

MUTINY

“The treasure’s not here!”

Wilkes eyed Captain Rowan suspiciously.

“What do you mean its not there?” answered the captain.

“I sez it aint there!”

Captain Rowan approached the six-foot hole and peered into it. Nothing. No chest, no rotted remnants, not even a sand crab. This was not good. He could already feel the eyes of the crew burning into his back.

“This is where the loot should be,” insisted the captain, “We followed all the markers...”

“Perhaps the map is wrong,” put in Wilkes.

“Or maybe Captain Morgan has already retrieved the booty.” That from Old Jeb, the cook.

“Impossible!” remarked Rowan, “No one could have arrived before we, and this is the only copy of the map that—“

The map was violently torn from the captain’s hands. “Rubbish!” yelled Iverson as he spat at the captain’s feet. He flicked the map over his shoulder, letting the balmy winds catch it and fling it into the surf. “Ye been leading us around the Spanish Main for weeks now lookin’ for that blasted gold. We done passed up a dozen easy prizes on account ye said this’d be enough money to last a lifetime. Methinks ye done lost yer nerve and yer mind. And methinks I’ll not let ye stand for captain not one more day!”

Iverson drew his cutlass and leapt back ready to engage the captain. Rowan was caught off guard, but Iverson wasn’t interested in an honorable duel. He lunged forward before the captain could recover, only to have his blade parried by Wilkes’.

“Have ye gone daft, Iverson?” asked Wilkes.

“Yer takin his part then, Wilkes?” said Iverson.

“He’s the bloody captain!” exclaimed Wilkes.

“Fine then,” said Iverson, relaxing his posture a bit. “All those who be tired of chasin after this fool’s gold, eatin’ bad food, and runnin’ scared from every ship that crosses the horizon stand with me. Everyone else, with Captain Rowan.”

There was a pause as each of the twelve crewmen considered their loyalty. The sun was sinking low and clouds were gathering in the sky. As the men hemmed and hawed, Rowan considered his opponent. Iverson was a boor of a man, a loudmouth and a braggart. His barrel chest was covered with thick dark hair and his frame was strong. Though he could easily be replaced, he was one mean brawler to be sure. Rowan doubted he could beat him in a fair fight; ever since he had received a shrapnel wound in a boarding action against a Dutch frigate the captain’s fencing skills just weren’t the same. However, Iverson had already proven that he had no interest in a fair fight...

Two men had joined First Mate Wilkes in standing with the captain. The rest had moved behind Iverson. “Ye see, captain?” smiled Iverson with his gap-toothed grin, “Ye shoulda gave up sailin’ after ye got that limp. Nobody wants to follow a lame captain.”

Rowan dug his foot into the soft sand, exaggerating his stance some to compensate for his bad leg. Calmly he drew his own sword, which had seen better days. “Would you mind terribly if we hurried this up?” commented the captain, “It’s getting dark.”

Iverson, aggravated at the captain's cavalier attitude, stomped forward like an angry bull. He raised his cutlass high, ready to cleave the smarmy captain right in half, but was surprised to see a shovel suddenly flying at his face. Captain Rowan had flicked it up with his foot from where it had become partially buried under the sand. The rusty digging tool cut into Iverson's face and came close to breaking his nose. Iverson dropped his sword and grasped his face in pain as the blood began to trickle down his cheek. Before he could angrily turn on his assailant and put a ball between his eyes, the clever Captain Rowan firmly planted his boot into Iverson's rump, sending him spilling into the deep -- though no longer empty -- hole.

"Fill it in," ordered the captain.

"Aye, sir," replied Wilkes.

By the time Iverson came to his senses, he was already buried waist deep in sand, his arms and legs pinned. "Aw this aint right, captain. Leave me marooned or make me walk the plank but don't bury me alive!"

Rowan held up his hand and the diggers ceased their shoveling. "Very well, Iverson. I will give you a second chance. I will leave you here alive and only half-buried. And when we are gone from this place I shall draw up a new map and attempt to sell it at the nearest port. Then we will see if anyone can find you before the tides or the coming rains drown you."

"Or the crabs get ya!" offered Wilkes.

"Or ye starve to death, you ungrateful wretch!"

Captain Rowan looked to Old Jeb the cook at this comment. "Why my good fellow, I thought you had betrayed me standing behind the enemy as you did."

"Sorry to deceive you, sir" Jeb said sheepishly, "but I was trying to get in a position to use this on him." Captain Rowan looked down at the particularly nasty poniard in Jeb's hand.

"I see," said the captain.

"Us too," grumbled several of the men who had backed Iverson. "We wuz gonna jump him from behind!"

"Indeed," said the captain skeptically. "Jeb, return with me to the ship. The rest of you draw lots for discipline. See to it, Wilkes."

"Aye-aye, captain."