The pirate boys would read the magazines and wonder at the strange ways of the rich and famous. The girls heard all the gossip on the boat during their hairdressing sessions although the fun couldn't really start until Captain Blackheart had been trimmed up and sent on his way. He had a horror of gossip and didn't approve of celebrity magazines or fragrances for men. Some of the crew [it must be said] were not very good at reading. They looked at the pictures in the magazines, however, and Emily usually managed to share the most awful parts of the story with them while she worked. She told the pirate boys that some of the most addicted readers of these magazines only ever looked at the pictures. [I believe she were right about this.]

On these hairdressing days, Old Riley always went last. He was old now and happy to sit in the sun and look at the magazines while the younger pirates giggled through their time in the hairdressing seat. When it was his turn, one of the girls made him a special cup of tea while the other cut through the silvery hair and gossiped about the other sailors. Well, Old Riley listened while Katie or Emily chattered away. He was shy and bashful but he loved the little girls as if they were his own granddaughters.

The girls took good care of him, too. When they had made a roast dinner on Sundays, they always put the best slices of meat [after the ones put out for Captain Blackheart] aside for Old Riley. He got the brownest gravy, the greenest peas and the crispest roast potatoes too. He loved to hear the girls read aloud and when all the jobs on the *Saucy Nancy* were finished, he would quietly find the big black Bible in his sea chest and sit by the mast. He was too proud to tell anyone

that his glasses were almost as old as he was and no longer worked on his tired old eyes. If the girls found him there, they would offer to read aloud to him. He asked for the same stories over and over again. He loved the story of Noah and his Ark: "He was the first brave sailor, you know" he would say as he lit his pipe and enjoyed a smoke. He loved the story of Joseph and his beautiful coat. "Ah, now, that was a mighty journey he made, you know, all the way to Egypt!" Another favourite was the story of Jonah who was swallowed by a giant fish. "I saw the same thing happen, you know, when I was on board ship in the cold northern waters when I wasn't much older than you girlies!" Old Riley would say. The other crewmembers would come and listen too but they sometimes called for a different story this time. Katie and Emily would do their best to please all the sailors with the stories they chose.

The other sailors looked forward to arriving in port because they would have letters to collect or family to call on their mobile phones. Old Riley never got letters and he didn't have a mobile phone or an email address. The girls usually took him with them when they were in port and they spent many a jolly afternoon after they had done their shopping sitting in a harbour side pub having a drink with their old shipmate. Old Riley would order a glass of beer and a big bottle of lemonade for the girls. And as the afternoon went on, he would very slowly and cautiously tell just a little about his early life - before the *Saucy Nancy*.

He talked about whaling in the Arctic waters near Greenland - and polar bears and penguins and seals and walruses. He talked about the grim, dark fishing ports of England and how hard it was to pull in the nets full of fish on a cold winter's morning. But more than anything, Old Riley talked about the islands around Papua New Guinea. After the ice and cold of Greenland and the dismal cold fogs of England, Papua New Guinea, he said, was like Heaven - warm and green and sunny and full of excitement. Sometimes as he talked his eyes would cloud over with tears and his voice would catch in a sad kind of sob. The girls still had trouble working out where Old Riley had been at any one time - the cold days of whaling and the weary days of fishing and the warm days in the islands all rolled into one as he told his stories. In fact, Katie was sure that Old Riley meant to tell them that when he had been in Papua New Guinea that he hadn't been working as a pirate at all or even sailing, for that matter. The girls were too polite to ask and Old Riley was getting too old to make it all work logically. When his eyes would cloud over and his voice would catch, Katie would rub his old brown hand and Emily would stroke his whiskers kindly. It was their way of showing the old sailor that they did care about him deeply.

The one thing that the girls never got tired of looking at was Old Riley's scrimshaw. Other than knots, scrimshaw is the oldest craft that sailors ply and Old Riley was cleverer than anyone the girls had ever seen. Scrimshaw is carving and drawing on bone. You can draw with a sharp steel pen into the soft surface of ivory taken from a walrus tusk or a whale's tooth or a narwhale's horn. The ivory surface is creamy and glossy and although scrimshaw takes wonderful patience and care, the results can be very beautiful. The girls saw Old Riley occasionally working the ivory with his penknife and then colouring in the design with ink given to him by Imoteph, the Maori sailor who took care of the crew's tattoos. Emily had once asked Captain

Blackheart if Imoteph could give her a tattoo -something sweet with flowers and a heart. It was the only time the girls had ever seen Captain Blackheart so angry that he couldn't speak. Saddam went squawking about in fear as Captain Blackheart fired off his pistols. Poor Imoteph [who hadn't suggested the tattoo and had never even discussed it with Emily] was roared at by Captain Blackheart. He was told that if Emily or Katie ever had even the tiniest tattoo that he would make him walk the plank! After that there was no more talk of tattoos; Old Riley did make Emily, however, her own piece of scrimshaw on a whale's tooth to the tattoo design just as she had proposed it to Captain Blackheart. It became one of Emily's most precious possessions.

Old Riley gave away most of his scrimshaw pieces to anyone who would admire them but he kept his finest work in a soft leather bag in his sea chest. On very special occasions he would shyly show them to the girls who always admired them and made Old Riley blush as they told him that he was the very best artist they knew. There was one drawing of a beautiful mermaid sitting under a palm tree eating a coconut. Another showed a polar bear and two cubs on an ice flow catching fish. Their favourite was a beautifully drawn picture of the *Saucy Nancy* under full sail, cutting through the sea while the dolphins frolicked around her. In a tiny detail, you could see Katie at the wheel of the ship and Emily up in the crow's nest with a spy glass.

Most of the crew loved Old Riley as much as the girls did. They made sure that when it was his turn to keep watch that someone a little younger would climb high into the rigging and do the job for him. When there was pirating to do, of course, and noisy battles at sea, Old Riley was never slow to join in but more and more often he would just take his share of the treasure and head off for a quiet smoke rather than joining the rest of the crew in a party to celebrate. He always slung his hammock in a corner of the crew's cabin near a porthole window. He loved to fall asleep, he said, with one eye on the silver grey waves and the other on the stars that had guided sailors for centuries.

All of this sadly finished on a winter's voyage that the *Saucy Nancy* was making to Cooktown and beyond. Old Riley had been feeling poorly for a little while and Tiny, the great wrestler, had got into the habit of bringing his old shipmate an early morning cup of tea - just to check on him first thing. [Emily was always up first and had the billy on quick in case a sailor needed an especially early cup of tea to start the day.] Tiny was late one particular morning as the *Saucy Nancy* clipped lightly past Lizard Island in a splendid breeze. Busy making a batch of muffins for breakfast, the girls hadn't noticed that Tiny had not called in.

Then Katie heard the unmistakable sound of Captain Blackheart's loud swearing - and then an unusual sound - the Captain was crying. The girls left their galley and found the whole crew assembled on the deck. Many of the crew were still in their pyjamas; all of them were crying or fighting back tears. And on the deck, still wrapped in his hammock, was the still body of their friend, Old Riley. His grizzled face was peaceful and calm but when Emily and Kate knelt down to touch his hands they were cold. Their old friend had died quietly and peacefully in his sleep, his silent eyes on the silver waves and the twinkling stars.

The girls had never been on board when one of the crew had died. They were in tears too, of course, but each of them marvelled at the quiet and dignified way in which the morning unfolded. Captain Blackheart asked Katie to find her sewing kit; it was in a fine teak box she kept handy in her cabin to sew up everything from holes in socks to a tear in the sail. Vince was sent to find one of the old iron cannon balls that stood beside the canon on the deck - rarely used these days but kept on display still for everyone to admire. The very first thing the Captain did was to call for Vince the bosun to turn the *Saucy Nancy* east towards the great deep of the ocean. Slowly, the blue coral reefs slipped away; the land became a lost blur on the horizon and the most beautiful pirate ship in the whole South Seas sailed strongly into the green ocean swells. While this was happening, the Captain selected a large needle and heavy linen thread from Katie's box and while everyone looked on sadly, he carefully sewed Old Riley's body into the hammock, with the heavy canon ball at his feet. Captain Blackheart sobbed as the last stitches were put in and Old Riley's kind face was covered by the canvas fold of the hammock. Tiny carried the body into the Captain's own cabin and stretched it on the big bed there.

The crew had disappeared one at a time through the last hour so that pyjamas were shed and the crew could assemble in their best canvas pants and cleanest linen shirts. Katie and Emily finished their muffins and served tea to everyone. The girls were glad to have something to do; their hearts were heavy and sad and their eyes red with crying. They finished the washing up just as the ship's bell was rung as the signal for the service to begin.

When everyone was assembled on the deck, Captain Blackheart found his old Pirate's Prayer Book [Authorized Edition] , took off his best feathered hat and read the service aloud in his deep, powerful voice. Katie then read the story of Jonah - one of Old Riley's favourites - from the old black Bible and then Emily lead the singing of the Pirate hymn:

*Eternal Father strong to save  
Where e'er the skull and crossbones wave.  
Be near us and our treasure chest  
And may old pirates have their rest.  
Let all our parrots cry to thee  
For those in peril on the sea.*

When this was finished and everyone was choked and crying openly, Captain Blackheart gave the signal and Tiny lifted up Old Riley's body in the hammock and held him gently over the side of the ship. Then he was gone, sinking like a stone into the deep green water. Everyone went quietly back to work, Tiny blowing his nose and hugging Emily for comfort and Captain Blackheart holding Katie's hand for a long time. The girls cried as they assembled lunch for the boys but there was nothing to say.

Afterwards, Katie and Emily were a little surprised to find Tiny at the door of the galley. He brought an invitation from Captain Blackheart to join him in the great cabin in the stern. They tidied themselves quickly: an invitation like this was rather unusual. When they reached the door, they were surprised to find Vince and the Captain standing at the map table with a chair in front of them. And on the chair was Old Riley's sea chest. Spread out on the table was a piece of writing paper that was much blotted and covered with spidery writing. Pinned in the corner of the paper were two \$100 bills.

Captain Blackheart was very solemn and the girls were a little frightened at first that they might have done something wrong. There weren't enough chairs in the great cabin for everyone to sit and so only Captain Blackheart did so; the rest of the crew [Katie and Emily, Vince and Tiny] formed a little semi circle in front of him. When they were still, Captain Blackheart read the paper to them:

This is the last will of Riley Murphy McSporran, sailor, of the Saucy Nancy, made when I am still in full possession of all my faculties.

Katie and Emily were impressed and looked at each other intently: Old Riley had a very grand and impressive name after all. Even Captain Blackheart seemed impressed.

I leave to my dear friend Tiny, sailor of the Saucy Nancy, the sum of one hundred dollars to thank him for fetching me a cup of tea in the mornings. He always was a fine and honourable fellow.

Captain Blackheart solemnly unpinned the first of the \$100 bills and handed it to Tiny who burst into tears and sobbed. Katie put her hand on his broad shoulders and hugged him as best she could.

I leave to the good bosun, Vince, of the Saucy Nancy, the sum of one hundred dollars to buy bottles of rum so that the crew can have a party to remember me by.

Here Vince could not suppress a little laugh. It was just what the crew would appreciate after their sad day. He accepted the second \$100 bill as cheerfully as anyone in these sad circumstances could manage.]



All the rest of my property [all the contents of my sea chest] I leave to my two best friends, Miss Katie and Miss Emily Bland – cabin boys on the Saucy Nancy. And I charge them to be very careful and thoughtful as they handle the scrimshaw in the soft leather bag. May God bless these two fine little girls who were always patient and kind with an old sailor who loved them dearly.

The document was signed by Old Riley and witnessed by Captain Blackheart.

Everyone was crying now - even the captain - and it took a little while before the girls were able to ask timidly “Does this really mean that everything in the chest belongs to us?”

“Most certainly it does, Miss Katie, “said the captain, “and you would be very wise to unpack the chest carefully. I think that there was more to Old Riley than meets the eye. Even though I witnessed the will six months ago, I’ve never seen what’s inside Old Riley’s sea chest. He was a wise and sensible old man. He loved and trusted you two little girls more than he trusted anyone on board ship. I think you will be surprised at what you find in the chest.



## Chapter 2: The Secret in the Scrimshaw.

Now I think that most little girls [and all little boys] would have opened the sea chest right there and then rummaged through it looking for treasure and banknotes and all the other precious things you are probably thinking about. The girls were certainly the owners of the chest - Captain Blackheart had even pushed it gently towards them when he had finished reading the will - but there were several things holding them back.

For a start, the girls were very busy. They counted on this quiet time every afternoon to get the dinner ready; tonight they were making cauliflower cheese and sausages with onion gravy- a great favourite with the crew - with jelly and fruit for pudding. They had been making the jelly when Captain Blackheart had summoned them to the cabin and they were both keen to get back to pour the jelly over the tinned peaches before it cooled. Then it would need a couple of hours in the refrigerator before it would be ready. [The boys in the crew hated runny jelly; I'm sure you know what I mean.] This is what they politely told Captain Blackheart, anyway, as they begged to be excused.

The real reason, of course, was that something as private and solemn as opening up Old Riley's sea chest was something that they wanted to do on their own. Vince and Tiny knew how the girls would feel and politely made their excuses. Captain Blackheart offered to look after the chest for them until after dinner. The girls were very happy for him to do this, asking only that they could come back after dinner to do this job properly, using the big map table to unpack the chest. With the crew busy drinking the rum that Vince had been commissioned to buy, they would have a clear hour or so before any of the crew started to look for cocoa and ginger nut biscuits before bed.

The afternoon seemed to go so slowly and as they chopped the onions for dinner the girls turned over again and again the little they really knew about their old friend. At least now they knew he had a full name! At last the bell was rung and when Captain Blackheart assembled the crew on the deck for dinner, he announced to great applause that Old Riley had left enough for the boys to have a party that night. Of course there was nowhere for Vince to go ashore and buy some rum for

the occasion, but Captain Blackheart [as you must know] always kept a supply of the best Bundaberg rum safely locked up in his cabin for just such an emergency. With Vince superintending the transaction, four bottles of rum were produced from Captain Blackheart's store and the \$100 note solemnly handed over in full payment. Tiny [who was at the wheel that afternoon] dropped anchor inside the shelter of the reef and while the girls did the washing up in the galley, they heard the happy sounds of Imoteph's fiddle calling everyone to share in the fun. They loved a party too but tonight there were more important things to think about.

They closed the door to the great cabin and very gently, Katie lifted the lid on the chest. Right in the top was the soft leather bag of scrimshaw pieces that the girls had seen so often. They put the leather bag aside and went to the next layer in the chest. Here was a canvas bag - the kind that every sailor had on board- where he kept his pipe and tobacco, a clean shirt, a spare pair of knickers and some socks for formal occasions. Emily went through these few personal things with tearful eyes. Everything was clean and neat; next time they were in port, the girls would take the bag to the Mission to Seafarers office where the good folk could hand these things along to some old sailor down on his luck.

The old black Bible was there as well. The girls looked at it a little more closely now that it was theirs and for the first time ever they noticed some writing on the inside of the cover. It said: Presented to Riley McSporran with love from Fr Richard Lawrence, Saint Peter's Mission Station, Itapa Island, New Guinea. Christmas 1938.

"Old Riley must have been only a boy when he received this," said Katie. Without trying to work out the mystery any further, they looked further.

Everything below the bag of clothes and the Bible was very carefully and tidily maintained - just as you would expect a tidy old sailor to leave it. There appeared to be a number of separately wrapped parcels, carefully arranged. The first of these, of course, was the soft leather bag where Old Riley kept his precious scrimshaw pieces. Very gently they turned these out on to the table and they marvelled once again at how clever the old sailor had been. They handled the familiar pieces carefully, feeling with a stab of pain that Old Riley's dark brown hands had held them so often. Here was the mermaid, here the polar bears, here the beautiful drawing of the Saucy Nancy with Katie at the wheel and Emily in the crow's nest. The girls had never felt so sad - not even in the miserable workhouse from which they had run away to sea. They cried a little at this stage and couldn't bear to divide the pieces up. That could be done later. They put them all back in the leather bag and put it aside.

"These pieces are important, Emily," said Katie. "The will says that we are to pay particular attention to the scrimshaw in the leather bag. I wonder why?"

"What's this?" asked Emily, holding up a large and lumpy tartan pencil case.

When it was opened, the girls gave a little start. Inside they found a collection of fine steel nibs fixed in elegant bamboo pen holders. There were bottles of ink, too, of different colours. There was a box of colouring pencils, a soft rubber, some

painting brushes and a pencil sharpener. The girls had seen most of this at some time before when they had watched their old friend working the ivory pieces as he made his treasures. It was, of course, his scrimshaw set.

Another tartan pencil case with a zip was much more exciting; it contained some money - a great deal more than the girls had expected to be there. They quickly counted over ten thousand dollars! Then the girls realised that they had sailed with Old Riley for some years and in all that time, Old Riley had had his share of all the treasure that they had collected along the way. He lived a very simple life. Although they had seen him buy a drink for them when he was in port, he had never gone on a spree to the casino like all of the other boys who really loved to party when in port. This must be all Old Riley's savings. There was a yellow post-it note on the pencil case that read: *Katie and Emily, please divide this money between you. I'm sorry that there isn't more of it for you.* The girls put the money aside, wondering what all the other parcels would contain.

A rather grand looking box with mother of pearl inlay had a tiny clasp that took a little while to open but when the lid finally yielded, there were some real treats of the very kind you associate with pirates and treasures. There were black pearls - hundreds of them ranging from small to simply enormous - and packed into a velvet lined tray. There were two elegant jewelled watches, and two diamond and emerald rings of great brilliance and size and a big handful of gold coins. The girls gasped. The treasure chest in Captain Blackheart's office was larger and more impressive, to be sure, but this was a beautiful collection of the things old pirates treasure most.

As you can imagine, the girls were most interested in the diamond rings. They remembered that two voyages ago the *Saucy Nancy* had anchored off Bowen and in the dead of night, the pirates had sprung a raid on the Sunlander train as it rolled between Townsville and Mackay. The train had been carrying a group of very wealthy lady real estate agents who had been at a convention in Townsville. The pirates had treated the ladies with great gallantry but they had [all the same] lined them up in their pyjamas and helped themselves to their luggage. These beautiful rings were Old Riley's share of the loot. The girls tried the rings on their little fingers and giggled at the extraordinary size of the precious stones.

In an oilskin parcel, neatly wrapped in red ribbon were some important looking things that the girls had never seen before - and it wasn't until they had called Captain Blackheart later that they realised what they were. Arranged in two parcels [clearly labelled *For Katie* and *For Emily* were some share certificates: two hundred shares for each of the girls in BHP Billiton, Macquarie Bank, NAB and Harvey Norman. In each folder there were letters from these companies with fat cheques for recent dividends.

So far, the girls were pleased but just a little frustrated. They were happy to have the cash and the treasure and the shares [Captain Blackheart kept the girls' share of the treasure they collected in a special box in his cabin; these things could go safely into their own collection] - but there was nothing in the chest so far that gave them any clue to the man Old Riley had been. There were two parcels left right in the bottom, however; perhaps they would hold something for them.

The first parcel was made of oilskin - the tough, robust material that sailors used to protect anything precious from seawater and stain. It was a lumpy parcel secured with string that had been tied many years ago and it took Emily all her skill and patience to worry the knot open. [Like a true sailor she would never think of cutting a piece of string if she could help it.] Finally, the knot opened and as the oil skin was unwrapped, some strange and most unexpected things slipped across the big table.

There were five photographs- old black and white pictures stained with age and a little faded, perhaps, but you can imagine the excitement with which the girls picked them up. In one of them was a very young Old Riley, standing with three smiling, happy New Guinea boys under a coconut tree by the beach. A trim sailing boat had been pulled up on to the beach behind them. You could read the name on the boat: *Southern Cross*. Another showed Riley at the door of an open thatched building that looked very much like a church; beside him was a weather beaten, much older man with a wonderful, gap toothed smile. One photograph showed a tropical beach with a lagoon and a tall, dramatic mountain rising in the distance with smoke of some kind coming from the summit. A sailing boat - surely the same *Southern Cross* from the other photograph - slipped elegantly across the bay. Another picture showed a young Riley at work on his scrimshaw while the three New Guinea boys stood watching his hands at work. A final picture showed young Riley in his very best clothes, clean shaven and looking very proud, holding a cross; beside him was the same older, smiling man from the earlier picture. The older man was wearing a long white alb and the embroidered clothes of a priest that the girls recognised from their visits to the cathedral church in Townsville for the annual Pirates Memorial Service. There was nothing on the back of the photographs except the one that showed Riley at work on the scrimshaw. It said "Working the scrimshaw as a treat for Zadok, Solomon and Nathan [right]: Itapa Harbour, December 1940."

"I wonder why Old Riley never told us about this part of his life in Papua New Guinea," said Emily. "Let me see, he must have been only a teenager when these pictures were taken."

The girls had so much to say to each other but there were other things to look at in the oil skin packet. A very old envelope was sealed up; it contained something lumpy like coins. You can imagine how astonished the girls were when they opened it to find four medals - the kind presented to soldiers who had done brave things in battle. One of them was a shiny silver colour with the words "For Bravery" written on them and two palm branches framing a star. The medals felt very solemn and special and without knowing why, both the girls began to cry again. Whatever they

had expected to find in the sea chest, I don't think that either of them had expected to find anything so private and special.

There was only one more parcel at the bottom of the chest - and it seemed to be especially protected by another layer of oilskin. Emily loosened the string and opened it carefully- only to find that the parcel was a leather pouch or bag. Two pieces of soft leather about the size of a man's handkerchief had been sewn together; all four sides of the leather square were carefully stitched up with thin leather. It took an age to open one side of the bag and very gently Katie squeezed and nudged the contents of the bag out on to the table in the great cabin as if she were gently squeezing out tooth paste.

There were nine beautiful cubes of ivory, soft and lustrous and beautifully shaped - each one about three centimetres square. They were arranged in three lines of three to form a beautiful square of nine separate cubes of ivory. They fitted together into a neat wooden frame to form a picture -almost like a jig saw puzzle. On each cube there was a design worked in the scrimshaw in clean black ink. On its own, each block was meaningless, but the nine pieces arranged as they were in three neat lines formed a picture. No one needed to tell them that this was Old Riley's work. It was as beautiful as anything he had ever done in scrimshaw.

"Look!" said Katie excitedly: "It's the same picture as the photograph. There's the bay, and the boat and the volcano!"

And indeed it was the picture but the scene drawn in scrimshaw on the ivory looked even more beautiful than it did in the photograph. In a corner, Old Riley had carved his initials: RMM and the date: January 1 1942. The girls stood back full of admiration. The most beautiful piece of scrimshaw had been at the bottom of Old Riley's sea chest all these years.

"It's very beautiful," said Emily finally. "Old Riley has given us everything he had: beautiful jewellery, some money and shares and these lovely scrimshaw pieces. But what about the photographs from New Guinea?"

"And what about the medals?" asked Katie thoughtfully.

"And there's something odd here, Katie," said Emily. "These blocks that form a picture. I've seen blocks like this before. Not made of ivory, to be sure, but made of wood - as a puzzle for little children. There's a picture on every face of the cube and they make different pictures when they are assembled that way. I wonder if that is what happens here?" And here Emily winked one of the blocks of scrimshaw from the neat wooden frame where it had been nestled. Sure enough there was part of another picture - this time in green ink on one face. Another face had a picture in brown ink; another with red ink, another with blue. One face had no design at all that the girls could see. And as they moved the pieces out of the frame and began to assemble the picture in green ink, they felt [as you must do] that this was going to be the start of another wonderful adventure.



### Chapter 3: Old Riley's Other Life.

Old Riley had been the girls' shipmate for six years and he was closer to the girls than to anyone else among the crew. Even so, they had known almost nothing about the other life he had led before his days on the *Saucy Nancy*. Now, both of the girls felt the most anxious mixture of fear and curiosity as they turned the scrimshaw around like pieces in a jigsaw. Perhaps, they thought afterwards, they should have called for Captain Blackheart but this was such a private thing that they were doing - something that Old Reilly wanted to share with them alone. Every now and then they could hear the sailor's party from the deck above with Captain Blackheart's wicked parrot, Saddam, calling out and squawking louder than any of the pirates. It made the little puzzle in front of them all the more strange and confronting.

The first of these pictures took longer to assemble than you might think. Once the girls had found the four corner pieces, however, the rest of the blocks were easier to fit. Staring back at them from the green baize map table was the same scene of the harbour as one of the photographs showed: there was the same volcano, the same thatched church and the same palm trees fringing the beach. But the sky was now angry with small fighter planes. A battleship with a Japanese flag was in the harbour firing at the little town on the bay. The church was in flames. On the beach was a cruel looking Japanese soldier with his sword held up ready to strike.

It was horrible. Without saying a word, Emily scattered the scrimshaw blocks and turned them over to form the scene drawn in brown ink. The girls were silent as they assembled the tiles - faster this time - to make the picture. They gasped as the pieces went into place and they could see in Old Reilly's wonderful drawing the terrible scene he had captured. The beach and the palm trees and the harbour were there in the distance but in the front of the scene were three of the people the girls had already met in the photographs. Katie quickly found two of the photographs again and propped them up against the ink stand to make certain but there was no mistake. The kindly looking old priest was kneeling in front of the

burning church. Above him was the Japanese officer with his sword lifted high. Kneeling beside the priest were two of the happy young New Guinea boys who smiled out of the photograph with Old Riley - the boys who were named as Zadoc and Nathan in Old Riley's beautiful handwriting on the back of the photograph. The boys drawn in the scrimshaw looked brave but sad. Old Riley had drawn the scene on the scrimshaw so that the faces of the priest and the two young men were turned toward the girls, as it were. The Japanese officer with his sword held high looked excited and triumphant. Other soldiers stood behind, looking sullen. Old Riley had captured all of this in the very moment before the priest and the young men were cruelly killed. Etched into the bottom corner was the date: 28 March 1942.

Katie and Emily were crying now. The whole day had been one of great sadness and pain for them but the death of their old shipmate had been dignified and gentle compared with this. Because they were crying, they had not heard the door of the great cabin open and Captain Blackheart come quietly in. Without a word, he put his arms gently around the girls and held them tenderly.

"Have you been finding more than treasure in Old Riley's chest?" the Captain asked. "I thought you might. He was a wise old fellow, and while he never told me all the terrible things he had seen when he was a young man, I knew that there were some things on his heart that he couldn't share with anyone."

Very quickly, the girls took the captain through the sea chest. Captain Blackheart whistled when he saw the tartan pencil case of money and chuckled at the folders containing the share certificates. "He was always such a one for secrets," said the Captain. "And no fool when it came to money and such, I'll be bound. You little ladies are a good deal richer today than you were yesterday."

Captain Blackheart studied the medals and the photographs closely before the girls took him through the three scenes in the scrimshaw which they had unravelled. By the time he had seen these, he was close to crying with the girls too. Katie passed around a box of tissues and for a little while, they were quiet and lost in their own thoughts.

"There's a mystery here," said Emily. "The story in the scrimshaw blocks is a terrible one, I know, but why would Old Riley make it all so secret and share it only with us?"

"To answer that question, Miss Emily," the captain said, "I think you will have to find what is on the last three faces of the scrimshaw puzzle. Let's see what the red ink picture contains."

Most other men - and all other sea captains, I'm sure, would have elbowed the girls aside to assemble the picture himself but Captain Blackheart had more sense than that. He had sailed with these two little girls for six years now and he trusted them more than anyone else on the boat. Even more than that, the scrimshaw puzzle, snuggled at the bottom of the sea chest and kept there safely for many



years was so obviously a private and personal thing that only the owners of the scrimshaw should be touching it or trying to learn its secrets. The Captain wisely stepped back while Katie turned the pieces over to show the beautiful red ink drawing on the soft, ivory coloured bone. In a few moments, the scene was complete.

It was the same beach but near to where the church had stood was a new thatched building with a Japanese flag on a pole in front of it. There were thin Japanese soldiers and some tired looking young New Guinea men in rags all trying to lift four big crates on to their shoulders. In the background there was a submarine in the bay and more fighter planes in the sky. The volcano looked angry and threatening in the background but more threatening still was the horrible face of the Japanese officer who stood over the soldiers and the native men with a fierce stick raised to beat them if they hesitated.

“This man,” said Emily excitedly, pointing to one of the native men struggling with the box, “is one of the men in the picture with Old Riley! It’s Solomon, I think. His friends, Zadok and Nathan were killed on the beach with the priest but he must have escaped!”

It was the same man although his face had aged and saddened from the cheerful and happy youngster he looked in the original photograph.

“It’s the same horrible soldier, too!” said Katie. “How cruel he must have been!”

“But the planes in the sky over the harbour,” said the captain, “are different. On the green blocks, the planes are Japanese. These are Australian planes. The Japanese warship is gone now - chased away by the American navy, I’ll bet. The submarine has come for some reason but in the sky are the Australian planes. The war is coming to an end, I’m sure.”

With trembling hands, Katie and Emily assembled the last picture - the one made in blue ink. It seemed to show a cave on the beach with water up to the mouth and the mountains and jungle rising behind. In the distance stood the volcano and the harbour and there in the cave the four boxes were peeping from a pile of sand that was almost covering them.

But it was what was happening in the front of the picture that was so shocking. The Japanese officer now carried a gun and there were four men dead at his feet - two were Japanese soldiers and two were New Guinea men. The Japanese Officer looked cruel and proud and excited. His face was drawn almost like a photograph. Katie and Emily felt sure that if they were ever to see that face again, they would certainly recognise those cruel and proud features.

“I wonder what was in the boxes there in the cave?” said Katie.

“I wonder what happened to Solomon?” said Emily. “If he were killed too I think that Old Riley would have put him into the picture, don’t you?”

“That I do, young Emily,” said Captain Blackheart.

“I wonder where this is?” said Katie. “Do you recognise the place, Captain?” It seemed a silly question, perhaps, because there were few clues in the scrimshaw pictures, but Captain Blackheart was the wisest old captain in the whole of the south seas and if anyone knew where this were, it would be he.

“It’s Itapa,” said Captain Blackheart, quietly. And then he did the most surprising thing. He went silently to the door of the great cabin and swung it open, as if he were checking that someone might have been at the door. There was no one but the din of the party above them - Imoteph’s fiddle and the sound of pirate dancing - carried in now much more noisily. Captain Blackheart’s act of caution was the strangest thing to do on board ship where no one was a stranger and the crew were all great mates.

“Just being careful,” said the Captain. “This is, you know, the kind of thing that needs to be our secret for just a little while.”

Katie reached for the black Bible that had been in the very top of the sea chest and turned to the inscription on the fly leaf. She read it aloud: *Presented to Riley McSporran with love from Fr Richard Lawrence, Saint Peter’s Mission Station, Itapa Island, New Guinea, Christmas 1938.*

Captain Blackheart turned back to the photographs again and he was silent for some little while. “I think,” he said gravely, “that Old Riley has taken some great secrets with him to the grave but that he has given you two little girls the way to find a treasure much greater than anything the *Saucy Nancy* has ever carried.” He looked at the clock on the desk and stood up.

“It’s time for the party upstairs to be finishing, girls. After you’ve served the supper, perhaps we could gather here again. I’ve a feeling that there is more in the chest than we’ve yet discovered.”

The girls usually loved serving supper to the crew. Their cocoa and homemade ginger nut biscuits were a great favourite and it gave the girls the chance to say goodnight to everyone on board ship. But tonight, the happy job of taking around the mugs of steaming cocoa seemed to take for ever. All of the crew were merry after their party and reluctant to go to bed but the last of the sailors finally went below to find his pyjamas and Captain Blackheart lead the girls back to his great cabin and locked the door.

He took the blocks of scrimshaw and assembled the last picture on the green baize of the map table.

“I’ve heard stories of the treasure of Itapa Island ever since I was a lad no bigger than you are now, Miss Emily. It was there in the New Guinea Islands that some of the most terrible scenes of the war were carried out. There was a mission church there and Father Richard Lawrence was known through all the islands as a good and kind soul who was a friend to everyone who came his way. He looked after

sailors down on their luck; he cared for the village folk who lived at Itapa and who came to his church; he was always ready with a kind word for the planters and their people who grew coconuts and bananas and all such things in the hills around the harbour. I dare say that Zadok, Solomon and Nathan were three of the many young men and women who loved the old priest. He had a way, apparently, of seeing good things in broken people and taking in strays who had washed up in the harbour. No doubt that's how he met Old Reilly. He looks as happy in these pictures as I've ever seen him anywhere." Katie picked up the old photographs and looked at them carefully again. They certainly seemed to show a happy time for Old Reilly; there was none of the quiet pain that sometimes came across his weathered old face when the girls had known him.

"All of that changed, of course," said the Captain, "when the war came. The Australian government tried to move all the Australians and Englishmen out of the islands away from the Japanese as they invaded but the Bishop in Papua New Guinea told his priests and teachers to remain where they were. Father Richard was a rum sort of priest, I'm sure - much happier in the islands than he would have been back in Australia - but all the same, he wasn't going to desert his people when times were tough. Old Reilly could have left then too - in fact, he should have done just that. But there were men like Reilly who stayed on. Then the Japanese soldiers arrived and you can see from the scrimshaw drawings what happened to them."

"But Reilly didn't die, did he," said Emily quietly.

"No, he didn't," said Captain Blackheart. "I'd say from the drawings that he must have hidden - or been hidden by Father Richard. The few men and women who weren't killed went into the hills and hid. And some of them - and this is only a guess " - here Captain Blackheart picked up the medals from their envelope - "spent the war watching the movement of Japanese ships and aircraft and sending messages back to the Australian navy. They were the bravest men in the world, those ones who stayed behind. They must have been in constant danger of being caught by the Japanese. I'd say that Old Reilly probably hid out with Solomon through the war - close to Itapa - close enough to record what terrible things the Japanese soldiers did to the people there."

"Is that the treasure - the Itapa treasure - in the picture where the poor boys and soldiers are made to carry it before they are killed?" asked Katie. "Is it pirate treasure then?"

"No, my dear," said the captain, "but it was stolen and paid for by blood - and only some of it is shown on the scrimshaw pictures. The legend is that the man who killed the poor folk at Itapa was a famous Japanese soldier named Colonel Tanaka. After Itapa, he went on to Singapore where the Japanese had established their headquarters. Colonel Tanaka is supposed to have robbed all the banks in the city and when things turned sour for the Japanese, he collected their gold into four big ammunition boxes so that they could be taken back to the Emperor in Japan. There were supposed to be one hundred gold bars - each weighing twenty

pounds. The gold had come to Singapore from Malaya and all over the East; the Emperor wanted all that gold for himself.”

“By this time, however, the American navy was powerful everywhere and the skies were full of American and Australian warplanes. There was only one safe way to take the gold to Japan and that was by submarine. Now the story was that the submarine never reached Tokyo. It was supposed to have been hit by an Australian fighter plane and sunk in the China Seas. But there was always a yarn around Itapa that the wicked Colonel wanted to keep the gold for himself and so he brought the gold back to the place he knew well - to Itapa. The story was that he packed four ammunition cases with sand and sent those on in the submarine. The gold was hidden at Itapa.”

“I met old sailors in Itapa when I was there with the *Saucy Nancy* who would tell you the story if you bought them a tot of rum. Everyone said that the gold was hidden somewhere at Itapa. There were plenty of stories but no one ever found it. One thing is certain: the banks in Malaya and Singapore never got their gold back. The submarine went to the bottom of the harbour. There was millions of dollars worth of gold hidden and lost. And all the poor souls who had been made to hide it had been killed by the Colonel himself. Of course, no one knew where it was and no amount of looking for it would turn it up.”

“But Reilly knew where it was,” said Katie.

“And so did Solomon,” said Emily.

“If the picture in the scrimshaw is right,” said Katie, “the treasure was buried just in the mouth of the cave. - just left there and covered with sand. It shouldn’t be hard to find.”

“I would guess that Colonel Tanaka did not leave the treasure there,” said the Captain.

“Perhaps Reilly didn’t leave it there,” said Katie. “Perhaps the treasure is somewhere else entirely.” She turned the scrimshaw blocks over on the table absent-mindedly, admiring the beautiful work on each side and puzzling the whole mystery through.

Emily reached for the will itself; in the excitement of unpacking the sea chest, the will had been left neglected on the edge of the table. She read it through again and again, searching for something she felt to be there but couldn’t quite reach. Emily read aloud: *All the rest of my property [all the contents of my sea chest] I leave to my two best friends, Miss Katie and Miss Emily Bland - cabin boys on the Saucy Nancy. And I charge them to be very careful and thoughtful as they handle the scrimshaw in the soft leather bag.*

It was Katie who hit the mark first. “There’s something extra here,” she said. “Old Reilly was always as thoughtful and as careful as anyone could be. He had six faces

on the scrimshaw blocks to use. Why would he use only five of them? Oh, we are stupid!”

The nine blocks were quickly turned with the creamy white face looking upwards. There were no inked drawings on the blocks, to be sure, but when Katie held them up to the kerosene lamp there were the clear signs of engraving with a metal pen. Emily reached into Old Reilly’s pencil case and pulled out a bottle of dark blue ink and a brush. Katie held the tissues handy in case there were an accident as Emily carefully and deliberately inked each of the blocks. After the splotch of ink was applied with the brush, Katie wiped the block with the tissue, taking up the ink but leaving some in the lines Old Riles had traced with his metal pen. And in front of their eyes, slowly and deliberately, the blocks came to life. Staring back at them from the green baize table was the secret of the great Itapa treasure.

The pieces of scrimshaw formed [as you must have guessed by now] their own beautifully made treasure map. It was as much a drawing as a map. There was the harbour and the high mountain of the volcano clearly marked. The Southern Cross, the little mission boat, floated merrily near the beach. Itapa Island with the mission station and church were also drawn in clearly - the church obviously just a burned shell of its former beauty. Here Old Reilly had written: *St Peter’s Church where Colonel Tanaka killed my friends, Nathan and Zadok and the good Father Richard.* The wreck of the submarine was shown at the bottom of the harbour and a clear X marked the cave where the treasure had first been buried. Spidery writing beside the X said simply: *Here Colonel Tanaka killed four men who had brought the treasure to the cave. Their bodies are buried here.*

There was no other marking of a treasure spot. Emily noticed, however, the spidery writing running around the very edge of the map. This is what it said:

*To be rich, you need the heart of Solomon  
For where your heart is, there is your treasure safe and sure.  
So pray that God will take away your heart of envy  
At his table may you find peace for evermore.*

“It’s a nice poem,” said Katie. “But what does it mean? And where’s the treasure?”

“You’d think that Old Reilly might have made it clearer, wouldn’t you?” said Emily. “We’ll probably never find it with this strange map. And yet he trusted us to find it, Katie. He gave us enough information to find the treasure.”

“Or at least to find someone who did know exactly where the treasure was,” said Captain Blackheart. “*To be rich, you need the heart of Solomon...*” he read.

The girls knew that Solomon was the wise king in the Bible who was also very rich so the parts about being wise and rich seemed to go together. The girls also knew what the captain meant: that Solomon - Reilly’s friend of the dangerous war years - might be able to show them where the treasure might be. Reilly was an old man

when he died; if Solomon were still alive, he would be almost eighty years old now. But how to find him?

It was growing very late and both the girls were exhausted by the sadness and mystery of the long day. Before they could go to bed, they had to tidy up their newly found treasure. Captain Blackheart helped the girls pack everything back into the sea chest and rearrange it as neatly as they had found it. "We'll be in Cairns tomorrow, girls," he said as he led them from the cabin. "And then we'll be away on the very first tide. You'll have to shop for a six week voyage and we must be quick about it."

"Where are we going?" the girls asked together. They had been looking forward to a week in port at least - perhaps, even, a trip to the swish hairdresser at the Cairns International Hotel.

"Why, to Itapa, of course," said Captain Blackheart with the happiest laugh. "Old Reilly wanted you to find the greatest treasure in the South Pacific and I'm determined that you shall have it!"

Despite the wonderful quiet of the boat and the velvety night, the girls gave an excited squeal and hugged their captain. This was sure to be their greatest adventure ever.



## Chapter 4: Tiny's Folly

Now where sailors are concerned, things don't always go as you planned and as it turned out, Captain Blackheart was obliged to spend more time in port than he had hoped. Many times afterwards the girls, the Captain and all the crew regretted that delay because the consequences for everyone were more far reaching than anyone could have known at the time. Poor Tiny was terribly embarrassed and apologized again and again for what happened that first day in port but as the Captain said after the whole adventure was finished, perhaps it worked out for the better after all.

The day after the funeral was fine and breezy and the sadness of Old Reilly's death seemed almost swept away. The new day had not solved some very real problems, however. For a start, what was Captain Blackheart going to tell the crew about Old Reilly's treasure? The girls and the Captain discussed it at length as the *Saucy Nancy* headed west to Cairns over the reef and into the sheltered waters of the islands there. The girls wanted to trust the crew with the whole story; after all, the crew would be in Itapa with them and if Captain Blackheart had heard the famous story of the lost treasure it was likely that many of the other crew knew it as well. The members of the crew were their friends; they trusted all of them with their lives and loved them like their brothers. It seemed foolish to keep secrets from people they loved and trusted so much in other things.

Captain Blackheart thought differently. He wanted to tell the crew nothing - to get them in and out of Cairns as quickly as possible and then to take them towards the New Guinea islands on the vague promise that there was important and urgent business to transact. Captain Blackheart insisted that the crew should trust their captain and be good sailors and do as they were told. This was true enough but the pirate lads were used to knowing just what their Captain was doing and where they were going. No one likes bossing about less than pirates and the crew of the *Saucy Nancy* were a proud bunch who liked to be treated with respect - especially by their captain.

As it was, Captain Blackheart was wise to be cautious and he knew the crew better, perhaps, than the little girls did. You see, all pirates are great gossips and love a yarn. The crew of the *Saucy Nancy* had been at sea for some weeks and were feeling frisky. They were sure to have a drink in port and if they knew the whole story, one of them might have been tempted to boast about it in a hotel bar to anyone who would listen. And what would happen then?

When Captain Blackheart dropped anchor off Green Island at lunch time and called all the crew to the deck, everyone expected to learn what was happening. They were really quite bewildered when Captain Blackheart had finished speaking about the “urgent business” that would take them out of Cairns on the very first tide.

“What was this important and urgent business?” they wanted to know. “Was it related to Old Reilly’s death and the will he left?” After all, the crew all knew that the girls had inherited everything in the sea chest and they were naturally curious to know just what that meant. But Captain Blackheart had nothing to say and asked the girls to serve the salad sandwiches they had made for lunch. Knowing what waited for them on shore, the Captain was keen for the boys to have something good to eat before they left the boat.

There was lots of grumbling about the one day in port. Many of the sailors had been looking forward to cold beer and meeting ladies on the Esplanade. Some of them had emails to send and shopping to do and mobile telephone plans to consider. They wanted to sleep in a bed for a change and try their luck at the casino. Captain Blackheart was deaf to all protests and the crew went back to work for the final run into Cairns feeling sulky and grumpy. The only concession that Captain Blackheart would make was to move the time of departure from Cairns to the morning of the next day. Everyone was bidden to be back on board at their post by 10 am or they would miss the tide. This was less than a full day in port and the poor sailors were bitterly disappointed. Katie and Emily made an especially nice afternoon tea but when the *Saucy Nancy* docked at Trinity Wharf, there was quite a scramble to get ashore and have a bit of fun.

The girls couldn’t go up town until the vegetables were peeled for dinner. Captain Blackheart knew that most of the crew would want to have a meal on shore but he was looking forward to dinner with the girls to talk about what they would do once they reached Itapa. He reckoned that they could count on a good couple of hours of uninterrupted time until the sailors began to return looking for snacks and strong black coffee. The girls put the roast beef in a slow oven. Once the potatoes and carrots were nicely peeled and sitting in cold water, the girls could settle down with a long shopping list and Captain Blackheart’s Mastercard for a shopping expedition to the supermarket at Cairns Central.

They had a nice long milk shake first, however, at a coffee shop at the Pier and felt very grown up when many people noticed and admired their enormous diamond and emerald rings. Captain Blackheart had allowed them to wear the beautiful jewels just once before they went back into Old Reilly’s sea chest for safe keeping.

With all their shopping packed into a taxi, the girls returned to the *Saucy Nancy* just as night was falling. The roast was almost done and the vegetables joined it in the pan. With a glass of lemonade in their hands, this seemed to be the best time to talk with the captain. It would take forty minutes for the potatoes to crisp and much could be decided in that time.



The girls assembled the creamy white ivory blocks of the treasure map in front of them. The first job, really, was to make a perfect copy on paper so that they could consult this rather than the blocks when the time came to go ashore. The scrimshaw blocks were very beautiful but not very practical for daily use. Katie was trusted to make the copy and it took all of her concentration to finish it perfectly.

“The most important thing, I suppose,” said Emily, “will be to find Solomon. He will know where the treasure is, I suppose. I wonder why he hasn’t dug it up himself?”

“That’s a mystery to me too,” said the Captain. “It’s my guess that he either doesn’t know exactly where it is or that he doesn’t want to find the treasure until the right time.”

“Perhaps he’s waiting for Old Reilly to come back?” said Emily.

“Perhaps he just doesn’t value the treasure,” said Katie thoughtfully.

“Now there I wonder if you’re closer to the truth than you might think,” said the captain. “Remember how many poor people have died in hiding this treasure. Many of them are Solomon’s friends. Perhaps he made a promise to Reilly that he wouldn’t disturb the treasure until he returned so they could collect it together.”

By now, the roast was ready and for fifteen minutes, all conversation was suspended apart from some very approving grunts. It was certainly an excellent roast and the potatoes were crisp and fluffy and the pumpkin just floated out of the pan. Katie had made the most delicious gravy and it’s not surprising that for a little while even the thoughts of treasure were pushed out of their minds. When all of them had eaten seconds there was still half the roast and a big pile of roast vegetables left in the pan.

Katie had been particularly thoughtful through the long pause in the conversation and when she finally spoke, she showed that she had tried to guess one of the things at the heart of the mystery. “I think this is not a simple story at all. If the stories are true, there is treasure, certainly - and plenty of it. But it’s more mysterious than that. I think that Old Reilly only half valued all the gold - otherwise he could have gone back many years ago to find it.”

Exactly where this discussion would have gone if there hadn’t been a loud banging on the deck I do not know. Someone was knocking at the gangway and calling out. Visitors were rare at any hour on the *Saucy Nancy* and Captain Blackheart wisely folded up the newly copied map and slipped it into the leather pouch that contained the scrimshaw blocks. Katie went to answer the call and returned a moment later looking anxious. With her were two young police officers looking very solemn.

Now Captain Blackheart could be a terrifying person when his temper was up and even though he had never been angry with the girls they had seen him at times

when there were problems on board the *Saucy Nancy*. Then he would storm and shout and make the most terrible threats to the pirates who crossed him. You would never guess, then, just how charming and friendly Captain Blackheart could be when he wanted to be and encounters with young policemen in the evening certainly seemed to bring out the best in him. Because Captain Blackheart [and the girls] knew without being told exactly what was wrong. One of the crew was in trouble!

“Why, Constable,” said the Captain gallantly, “how can I be of service to you on my beautiful ship, the *Saucy Nancy*? You look peaky; won’t you both sit down and enjoy some of Miss Emily’s capital roast beef.”

It was Tiny. He had left the *Saucy Nancy* with Vince, headed for a spree at the Casino. Tiny had won a small fortune on the pokies and then turned it into a considerable sum playing cards at the tables. With his pockets full of cash, Tiny had shouted his mate a big feed in the casino dining room before they set off for the night clubs in town. In the street, some sailors from a big American naval ship in port had made some cheeky comments. Tiny had made some saucy comments back. Both the sailors and the pirates had been drinking, I suppose, and a big fight had started in the street. The Americans turned out to be good fighters but not as good as Tiny and he had chased them all the way back to their boat. That was where the policemen had intervened and Tiny decided to fight the police as well as the whole American navy. At that moment, Tiny was in the Cairns Watch House under guard. The only happy part of the story was that Vince had managed to stop Tiny from doing any real damage to anyone. He had also rescued the thousands of dollars that Tiny had won at the Casino.

As the young policeman told the story, Captain Blackheart, without any prompting, had been shovelling slices of roast beef and a big serving of Emily’s roast potatoes on to two plates. Katie dished out the gravy and the policemen were soon tucking into the best roast dinner they had ever had. It made them very cheerful and happy and the two officers were only too pleased to suggest ways that they could help their poor friend in the lock up. When it was time to go, he suggested that the best way out of the problem altogether was to plead guilty the next morning in the magistrate’s court. The magistrate was a kindly woman who knew all about the temptations that a sailor might meet in port and as no one was hurt and only Tiny’s pride was wounded he might be able to escape with a fine. In the meantime, Katie packed up a big serve of hot roast beef and baked potatoes in a Tupperware container for the policemen to take back to Tiny. They went to bed hopeful that with a little luck they might just be able to get away as planned.

Alas, it was not to be so simple. The kind lady magistrate was, apparently, on circuit in the Cape and her place on the bench was taken by Justice Fang - a grumpy old man who seemed to harbour a grudge against sailors in general and pirates in particular. The courtroom seemed crowded. The girls and Captain Blackheart squeezed in right in the back of the court and when poor Tiny was escorted in by one of the young police men who had called the night before, he looked very sheepish and sad. He was feeling very sore and sorry for himself after a night in the cells and the breakfast at the watch house was nowhere as good as

the one that Katie and Emily served the sailors on the *Saucy Nancy*. One of the American sailors had also landed a lucky punch in the fight and Tiny had a wonderful black eye to show for himself. He gave the girls a shy wave.

The facts of the matter were readily admitted- although Tiny insisted that the American sailors had hit first. Justice Fang would have none of it. He seemed to think that Tiny was a great bully and that he had been keen to fight anyone who came his way. The arresting police officers told the judge that ten American sailors had needed treatment after the fight and several were receiving counselling.

“Before I pass sentence on you,” said the Judge sternly, “do you have any reason you can give me why I should not send you to Lotus Glen prison for a year or two?”

Poor Tiny! He had every sailor’s fear of confined spaces and the thought of prison- even for a day- was too terrible to contemplate. That’s the only reason I can think of for what Tiny said next. The poor girls gasped in disbelief as Tiny began his speech:

“Your Honour, Sir,” said Tiny sadly, “please understand I have to be at sea this very morning. You see, my two little friends - the bravest girls in the world- have come into a treasure of some kind and we must be off to New Guinea on the tide. One of our crew, Old Riley by name, died at sea three days ago and he has left the girls some wonderful secret and ..”

Now here Captain Blackheart did an amazing thing. He leapt to his feet and with a flourish of his plumed hat begged to be allowed to address the court. Justice Fang was particularly grumpy at this interruption but he allowed Captain Blackheart to speak: no one else, after all, had spoken in Tiny’s defence.

Katie and Emily were used to Captain Blackheart’s bravery, his strong voice and his occasional bad temper but they had never seen him as he was that morning in the court. Here is just a little of what he said:

“Your Honour, I am the captain of the good ship, the *Saucy Nancy*, and this poor lad is a member of my crew. I know that you see him here this morning as the black eyed brawler who has terrified the American fleet and brought trouble and tumult to the quiet and peaceful streets of this beautiful city. Offended justice cries out for punishment and retribution. But you must know that he is as decent and true a boy as ever sailed the seas. If you could have seen him when his poor old widowed mother brought him to me as a boy and pleaded with me to take him to sea and make a man of him then you would feel, as I do, the terrible shame and sadness of this moment for he has been a worthy shipmate and a brave sailor lad in storm and calm.”

“He is truly a gentle soul which only the bright lights and dangers of the port have spoiled and marred. He was impulsive and foolish to attack the American fleet but brave as a lion as you can see. His old Mother has been so proud of him - and to take him away to prison at Lotus Glen and confine him in the company of thieves and felons will undo all the good work that the sea has done on his spirit. Sir, deliver him to me and I will take him from this city this morning - away from

temptation and danger. He is a fanciful lad - as his silly story about some great secret shows - but have mercy on him and you will never regret your kindness.”

Katie and Emily were deeply touched by this wonderful speech and reached for their handkerchiefs. Tiny himself was crying at the mention of his old mother and the shame he might bring on her. Even the hard hearted Justice Fang was touched for a moment.

“Captain Blackheart, I believe that this young man had a rather large win at the casino last night. Is that correct?” demanded the judge.

“Yes, sir,” said the Captain, seeing where the judge was taking the conversation. “By great skill and good luck he won two thousand dollars. If you discharge the prisoner into my care, Your Honour, I will see that he pays this sum into the Mission to Seamen Benevolent Fund to support old and broken down sailors.”

“I think a better place to put this money, Captain Blackheart, would be the Policemen and Magistrate’s Relief Fund to care for destitute and broken hearted judges and policemen. And on that condition, I discharge the prisoner!”

Here Justice Fang slammed his gavel and called for the next case. Tiny stepped down into the arms of his friends; Emily turned over Tiny’s money to the friendly young policeman who had eaten her roast dinner the night before and Captain Blackheart lead the way out of the court in the direction of the docks as quickly as he could.

“Katie,” said the Captain, “I have to go ahead to get the boat cleared from the port. There are some papers to sign and I need to call in at the bank. Can you and Emily and Tiny walk back to the *Saucy Nancy* and keep him out of trouble? I’ll see you at the dock in fifteen minutes.”

“Aye, Aye, Captain!” said Katie smartly. She was conscious that there were people watching her and Emily - and Tiny was such a big man that he was very hard to hide in the crowd. She wanted everyone who was about to see her and believe that she was a true sailor - even if she were a little girl. The Captain gave her a warm smile and headed off impatiently; the girls and Tiny - without his big win at the Casino - headed off to the docks. It wasn’t a long walk and the girls felt that they were surely out of danger now,

That’s when it all went terribly wrong. They should have remembered one of Captain Blackheart’s favourite sayings: *There’s more danger from the snakes on land than from the sharks at sea!* You see, the Magistrate’s Court was crowded because the case to be heard after Tiny involved a charge of drink driving against a very famous and powerful local businessman [a rich man who owned the local volleyball club and was famous for having his photograph in the local papers all the times]. Normally the Magistrate’s Court was a sleepy affair but today there were journalists waiting to see the drink driver and to report the story and one of them, a clever young lady with curly blonde hair named Tracey Scribble, was intrigued by Tiny’s story about the treasure and the great secret. A drink driving businessman -

well, that happened all the time. But a pirate treasure and a great secret? Well, that was unusual - and newsworthy!

She had been watching Captain Blackheart carefully in the courtroom. With his wonderful gold ear ring and plumed hat he was certainly an interesting person to watch. He had been on his feet the moment that Tiny had mentioned the treasure and the secret; it looked to her as if there might be something here that he was trying to hide. She watched Captain Blackheart disappear in a hurry. Now was her chance. On the footpath, she confidently stopped the three sailors, boldly taking Tiny by the arm. She wasn't surprised to find her questions brushed aside.

"None of us has anything to say, my dear," said Katie. "This poor sailor needs to go back to his ship and find his hammock. We have to be off on the morning tide, as you must have heard Captain Blackheart telling his honour the Judge."

Tracey Scribble was used to people not wanting to answer her embarrassing questions and so she took a different tack. "Surely these beautiful young ladies are the brave girls Mr Tiny mentioned in court. Can you at least tell me their names and ages?"

Tracey Scribble was young and pretty with lovely blonde hair and a nice figure. She sensibly addressed none of her questions to the girls; instead, she concentrated on Tiny who had gone quite pink while this young lady hung on to him.

"Mr Tiny," she said sweetly, "are these the two little girls you mentioned in court - the ones who had come into a treasure? They look like good girls to me."

Tiny was charmed and disarmed. "They're the best girls in the world, Ma'am. Why, Katie and Emily are brave and clever and they care for all the sailors on the *Saucy Nancy*. It's no wonder Old Reilly left them his sea chest and everything in it."

"I'm sure that Captain Blackheart wouldn't want us talking about this with anyone!" said Emily quickly, trying to break the horrible hold that Tracey Scribble had on poor Tiny. "Here, you leave Tiny alone. We've all got to get back to the ship as quickly as we can."

"Miss Emily is right," said Tiny colouring even more. "Why, if anyone knew that we were headed off to New Guinea hunting for treasure, we could all be in deep trouble."

"Oh, treasure is it? And in New Guinea?" said Tracey Scribble with a deep sigh. "I'm sure that you will be the bravest and most daring sailor in the whole South Seas, Mr Tiny. Why don't we find a nice place in the lounge of the next pub and I'll buy you a glass of beer. You can tell me all about it."

Katie and Emily were desperate now. Tiny was their dearest friend but he had no sense at all where ladies were concerned and the girls could imagine him telling this horrible woman everything he knew about Old Riley - and making up a whole lot more while Tracey Scribble was buying the beer.

Katie solved the problem in a most unexpected way. It wasn't far to the portside now - the girls could see it in the distance - but there were several pubs between them and the *Saucy Nancy* and Tracey Scribble was hanging on to Tiny like a leech. A passing taxi stopped just by them to let off an elderly Aboriginal gentleman and his friends and Katie swooped. Even before the fare had been paid, she pushed Tiny into the cab and Emily slid in quickly beside him. Katie took the front seat and asked the cabbie to drive off as quickly as he could. The cabbie did just that and Tracey Scribble was left furious on the pavement. Already, however, she was planning tomorrow morning's story in her busy mind.

The taxi trip was really so short that Katie had to give the taxi driver a big tip to make it worth his while to have picked them up at all. And once inside the cab, without the warm hand of the pretty girl on his arm, Tiny seemed to realise that he had been just a little bit foolish. He would have to ask Katie and Emily to give him some lessons on ladies.

All of this was forgotten once they reached the gangplank. The whole crew had been waiting anxiously for their return. Their mate, Tiny, was a great hero; the story of his fight with the American sailors had grown in the telling and it was now confidently repeated that ten or fifteen Americans were in hospital with broken bones and many others were in poor repair. He was cheered as he came aboard by everyone except Captain Blackheart. He looked as grumpy as the girls had ever seen him and gave the order to weigh anchor and pull up the gangway with more swear words than that simple process usually needed. Captain Blackheart's mood was not improved by the noisy arrival on shore of a bus load of Japanese tourists who took out their cameras and recorded the ship's departure. The sails were unfurled and the *Saucy Nancy*, the most beautiful pirate ship in the world, gently sailed down the inlet and out into the glorious green water of the Coral Sea.

Captain Blackheart was even more grim when the girls had a chance to tell him about the awful Tracey Scribble. "It's just as I feared it would be," said the Captain sadly. "Our best hope of recovering the treasure and honouring Old Riley's wishes relies on doing things quietly and without any fuss. Even so, let's hope that the editor of the *Cairns Post* is clever enough to think that this story about treasure in New Guinea is too silly to print."

The girls hoped the same. They made an especially nice lunch for all the crew to make up for their short time in Cairns and before long there was the same jaunty, happy feel to the boat that always marks the start of a long and exciting adventure.



## Chapter 5: Colonel Tanaka Waits.

Once the *Saucy Nancy* was at sea and Tiny had told his story several times for all the crew, Captain Blackheart called the girls to the great cabin to talk about what they would do next. When he learned about Tracey Scribble's interview on the footpath outside the courtroom he was even more worried and concerned. Of course it was hard to be angry with Tiny for very long but there was a niggling pain in the back of the Captain's mind and a sense that the difficulties they had encountered were only just beginning. The Captain made the girls repeat as carefully as they could the words that Tiny had said to the journalist.

"In the end, of course, it doesn't matter what he said," said the Captain gloomily. "If Miss Scribble is anything like the other newspaper reporters I've met she can make a thousand juicy words out of anything that Tiny said -just as long as the words *treasure* and *pirate* and *New Guinea* figure in the story somewhere.

Captain Blackheart would have been a great deal more gloomy if he had had a little more respect for Tracey Scribble. She guessed that there was a big story lurking in the strange behaviour of the sailor, the pirate captain and the two bright little girls who had whisked Tiny away from her just when he was about to tell her all he knew about the treasure. She guessed too that if Tiny had spoken to her in the cold light of day he might have been more talkative the night before when the power of the rum he had drunk at the casino bar was still in him. It just so happened that Tracey was good friends with one of the police officers who manned the watch house and she decided to call on him to hear what he might be able to tell her. And this young man, Constable Robert Sweet, was, of course, one of the policemen who had enjoyed Emily's roast dinner the night before.

Now Constable Sweet had been working in the watch house for most of his police career and Tiny was only one of many sailors who had ended up sleeping off a heavy night on the town in his cells. He soon realised, however, that despite the black eye and the boxing skills, Tiny was really quite a softie. When Constable Sweet returned from the *Saucy Nancy* with the roast dinner in Katie's Tupperware, Tiny had become sad and sentimental. Constable Sweet made him a cup of tea and sat with him while he took on board all the roast beef and vegetables.

“The little girls who made this dinner, let me tell you, Sir, are the best little girls who ever went to sea. Why Miss Katie has the kindest heart and she can take a splinter out of a sailor’s finger better than any doctor can. And Miss Emily - quite apart from making excellent roast dinners, sings as sweetly as a bird. And they are blessed, to be sure, because they have come into some great secret - which I don’t know, of course, but you can be sure that it involves a rum old ship mate named Old Riley who died at sea three days ago.”

Then Tiny sensibly addressed himself to the roast dinner and Constable Sweet had a call from the front desk to assist with an unfortunate gentleman who had been in another fight - this time at a well known night club.

All of this Constable Sweet told Miss Scribble at a coffee shop and not even an extra piece of cake supplied by Miss Scribble could assist his memory in any other way. There was little more to add to the story told in court but Miss Tracey Gribble knew that she had a good lead. Her imagination would supply everything else.

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The girls and Captain Blackheart decided one thing for certain: that they would have to tell the crew immediately all that they knew and ask them to keep the secret. It was what Katie and Emily had always wanted but they admitted that if Tiny had known all the story and had fallen in with Miss Scribble earlier in the day without Katie and Emily to mind him, there would now be no secret to keep. Late in the afternoon, Captain Blackheart dropped anchor for the night off Lizard Island and mustered all the crew at the main mast. With the girls beside him, he told them [almost] the whole story. He didn’t mention the scrimshaw blocks and he didn’t really say just how much gold was involved but he did say that while the lion’s share of the treasure would belong to the girls [as Old Riley wanted] that there would be enough gold to make everyone rich. The gold was waiting for them at Itapa in the New Guinea islands. That’s where they were headed now. It would most likely be relatively easy to find and collect the gold; there was a treasure map to guide them and the gold itself was well hidden. It was not as if they would have to fight anyone for it. The whole crew needed now to stand up for their shipmates, Katie and Emily, to make sure that Old Riley’s treasure came to them as he had intended.

Several of the crew were very excited and interested. They had heard of the lost gold of Itapa and were very pleased that it was going to come back to Australia in the hold of the *Saucy Nancy*. The most agitated of the crew was Tiny who now knew just how dangerous his comments in the court and to the journalist were. He pleaded with the girls to forgive him his stupidity - something they were pleased to do by giving the big, gruff sailor a lovely hug.

Everyone was keen to get going - to collect the treasure and see the lost gold - but Captain Blackheart couldn’t contain his curiosity. Even though he was as keen as anyone to drop anchor and head for Papua New Guinea, he was determined to know what kind of mess the *Cairns Post* had made of the story. The next morning, they put into Port Douglas -supposedly to post some letters but really to collect a



copy of the next edition of the *Cairns Post*. Katie and Emily cooked an early breakfast and dressing as simply as they could; after all, they didn't want more questions at this stage from anyone. The crew was given strict instructions not to leave the ship; Katie and Emily and the Captain would go alone up the wharf to the newsagency in the plaza.

The news boards outside the shop carried two banners from the paper: LOCAL REAL ESTATE MAGNATE IN DRINK DRIVING SCANDAL. Well, that was just what they wanted to see but beside in big red letters was another full page notice: PIRATE GIRLS SEARCH FOR NEW GUINEA MYSTERY TREASURE. There, on page three of the *Cairns Post*, was a photograph of young Constable Sweet and another of a pirate ship - a very poor one, to be sure, with the caption: *Saucy Nancy heads for Papua New Guinea on secret search for treasure*. Captain Blackheart didn't know what made him most angry: the story about the treasure or the horrible boat that the newspaper had put in the paper as the *Saucy Nancy*!

They took the paper with them back to the boat and as the girls quickly organised some morning tea, Captain Blackheart read the whole report aloud to the crew. It was fortunate, perhaps, that they were in Port Douglas and Miss Tracey Scribble and her editor were safely at home in Cairns. Here is part of the story:

*The Cairns Court was in uproar yesterday when dangerous pirate Sebastian McWhirter [also known as Tiny] was charged with multiple assaults on members of the crew of the American aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln.*

"Sebastian? Is that your real name?" laughed the crew, chaffing Tiny terribly. He reddened with embarrassment. They probably accepted that Tiny had a full name but had only ever known him as Tiny. Captain Blackheart quietened the crew so he could read on.

*The American sailors were enjoying shore leave when they became involved in a brawl with Tiny outside the Mad Cow nightclub in Lake Street. Tiny was claimed to have knocked down fifteen American sailors before he could be restrained by police.*

*In court, the pirate claimed that he could not be sent to Lotus Creek prison because his ship, the Saucy Nancy, was headed for New Guinea to collect treasure. Tiny stated that the treasure had been left by a member of the crew whom he named as Old Riley to two girls on board ship. These girls were identified by arresting officer Constable Robert Sweet as Katie and Emily Bland who are reportedly working as cabin boys on the ship. Little is known about these girls but they are apparently quite as vicious and as dangerous as Tiny McWhirter himself.*

All the crew roared with laughter when they heard their two dear cabin boys described as dangerous and vicious but the mood soon changed. "Listen to this!" said Captain Blackheart angrily:

*There are no further details available on the treasure at this moment. Pirates have always been active in Papua New Guinea but there are no reports of recent*

*large scale thefts. Dr Muriel Barnacle of the University of Townsville -a national authority on pirate treasure - told the Post that the largest unclaimed pirate treasure in Papua New Guinea was the legendary lost gold of Itapa. It is thought that this gold - looted by the Japanese from the banks of Singapore in February 1942- was lost in a submarine at the end of the war but old sailors often claim that it is hidden somewhere in the New Guinea islands.*

*Captain Zachary Blackheart, captain of the Saucy Nancy, spoke as a character witness for McWhirter and posted bond for his good behaviour.*

*McWhirter was fined \$2 000 and a conviction recorded.*

While vicious pirate Katie Bland poured the tea and dangerous cabin boy Emily Bland handed around the muffins the crew laughed and joked - much of it at poor Sebastian's expense. Tiny swore that there were many more than fifteen American sailors on the footpath outside the Mad Cow before he were finished; Vince [a more disinterested witness] backed his mate and claimed that the count did not include officers and members of the Military Police who unwisely tried to intervene. Even Captain Blackheart allowed himself a smile.

With the tea things cleared away and a fine South Westerly wind blowing, Captain Blackheart gave the order to weigh anchor. The sails filled and the wooden timbers groaned; the most beautiful sailing ship in all the South Seas headed out across the reef into the deep green water of the open sea. The start of any voyage is always an exciting moment and I think that everyone on board that morning watched the land slip away from sight with hopeful hearts. Three weeks of sailing should bring them to Itapa and all its promised treasure.

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That morning, four thousand miles away in Tokyo, Japan, an elderly Japanese gentleman was sitting at his computer. Kenzo Tanaka had returned from the war to his shattered homeland and made a new life for himself. He had become a very successful businessman making zippers for trousers and skirts in a big factory outside the city. He never forgot, however, the fabulous treasure of Itapa that he had held for such a short time before it had slipped for a moment from his fingers. He had left the great prize hidden- well hidden - and all the New Guinea men and Japanese soldiers who had carried it to its hiding place had been killed. He had hoped that ten years would be sufficient time for the whole thing to quieten down.

Using a false name, Colonel Tanaka had returned to Papua New Guinea to search for the treasure. There were many people in Itapa, of course, who would have recognized Colonel Tanaka as the murderer of their friends and family during the war. He stayed at the Itapa Hilton - the best hotel on the island - and told everyone that he was a butterfly collector for the Tokyo Museum. Wearing dark glasses and a hat pulled down over his face he walked about Itapa, often going out in the early evening with a flashlight. The beautiful harbour was just as he remembered it; the mission station had been rebuilt and the church had a new priest. But the cave where he had left the treasure was empty. There was nothing

to show for the glorious treasure he had left there in the last terrible days of the war. He looked through the area for the next two weeks but there were possible hiding places everywhere. He felt so close to the treasure - and so far away.

Two people, he knew, might know where the gold might be. One of them was the native man - Solomon - whom Colonel Tanaka had tried to find to force him to join the group to bring the treasure to the cave. Solomon had run off, apparently, and couldn't be found. The other person who might know was the young sailor, Riley, who had fled from the mission station when the Japanese arrived at the beginning of the war and who had hidden in the hills for the whole of the war, signalling to the Australian army to let them know the movement of Japanese ships in the harbour. If only he had been able to capture him during the war and kill him! He had tried many times without success. Colonel Tanaka had returned to Japan empty handed and bitter.

But he never lost hope. One day, either Solomon or Old Riley would come forward and try to claim the gold; and then he would attack and take back what he had originally stolen. For many years he had paid a library clipping service to watch the newspapers for any reports on Riley or the Itapa treasure. Every now and then, the story would find itself into the newspapers - usually at Christmas when news was slow - and usually collected with other stories of lost treasure. None of this gave Colonel Tanaka any satisfaction; the less people thought about or knew about the treasure the easier it would be to retrieve. When he connected to the Internet, of course, the search for information became so much easier. He was old now and his treasure hunting days were surely coming to an end. If he were to find it, it would have to be soon. Every morning, Colonel Tanaka googled the names *Riley* and *Itapa*. And this morning, the thing he had hoped for fifty years appeared. The story in the *Cairns Post* was enticing - and obviously true! Old Riley had died leaving a treasure map; very soon, there would be people in Itapa looking for the lost gold. They would lead him straight to where the treasure was hidden. A sailing ship, he guessed, would take a couple of weeks at least to travel from Cairns to Itapa through the reefs and islands of New Guinea. He would be waiting for them when they arrived. Two little girls - even if they were vicious and dangerous as the newspaper reported them to be - would be easy to trick and defeat. Then the treasure would be all his to enjoy at last.



## Chapter 6: Scrimshaw Again

Even if there had been no treasure waiting for them at the end of the journey, the voyage to Itapa would have been one of the happiest in the girl's whole sailing life. It was mid winter - the very best time to be at sea in the tropics. The weather was perfect with a brisk southern swell, light winds and clear skies. On most voyages the *Saucy Nancy* sailed through the night, of course, and the sailors had to be on watch to steer the ship. But on this voyage they were rarely out of sight of land and it was simply too dangerous among the coral reefs to sail at night. In the evening, Captain Blackheart would drop anchor in the lagoon of some lovely tropical island. Sometimes Katie would take the boat to the shore looking for coconuts and fresh water. The crew took to having an early morning swim followed by breakfast on the deck; then there would be ten or so hours of sailing in which Captain Blackheart and Emily took it in turns to stand at the big wheel and steer the ship. One of the most trusted sailors - often Imoteph or Kiwi Bill - was at the front of the boat swinging the lead to take the depth of the water. There was always someone in the crow's nest to watch for coral reefs but many of the crew had little more to do than enjoy the journey.

Captain Blackheart always believed that an idle sailor was a danger to everyone and despite plenty of grumbles, he kept everyone busy swabbing the deck, polishing the brass, mending the sails or [for three happy hours every day] fishing from the back deck of the *Saucy Nancy*. Some of the pirates were very good fishermen, too, and many of the groceries that the girls had bought in Cairns for a four week voyage stood uneaten in the galley pantry. There's nothing quite as delicious as fish that have been on the reef one moment and in your frying pan the next. Before they ran away from the cruel workhouse, Katie and Emily had dreamed of a life at sea living on fish and chips and coconuts and for the three weeks of the journey to Itapa, that was almost exactly how they lived. The fresh fish were a treat for everyone and the coconuts collected from the beaches made the best puddings and cocktails. At night, Imoteph would play his violin or the girls would organise card parties and various games for the crew. Emily had bought a supply of milk chocolate in Cairns and kept these as prizes for the card games. [After Tiny's win at the Casino, there was a lot of talk of playing cards for money and Captain Blackheart was determined that none of his crew would get into that awful habit.]

After the card parties and games while the crew got into their pyjamas for lights out, Captain Blackheart worked with the girls at the big map table in the Captain's cabin. Using the Captain's beautiful hand drawn charts, they traced the journey

and plotted their course for the next day. They often assembled the scrimshaw pieces again, working from the original pieces and not their own copies in the fear that they might have missed some tiny detail that would be important on the ground.

More than anything, they searched the hidden picture formed by the careful drawing on the sixth face of the scrimshaw blocks - the one they had discovered by brushing the blocks with ink. They now knew Old Riley's poem by heart:

*To be rich, you need the heart of Solomon  
For where your heart is, there is your treasure safe and sure.  
So pray that God will take away your heart of envy  
At his table may you find peace for evermore.*

There were so many unanswered questions and the girls turned them over constantly in their discussion. Did Solomon survive the war as Old Riley did? Did Colonel Tanaka know where the treasure had been hidden? Was the treasure still there to be found? Was Colonel Tanaka still alive and looking for the treasure?

They couldn't be certain about any of this, of course, and no matter how long they talked the conclusions they came to were usually the same. Firstly, the treasure was probably still somewhere in Itapa waiting to be discovered. It was such a great prize that it could never be found and carried off secretly. As Tiny showed, pirates are great gossips and news of the discovery of the treasure would soon have carried to every port in the Pacific. If it had been found, someone would have told the story and even though the yarns told about the lost gold of Itapa varied in the telling, every one of the stories agreed that the treasure had been hidden once and afterwards lost. Besides, the ammunition boxes were large and heavy. Twenty blocks of gold each weighing ten pounds was a lot of gold. It couldn't be found and carried away in a briefcase!

They also agreed that it was very likely that both Solomon and Old Riley had survived the war and that together they had moved the treasure from the cave where Colonel Tanaka had hidden it. Who now knew where it was? Old Riley was dead. The only other person who would know the answer to the mystery was Solomon; if he were still alive, he would be an old man now. At one stage Emily had thought that the gold might yet be in the submarine- after all, Old Riley had carefully marked the site of the sunken submarine on the map. But if the gold were in the submarine, Riley and Solomon could not have moved it and the poem - which seemed to promise to be the clue to the mystery - didn't fit with a submarine location at all. If Riley and Solomon had moved the gold together and Riley were now dead their only hope of being shown where the gold was [rather than somehow discovering it themselves] was to find Solomon and ask for his help.

This always worried Captain Blackheart more than it worried the girls. He had been a pirate too long to imagine that anyone [no matter how kind and good] would willingly give away the secret of a great fortune in gold to two strangers - even if they were nice little girls. "Perhaps Solomon helped Riley take the gold from the cave," said Katie, "but never felt that he owned it."

“And Riley certainly seemed to feel that the gold was his to give away,” said Emily, “And he was a very decent person, remember. He wouldn’t give away something that really belonged to his old friend.”

Captain Blackheart had to acknowledge that all of this were true but he still doubted that this would be quite so easy on the ground when the treasure was winkled from its hiding place. Things were rarely that simple, he had found, where treasure was concerned - and this was a very large treasure indeed. Whatever the case, the first thing to do was to find Solomon and ask for his assistance.

The third thing that the girls could agree on in the mystery was that this was no simple quest for treasure. The poem on the scrimshaw talked about prayer, and God and peace. Captain Blackheart admitted that this was certainly unusual for pirate maps. Then again, Old Riley himself was certainly unlike most of the pirates who had ever sailed in the *Saucy Nancy*.

“This is hard to put into words,” said Katie one night, “but I’m sure that Old Riley would want us to think deeply about all of this - about the clues, about the treasure and what it had cost anyone who touched it.”

“This is a job for hearts and heads, to be sure,” said Captain Blackheart. “I’m beginning to think that that’s why he gave the job of recovering the treasure to you two little girls. Lots of people with strong arms and cunning brains have searched and not found it. Wicked Colonel Tanaka has killed people - including his own soldiers - to keep the secret. I don’t doubt that if that villain is still alive he’ll be prepared to kill again.” Emily was strangely silent, trying to puzzle it all out one last time. For the first time since Old Riley’s death she felt terribly alone as well as sad.

The three shipmates turned to the scrimshaw blocks in the frame one last time to try to draw something from them. They had gone over everything again that night with the captain, brushing the scrimshaw again with the ink to see if anything had escaped them the first time. They had even examined the other faces of the scrimshaw blocks to see whether there were clues still hidden on the sides coloured with brown, green and red ink. Nothing.

“Old Riley gave us a task to do,” said Katie. “I’m sure he also gave us all the clues we would need to do the job. There’s something we’re missing - something that must be right in front of us - too obvious for us to notice. What do you think, Emily? You’re better at tricks and puzzles than I am.”

But Emily had no idea what more they could do. They even went through all the things that had been in the sea chest before they reached the leather parcel of scrimshaw blocks. They had looked at the first bag of scrimshaw pieces, then put them aside without another thought. They checked the pockets of Old Riley’s spare pants and jacket in the canvas bag but there was nothing there. There was nothing in the pencil case - except the great wad of hundred dollar bills. There

was nothing else in the share portfolio; nothing out of the ordinary in the envelope of medals [except the beautiful medals themselves]; nothing else in the photographs that they could see. This was probably the last time the girls and Captain Blackheart would have a whole evening to do this at their leisure. They would reach the southern tip of New Ireland tomorrow and then there would be a three day sail across open water to Itapa. They would have to start the search with only a fuzzy idea in their heads of what to.

The girls packed the sea chest up again carefully. They always packed it exactly as Old Riley had left it to them with the precious scrimshaw blocks in the frame at the bottom of the chest. Of course the diamond and emerald rings - the most immediately valuable things in the chest - had gone to the big strongbox in the captain's cabin for safe keeping. This time the girls kept the carved scrimshaw pieces from the very top parcel in the chest with them, however. It would be somehow comforting to have the lovely familiar things they had seen Old Riley handling about them.

The girls went to their cabin quietly troubled. While Emily brushed her teeth, Katie arranged the scrimshaw drawings on the tiny shelf in their cabin, beside a little mirror and the candlestick that gave the only light in the room. The little mermaid eating the coconut and the polar bear cubs glowed a warm yellow in the gentle candlelight. The girls kissed good night and then slipped into their hammocks.

Katie fell asleep almost immediately. She had spent the afternoon steering the boat through dangerous coral reefs and she was exhausted from the concentration required by this very responsible job. Emily tried to sleep but couldn't. She looked out the porthole window at the silvery waves and the bright stars in the black velvety night sky. How many times, she thought, had Old Riley himself looked at the same beautiful scene? She concentrated on the brilliant stars that seemed closest to her; they were almost close enough to touch. Captain Blackheart had begun to show the girls how to steer the boat by the stars; he said it was the most ancient way of finding a direction at sea and that if only they looked and thought hard enough, they would find their way anywhere.

That's when Emily realised what they had overlooked. She swung out of the hammock and fumbled for the matches. She quickly lit the candle and reached for the scrimshaw pieces arranged on the little shelf. Her fingers searched the base of each of the pieces and when she came to the last of them - the drawing of the *Saucy Nancy* in full sail with Katie at the wheel and Emily in the crow's nest, she gave a squeal of joy that woke Katie even from her deep sleep.

While Katie sat up and asked all the questions that you must be thinking about at this moment Emily was struggling in her kit bag to find the brush and the bottle of black ink that they had taken from Old Riley's pencil case. In a moment, there was a smear of black ink on the scrimshaw surface and then it was gone, wiped away with a tissue. On the bottom of the creamy ivory piece - quite out of sight when Katie had placed it on the shelf - was a drawing of keys and a kind of letter P. These were arranged in a neat circle. Neither of the girls could say at that moment

what it was although it did look vaguely familiar. Both of them knew immediately however that this must be the last, extra clue for which they had been searching. The key to the mystery had been under their noses all the time - in the piece of scrimshaw that the girls had admired and handled many times before Old Riley's death. It was, after all, the piece they loved most.

“We have been so silly, Emily!” said Katie. “I knew you would figure it out. It's just as Old Riley himself said to us in the will - even though we didn't follow the instruction immediately: *And I charge them to be very careful and thoughtful as they handle the scrimshaw in the soft leather bag.* We found the message in one soft leather bag and thought we were so clever but we missed the message right in front of us - in the bag we had seen so often!

They were terribly excited and Katie crept out in her night gown up the ladder to the main deck to see whether the light were still on in Captain Blackheart's cabin but all was in darkness. The coast of New Ireland was close and bathed in moonlight. The water of the sea looked like grey silk in the still evening air. Their new secret would have to wait until tomorrow before they shared it with the Captain. The little girls settled for the night now with happy hearts. Tomorrow they would be sailing towards Itapa and all that it promised to them.





## Chapter 7: Resort Wear.

“Well, Miss Emily,” said the Captain, beaming at the girls, “Katie said that you would solve the mystery and you have.”

“But we haven’t solved it really,” said Emily. “We’ve found the last sign, perhaps, but what does it tell us?”

The girls had gone to see Captain Blackheart in his cabin as soon as the breakfast things were cleared away. Tiny was at the wheel as they sailed north east from the tip of New Ireland towards Itapa and in the deep green water away from the reefs and the islands the ship was making good progress. There was a little time at least in which they could relax before reaching the coral reefs again.

“I’m sure I’ve seen this mark before,” said Katie, “but I can’t say where.”

“Look at the photographs again, Katie,” said the Captain. “I think I’ve seen it too. It’s the ancient symbol for Saint Peter. Isn’t that the name of the mission station where Old Riley lived at Itapa?”

There, in the last of the photographs - the one showing Riley standing with the cross and the priest - was the same design on the chasuble the priest was wearing. Captain Blackheart told them that the keys in the design were the sign of Saint Peter and the strangely shaped P was actually the symbol for Jesus himself.

“I think that this is Old Riley’s way of telling us that the place to start looking for Solomon -and the gold- will be the mission church across the bay from the town of Itapa” said the Captain. “That’s where we should begin, anyway.”

With the final part of the puzzle in their hands, the girls hoped [very wrongly as it turned out!] that it would be a simple case of finding the church and then locating either Solomon or some other direction to the treasure. On that lovely tropical morning as the *Saucy Nancy* clipped through the Bismark Sea, however, it all seemed very easy. It was Friday; they would be in Itapa late on Saturday afternoon.

As the girls sailed across the glorious green water towards their dreams, Colonel Tanaka was flying towards Itapa on the gleaming red and white Japan Air Lines 737 jet. There was a scheduled flight from Tokyo airport every day now because Itapa had become a popular place for Japanese honeymooners to go. A string of splendid

hotels had sprung up along the old harbour in the town, all of them offering good plumbing, nice buffet breakfasts and tropical glamour for happy young couples. There were other resorts at the surf beach close by with restaurants serving Japanese food and Duty Free Shops offering designer handbags and perfume. There were tourist offices and currency exchanges where the visitors could change their yen into local PNG kinas. Itapa was a very different place from the quiet little fishing village it had been before the war. You might have wondered, however, whether it would have looked any different now if Japan had won the war instead of losing it so badly.

Colonel Tanaka was not alone. He knew from experience that he could not manage the gold on his own; even as a young man he had not been able to lift one of the ammunition boxes on his own and he was a much older and less able man now than he had been fifty years ago. He had used all his shady old business contacts to find the two things that he needed: a way of getting the gold back to Japan and two large boys who could be relied upon to do as they were told and ask no questions.

Colonel Tanaka knew he couldn't fly the gold home. Four big heavy boxes would need lots of explaining at the airport and would be unusual - even for a Japanese tourist. No, it had to be a ship - the kind of ship that would not draw attention to itself. Here the Colonel was very lucky. An old friend in Colonel Tanaka's Rotary Club, Captain Honda Toyota, owned a fleet of busy container ships that sailed between Yokohama and Papua New Guinea. Itapa was a regular port of call and Captain Toyota was happy to help by providing an empty container on the wharf at Itapa into which the Colonel could pack anything he liked. Colonel Tanaka told his friend that he needed the container to bring coconuts back to Japan. The container would be loaded the next time one of his boats came into port; as this happened almost every week, it was a good way of bringing a heavy load of gold home to Japan. In fact, the *Bento Maru* would be in port just when the Captain needed it. With a little luck, the gold would be loaded into the container and on its way to Yokohama in the space of a month.

Colonel Tanaka was equally lucky in finding two well built boys to help him steal the gold on the ground. Their names were Guzenko Sushi and Lukihiro Sashimi. I wish I could tell you that they were sensible, brave and wise young Japanese men but they were, in fact, cowardly bullies of the very kind with whom someone like Colonel Tanaka would feel most comfortable. They were, for a start, large and ugly. Lukihiro had a face scarred and battered from too many fights and too much sake to drink. Although big by Japanese standards he was scrawny compared with his mate, Guzenko, who looked a little like an out of work sumo wrestler. Both had tattoos on their bodies and both had the swagger and the sneer of petty hoodlums. Japanese people are normally very polite and well mannered; you could never say that about these two boys, however. Until last year they had been at high school but their school principal became so tired of their awful behaviour that he had had to call in their parents and ask them to take the boys away. Perhaps a change would help them to settle and become good boys, he said. They were smokers as well and enjoyed eating whale meat. Perhaps this accounted for their poor complexions and large bellies.

When they were expelled from school, Guzenko and Lukihiro had not gone to another school; instead, they had been working on the factory floor of the Colonel's zipper factory. There they had come to his attention because their boss wanted to sack them for laziness and for bullying other workers. When the Colonel had heard about this he knew that he would find these two scoundrels useful. Instead of sacking them, he bought them some sake to drink and then offered them a nice holiday in the South Seas as his guests. All they would have to do was push around two little girls who were causing trouble. Guzenko and Lukihiro [known to all their friends as Guey and Luey] thought that this was just the kind of work they would enjoy. They could not know, of course, what happened to the last young men who had been forced to help the Colonel in the matter of the Itapa gold. If they did know, I doubt that they would have been quite so pleased with themselves as they headed towards their tropical holiday destination.

The flight from Tokyo was uneventful and to make sure that they kept their arrival some sort of secret, the Colonel bought the boys seats in Economy class while he sat at the front of the plane in the splendour of Business Class. Guey and Luey quickly found the button on their seats that summoned the Flight Attendant and were soon drinking more sake and lemonade that is good for anyone. They arrived at Itapa feeling queasy in the stomach and just a little surly for someone going on holidays. At the airport, lots of people looked carefully at these two large boys - so different from the shy honeymoon couples who made up most of the passengers. The Colonel had given the boys instructions to catch a taxi into town and wait for him at the hotel. They were all wearing hats and dark sun glasses. With little bother, they were safely checked into the Itapa Sofitel [with the Colonel on the top floor and Guey and Luey sharing a room on the third floor with a view of the car park. It was a small room for two such large boys. The Colonel summoned them to his room for the next part of his plan.

The Colonel's plan was not to their liking, however. They wanted to go to the swimming pool to get a sun tan and order more drinks. Instead, there on the table in the big room were the clothes he wanted them to wear. Guey was pleased with his big colourful print shirts and white, long legged shorts. But Luey was disgusted. The Colonel had chosen for him a very colourful floral print dress in the largest size. There was also a bag with makeup that the Colonel had bought duty free on the Japan Airlines flight.

"I'm not wearing a dress!" Luey swore. Guey thought it was a great joke and sniggered and laughed.

"Oh yes you are," said the Colonel. "For the duration of this visit you are going to be Mr and Mrs Tempura - newly married couple from Osaka. I can't have a couple of Tokyo toughs walking about the town; the police will be interested in us immediately and what I want to do I need to do without drawing attention to myself. Now get into those clothes and let me see how you look. If you do this job for me right, I'll pay you a big bonus - twenty thousand yen each! If you put one foot wrong, I'll put you on the first plane back to Tokyo and make sure that there are friends of mine waiting to meet you at the airport. You know what that would mean.

With a snort from Luey and a giggle from Guey the two crooks took their clothes into the Colonel's bathroom to dress. There was some terrible bad language after this, lots of smart remarks from Guey and giggles before the door opened and Mr and Mrs Tempura emerged from the bathroom.

Poor Luey looked awful. Colonel Tanaka had brought along a red wig to go with the outfit and Guey had had a stab at applying lipstick and powder to his friend. Luey fully filled the cotton print dress and he might have looked just a little respectable but for his large feet. To be truthful, Guey didn't look much better. The gigantic red Hawaiian print shirt looked like a large blood clot. Together, they made a terrible couple. There was one tiny satisfaction in the fact that no one would have married either of the odd pair except the other.

"Can you at least tell us what we're doing here," said Luey.

"And tell us what we have to do to earn the bonus, Boss," said Guey.

"There's little enough you have to know at this stage," said the Colonel. "Right now, I want you to get down to the wharf and see if you can see a sailing ship named the *Saucy Nancy*. It's supposed to be a pirate ship so you'd better be well behaved. My grandfather was a pirate in the China Seas and I know how much he hated bad manners from anyone. Be on the lookout for two little girls named Katie and Emily. If you see them, don't make any comment just find out where they are staying and report back to me immediately. Now get outside and earn your keep!"

The two boys left, grumbling, and headed off the short walk to the wharf. It was a hot day and neither of the boys was used to tropical weather. They were pleased now that they had worn their big straw hats and sun glasses.

For the whole of the next week, Luey and Guey slouched around the town dressed in their resort wear. They didn't do any of things that the other Japanese tourists enjoyed: romantic candlelight dinners, trips to the surf beach or mini bus trips into the cool mountain villages. Instead, they hung about the port itself, drinking in low bars and trying to listen in on the conversations of sailors there. Colonel Tanaka had given them a copy of the newspaper photograph of the *Saucy Nancy* to identify the ship in the port; of course this was very unhelpful because Tracey Scribble at the *Cairns Post* had simply used a picture of a sailing ship she found on the Internet for the story. Every evening the boys reported to Colonel Tanaka that they had found nothing and while the Colonel blustered and threatened, he wasn't surprised. It would take a couple of weeks, he guessed, from the time he had read the newspaper report before the boat would be due. In the meantime, he ordered the two bullies to take a taxi around the bay and visit the mission station.

Colonel Tanaka was busy himself as he waited for the *Saucy Nancy* to arrive. He hired a car - a kind of van- that might be necessary if there was a load of gold to move. He visited the wharves and found the big, metal container that captain Toyota had promised him. By the best of good luck, a ship was due in a couple of days. If all worked out according to plan, the gold would be stored in the container

and on its way to Japan very soon. He bought a padlock so that he could lock the container and into it he brought some rope, water and food; the container, he knew, might be useful if he had to imprison some one while he was looking for the gold.

Colonel Tanaka spent a great deal of time loitering about the city - often watching Luey and Guey at work. He had also visited the cave where he had originally hidden the gold. It wasn't hard to find because it now appeared on tourist maps of the town. A brass plaque marked the spot, it said, where three young New Guinea men had been brutally murdered by the Japanese in the last days of the war. Colonel Tanaka sneered when he saw the memorial. He knew that the number of men who had died stealing the gold at that time was many more than three. After all, he had killed three young Japanese sailors with his own hands after they had been forced to struggle up the mountain with the gold and bury it here.

Then one evening, ten days after they had arrived, Colonel Tanaka called Luey and Guey to his room and threatened that they would be sent home immediately if they didn't make progress soon. He knew, of course, that there was nothing to find yet, but he was one of those men who enjoyed being a bully and threatening the two fat thugs gave him real pleasure. How he wished he could beat them - as he would have done the poor soldiers who served under him during the war.

Actually, if Colonel Tanaka had only looked out the window he might have seen the *Saucy Nancy* - the most beautiful ship in the South Seas - sailing gently into Itapa harbour at that moment. Instead of coming to berth in the old town, however, it nudged gently into the bay opposite the harbour.

The girls knew the place immediately. It was exactly as the photographs in the sea chest showed; exactly as the scrimshaw puzzle had pictured it. Of course the old photographs did not have the new high rise hotels and gleaming shopping malls that now stood out against the jungle green background. But there was the bay and the volcano and on the beach nearest to them, the mission station where Old Riley had been, for three or four short years, the happiest he had been anywhere in the world. On the beach was the sailing boat - the *Southern Cross* - and the mission station and the church were there as well.

The crew of the *Saucy Nancy* were excited when Captain Blackheart called them to the main mast after afternoon tea and told them that he was sorry that the boys had missed out on time ashore in Cairns and they could have plenty of time here in Itapa to make up for it. Captain Blackheart did want to reward his crew, of course, but he had his own reasons for wanting to have the crew out of the way. Nothing would draw more attention to them in port than a whole ship full of pirates out and about looking for treasure. That's why they had berthed at the mission station and not in the town harbour. The Captain was determined that he and Katie and Emily alone would search for the treasure; the boys in the crew would be brought in to move the gold once it was found but he couldn't trust any of them with the dangerous secret at this stage. Besides, Captain Blackheart was more anxious about Colonel Tanaka than he was willing to tell the girls. None of this was

mentioned as the *Saucy Nancy* dropped anchor in deep water off the mission station and the crew began to plan their shore leave.

Before anyone could go ashore, however, Captain Blackheart insisted that everyone of the crew be smartened up; this meant a wash, a shave and a change of clothes. Katie and Emily heated big cans of hot water in the galley. Wash tubs and bars of soap were brought out and the boys began their laundry- first of themselves and then, their clothes. Most of the sailors only had one change of clothes in their kit bags so it was necessary to wash the clothes they took off when they changed. Soon the masts were festooned with linen shirts, canvas pants, cotton knickers and pyjamas. Once the washing tubs had been cleared, they were pressed into another use. Katie and Emily set up their hairdressing salon on deck and began taking appointments. Despite the horrible events in Cairns during their last hurried stop, Emily had remembered to get a fresh supply of magazines for the boys to read while they waited and soon the sailors were busy gossiping about the scandalous behaviour of a lady singer who seemed to have a different fella in every new edition of the magazine.

Katie did the shaves, the hair washing and colouring; Emily did the style cuts. There were complaints from the impatient sailors that Kiwi Bill's colour rinse was holding everyone up. [He was, to be truthful, very vain about his greying hair.] Katie was busy making glasses of latte for the impatient boys; at least that calmed them down a little. As each sailor finished, Katie sprayed them with a big dab of the *Macho Marine* cologne they had pinched from the luxury yacht in the Whitsundays. Every one of the pirates protested noisily about this but no one more than Tiny who claimed that Vince and Kiwi Bill had more cologne than he had! By night fall, the boys [all spruced up and smelling very posh] were ready to go to town. Captain Blackheart inspected the crew before giving them a severe lecture about their behaviour - and about the importance of saying nothing to anyone about their reason for being in port. Once or twice poor Tiny blushed a terrible shade of red as the boys kept looking at him as the Captain spoke his warning. He particularly warned them against lady journalists and American sailors. Finally, the Captain had finished and it was time to go. As the lights came on across the harbour, the boys of the *Saucy Nancy* set out for Itapa town in the ship's dinghy with Emily rowing. She arranged to be back at the dock at 11 pm the next night. Katie cleared away their hairdressing salon and swept the deck. It was time to think about their own dinner and to plan the next day which would bring them, happily, towards the treasure. With the dinghy tied up safely at the *Saucy Nancy*, the Captain and the girls settled down to cheesy pasta - the girls' favourite- and a nice change from all the fish and chips they had enjoyed since leaving Cairns.



## Chapter 8: Solomon's Story

Over dinner that night, the girls decided with Captain Blackheart that their first stop should be Saint Peter's Mission. They would not make a fuss but would simply arrive for the morning service and look at the church from the congregation. It seemed the simplest thing to do and it certainly made for an early start; the girls were still clearing away the breakfast things when they heard the unmistakable sound of the mission bell ringing to call people to mass at 7 am. Captain Blackheart had at one time thought that he would insist that all the crew come back to the ship from their night in Itapa so he could take them all to church that Sunday morning. He argued [very wisely] that his pirate crew must have terrible sins to confess and really needed all the opportunities to go to church that might come their way. When the bell rang at 7 am, however, Captain Blackheart knew how hard the boys would be to hurry along. Church could wait for next Sunday, perhaps.

The girls and Captain Blackheart arrived at the mission church just as the first hymn was starting. They hurriedly anchored the dinghy and waded up on to the beach. Judging the flow of the tide, they expected the boat to be ready for them in a couple of hours. They were not the only late comers. As the girls and Captain Blackheart were walking in, a taxi delivered two very large Japanese tourists wearing horrible floral print clothes. These two people wore big sunglasses with their straw hats pulled down over their faces. The girls barely noticed them, however, in their haste to get into the church before the service started.

They quietly squeezed into the back pew of the long, cool building that was [as the notice board informed them] no longer the Itapa Mission but the parish church of Saint Peter's, Itapa. The palm thatched roof and bamboo construction of the photographs in Old Riley's sea chest had gone at the end of the war, burnt by Colonel Tanaka to punish the poor families there for hiding Old Riley and Solomon from him. The old church had, apparently, been rebuilt in thatch and bamboo in the sad days after the war when money was so short. That church had been wrecked in a tropical storm. It had been hastily repaired with a new thatch roof but that older building had become a kind of open walled church hall connected to the new church by a concrete path and covered walkway.

The new Saint Peter's was a splendid church - not as lovely as the old one, to be sure, but more solid and secure. The roof was made with a solid wooden frame to which palm branches had been attached as thatch. Instead of bamboo, however,

the frame of the church was made of steel and concrete blocks. There was a new organ and some lovely banners hanging up in the seasonal colours. The girls noted that most of the furniture in the church [the wooden pews and the pulpit and the altar itself] was new- probably dating from the rebuilding of the church after the war.

The girls were too busy looking at the church itself and the happy, dark skinned families who made up the congregation, to pay much attention to the hymn but they both gasped when the priest and servers came down the aisle in the opening procession. The priest was a stout, friendly looking black man with a shock of dark black hair and a wonderful smile. On the splendid green chasuble he wore was the same beautiful symbol of the Petrine keys that the girls had found at the base of the scrimshaw. As they looked around the church, they found the symbol again on the pulpit and in a big round circle on the front of the altar. It was a very large solid altar made of dark wood; the outline of the keys and the letter P had been picked out in tiny white shells. There were two little girls not much older than Katie and Emily carrying the candles in front of the priest. And carrying the cross at the head the procession was a thin, grey haired old man with a lined, sad face. He was, without any doubt, the same man whose picture the girls had found among Old Riley's treasures. This was Solomon - the person they had come so far to find. Captain Blackheart recognised him as well. When he smiled, his face lit up in the same beautiful light that filled the happy pictures Old Riley had kept safe for so many years.

You didn't have to be bursting with a hundred questions [as Katie and Emily were] to find the service a little long. The good priest [Father Enoch] preached a rousing sermon; Captain Blackheart sensibly had a little snooze through this part of the service but the girls couldn't take their eyes off Solomon. When the sermon finished, Captain Blackheart woke up and sang the offertory hymn with gusto. A small orchestra of ladies with drums kept time with the organ and sang with the deep, rich voices that made even the most dismal hymns sound wonderful. When it was time for communion, all three of the pirates knelt together at the rail to receive the bread from Fr Enoch and the wine from the chalice held in Solomon's strong, dark hands. The girls felt as if their long mission were over. Now that they had found Solomon, surely it would take only an hour or so to recover the gold. Perhaps they could find it and be on their way after the crew retuned tomorrow night.

After the service had finished everyone gathered in the hall. The tea things were set up on the old altar and as Fr Enoch chatted with the families, two wonderfully black ladies poured cups of tea. Families wandered out to talk with their friends in the shade of the beautiful rain trees on the lawn. The two Japanese tourists who had loitered outside in the porch through the service now came forward to share in the morning tea. They had a camera handy and took many photographs - including some of Katie and Emily. Captain Blackheart was a little uneasy at this but Japanese tourists, to be sure, often behaved strangely with cameras. Soon, he noticed, they were busy with their mobile 'phones. This was so very like the way Japanese tourists behaved that he began to relax. Captain Blackheart suggested to the girls that they find Solomon quietly with a minimum of fuss and ask him to



meet all three of them in the church. They found him in the vestry; Father Enoch was greeting the congregation on the lawn.

“Please, Mr Solomon,” said Katie quietly, “may we talk for a moment in private. It concerns an old friend of yours.”

Captain Blackheart knew that Solomon would probably be highly suspicious of any stranger coming to raise the matter of the lost gold. If two little girls made the approach, it was likely, the captain thought, that Solomon would be less fearful.

It was a wise move. When Katie and Emily had seated Solomon in the back of the deserted church, they said nothing but Katie took from her handbag the photographs that Old Riley had left in the sea chest. Solomon looked at each of them in turn and his eyes filled with tears. Emily took his hand in hers and the four of them sat in a deep silence for a little while. Solomon’s first words were very simple: “So my old friend is dead, then?”

Katie took the lead here and said very quietly, “He was our friend too, Mr Solomon. He was buried at sea - out beyond the reef, three weeks ago. He wanted us to come to see you, I think.”

Then, without leaving out any of the details, Katie told Solomon the whole story including even the things that the crew did not know. She told him about the scrimshaw and the map and about the pictures of the cruel Japanese officer. Solomon listened intently. He smiled broadly when Katie mentioned the scrimshaw and he instinctively picked up the photograph of his old friend carving the scrimshaw when Katie mentioned this.

“He was a good man,” said Solomon finally. “He was a very good man.”

“Were you with him in the mountains during the war?” asked Emily, “all of those years when he was hiding from the Japanese?”

Solomon stood up and led the three shipmates back into the church. Across the bay, the city of Itapa shimmered in the beautiful morning light. The green mountain ranges rose above it dramatically. “We lived up there,” said Solomon, pointing to the highest of the mountains. “We had a hut hidden in the jungle and we moved camp many times so that the Japanese would not find us. Riley could signal to Australian boats with a wireless set and when that was dangerous, I would carry information down to Itapa or to the villages on the other side of the island where there was another wireless operator. For a little while I was able to gather food for both of us in the town but then the Japanese learned that I was hiding Riley and they came looking to kill me. The Japanese officer - Colonel Tanaka - was very keen to capture us both because we had seen the massacre at the mission church when the Japanese arrived. We had seen the soldiers kill Fr Richard and Nathan and Zadok and the others. He knew that if the Japanese lost the war that he would have to answer for his wickedness. If he could find us and kill us, there would be no one to tell what happened.”

“We were always in danger. Once I was very sick and the Japanese almost discovered us. I wanted Riley to leave me and save himself but he stayed with me and nursed me better than any doctor could. He saved my life. Did Riley show you the medals that the sailors gave him after the war?” Solomon asked.

“He gave them to us when he died,” said Katie, “but he never told us what he had done in the war.”

“The medals made Riley sad,” said Solomon. “When he received them, he demanded to know why the Australian government hadn’t given me the same medals. He said that I was just as brave and had suffered just as much as he had in those dangerous times. They told him that I was only a native and that the medals were only for Australian citizens. Riley never wore the medals or told anyone about them. He said that it was unfair if I couldn’t have the same medals as he had.”

The church was quiet and very peaceful; it seemed strange to listen to the story of so much suffering and pain told in such a beautiful place. The congregation had gone home for breakfast now and Fr Enoch had interrupted them only long enough to say goodbye and ask Solomon to close up. The only people who still seemed to be about were the large Japanese couple who hung about under the rain tree.

“Mr Solomon,” said Emily, “you must know that Old Riley gave us enough information to find you and so we have. He wanted us to find the gold, I’m sure, that Colonel Tanaka stole and hid. Is it your gold or Old Riley’s? We don’t want to take it if it belongs to you.”

“All these years,” said Solomon, “I have waited for Riley to come back. He left it with me, certainly, but it is Riley’s gold - not mine. You see, things became so desperate in the last months of the war that it wasn’t safe to hide in the mountains any more. Riley asked me to take the wireless set deep into the mountains and hide it there. While I was away, he saw two submarines arrive in the harbour; he knew that this was the end of the Japanese and that the Australian navy would be here any day now.”

“In a very brave move, Riley came down from the hills in the darkness of night to see what the submarines were doing here. He recognised Colonel Tanaka on the dock and followed him into the town. He saw him take eight poor soldiers and New Guinea men to carry the four heavy boxes from the wharf. All of this was done when the town was sleeping - waiting in hope for the Australians to arrive.”

“The boxes were carried on stretchers from the hospital along the coast road to the cave on the beach and hidden there. Riley followed, moving through the jungle but keeping the beach in sight all the time. Colonel Tanaka made the soldiers dig into the sandy floor of the cave and bury the boxes. Then, on the beach in the moonlight, the colonel shot and killed every one of them. He wanted to be the only person who knew the secret hiding place. He could not know that Riley had watched him from the moment he had come ashore from the submarine.

As soon as it was light, Riley went to the cave and buried the men whom Colonel Tanaka had killed. The next day the Australian sailors arrived on a destroyer but the Colonel was gone; he was certainly not imprisoned along with all the other Japanese.”

“There were two submarines!” said Captain Blackheart. “That makes sense. The Japanese command would not have trusted one alone to bring the gold to Tokyo.”

“And if one of the submarines is sunk in the harbour here,” said Katie, “I suppose that that is how Colonel Tanaka escaped back to Japan - on the other submarine.”

“The Colonel certainly wasn’t here when the Australians arrived back,” said Solomon. “Many people wanted to see him arrested for his cruelty and searched for him. When the war finished and the Japanese went away, Riley and I moved the gold one night to a new hiding place. We decided that we would leave it there until it was time to bring it out again. Perhaps that time has come now.”

“There is something else, Mr Solomon,” said Katie. “Captain Blackheart believes that Colonel Tanaka may still be alive and looking for the gold.”

“Oh, yes,” said Solomon, “that’s very possible. He came back after the war - at least once, you know - and found that the gold had been moved from the cave. He was furious; he looked all over the island and he was particularly keen to find me. He believed that I had taken the gold for myself. Even though I helped Riley hide the gold again, it was always Riley’s treasure. I could never forget how many people had died to steal and hide it and I didn’t want their blood on my hands. I think Riley felt very much the same way. Why else would he leave it so long before he came back to claim his treasure?”

“He must have thought,” said Solomon, “that you little girls would be able to find the gold and take it with clean hands. I will be pleased to show you where it is hidden.”

And that is just what would have happened, I think, but at that moment, two horribly dressed Japanese tourists burst into the church with guns drawn. Behind them was an old, villainous looking Japanese man with a terrible smile on his face. “Get on the ground,” he screamed. “Get down, or I will shoot you all, beginning with the girls!” Then he gave some orders to the other two in Japanese and before they could do anything to prevent it, Katie and Emily, Captain Blackheart and Solomon were on the ground, their hands tied and canvas sacks over their heads.



## Chapter 9: Katie's Clever Plan

All four of the friends knew immediately that they were in terrible danger. Solomon recognised Colonel Tanaka immediately; Katie, Emily and Captain Blackheart did not need to be told who this violent and dangerous Japanese man was. They all knew that he had killed many times already to secure the gold. He had sacrificed the lives of his own soldiers; he wouldn't hesitate for a moment, they knew, to kill any one of them.

In the back of the van, hurtling along the road that led around the bay to the city wharves, all four of the friends struggled against their bonds. Guey and Luey had done their work well, however, and escape was simply impossible. The girls were angry more than frightened. They trusted Captain Blackheart and the crew completely; as soon as Tiny and Vince and Kiwi Bill and all the crew knew what had happened, they would be rescued for certain. Captain Blackheart was a little more sensible in his fear. The crew were all enjoying their leave in Itapa. They were not due back until 11 pm that night. The dinghy that was to meet them was now on the beach in front of the mission church. Much could happen between now and then, Solomon was probably the most frightened of all. He had seen Colonel Tanaka kill many times. Of the four friends, he was probably the most likely to be spared -but only until the gold were found. After all, he was the only one who knew where it was.

Katie and Emily tried to whisper to each other or to Captain Blackheart but every time any one of them made the tiniest sound, Guey would smash into the sack with his heavy fist. There were so many things that Emily was wanting to say; she hated bullies and she hated being bullied. She wanted to tell these bullies how mean and nasty they were. More than anything she wanted to tell these fat Japanese tourists exactly how awful they looked in their resort clothes. But all of that would have to wait for the moment she could open her mouth without Guey punching her. Luey, of course, was driving the van. It must have been a fine sight that Sunday morning to see a fat Japanese lady in a floral print dress driving a van at high speed around the bay.

Captain Blackheart and Solomon probably knew before the girls that the ugly tourists were in every bit as much danger as they were. They had been useful to Colonel Tanaka to go about the port at Itapa and spy for him; they had been useful when it came to frightening old Solomon and the little girls with guns [so brave!] and they would be useful when it came to carrying the boxes of gold back to the container on the wharf. But as soon as the gold was safely stored, their lives

would be worth nothing more to Colonel Tanaka than the poor soldiers and the New Guinea men who had carried the gold on stretchers to the cave so many years ago.

The wharf was quiet on a Sunday morning and the van was able to drive right up to the container on the wharf and open its doors; in just a moment, the four sacks had been dumped in the back of the container and the doors locked behind them. Then one by one, each of the sacks was opened and the poor prisoners brought out. Luey pushed a nasty smelling rag into each mouth to stop anyone from crying out; Guey pushed each of them to the floor. Their feet and hands were tied with cruel rope. The container was lit by a single light bulb which threw a dismal, sickly glow in a pool beneath it. The corners of the container were a gloomy darkness but they could all make out a big pile of coconuts piled to the top of the container box. It took up fully half the box. The girls' eyes blinked in the sudden light. It was suffocatingly hot.

Colonel Tanaka stood above them, swaggering with hands on hips, a note of absolute triumph in his voice. For over fifty years he had waited for this moment. Now that it had come he was possessed by a terrible sense of anger and hatred for the Mission boys and the young New Guinea men who had robbed him of the gold at the end of the war.

Colonel Tanaka spoke in English. It was the only language that all of the prisoners understood. "I know who the black boy is," said the Colonel. "I hunted Solomon for years through the war- and after it when I came back to look for the gold. Now here he is, at my feet - at my mercy. The two girls, I suppose, are the vicious and dangerous Katie and Emily Bland. That's how the *Cairns Post* described them, at least. And I suppose this one"- here Colonel Tanaka kicked Captain Blackheart in the thigh- "must be the famous Captain Blackheart."

Katie and Emily seethed in anger and couldn't help but struggle against the tight ropes that held them firm. They hated the way the Colonel spoke of Solomon as a boy; he wasn't much younger than the Colonel himself. And anyone who would kick their Captain - the person they loved most in the world - would have to answer for it sooner or later. Even in their anger, however, they felt a tiny sadness too for this old man who had carried this terrible greed in his heart for so long. Solomon and Old Riley had obviously let that feeling go long ago.

"Stand the boy up!" the Colonel commanded in Japanese and Huey and Guey forced Solomon to his feet. The Colonel pulled the rag from his mouth and spoke to Solomon with cold, quiet anger.

"You will tell me now, Solomon, where the gold is hidden. If you do not, I will kill your little friends here and their Captain. And then I will kill you. We are right on the wharf. My companions here are eager to do just that - and throw your miserable bodies into the harbour for the sharks to eat."

To the girls' great surprise and admiration, Solomon was wonderfully calm and gentle. "I know you well enough, Colonel Tanaka," he said evenly. "I have seen you

kill Fr Richard and the good people at the mission when the soldiers came. I have seen you kill anyone of my people during the war who helped me and Riley. And I have seen you kill your own soldiers in those last terrible days when you brought the gold from Singapore. Do your two young Japanese thugs know what danger they are in? Before you are finished, you will kill them too, I suppose.”

Colonel Tanaka’s face twitched for a moment before he barked an order at Guey who swung his fist powerfully into Solomon’s face, breaking his glasses.

“The next blow like that will be to one of the girls,” said the Colonel coldly. The little one, I think.” Emily growled through her gag. Katie could see Captain Blackheart’s face cloud over with the most terrible anger.

Solomon remained, however, wonderfully calm. “There is no need to hurt anyone - certainly not one of the girls. I will show you where the gold is to be found. You can have it - but you must first let the girls go.”

The Colonel gave another order in his angry, vicious voice and Guey struck again - this time to Solomon’s belly. The old man doubled up in pain and the Colonel stepped forward and grabbed him by the hair, pulling him upright.

“I give the orders now, Solomon! You do not tell me what to do. You will show me where the gold is now - that is your only chance of saving yourself or anyone. Until the gold is safe here in this container and loaded on the *Bento Maru*, no one will go anywhere.”

When he could stand up again, Solomon nodded his head sadly. Katie hoped that she could see something hopeful in his kind old face.

The Colonel gave another command and Solomon was thrown down and the rag pushed back into his mouth. “We will come back later and you, Solomon, will lead us to the gold. In the meantime, you will wait and think about how best to serve me if you want to survive into tomorrow.” Emily squealed her anger behind the gag and the Colonel kicked her as he went to leave. There was some cruel laughter from the two Japanese boys before another order was barked out; the light was turned out and the three Japanese left the poor captives locked inside the container.

I won’t tell you how hot and terrible that long day was. The girls and their Captain had been to early morning mass and even given the long sermon and the talk with Solomon they had been captured in mid morning. At the very latest it must be eleven o’clock now. The Japanese had been lucky that it was Sunday and the wharf was so quiet when they arrived. Without being told, every one of the poor captives understood that the Japanese would have to wait for darkness before they returned and Solomon was forced to lead them to the gold. A long, very hot and uncomfortable day stretched ahead of them and just thinking about it made every one fearful. The container was made of metal and in the tropical sun, the heat was terrible. Everyone was feeling thirsty and once the anger had washed out of them, they began to feel very fearful in the darkness.

The first thing that the four friends did was struggle across the floor and sit together against the cooler side of the container. There was something just a little comforting about being next to a friend in the darkness. The girls had been in difficult moments before but this was certainly the worst they could remember. As their eyes became accustomed to the darkness, they realised that there was a tiny vent in the top of the container that let in some little air. It was not wide enough for even Emily to crawl through [their first thought, of course] - even if they could somehow get out of the tight ropes which tied their hands behind their backs. Katie was squeezed between Captain Blackheart and Solomon and it gave her a wonderful sense of hope when she felt Solomon twist his body so that he could touch her hand with his. Then he was struggling to his feet and turning his back to her, feeling in the darkness for Katie's face. His fingers felt in the darkness for her mouth and with a leap of excitement, Katie guessed his purpose and pressed her mouth into his tied hands. With great effort, Solomon managed to pull the nasty rag from Katie's mouth and she took in great gulps of the hot close air before breaking the horrible silence with a cry of joy.

The four friends had no idea how long the Japanese would be gone so they worked as hard as they could for the next half hour to free each of them from the gags that Huey and Luey had tied into their mouths. Everyone was delighted that at last they could breathe easily and talk. Their spirits rose and now that they could talk they could make some kind of plan for the future.

As you can imagine, the first thing was to work on the ropes that bound their hands and feet. This was much more difficult than removing the gags but after an hour and a half of frantic effort, Katie had been able to loosen the knots that held Emily's hands in place. Afterwards when the adventure was all over and the girls could laugh about that terrible morning, Katie said many times that she was glad that Huey and Luey had been bullies from the floor of the zipper factory - and not real pirates. True pirates, of course, are real sailors and know everything there is to know about tying knots. All the same, the bullies had strength and it took Katie a long and anxious time to slip the knots on Emily's hands. She had to do it standing up and facing away from her sister and just feeling for the knot with her fingers because both girls were still tied up when all of this was happening.

Once one person's hands were untied, it was relatively easy to free the rest. All the time, they talked. They tried to recall every detail they could of the three men who had captured them. They recalled the dinghy they had left behind on the beach and hoped that the anchor would hold and it would not float away when the tide came in. They thought of the crew from the *Saucy Nancy* who would be enjoying their shore leave - and would be assembling at 11 pm that night on the wharf in the expectation that Katie or Emily would meet them with the dinghy to take them home to their boat. These were easy things to consider; much more difficult was managing the return of the Japanese. There were three of the Japanese and four of the friends tied in the container but the villains had guns and were not frightened to use them - at least Colonel Tanaka wasn't. Katie had watched the two young Japanese carefully and was almost certain that there were moments when they were just a little shamed by some of the things that the

Colonel ordered them to do. When Guey had struck Solomon to break his glasses, Luey had winced and hung his head in something like shame.

Katie untied Emily first and then together they had worked on the knots that captured Captain Blackheart. Guey and Luey had been particularly cruel there because he was, they reckoned, the most dangerous of the four. After all, they thought, how much risk could two little girls and one old man pose to brave young men like them? It took a long time to free the captain but as the afternoon wore on, they finally managed it. As they worked, Katie suggested that the time to turn on the thugs was not when they came to get Solomon at darkness but later - when they would be excited or distracted by the prospect of sharing in the treasure. In fact, Katie suggested, it would be foolish to let the Japanese know that they had managed to lose their gags and untie their ropes.

Solomon - brave, kind and fearless- told the girls to leave his knots alone. The bullies would come for him first and if they found that his knots had been tampered with, the Japanese would know that the friends had begun their escape. Captain Blackheart could see the truth of this immediately and agreed that that might be the best way. If, as they expected, the Japanese took Solomon away and they returned with the gold then that would be the moment to strike. Until then, they had to make the Japanese feel as confident as they could.

Each one of them was thinking of how they could possibly escape. This troubled Katie and Emily much less than it did captain Blackheart and Solomon. They never imagined that Colonel Tanaka and his horrible goons would succeed because they never for a moment lost their faith in Captain Blackheart. He would rescue them - one way or another. But Captain Blackheart, no matter how bravely he spoke, was inwardly very fearful. He and Solomon insisted that in the little time they had to plan their escape they should consider fighting back so that the girls at least could escape. With his voice shaking a little, the Captain tried to make Katie and Emily promise that if they could get away and Captain Blackheart could not that they were to take the *Saucy Nancy* back to Cairns and leave him there.

“And you must promise me too, that you will do exactly as I tell you if we fight with the Japanese tonight,” the Captain said sternly. “Even if I tell you to run when you want to stay and fight! You must do exactly as I say as soon as I say it.”

At first the girls wouldn't listen; they couldn't think of a world without their friends and to leave any one of them behind was impossible. But Captain Blackheart insisted that they give him their promise to do as he wanted. Finally, they did as the Captain asked - both of them hoping that they would never be held to their promise.

It was the one moment in that awful day in which both little girls came close to crying. They had no intention of leaving anyone - or the gold, for that matter! Emily squeezed the Captain's hand and Katie put her head on his shoulder and kissed him. It was probably good at that point that the container was so dark that the girls couldn't see the Captain's face.



Solomon took a different line. Suppose that in the fight that all of them got away but not together? They should plan to meet back at Saint Peter's. It was, he insisted, the place where the whole mystery would be solved.

With the evening light failing, they realised gloomily that the Japanese could be back soon. It was time to go back into their horrible bonds. For the next weary hour then, Katie and Emily patiently worked in the darkness to retie the knots on the three sailors to make them appear whole. These girls knew exactly what they were doing because they were, after all, real sailors and had learned from Old Riley everything there was to know about knots. They could tie knots in the dark on board ship in a cyclone so these knots were not nearly as challenging. Their new knots probably looked tough but were actually simple slip affairs that could be easily undone. Katie was last to be retied and it was obviously difficult for the friends to make these last knots look real but finally it was done. It was dark and they hoped that the Japanese, in their eagerness to get out and collect the gold, would not notice.

The worst thing was pushing the horrible gags back into their mouths. The gags tasted spiteful and the friends couldn't be sure in the darkness that they had used the gags that had originally been used on each of them. All of them, however, allowed themselves to hope that the next few hours would bring their release.

The girls might have been a little less confident if they had known how long the evening would be. The tiny window at the top of the container let in a chink of light during the daylight hours; when it grew dark outside, the clear sunshine was replaced by the grim orange glow of the wharf light. The four friends thought that the Japanese would return soon after darkness fell and steeled themselves for this to happen. The night was quiet and every movement on the wharf seemed to echo through the metal box of the container. There were the plops and splashes of the harbour beneath them; they heard music in the distance from a pub near the wharf and there was occasional traffic nearby but no familiar roar and squeak of the sinister van returning to the container. The delay annoyed the girls but it made Captain Blackheart and Solomon more afraid for their safety. Colonel Tanaka was clearly waiting for the town to quieten down before he went looking for the gold. At some time, despite their discomfort and fear, the girls fell asleep.



## Chapter 10: What Happened at the Buffet.

While the girls, Captain Blackheart and Solomon sweated it out in the container on that long, awful afternoon, Colonel Tanaka, Guey and Luey were enjoying themselves immensely. The Colonel was impatient. He was so close to finding the treasure after all these years and for some minutes he had to fight to control his impulse to return to the container and beat Solomon until he told him where the gold was hidden. He needed time to think and to plan what to do once the gold was safely his. Guey and Luey did not know it but what the Colonel was planning was a way to make sure that they did not return to Japan alive.

When Luey and Guey left the container wharf, they believed that their job was finished. Colonel Tanaka had never told them directly that he was looking for the lost treasure of Itapa - only that they were needed to catch two dangerous girls and anyone with them. They had done this and their first thought was of the Sunday brunch buffet at the hotel. They had seen it advertised in Japanese in the hotel foyer and as they had had to start the day so early, both of the boys were ravenous. They were thirsty, too. Colonel Tanaka had bossed them around terribly during what should have been a holiday. Now that they had finished the job, they intended to enjoy a few bottles of sake with their brunch and then go to the pool for more drinks.

Apart from swearing them to secrecy, the Colonel was happy to have the two dim thugs off the scene for a little while. He had Luey park the car in the hotel car park and he went in the lift to his room - but only long enough to give the two boys time to find their way to the buffet. He walked out of the hotel and back to the wharf. At the container, he listened for anything that might indicate trouble but all was silence. Inside, the four friends were still trussed up tightly. The Colonel smiled when he remembered Guey's big fist smashing into Solomon's face to break his glasses.

It was a short walk down the wharf to the *Bento Maru* and when Colonel Tanaka came on board he found the captain busy enjoying his own Sunday lunch. The Colonel was pleased with what he learned; the ship was almost loaded and would be leaving early next morning on the tide. The Colonel arranged for the captain to have his container put aboard just before the ship steamed out of harbour. His container box would not be packed and loaded with coconuts, the Colonel insisted,

until late that night. Back in his hotel room, the Colonel called the Japan Airlines office to book a Business Class seat on the flight that left Itapa the next afternoon. He also cancelled the reservations for the Economy Class seats of Guzenko Sushi and Lukihiro Sashimi. They would not be needing their return tickets.

Colonel Tanaka's plan was simple. When the gold was delivered to the container, he would either kill Solomon, the girls and the Captain himself or have Guey and Luey do this. Then he himself would shoot his two Japanese bullies. The six bodies could accompany the gold back to Japan and be delivered from the port in Yokohama to his zipper factory in Tokyo. It would be easy enough then to dispose of the bodies.

Colonel Tanaka decided at this point that he would enjoy his own lunch in the Harbour View dining room on the top floor of the Itapa Sofitel of the hotel. It was altogether more grand than the buffet restaurant downstairs where Guey and Luey were working their way through the various dishes and ordering more and more sake as the afternoon progressed. In the harbour view room there were yellow roses on the table, elegant silver and crisp white table linen. The Colonel was pleased. He ordered lobster and champagne and as he dined, he could only think how clever he was and how rich he would be - rich beyond his wildest dreams. While he waited for his pudding he used a pencil to calculate how much all that gold was worth today. He had had to wait a long time but he guessed that the gold was now worth almost thirty million dollars. He would not have to share a single yen of it with anyone. He was particularly pleased that he could see the *Saucy Nancy* at anchor in the bay. He would be home in Japan, he thought, before the crew realised that their captain and their cabin boys were never coming home. And far in the distance across the bay was the unmistakable outline of Saint Peter's church - brilliantly white against the jungle green hills. The parish would need a new deacon, the Colonel assumed with a chuckle, once Solomon were dead.

Down in the buffet restaurant, the poor staff were having a difficult time. Just before closing time there were only a few guests left loitering at the tables. At a table near the buffet were two Japanese tourists wearing awful resort clothes. The larger of the two appeared to be a lady in a red and white Hawaiian print dress. Her companion was a fat man - or rather a fat boy. Neither of the two tourists looked [or acted] like the shy honeymoon couples who usually used the hotel. The greedy pair had eaten an enormous lunch but they seemed keen to stay on and eat even more.

At another table, a young, blond woman was dining with a bright young man who wore his sun glasses lifted back on to his curly brown hair. The young man was very busy with the excellent buffet; the blond had brought a newspaper with her to the table and while she picked at her salad, she read the newspaper right through. She was, however, extremely alert and looking about her. Every now and then she would reach for her note book and pencil to jot down a thought or idea as it came to her. The young man had a large kit bag at his feet and in between eating the buffet, he would look at his expensive camera and test the room for light.

The rest of the tables were being cleared and the staff were beginning to pack up the buffet when three scruffy looking men of dangerous appearance came nosily into the restaurant and took a table overlooking the pool. They couldn't have looked any more scruffy if they had been out all night partying in the pubs along the waterfront before turning up to have a very late lunch at the hotel - which is exactly what these three men had done. One of the three was a Maori looking gentleman with large and prominent tattoos. Another was a weasely sort of character with a pot belly and nicely coloured hair. The third was a very large man with broad shoulders and strong muscles that rippled over his chest and brawny arms. You will know them, of course, as Imoteph, Kiwi Bill and Sebastian McWhirter - or more probably, as Tiny. And they were certainly hungry and began quickly to charge their plates from the dwindling buffet. An observant person in the restaurant that day might have noticed that the pretty blond guest suddenly became very interested in her newspaper and held it up in front of her to read a story.

The cooks at the buffet worked in a galley behind the hot plates of food and seeing the appetites on the newly arrived guests immediately got to work grilling some more steak, fish and chicken. [These guests certainly looked as if they were not going to settle for the salad bar!] The cooks were fast but not fast enough. Imoteph and Kiwi Bill filled their plates but when Tiny reached the *bain marie* dish with the salmon pieces, there were only two left. Ahead of him in the buffet queue was the very large fat lady tourist in a red print dress and with a sneer at Tiny, she scooped both pieces on to her plate.

It was not a wise thing to do - and Luey wished many times afterwards that he had not been so greedy. But as Guey pointed out, those two pieces of salmon probably saved their lives. At that moment, Tiny was not himself. Despite his promises to Captain Blackheart, he had been tempted in the pubs to drink more than he should and he was certainly a little drunk. Imoteph and Kiwi Bill had both taken two pieces of salmon themselves; it would have been simple enough to ask them for one of their slices until the cook had refilled the plate. But the smirk on the face of the ugly Japanese woman and the sneer of her equally awful companion snapped a nerve in the pirate. He had left his cutlass on board the *Saucy Nancy*, of course. [Captain Blackheart had sent Emily around with a big tin washing up tub to collect all armaments before the dinghy with all the crew was allowed to leave the ship for the town.] Tiny did the next best thing; with his fork, he simply reached across and scooped up one of the pieces of fish from the lady's plate and popped it straight in his mouth. It may have been less offensive to the Japanese if Kiwi Bill and Imoteph hadn't laughed quite so loudly.

Tiny was a little drunk but so was Luey; that's the only thing that can explain what happened next. Luey stormed back to his table, shouting in anger. It was just as well at this moment that none of the pirate boys spoke Japanese because Luey used some terrible language. He put his plate down and reached for his handbag. The three sailors stopped laughing when this very ugly lady pulled a pistol from the handbag and fired. The shot missed Tiny and his friends by metres but it almost collected the blond lady, putting a clean hole right through her newspaper before coming to rest in a coconut palm tree in the garden. The poor staff in the hotel

dining room screamed in fear; there was a second shot which might have hit any of the pirates if they hadn't flung themselves on the floor a moment before. There was no third shot because Tiny -moving faster than you could imagine so large a man could move- sprung from the floor and seized the dangerous Japanese lady in a wrestling hold. Despite her size, Tiny lifted her into the air and ran for the door; with a single, mighty effort, he threw the woman across the fence and into the swimming pool. He was astonished to find himself holding the lady's hair in his hand when she hit the water. She was still holding the gun and rose to the surface spluttering and waving the pistol.

Imoteph, who was rather impressed by his friend's quick thinking, was less fuddled by drink and the sailors were lucky that he was. Even though everyone was looking at Tiny, Imoteph was very conscious of the large Japanese man who had sprung to his feet when his companion fired the gun. He was also reaching into his jacket pocket for a gun when Imoteph scooped him up. Being a little smaller and less enraged than his ship mate, Imoteph couldn't throw this gentleman through the air but he did manage to dump him head first into the pool beside his spluttering lady friend.

Now the waiters and cooks all cheered! At that moment, the Restaurant Manager came running in with six large black Itapa police officers. Everyone in the dining room who saw the size of the Japanese lady was filled with wonder and admiration for Tiny's strength. No one was more impressed than the blond lady with the newspaper who rushed forward and hugged Tiny in relief at her rescue from what looked like certain death. And now Kiwi Bill and Imoteph certainly did laugh - and poor Tiny went brick red - for the lady at the table was [as you must have guessed] none other than Miss Tracey Scribble - investigative journalist for the *Cairns Post* newspaper. And recording the whole incident on film was her companion, Rodney Flash - the young man with the camera and the sunglasses in the buffet restaurant

It seems that the story about pirate treasure and cabin boys on board the *Saucy Nancy* that Miss Scribble had written found its way to the world on a very slow news day. While the girls were at sea headed for the green waters of Papua New Guinea, the story made its way first to the southern papers, then to morning television in Australia and finally overseas. Tracey's editor at the *Cairns Post* was determined to follow up the story and had Tracey rewrite and retell the story several times - without, of course, having anything more to say. [Journalists and editors are good at this.] Finally, he sent Tracey and a young photographer to Itapa to see whether the girls and the *Saucy Nancy* had arrived. The *Saucy Nancy* was easy enough to find because it was moored in the bay in full view of the town and Tracey and her photographer had rented a rowing boat and rowed over that morning to see if they could meet the girls again. [Secretly Tracey was hoping to find Tiny and charm all the details out of him.] When they reached the *Saucy Nancy*, however, there seemed to be no one on board. They could not know that the crew were enjoying themselves in the pubs of Itapa and that Captain Blackheart and his cabin boys were locked in a foul container on the docks. But here, in her arms, was the very man she had been looking for.

Tiny might have been flustered- and he was wise to be very cautious with Miss Scribble- but at that moment, she proved to have more sense than any of the sailors. The arrival of the police meant that everyone was now safe but like police everywhere, they were sure to ask questions and make things warm for Tiny, Imoteph and Kiwi Bill. Without waiting a moment, Miss Scribble was leading Rodney and Tiny to the lift, with the others following. They went briskly and with no fuss and managed to escape without anyone noticing their going. Everyone - and it was a large crowd by now - was concentrating on the two badly dressed Japanese floundering in the water. The lady, it appears, was not a lady at all and other Japanese tourists with a sense of the moment produced their cameras and recorded the whole event for their friends at home.

The news of the shooting in the buffet restaurant reached even to the harbour view room on the top of the Sofitel. Excited staff deserted the place to see the fun and while Colonel Tanaka noticed their going he missed the sense of their excited chatter. Then a sudden cold feeling interrupted his smug happiness. He left his pudding on the table and headed for the lift; he arrived in the foyer just as the six police officers were frog marching two sopping wet Japanese honeymooners out to the waiting police vans. At that moment, the bright sunshine suddenly seemed to cloud over and Colonel Tanaka felt every one of his eighty-five years.



## Chapter 11: The Lost Gold of Itapa

Colonel Tanaka went back to his hotel room white with rage. These two stupid boys had ruined everything. Without their muscle, how could he beat Solomon into telling him where the gold was hidden? How could he move the gold once he found it? All those years of patient searching and waiting now seemed to come to nothing.

He could, I suppose, have gone to the police station and tried to have the two boys released into his care. But there would be awkward questions to answer. What was Luey doing wearing a dress? Just why were they pretending to be a honeymoon couple? And what was Colonel Tanaka planning to do with these two young men? No. He would leave them to the tender mercies of the Itapa Police Force. At least he believed that the two goons knew little of his purpose in Itapa and would probably remain silent until he was safely away.

Colonel Tanaka paced up and down his room, ignoring the beautiful view across the harbour. He had brought with him from Japan the uniform he had worn as a Colonel in the Japanese Imperial Army. Old and stained it had nevertheless been kept always cleaned and ironed and ready; Colonel Tanaka had planned to wear it tonight to celebrate his great victory. It now looked forlorn on the bed in his hotel room. Beside the uniform was the beautiful curved sword which had belonged to his great grandfather. He had carried the sword through the war and used it, too, when he took the gold so many years ago.

As he looked out across the harbour to the *Saucy Nancy* riding so beautifully in the bay a terrible plan formed in his mind. If he could not use the muscle of Luey and Guey to find and move the gold he would use the captives themselves. And if that were not possible, he would kill them all anyway. If he couldn't have the gold, no one would have it. He picked up the sword and felt the blade. It was sharp and keen and ready to use.

Now the Colonel did as Guey and Luey had done: he turned for comfort and encouragement to the sake bottle. The Colonel had brought a bottle of the finest sake from Japan with him; he had planned to drink it that night after the gold had been recovered. He needed it now, however, and he warmed the expensive bottle

in the hand basin of his bathroom and then opened it. The liquid was soft and powerful; he began to feel better after only two small glasses. He must wait for darkness and for late evening. He had waited patiently for fifty years; he could wait out the evening now.

In her hotel room on the floor below, Tracey Scribble and Rodney Flash were doing their very best to get a story out of Tiny. I think that he might have answered any of their questions if Imoteph and Kiwi Bill hadn't been there to protect him. These two shipmates were more worldly wise than their friend. They had been shearers together in New Zealand before coming to Australia where Kiwi Bill had belonged to a famous motor cycle gang. In Australia, they had worked on removal vans together until they had an unfortunate experience with a tow truck operator and they had decided at rather short notice to join Captain Blackheart's crew. Both the boys loved their life on the sea and both of them loved the girls as great friends. They didn't want to do anything [or let Tiny say anything] that might injure the girls' chances of collecting their treasure.

None of the sailors was really concerned when Tracey and Rodney told them that they had been to the *Saucy Nancy* and no one was there. But Rodney's photographs of the boat and Saint Peter's in the distance clearly showed the dinghy beached on the muddy shore. That must be where they were, they reasoned. Imoteph was uneasy. No true sailor would let his boat run aground like that. Kiwi Bill and Tiny noticed it too and Tracey picked up immediately on their fear. She offered to drive them all back to the church. She was hoping to find the girls with the treasure. What a photograph that would make!

It was a tight fit in Tracey's rented car even though the drive around the bay only took twenty minutes. Tiny, of course, had to sit in the front and Rodney's big camera bag took up a lot of the room in the back seat. At the church, there was nothing to be seen and no sign of the girls or Captain Blackheart. Father Enoch was putting out the prayer books for Evensong but he was pleased to talk briefly to the little group. Yes, there had been two little girls and a captain in the morning congregation. In fact, he was almost certain that they disappeared after morning tea - at the same time that a pair of badly dressed Japanese tourists had been looking around the church.

The three crew members from the *Saucy Nancy* were a little more concerned now. They knew that the Captain was frightened that a Japanese soldier from the war would discover what they were doing. Two tourists were surely a different matter. They waited with the dinghy until darkness fell. Evensong came and went and still no sign of the Captain and the girls. Everyone now was getting more anxious.

The only commitment they had to hang on to was the rendezvous time of 11 pm on the docks when Katie or Emily would come to collect the crew in the dinghy - now pulled up on to the beach. It seemed increasingly unlikely that that would happen now - and the girls were never late for anything! With a heavy heart, the five of them returned to the hotel to wait. Something would turn up, they hoped, at 11 o'clock. Tiny was all for going to have a drink but Imoteph and Kiwi Bill were much more cautious. They took their friend back to town but only to collect the crew by



ones and twos from the waterfront pubs. No one must be late. Tracey and Rodney would meet them at the docks at 11 pm as well.

Now we must go back to the container and the four friends waiting fearfully for the return of the Japanese. I think everyone except Solomon dozed for some time; it was so hard in that close, hot box to stay awake and alert. Finally they heard the sound of the van, the slamming of a car door [but only one, Captain Blackheart noted] and then the scraping of the metal door at the end of the container. The light was turned on and there was Colonel Tanaka dressed in his uniform, his sword at his side and his face livid with anger. Solomon knew that face; it had haunted his dreams for many years. The four friends turned their backs to the container wall, anxious to hide the knots they had substituted for the ones tied by Guey and Luey.

“Your time has come,” the Colonel said simply. He wrenched the gag from the black man’s mouth. “Solomon, tell me where the gold is hidden and even now I will spare you and all your friends. If you hesitate or lie to me, I will have no mercy.” Here, Colonel Tanaka took his great sword out of its scabbard and held it threateningly over each of them in turn.

“I know all about your mercy, Colonel Tanaka,” said Solomon simply. “I saw you burn my church and kill the good priest who loved and helped us all. I saw you kill your own young soldiers so that no one else alive would know where the gold is hidden. It is not worth another life; you are welcome to all the joy it may bring you. I will take you to the gold. It is hidden on the other side of the bay but I will not show you where until I know the girls are safely gone. Where are your fat boys with the guns - the ones who broke my glasses and beat me? You plan to kill them, I suppose, once they have lifted the gold for you. But they should be here now. You will need all their power to persuade me while the girls are still your prisoners.”

Colonel Tanaka’s face lit up in a terrible sneer. “You will tell me before the night is out - but not on your terms. I wonder how you will feel, Solomon, watching these little girls suffer for you.” Colonel Tanaka raised his sword and held it over Emily. It was, of course, the worst thing that he could have done. As soon as the Colonel appeared alone, every one of the four friends knew that the situation had changed greatly. They had made their plan to meet again at Saint Peter’s if they could escape and that is what they would do. But if any of them were to get away, they would have to move quickly. Katie was out of the ropes holding her hands first and as soon as the Colonel raised his sword to Emily, she struggled free. Captain Blackheart, his heart pumping in anger raised his feet as hard and as fast as he could and knocked the sword out of the Colonel’s hands. It gave them just enough time as the Colonel went for his gun. Katie’s hands were free and she seized the first thing that she could reach - a big coconut - and heaved it as hard as she could. The gun went off, the bullet echoing around the box dangerously. Captain Blackheart was free now but instead of attacking Colonel Tanaka, he was bustling the girls towards the door of the container.

“Run,” he shouted! “Run now!”

The girls wanted to stay and fight but the Captain was pushing them even as he shouted and in a moment they were tumbling out into the cool evening air and running as fast as they could in the darkness. They heard another shot. The wharf was velvety black away from the orange glow of the one light over the container. They could feel the splintery planks of the wharf below their feet and then suddenly without warning the wharf was gone and they were falling into inky blackness. With a mighty splash, they hit the warm water. In the water, they found one another and laughed and cried at the same time. They were alive and away from the horrible container box but their friends were still in the most real danger. Above them they heard the container door slam, some shouting and then a van starting up. What was happening? They could see another light at the dock steps some distance away and the two girls swam towards it. They tried not to think of sharks or stingrays or broken bottles or any of the other things that they knew lurked under the wharves. Afterwards, Emily said that the thing she was most angry about at that moment was that she had worn her best dress to mass that morning and now it would be soiled in the sea water. It was just another thing that Colonel Tanaka had ruined! At last they came to the dock and struggled up the steps wet and bedraggled. All of a sudden, there was a flash of light, then another and another! And there on the steps were the crew of the *Saucy Nancy*.

“Well, Katie and Emily,” said Tiny running forward to hug them, “you’re right on time!” Rodney Flash made sure that he captured this precious moment for the readers of the *Cairns Post*. Tiny was right; the girls were never late!

It took only moments for the girls to tell their story. They could not say for certain whether the Captain were alive or dead but the girls retold again and again that night how Captain Blackheart had sacrificed himself for their escape. Whatever happened, they had to get to Saint Peter’s as soon as possible. The girls lead the crew back to the container on the wharf; they were frightened when they pushed aside the door at what they might find there but the container was empty and far as they could see in the poor light, there was nothing there except the ropes that the girls had escaped from and the coconuts piled into the back of the box.

What to do now? There were fifteen members of the crew plus Rodney and Tracey. They had the hire car, of course but that would only carry four or five of them and neither of the journalists was keen to face Colonel Tanaka with only a camera for protection. Now most ordinary people might have thought of calling the police - or even whistling up a taxi- but the crew of the *Saucy Nancy* were made of sterner stuff than that. They were sailors and could put to sea in any kind of boat and manage it well enough. And they were pirates and the harbour was full of beautiful boats. Nothing could be simpler.

This is where Kiwi Bill made himself the hero of the night. There were several beautiful motor cruisers in the harbour; very near them was an elegant ocean going motor boat that could comfortably hold them all. The owners were enjoying a candle lit dinner in the Harbour View Restaurant at the Sofitel and would be very concerned on their return to find that their boat was gone. As Kiwi Bill said, however, this was a matter of life or death. Emily volunteered to swim to it and

take it in hand. She was already wet; the harbour water wasn't cold and she was prepared to do anything that would speed up the rescue of her friends.

At this point, Tracey Scribble and Rodney Flash wondered what they should do. They were loving being part of the news instead of just reporting it but what was happening at this moment looked very much like stealing. If they went along with the pirates, would they be guilty of stealing too? In the confusion of the wharf as they waited for Emily to swim the boat in, Tracey stepped back into the shadows and used her mobile telephone to call her editor in Cairns. It was very late at night and he wasn't very pleased to be woken up but the story she quickly told was electrifying. He gave a very simple instruction to the two journalists: stay with the action at all costs. Rodney should take as many photographs as he could. Steer clear of bullets and knives. And, the editor promised, he would call the police in Itapa and warn them to go as quickly as they could to Saint Peter's.

Once the crew was on board, Kiwi Bill used all the skills he had learned in the motor cycle gang to start the engine without a key. Soon it was throbbing with life and while Colonel Tanaka had a good start on them, they were soon churning through the still harbour waters for the other side of the bay. They stopped briefly at the *Saucy Nancy*; Katie climbed the rope ladder on the side of the boat and quickly found the tin tub with all the boys' weapons that Emily had collected before they had been allowed to go ashore. They would come in handy tonight. They set off again; it was a powerful boat and they covered the mile or so of the bay very quickly. Katie gave out the weapons she had collected in the tub and appointed Tiny, Imoteph and Kiwi Bill as the commanders of the attack. They would lead the pirates against Colonel Tanaka; the girls would find Solomon and Captain Blackheart. They felt the speedboat touch the sandy bottom of the bay and then run aground. This was it! In a moment, they would be over the side and need all their courage but, Katie and Emily hoped, their friends would be rescued. You can imagine their horror then to see the shape of Saint Peter's Church suddenly outlined against the hills behind the bay by the red and orange flames of a fire that leapt into the air.

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When Colonel Tanaka arrived at Saint Peter's he hauled Solomon and the Captain out of the car and into the church hall. This had been the church once - built on the ruins of the mission church which the Japanese had burned when they arrived in Itapa. In some ways, Katie always said afterwards, it was a nicer building. There were no walls. The roof was made of palm thatch and the floor was made of crushed coral. When the smart new church had been built beside it, most of the fittings had been moved there. Only the old altar, made of stones and fixed to the floor, remained in place. There was also a heavy wooden cross built into the east wall. Colonel Tanaka drove his two captives into the hall now and made Captain Blackheart lie on the floor. Solomon was sent to find a light of some kind [there was no electricity in the hall, of course] and he returned with a kerosene lamp. Colonel Tanaka had brought the rope from the container that had tied up Katie and Emily and with this he now tied Captain Blackheart and Solomon to the cross. He stood back to look at the two brave men without any shame or pity.

Colonel Tanaka's mood had altogether changed. Earlier in the day, he believed the treasure was in his grasp. He had been boastful and sarcastic and bullying. Now he seemed to know deep down that no matter who he beat or threatened or killed, the treasure would not be his. He was exhausted and bitterly angry and was now determined that Solomon and Captain Blackheart at least would die. That way, no one would have the lost treasure of Itapa if he couldn't have it.

As he turned the sword in his hand, he thought for a moment of the night fifty years earlier when he had unloaded the four boxes of gold from the submarine. He thought of the young, exhausted soldiers and men from this mission who had struggled with the gold to the mouth of the cave. He remembered their frightened faces as they dug into the sand - and their look of terror as he and his sergeant had shot them when the work was done. He remembered too the surprise on the face of the young sergeant when Colonel Tanaka had aimed the gun at him when everyone else had been killed. The mission, the Colonel thought, would be a good place to end his dreams of wealth and power.

He drew his samurai sword and felt the blade. To his great anger, Solomon and Captain Blackheart did not plead or even look frightened - although the Captain was obviously struggling with the ropes that bound his hands and feet. The Colonel picked up the kerosene lamp and smashed it on the old altar; immediately a sheet of fire leapt into the thatched roof. The fire would hide his murderous work, he hoped. Let the local police make what they could of the burned bodies of a foolish deacon and a rascally pirate. The Colonel raised his sword with both hands to swing at Solomon but before he could strike, the Captain had lunged and hit low. His hands were freed at last and the sword, when it fell, glanced against the stone altar with a shower of sparks.

Captain Blackheart had freed himself; now he went to work to free Solomon. Before he could do that, however, the burning palm branches began to rain down on them. There were police sirens, the screech of brakes, slamming doors and the repeated flash of a camera. And suddenly the hall was filled with noisy pirates and cheering swords and cutlasses. Solomon was cut down from the cross and hurried out into the cool evening air. The girls had flung themselves at Captain Blackheart and he had lifted both of them into his arms and hugged them for just a moment before diving out the side of the building just as the roof came crashing down in a ball of fire.

It took some little time before everyone was accounted for safe and well. Father Enoch had come running in his pyjamas and the police chief who took charge of the scene had everyone come into the church and be seated. Solomon made them all welcome; this was, after all, his home - and these were his friends. Captain Blackheart asked Emily to do the roll call for the crew of the *Saucy Nancy* and everyone was quickly accounted for. No one gave a heartier "Aye Aye Sir!" than Imoteph, Kiwi Bill and Tiny who were - everyone agreed- the heroes of the night. Rodney Flash used up all the battery on his camera taking photographs and when Tracey Scribble had hugged and kissed Tiny one last time she remembered to call her editor in Cairns to tell him that all was well and that he should hold the front page of next morning's edition of the *Post*. There was only one disappointment. In

all the confusion of the rescue, Colonel Tanaka seemed to have escaped. And the dinghy was mysteriously missing from the beach.

Some of the sailors were all for heading back to Itapa to celebrate the rescue of their Captain and the two cabin boys but Captain Blackheart was adamant. He wanted his crew back on board the *Saucy Nancy* as soon as possible - away from the temptations of town, the dangers of the Japanese and the prying questions of journalists. The Captain also thought that it would be a good idea to return the beautiful speed boat before someone reported it to the Chief of Police - who was standing right beside him at that moment and might ask some difficult questions. Tracy and Rodney left to file their story from the Sofitel Business Centre. The police, satisfied that there was nothing now that couldn't wait until morning, did the same. Father Enoch too went back to bed. The four friends stood together on the beach in the darkness for a long time looking across the bay to the lights of the town. When the crew had gone and the flames of the burning roof were just glowing embers, the girls tried to think of some words that they could say to tell Solomon how brave and good he was - and how hard it had been on the wharf for them to run away when Colonel Tanaka returned. When they tried to begin, Solomon hushed them. He took their hands. Captain Blackheart put his hands on the girls' shoulders, then he hugged the old deacon. There was nothing to say. Their spirits rose when they saw the lights go on as the crew arrived back onboard the *Saucy Nancy*. Now the boys were safe, Captain Blackheart could relax. The first tints of dawn were showing on the top of the great volcano above the town. Then the sky turned grey, then pink and fiery red. Solomon suggested a cup of tea and even though they were all exhausted and wanting their hammocks, he took them to the tiny room beside the church which was his home and found the kettle.

When they had their tea, the four friends walked back on to the lawn under the rain trees and looked back to the *Saucy Nancy* in the harbour. The view across the bay was spectacularly beautiful now; I think that only sailors ever see the morning in all the beauty it can possess. They were silent for some time until Solomon broke the moment with words that brought them all crashing back to reality. "And now, Katie and Emily, I think that it is time that you got what you came here for - the gold that Old Riley wanted you to have."

"Are you sure you want to tell us?" said Emily. "Old Riley sent us here to find you - and we did that. We solved the mystery of the scrimshaw and we defeated Colonel Tanaka and his two stooges. Even if we go home with nothing, I think that this has been the most exciting voyage of my life."

"Old Riley wanted you to have the gold," said Solomon. "When I realised that he had entrusted such a great treasure to two little girls I thought he must be mistaken. But now I think that he couldn't have given the treasure to anyone more decent and deserving. What you do with the gold is your decision, of course, but you have won it fair and square. And here it is."

He took the girls by the hand and led them back into the smouldering church hall. At the old stone altar, he knelt and pulled away the centre stone on the face. Like the altar in the new church it had been decorated with the keys of Saint Peter and

the P sign, picked out in tiny white shells. It took all Solomon's strength to move the stone. There behind it, filling the whole of the altar cavity, were the ammunition boxes. The lost gold of Itapa had been kept safe in the church for all these years.

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What a morning that was! The girls arrived back on the *Saucy Nancy* to find a very hungry crew all wanting their breakfast. Feeding the hungry pirates was the last thing the girls wanted to do at that moment and Captain Blackheart knew just what to do. Solomon had rowed the friends back in the mission boat and although it was a very tight squeeze, the whole crew, Father Enoch and Solomon now jammed into the *Southern Cross* and set off for the wharf at Itapa. Colonel Blackheart was going to treat everyone to the buffet breakfast at the Sofitel. The crew mercilessly encouraged Tiny to throw another Japanese tourist in the swimming pool! They were all a little surprised [but pleased] to find the ship's dinghy tied up at the dock. Only Katie, Emily and the captain, of course, realised the significance of their find. The girls sat with Solomon and the Captain in a window looking beyond the pool to the harbour. They had a fine view of the *Bento Maru* heading out through the lagoon towards Yokohama three weeks away.

At lunch time, Katie and Emily called a special news conference at Saint Peter's Church which was attended only by journalists from the *Itapa Independent* and Miss Tracey Scribble from the *Cairns Post* to announce that the lost treasure of Itapa had been found. There on a special table in the sanctuary were the four boxes, one of them opened to reveal ten bars of gold. A special security detachment from the *Saucy Nancy* [Tiny and Imoteph] stood guard. The pictures which Rodney Flash took and which were quickly sent around the world showed Katie and Emily formally presenting the gold to the local manager of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank. In a prepared statement, the girls stated that they had inherited the gold but that it should really be returned to the banks in Singapore and Malaya from which the Japanese had looted it. There was just a little sadness in the girls' voices as they made the announcement [and some photographs of the news conference show Tiny and Imoteph positively weeping at this point!] but they explained that so many people had died in taking and keeping the gold that only a really wise and generous action at this moment could stop the sadness that it had brought. Finally, both the girls remembered their dear old friend, Riley Mc Sporrán, who had done so much to keep the gold safe.

Captain Blackheart was as disappointed at losing the treasure as any of the crew but he knew that this was the only way. Once Tracey Scribble and Rodney Flash came on the scene there was no way the gold could be quietly taken home to Cairns. Pirates are very private people and Captain Blackheart would have weighed anchor that afternoon and gone on the next tide but that was equally impossible. The jets arriving at the airport now brought television crews and bank executives, scientists and Interpol officers. Every one of them wanted to hear the story from the girls, to inspect the gold and its hiding place and to speak to anyone associated with the story. The story was on television all over the world.

There was almost a mutiny on board the *Saucy Nancy* when Captain Blackheart announced that everyone was to be confined to the ship until they could sail back to Cairns; it was Katie who suggested that the problem of keeping the crew away from the media could be accomplished just as well by taking them all to the *Island Daze* luxury resort on the other side of the island. This was a great place with sparkling beaches, good food - and no television or mobile phone reception. On the Monday evening, the ship "went to bed" as usual but as soon as all was quiet, Katie whistled the crew out to lift the anchor and sail most of the night to the resort. The *Saucy Nancy* was back at anchor in the bay before daylight and not even Miss Scribble guessed what had happened. The crew enjoyed the best shore leave in their lives although when Emily went to settle the bar bill at the end of the week it took every dollar of the cash that Old Riley had left them in his sea chest.

There were only two people to whom the girls told the whole story. They needed to tell the Chief of Police in Itapa all that happened; after all, Luey and Guey were still in custody in the Itapa lock-up facing serious firearm charges. There was also the problem of Colonel Tanaka who was still at large - and in great danger, Katie pointed out, of being found not by the police but by Tiny and the crew. Word of what he had done to the girls and their captain made the boys determined to have the Colonel keel hauled or walk the plank. The Police Chief was a very wise man and promised to handle the whole matter with great tact.

The other person with whom the girls shared their story was Bishop Arthur - an old priest much the same age as Solomon who came from Rabaul to see the damage done to Saint Peter's. He came for tea on the *Saucy Nancy* the next Thursday and the girls wondered at the blackness of his happy face and the whiteness of his cassock. He listened for a long time and then thanked the girls and his saintly deacon for their simple goodness. I don't think that Captain Blackheart had ever been so proud of the two cabin boys as he was at this quiet moment.

The visit to Itapa finished with a special church service at Saint Peter's the next Sunday morning. The crew had come back late that night from the resort and as Captain Blackheart so wisely observed, these were boys who needed all the church services they could get. Bishop Arthur stayed on to celebrate mass, Captain Blackheart was asked to read the Old Testament Lesson and the girls carried the candles in at the head of the procession. The wise bishop preached a nice short sermon, the ladies in the drum orchestra made a marvellous noise and the only awkward moment came when Kiwi Bill was asked to take up the collection. [Solomon wisely helped return the money to the collection plate before anyone much noticed what had happened.] The press of the world had been camping in Itapa for the week and the girls were beamed around the world coming out of church. When the morning tea was served, the CEO of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank who had come from Singapore for the occasion announced that the bank was paying a reward of a million dollars for the return of the lost gold. The girls immediately announced that half of this would be donated to the Parish Church of Saint Peter in Itapa. The other half would be divided equally among the crew of the *Saucy Nancy* - Captain Blackheart insisting only that the bar tab at the Island Daze Resort be settled from the reward before anyone received any of the prize

money. That way Katie and Emily got to keep the contents of the tartan pencil case that had come to them from Old Riley's sea chest.

There were other happy consequences of the story making news all over the world. One journalist did his own digging and wrote a thoughtful piece about the bravery of the Coast Watchers like Old Riley who had stayed behind Japanese lines during the war to report on the movement of Japanese naval vessels and planes. Why, he wanted to know, were Australians honoured for their courage but men like Solomon had been overlooked? The Australian Prime Minister promised to look at this personally and many months after the excitement had otherwise died down, Solomon was invited to the Australian High Commission in Port Moresby to receive the thanks of the Australian people and the same fine set of medals that Old Riley had received but had been too shy to wear.

The day soon came for the girls to leave. They went home without the gold but with treasure enough in many other ways. The crew had their reward as well - and they could put it all safely into the bank instead of having to hide it in a sea chest. The *Saucy Nancy* slipped anchor at high tide very early one beautiful morning and with Emily at the wheel, they headed off across the pale blue waters of the reef towards the dark green of the open seas. In three weeks, they would be home.

Perhaps you are wondering what happened to Guzenko Sushi and Lukihiro Sashimi? They had been terrified by their time in the lock up and they were really very lucky that they had been captured before they had done anything really criminal - although beating Solomon and breaking his glasses was surely bad enough, Emily complained. The police were happy to charge the boys with firearms offences but as Captain Blackheart noted ruefully it seemed wrong to punish Guey and Luey while Colonel Tanaka was not in prison. It was finally decided that the boys would be allowed to return to Japan if they volunteered for service in the Japanese navy. "Time at sea" was Captain Blackheart's solution to most problems with unruly boys and you can imagine how astonished the girls were to find [some six months later] two trim young men with good haircuts and clear complexions calling on them at the *Saucy Nancy* at their berth in Cairns. The boys were wearing the formal white uniform of the Japanese navy; their ship, the *Sukiyaki Maru*, was visiting the city as part of the Cairns Sister City program. How proud the girls were to be seen on the Esplanade on the arm of these two stylish young men!

The girls never did hear anything more about Colonel Tanaka but two weeks after they had left Itapa there was an extraordinary incident at the Colonel's zipper factory in Tokyo, It seems that a container box had been delivered from the docks at Yokohama to the warehouse floor during the night. It remained in the car park for a day or so before someone came to investigate the knocking that occasionally came from it.

When the container was opened, there was the boss of the factory - although almost unrecognizable to all but his closest associates. In place of the snappy suit he always wore, he now wore a stained and tattered army uniform. He had a straggly beard, his hair had turned quite white and he looked haggard and gaunt. The floor of the container was littered with waste and husks and shells. He had



been opening coconuts, apparently, with an ancient samurai sword - now much dented by misuse.

Colonel Tanaka fell into the sunlight with an angry sob. His secretary came from the office and escorted him home. Once he was showered and shaved he recovered a tiny spark of his old self but it was obvious that he had suffered some terrible trauma. The fact is that when he escaped from the beach in front of Saint Peter's on the night of the fire he had been terrified of being found out. He could not return to his hotel room; it would be the first place the police would look. In the early dawn he went to the container box and locked himself in. He would think of something to do after he had had a snooze. At least he would be safe from the terrible crew of the *Saucy Nancy* even though he felt that the box was a kind of tomb. He woke later that morning just as a crane hoisted him into the air and into the hold of the *Bento Maru*. He was on his way to Yokohama and no amount of swearing, threats or banging could alert the crew of the Japanese boat that he was trapped inside.

The Colonel's poor wife hardly recognized the bullying villain who was her husband in the broken hearted soul who came back to her from Itapa. He slept most of the day and sat bleakly at his computer reading the thousands of Google entries on the Itapa treasure that had appeared in the last few weeks - almost all of them, of course, were poorly disguised versions of the original stories written by Tracey Scribble. Colonel Tanaka raged for a moment after each of these stories but then lapsed into the most complete silence and apathy. He became a great embarrassment at his Rotary Club, insisting on telling any member who might listen that he had almost secured a great fortune and that it had been snatched from him by two little girls. He told the story so often that no one would sit with him at meetings and no one was sorry when he stopped coming to meetings altogether.

He was a broken man. A month after his return, his wife found that she couldn't manage him at all. He kept trying to book holidays in Itapa on the internet and when she closed down his service subscription, the Colonel raged and threatened her with his dented samurai sword. She was very fortunate to find a place for the Colonel in the Dementia Ward of the Old Soldier's Nursing Home in Kobe - a very inconvenient distance from their apartment in Tokyo, to be sure, but Mrs Tanaka found that her life was much quieter and more comfortable now that the Colonel was a long way from her.

In the Dementia Ward, the Colonel told the same long, rambling story to all the nurses and the other poor patients in the ward. He knew where a great treasure was; all he needed was to get out of the hospital and go to New Guinea. The staff were very kind but when nothing else worked to calm the old soldier the doctors increased the dosage on the Colonel's medicine and everyone had some peace at last.

Back on the *Saucy Nancy*, the girls returned to the happy life they had lead before all the excitement of Old Riley's sea chest. They donated the photographs and the lovely scrimshaw blocks in their frame to the War Memorial in Canberra where they

went on display along with the best photographs of the Itapa rescue by Rodney Flash. In their tiny cabin on board ship, they arranged their scrimshaw pieces on the shelf and never tired of admiring the beautiful work of their old shipmate. I think he would have been very proud of the legacy he gave to these two brave little girls.