

THE ANDREW CHRONICLES
A YOUNG READER BY R.D. TRIMBLE

ANDREW AND THE PIRATE COVE



The Andrew Chronicles

Book 1

Andrew and the Pirate Cove

By R.D. Trimble

*Based on the groundbreaking,
text adventure game by Scott Adams*

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by Rusty Trimble
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“His story kept me on the edge of
my seat... I was surprised with
the eventual turn of events!”
~ *Scott Adams, Pirate Cove Game Creator*

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*In loving memory of my father,
Steven James Trimble.
I love and miss you dad!*

Part One

“Where there is a sea, there are pirates” - Greek Proverb

Andrew looked around the room and took turns alternately blinking and rubbing his eyes. He was in a small one-room flat overlooking the Thames River estuary. The room itself was relatively nondescript. There was nothing personal adorning the room such as pictures or other décor that would indicate that the home boasted a current resident.

The actual furnishings were sparse: a small cot with a dusty pillow and a blanket that had seen better days. The floor was wooden and showed evidence of a great deal of foot traffic and little, if any, cleaning. The walls were painted a sky blue, but had many areas where the wood behind it was completely exposed. Someone had indeed stayed here - perhaps many people had - but it hardly appeared to be a residence of someone seeking luxury.

The accoutrements of the room were of little concern to him right now. Of utmost importance was the question of where he was. He had suffered a moment of disorientation and confusion immediately after finding himself there. In simple terms, everything spun around and suddenly he was elsewhere; though he had no idea where he had been before. There was no smoke, no fire and brimstone, or any other strange occurrence that preceded his arrival in this dwelling. He tried hard to remember where he had just been, but as hard as he tried the knowledge eluded him.

His last memory was from the day before. He had been at his elementary school with Mrs. Hobbes, his 2nd grade teacher. That was his last memory. He had been a really good boy that day and his teacher had rewarded him with a small piece of candy and marked his daily progress sheet with an "Excellent." Excellent was the top rating that was possible; the other ones being "Good", "Satisfactory" and "Needs improvement". He had remembered his dad waiting for him to take him to the local aquarium for some father and son time.

That was it, that was the most recent event in his life he could remember. One moment school was out and he was being greeted excitedly by his dad, the

next he was standing alone in this deserted and creepy room. He looked around again for any sign that could give him some idea of how he had arrived there, but there was no evidence forthcoming.

There was a flight of stairs just off to the right which he ascended. He saw a rickety bookcase and an open window, the room was otherwise bare. He looked at the bookcase that held a handful of tattered books. He would have to wipe a layer of filth off of almost any of them just to make out the title.

He turned and walked to the window. He looked out and saw several signs that said the word "London" on them. He knew from school that London was England's largest city and its capital city as well. England, in turn, was a country in Europe and part of the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom or U.K., was a grouping of three other countries to create one blended form of government. He had never of course been to England, but he had met a few people from there and found their slightly different way of speaking to be quite charming.

The sky above was blue; it appeared to be early afternoon. The sun shone brightly and there were a number of white, puffy clouds ornamenting the sky. He was able to see for many miles in several directions as he leaned out of the window. There were hundreds of houses and businesses as far as he could see. Most of the buildings had chimneys, both large and small plumes of smoke belched out of the majority of them. It made the air he breathed feel a bit acrid, and while it was bad manners, he spat a few times trying to clear his mouth and throat. The smoke tainted the color of the sky, but he had to confess that despite this, it was a marvelous sight and he did, for a short moment, forget his circumstances.

He was enthralled with the myriad of people below that were oddly dressed, walking to and fro and going about their daily lives. The city itself seemed alive with activity. There were horses and carriages rambling about the town, and people wearing a variety of hats that were frequently tipped off in greeting, from one to another, as they passed. It was all incredibly exciting.

He briefly recalled his unusual predicament, but forgot about it just as quickly and resumed looking around. His gaze found the blue-green ocean that stretched out as far as the eye could see. There was a large dock nearby and close to forty ships of varying size nestled there. He observed more than one of them setting sail - a few vessels had already launched, having begun a journey about which he could only imagine.

Each ship he saw had a flag, some had more than one. He took some time admiring the various designs, some of them rather outlandish, perhaps being an insignia of some unknown country or organization. He also tried to spot the

infamous skull and crossbones or the Jolly Roger, synonymous with pirates. He assumed that he would glimpse at least one, judging by his surroundings.

For better or worse, he did not see any pirate vessels, but he was able to identify the builds of numerous ship types. These included sloops, frigates, pinnaces, Cargo Fluyts, several cargo ships and a few war galleons. He had learned about these various ship designs in school a few days prior when Mrs. Hobbes read a book entitled *The Golden Age of Pirates*. The book contained numerous stories of pirates and illustrations of the many boats that sailed the oceans at the time.

The entire class reacted to the book with great enthusiasm, so she had also promised to bring in a copy of *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson. He had been impatient to read this classic adventure, so Mrs. Hobbes had allowed him to take *The Golden Age of Pirates* home in the meantime. He had poured through the many pictures and took a great deal of delight in looking at the ships, their masts, flags, and of course, their cannons. He even learned a few songs, and several pirate terms such as “scalawag” which he didn’t quite understand, but knew it was not a nice name to call someone.

He turned his gaze away from the window and then headed back to the room downstairs. He began again to consider where he was. Perhaps he was dreaming. He tried to think himself awake, but nothing changed. He squeezed his eyes shut tight and thought “wake up” to himself.

However, he opened his eyes and realized he was still in the room, wherever that was. He came to the surprising revelation that he had no idea where he was, but was not scared in the slightest. It was as if he knew that nothing could harm him and that he would be okay.

He looked around. There was a table made of pine wood in the middle of the room, it was also in some disrepair, like the rest of the apartment. The polish that had provided it some level of elegance now seemed quite faded. Underneath was a rug upon which was laid a moth-eaten bag marked “crackers.” Sitting next to the bag was a pair of shoes, caked with what looked like mud or wet sand. Glancing at the wall, he saw a note written in the dust, it said “Bring Treasures.”

Andrew picked up the bag and underneath saw a bottle labeled with a skull and crossbones, and the word “Rum” written below the label. He opened the bag and placed the bottle in. His nose wrinkled at the odor that escaped from the musty fabric. He then grabbed the shoes and put them on.

Fortunately they seemed to fit. He reached down and tried to lift the rug, but it did not budge, instead kicking up a swell of dust, and he sneezed several times as it cascaded across his nostrils. His eyes watered and he coughed several times, almost choking. He ran to the window and breathed in the slightly less pungent

air. He walked back to the rug and examined it. It had been a fine shade of royal blue at one time.

The rug while retaining some of that blue tint was now mixed with a mélange of other colors, mostly from food stains. He then noted that the rug had been nailed to the floor. He reached down and tried to pull out the nails, but they were pounded in firmly. He didn't really need a rug, but thought that something like a key or note might be hidden underneath. It was nailed so securely, however, that he could not even get any of his fingers underneath to lift it.

He crossed the table to the solitary chair sitting in front of it. He was about to sit down, but had second thoughts. Even a small boy like him might cause it to break should he place his weight on the rickety thing. However, sit he did and surprisingly, the chair held and did not break, though it creaked and groaned several times as if in objection. He sat for several minutes fathoming his surroundings. He sighed and then rested his elbows on the table. After a few minutes of musing about the room, he stood up.

Andrew walked up the stairs again and strolled over to the bookcase. He noted, out of the many books in it, one looked as if it had recently been placed there. Examining it, he saw the title *Pirate Cove* on the binding. He excitedly withdrew the book from the case. As he did so, he felt and heard a click, followed by a creaking noise. He peered around the bookcase and a doorway had opened behind it. It was a secret passage! Throwing caution to the wind, he walked in.

The room was dimly lit, sunshine from the window spilling through the small cracks in the bookcase, giving him just enough light to take in his surroundings. It was not really a room per se, but a rank-smelling attic; its scent and grime seemingly in harmony with the rest of the flat. He looked on the floor and saw shards of broken glass. He recognized the pieces as being from a similar bottle to the one now in his bag.

Looking by his feet, he also spotted a long, rod-shaped piece of wood with what looked to be rags fastened to it. He sniffed it and immediately regretted it. He realized that it was a makeshift torch. Someone had likely used the contents of the broken bottle at his feet to soak the rags as a primitive form of fuel.

Next to the broken glass was a small bag. He cautiously reached into it. He felt around and even though it seemed empty at first, he found a small object and pulled it out. It was a pack of matches. He put the matches in his bag, and taking the malodorous torch, exited the passageway.

Andrew returned downstairs and once again sat at the table. He regarded the book, which was caked in some kind of ochre-colored liquid. He was not sure

what it was, but ignored it for now. He opened the book and a small sheaf of paper fell out. He read the flyer and it said "Beware of Voodoo Castle."

He had no idea what Voodoo Castle was; he had never heard of it, but it sounded like the last place he'd want to visit. A flicker from the paper caught his attention and when he looked at it again, he saw the writing had changed. It now said, "Discover your INHERITANCE!" It didn't make any sense to him, and the changing text unnerved him a bit. He stared at it for a few moments and the words changed again. It now said, "A STRANGE ODYSSEY awaits you." He didn't really understand what any of this meant, and when it changed again to still another missive that had the words "COUNT" and "GHOST TOWN," he ignored it, realizing he had more pressing matters; namely discovering where he was and how to get back home.

Puzzled, he dropped the flyer, and looked again at the book. It indeed appeared to be very old and nearly ready to fall apart. Not for the first time, forgetting his predicament, he turned a page in the book.

On the first page were a few notes scrawled in what appeared to be the same ochre-colored substance that gilded the cover. There were actually two messages written on the page. The word "YOHO" and a sentence which read "Captain Blackbeard left 2 treasures at Pirate Cove."

Sitting there staring into the book, he suddenly realized the importance of his situation. He was only seven years old. He was in a small squalid room separated from his family. The only people that he could see were on the street down below and they were complete strangers, which of course he had been taught to be wary of.

Andrew felt he should be afraid or at least a mite uneasy. Instead, he smiled. He considered something funny and ironic he had discussed with his dad. He had, just the other day, been telling his dad that he wanted to go on some kind of adventure, and perhaps somehow his wish had been realized, just not the way he expected it.

The only problem was that he had no idea what to do next. He was in what would likely be the living room for the flat, but he saw no front door. In fact other than the window, there appeared to be no way in. Perhaps, he reckoned, the secret passage behind the bookcase also hid an exit. It made about as much sense as anything since he had no clue how he had arrived here in the first place.

Again walking upstairs, he went back through the opening in the bookcase. He entered the small attic and began feeling around the floor and the sides of the wall. He could not find anything. He stood up and looked at the ceiling. It was only a few feet above him, but he could not reach it. He then turned back to the bookcase and began pulling book after book from it, dropping them,

unceremoniously, on the floor. He kept listening for the creaking noise to indicate a new passage had opened, but he had no such luck.

Dejected, he sat down on the floor. After a few moments, he stood back up and went back to the window. He leaned out over the ledge and looked down. It was a long way down. Perhaps he could walk across the ledge into another room. There he might find a door with stairs that would lead down to the street. From there perhaps he might find some help getting back home.

He looked at the shoes he had found. They had a good deal of tread on them and he reasoned that he might have a better sense of footing if he walked with them on. He carefully and very slowly climbed out through the window and on to the ledge. He gently tested it with his foot. It was very smooth and he was indeed grateful to the sneakers he wore as they seemed to almost hug the surface and definitely prevented him from a most nasty fall.

He began edging his way along the ledge heading towards another window about five yards away. As he did, the book dropped out of the bag. It landed on the ledge but luckily did not fall further! It had however opened and he again saw himself staring at the enigmatic words written on the page. The sentence regarding treasure was plain enough to understand. It obviously referred to the whereabouts of the famed treasure of the villainous Captain Blackbeard.

The other message, “YOHO” did not make any sense to him. He could not contemplate why anyone would choose to write that word inside a book, or anywhere. He dimly remembered a song he had heard. He first began whistling it to keep his mind off the terrible fall he could experience were he not careful. The whistling changed to a humming noise. He then instinctively began to sing. “YOHO....”

His surroundings began to spin. He felt a sense of nausea and saw the world disappear in a blur. He closed his eyes shut trying to fight off the dizziness he felt. Then the sensation stopped as suddenly as it had begun. He opened his eyes and looked around. He blinked repeatedly in disbelief. He was no longer standing on the ledge, no longer smelling the old, musty flat. He was somewhere else entirely. In his mind he heard the phrase “I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.”

That much was very clear as he looked around. He wasn’t in London anymore either.

Part Two

*“Fifteen Men on a dead man’s chest, YO HO HO
and a bottle of rum.” - Excerpt from Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson*

Andrew looked around. He was on a sandy beach. The smell of the ocean was far more powerful though thankfully less pungent than the acrid odor of the flat he had just left. Ahead of him just a dozen yards away was a lagoon. The tide was out a bit and in the lagoon, partially submerged, was the keel and mast of an old ship. There was a black flag with the infamous skull and crossbones insignia on it. It had been a pirate ship!

He began, on an impulse, to glance around for treasure. He thought that maybe a chest might be a few feet deep in the water, or protruding from the beach sand. He had no such luck, finding only handfuls of sand. His eyes skimmed the area around him and he hoped to catch sight of a large **X** somewhere that marked the location of some great fortune, but again luck was not smiling on him and he saw nothing of value. He then remembered what he had read about Captain Blackbeard burying two treasures on Pirate Cove. Could this be that same cove, he wondered?

Carefully he removed his shoes, bundled his socks together and then waded out cautiously into the water. He made sure to scuffle his feet as he had been told, just in case there were stingrays hiding in the sand. He was nonetheless a bit surprised to see a shape quickly swim off, though he had no idea what it was.

He turned his gaze forward and saw that not only was the tide rapidly coming back in, but a wave, at least six feet high, was barreling towards him. He had only recently begun learning to swim at a local youth gymnasium and he was not a strong enough swimmer to be out in the ocean, especially with such a strong current. He quickly began to retreat back onto the sand.

He stood there panting, trying to catch his breath. The water had been warm, but he still stood there shivering, glad for the warmth of the sun beaming down directly upon him. He then saw a sign that appeared to have been part of an old ship. Someone had planted it firmly in the sand and painted a small note on it. It read "Welkum to Pirates Island, watch owt for the tide." The letter *e* in the word tide was a laughing skull shape. He smirked, thinking that if Mrs. Hobbes saw

the poor spelling on the sign, she'd have blanched at it. She was a nice teacher, but she always used to say "No excuse for poor spelling when there are so many books to read."

Of course the sign's warning had been a bit late to do him any good, but he'd managed at least to survive his mistake. The tide again had gone out, but now was not the time to test his luck. Perhaps he could find a boat that would take him out further, maybe even help him get back home with any luck whatsoever.

He looked in all directions. Behind him was more sand, terminating in a mountain that appeared to be festooned with jagged rocks. He was not going to head that way. To the west was what looked like a jungle. He was very apprehensive about heading that way too, not particularly fond of the possibility of a chance encounter with a tiger or some other fierce or hungry animal. To the east he saw a long expanse of sand and he thought in the far distance he could make out a small building, perhaps a tiny house. Seeing as it was the only sensible option, he put the sneakers back on and began walking towards it.

The sand itself was very fine, his feet sunk in about two or three inches with each step, and the warmth of the sand felt good on his feet. He was rapidly drying off and the warm air caressed him and he ceased shivering. Out in the distance he saw a number of fins breaking the water line and at first thought how lucky he was to have run back in when he did. He knew that not all sharks were dangerous, but he certainly did not want an encounter with one unless there was glass between them. Several of the fins came closer to the shore and he observed that they were not really sharks, but dolphins. They bounded up and down the surf as it undulated back and forth, seeming to be having a lot of fun.

Andrew admitted to a touch of envy at that moment. He wished that he could swim like the dolphins did. He also felt sad remembering when his dad took him and his little brother to the beach. They had watched the dolphins swimming, and then they dug holes in the sand, finding tiny little sand crabs. He had even created a miniature pond on the shore, allowing the tide to fill it with water and he called it a "crab swimming pool". More than ever now, he was eager to find his way home.

He continued walking, admiring the many seashells that dotted the coast. He passed a few rocks that were lying on the sand and to his astonishment saw several large crabs walking amongst them, completely oblivious to his presence. He stopped to look at them for a second and saw, behind them, a few small fish swimming in the shallows of the water as the tide came back in.

At length, after about fifteen minutes, he reached the building he had seen. It was a small house, looking not much bigger than a tool shed. It was constructed, it appeared, of bamboo with large thickets of grass on the roof. The shape of it

made the flat he had traveled from, look regal in comparison. It looked like the tide had come in a few thousand times judging by its beaten look.

There were two small windows that had makeshift curtains built out of the same bamboo and grass. There was a small awning in front that was constructed of rotten timbers, perhaps scavenged from the sunken pirate ship he'd seen near the lagoon.

He walked up to the awning and inspected the wood a bit closer. Carved off to the side was *Neptune's Trident*. Perhaps that was the name of the ship; perhaps the current resident of the dwelling had given it a nautical name. Who was to know? The front door was a tangle of reeds strewn from the top down to the floor, the latter of which was comprised entirely of dry beach sand. At least, he considered, it was dry for now.

Andrew walked into the room and almost immediately wished he had not. Sitting directly ahead of him on a stool was a hugely immense man. His dad was tall at over six feet in height, however this man was larger by at least six inches! He was broadly built with heavily muscled arms, although his stomach protruded nearly a foot in front of him.

The man was dressed in what Andrew guessed was pirate garb with the iconic Jolly Roger skull and crossbones on his red coat. The coat was considerably clean, but ill-fitting and several of the fancy gold-plated buttons seemed to have fallen off. The man's face was sun-darkened and he had a full beard, made up of black hair with a few spots of white and gray highlighting it. His right eye was covered by a black eye patch.

The pirate wore a hat upon which was embroidered the Jolly Roger. His face had a sallow, sunken look along with a purplish nose, and for a moment he seemed not even to realize Andrew had stepped into the room. His eyes were downcast, looking at the floor. Andrew followed his gaze and for the first time noticed a medium-sized treasure chest.

The chest itself was typical of what he had seen in pirate literature. It had a lock upon it that was the color of gold. It contrasted with the shack in that it appeared new, resplendent with several jewels encrusted upon it. There was also an embossed sea serpent design with a forked tongue near the lock along with the name *Queen Anne's Revenge* carved into the sides, the only sign that it had seen some kind of ownership.

Suddenly he heard a high-pitched voice, sounding much like a parrot saying "Pieces o' eight." He looked towards the source of the sound and saw that it was indeed a parrot. It was standing perched on a crude t-shaped pole fashioned he believed out of the same old rotten wood timbers from the once seaworthy pirate ship languishing in the lagoon.

Andrew returned his gaze back to the pirate who seemed still not to notice him. He thought that maybe the pirate was actually asleep despite his eyes being open. His uncle, he remembered, had fallen asleep several times with his eyes still fully open. It was creepy, but Andrew had gotten used to it. However this was different, the pirate was completely captivated by the chest, his eyes fixated on the lock itself.

Andrew walked over and, withdrawing a cracker from the sack he carried, handed it to the bird, which hurriedly took it and began eating. It looked satisfied and squawked a “Thank you” to him. Then he returned his gaze to the pirate and hesitantly said “hello” to him. The pirate’s head lifted momentarily, but then he resumed staring again at the chest.

Getting no useful response from the pirate, Andrew gave the parrot a few more crackers and prepared to leave the shack. The parrot ate the cracker, and then said, “Check the chest matey.” Andrew blinked and looked at the chest. It seemed like a good idea, but not with the pirate sitting there, his watchful gaze unflinchingly set upon it.

From what little he had read and learned on the subject of pirates, a treasure chest was an important possession, not something another person should try to get too close to or touch. Also he was honest and not a thief. The chest might indeed contain something important, whether that was money, jewels, or even a means to get home. However, he would not attempt to filch or even peruse its contents without permission. He was a well-mannered, principled young man after all.

He had to figure out a way to honestly look inside the chest without offending the pirate. He knew it would not be easy. After all, pirates were hardly known for having a friendly or trusting disposition at the best of times. He would bide his time and wait for a suitable opportunity to speak to the pirate about the chest. He closed his eyes hoping that time would come before he was an old man like his dad.

Andrew stood in front of the shack. He was puzzled over what to do next. He was disinclined to try and interrupt the pirate. His attempts had been fruitless and he didn't want to press the matter right now. However, he knew he needed help to get back home. He considered the two treasures allegedly left on the island by Captain Blackbeard. Were they real? Was the chest in the shack one of them, or perhaps it had a map to help find those two treasures? He rubbed his scalp as he stood there trying to divine the most logical course of action. Was this even real?

It occurred to him that really so much of what had happened in just the last hour or so, was hard to fathom, so the idea of Captain Blackbeard's treasure being on this island made about as much sense as anything else he had already experienced. He still thought that he was trapped in some kind of dream. The island, the flat, the pirate, and the parrot - everything seemed as if they were props in a television show. Despite that, everything felt real. The sun was warm, the water wet and the sand felt like...well it felt like sand. He could even smell the salt air, so it had to be real, even though the idea of meeting a pirate and being flung across the world by uttering "YOHO" all seemed so impossible.

Of course being seven years old certainly did not hurt his believing in what should otherwise be nonsensical. Much of what makes being a child so enjoyable is the ability to believe in the incredible. Unlike an adult, a child's beliefs are not easily dismissed. Perhaps if more adults were to undertake flights of fancy, they would get more done in life.

Andrew ceased his wonderings for a moment and looked around. He gazed back across the sandy path he had traversed earlier. Further along he was able to make out a series of small caves dotting the base of a large hill. Perhaps he reasoned, he could get a better view of the island from its top. He began walking towards it.

He had taken a few steps, five or six at most, when he felt something on his back. Startled, he jumped and began feverishly reaching behind him trying to dislodge whatever it was. He thought that maybe one of the crabs had walked up

to him while he was daydreaming and crawled or climbed upon him. He then heard a slight chirping noise and his hands felt something a bit furry.

He managed to get a grip on whatever it was and wondering if whatever it was would bite him, did not drop it, but instead pulled his hands in front of him to see what it was. He was more than a bit shocked to see that what he held in his hands appeared to be a mongoose. He realized then that he was holding it rather tight, and while the animal was not fighting, it also appeared more than a mite uncomfortable, so he loosened his grip upon it. The animal cooed, laid its head down upon his palms and promptly settled down to sleep.

He was unsure what to do, so he simply cradled it under in his right arm, his left hand holding the bag, and continued walking towards the hill. It was a longer walk than he anticipated and after about half an hour, he began to feel a bit tired. He saw a rock about thirty feet inland and walked over to it and sat down. As he did, the mongoose awoke and seeing the crackers in his bag, raised its head expectantly.

He reached into the bag, pulled one out and handed it to the mongoose, then another, and another. His new pet seemed to enjoy them, though he thought they looked a bit stale and rather unsightly. Over to his left, he saw a pool of water. He was thirsty and did not want to even think about consuming the contents of his bottle. Rum he thought was something that the pirate at the shack would be more likely to drink.

The thought then occurred to him. Perhaps he could trade the bottle to the pirate for the chest. Pirates liked rum, though considering the smell, he could not understand why. Of course, chest or no chest, he still needed a way home and it did not appear that the pirate had a boat.

“One thing at a time” he said to himself. He walked over to the pool of water and tentatively took a drink. The water was fresh, not salty and it both looked and tasted clean. He took in several gulping swallows, quenching his thirst. The mongoose did the same. He sat there deciding what to do next; speak to the pirate or venture into the caves.

He decided that before he’d speak to the pirate he’d continue towards the caves since he was already almost there. He hoped that if and when he returned to the shack, the pirate would be a bit more talkative and hopefully receptive towards a trade.

He resumed walking and the mongoose crawled into his sack, with its paws and head peering out as he walked. He had apparently made a friend. He really did not know much about the species, but hopefully the crackers were okay for them to eat. It did indeed seem to enjoy them regardless. He knew from school that they ate snakes and that cobra venom seemed not to bother them. If there

were snakes on this island, a mongoose would be a good friend to have along. Like sharks, snakes were fascinating, but were best seen behind glass and even then, best admired from a good distance.

As he walked, he reached into the bag and pulled out another cracker. The mongoose cheerfully consumed it and then seemed to clean itself much like a cat would. He at least felt like he was no longer alone, though indeed he had no human companions with him.

He reached the foot of the hill. There were a dozen or more small caves spread across it. There was also a clear path to the top of the hill. He looked up in that direction and saw that it would be a long walk indeed. He decided first to explore the nearest cave. He saw one about twenty feet away and walked over to it.

He looked in, but saw nothing, it was pitch black. He remembered that he had the torch and the matches he'd found in the flat with him. This presented something of a small problem. His dad had always told him never to play with matches. He'd never even held a match and so was wary of trying to light the torch. At least he was surrounded by sand. If he dropped the match after lighting it, he would not start a wildfire.

Andrew went ahead and reached into the bag, then withdrew the matches and the torch. He was glad that the strange odor that surrounded it earlier was gone.

He struck the first match and carefully lit the torch, which quickly ignited. He wisely held it away from himself and was glad that the flame, while large, was not hot enough to make him uncomfortable. Using common sense, he carefully extended it at arm's length and slowly clambered down into the cave. He kept the torch over his head and using the light it gave off was able to find his way down below.

Reaching the bottom, he examined his surroundings. The cave was wide, about thirty feet in diameter. He saw more passages that were likely connected to the other caves he saw outside. There was one to the south as well as one each to the east and west. Ahead he saw yet another path that appeared to slope almost straight down. He slowly, carefully followed the incline, his torch still extended ahead of him.

He heard them before he saw them. Glancing ahead, he saw that there were several crocodiles gathered. They were not advancing, but remained relatively still, gazing at him. They seemed to regard him in a way that made it abundantly clear that he was not welcome. Walking further in this direction was not a current option. He decided to retreat quickly back up the path. He then ran back the way he had come in and exited the cave. He tapped out the torch on a rock knowing he might full well need it later.

He sat there unhurt, but a bit shaken. Crocodiles were still another animal he decided was best viewed from a distance. After taking a few minutes to compose himself, he decided to walk up the hill to get a better view of the island, not being really sure of what to do next.

He began walking and as he did, he observed a large boulder off to the side. He decided to look at it closer and walked over to it. Upon further examination, he saw that on the far end, a huge fissure had opened, leading it seemed, into the side of the hill. Throwing caution to the wind, he laid down the mongoose and tried to squeeze through the opening. It was a tight fit and he got a few small scratches on his arms and legs, but nothing serious. It took a lot of maneuvering, but at length he was finally able to wriggle through the gap.

Warily, he lit the torch and then looked around. He had not expected to find anything, but was surprised to see it contained several items of interest. First off, he saw what looked to be the various materials needed to construct a small boat. In one area he saw a pile of, what he believed, were sails. Off further, to the right, was an immense pile of lumber that looked as if it had already been cut, shaped, and even sanded. Immediately next to the lumber, standing straight up, was what looked like a mast.

Unfortunately they were in very poor condition. Andrew suspected that if used in the construction of a boat they would find themselves sinking before they had gained the open ocean. He would need to find better building materials.

Farther down, about 30 feet across a thin passageway, he saw what looked like a tool shed. Probably anything he needed to finish the work would be in there. Of course he did not know how to construct a boat, but maybe the pirate did. Perhaps he would help if and when the time came. Sadly he could tell that he would need more material.

He walked down the path and reached the shed. It was about ten feet high, and painted a dull red. Fortunately it was unlocked. He opened the shed and found a hammer, a shovel, and a pair of water wings. He decided to take all three of the items. Off to the north he saw a door. He headed over to it and tried to open it, but it was locked. He turned and headed back to the entrance. He tried to climb out of the crack, but the shovel was too large and he had to drop it in order to push his way back through. Even minus the shovel, it was still hard to get out through the crack because of the water wings and the hammer. He pushed those two items out first and tried again. With a great deal of effort he finally managed to emerge onto the sand outside the rock wall. The mongoose was still sitting there and was looking at him expectantly.

He picked him up along with his hammer and water wings and trotted down the path back to the beach. He walked up to the lagoon again. He put down his

belongings and placed the water wings on his arms. Slowly, he ventured into the water.

The tide began to encroach and he was a bit apprehensive about moving further out, but the wings provided a good deal of buoyancy and he was pleasantly surprised to see that they lifted him above the waves safely. He swam out about thirty feet and saw in the water a great deal of floating debris that looked like it had been from the marooned ship. He dipped his head under water just a bit and looking down he saw several colorful fish he could not identify and a few Garibaldi, one of which swam close to him and began tugging on his hair.

Andrew lifted his head up and took a deep breath. The Garibaldi released his hair and swam away, its orange color almost shining in the nearly clear water. He spied a number of other fish cavorting amongst the rocks, various plants, and corals. One of the stones appeared to move ever so slightly. He regarded it warily, remembering reading about a fish that looked like a stone, but had poison spines that could make someone really sick if they stepped on it.

Deciding he'd explored enough, he began swimming back to shore and once his feet touched the dry sand, paused in thought. He was no closer really to getting home. He'd hoped to find a boat or perhaps even find another book. Maybe he could read a magic word from it and be returned home. So far, he'd made a few animal friends and found the needed materials to build a boat, but was still marooned on this island, an island that was an unknown distance away from home.

Reluctantly, he decided he had to once again visit the pirate at the shack. He reached down and picked up the hammer, water wings, the bottle, the crackers, the book, and the mongoose. He then trudged slowly back to the east, feeding the mongoose more crackers on the way.

The mongoose, after a few bites, yawned and fell asleep in his arms. He wondered aloud what he would do with his new friend when he returned home. Would his mom and dad allow him to keep a pet? Even if they did, a mongoose was not a dog or a cat. He had no idea how to care for it. Would a pet store be able to tell him how or have a book on caring for it? Did such a book even exist? Of course none of this mattered if he could not get home. He decided to put off worrying about the future and concentrate on the present. There would be plenty of time to worry about his mongoose when they got back home, if indeed they ever did.

He reached the shack and peered through what passed for the front door. The pirate, as before, sat there with his eyes open, but again not moving, barely doing anything more than breathing. He walked in through the door and the pirate's glance fixed on the book. His expression changed for the first time. He scowled,

not at Andrew, but at the book. Regardless, it sent a shiver down his spine. Something about the book obviously disturbed the pirate, so Andrew quickly flung it out through the door behind him.

Andrew extended his arms and began to speak to the pirate. “Mr. Pirate, I...” the pirate’s gaze fixed on the bottle, his expression changing still again, this time to an excited smile.

“Give me the bottle!” he exclaimed and reached for it quickly. Andrew dodged to the side and shot an angry look at the pirate.

“Now listen here, you! Pirate or not, you should say *please* before taking something from someone!” Andrew yelled, surprised at his rather defiant tone. It was simply not a way children spoke to adults, especially pirates.

A bit taken aback, the pirate looked angry, but then his expression softened and he smiled. Then extending his hands, he said “Please, give me the bottle lad, I would heartily appreciate it.”

“That’s better,” Andrew replied a bit shakily, not sure berating the pirate had been wise. He handed the bottle over and the pirate took it gently, mumbled something unintelligible and barged past him, moving rapidly outside. Andrew turned to watch him, but he had disappeared and was nowhere to be seen. It was as if he had just vanished into thin air.

Off to the right in the corner of the room, the parrot squawked at him. “YOHO” it said to him. Andrew reached into the bag and extended a cracker. The parrot flew to him, landed on his shoulder, and sat down, perched quite comfortably, taking the cracker and eating it.

“Now I have two pets to worry about,” Andrew said with a sigh, and then he grinned.

The next step to take was not really clear. He had accumulated a number of items, all of them he assumed were of some use, but he really had no idea of the best way to utilize them. The parrot he noticed was tilting his head out the window, his gaze fixed on the book lying almost forgotten on the sand. “YOHO, YOHO, YOHO,” it squawked repeatedly at him.

Andrew stepped outside and picked up the book. A bit cautiously he muttered “YOHO” and the same sensation as earlier gripped him. The world seemed to spin and blur really quickly. His vision then went dark and then there was a blinding flash, and when he opened his eyes, he was on the windowsill of the flat

again. He stumbled for a second and the hammer in his hand dropped, but luckily it dropped in through the window. He quickly leaned into the window and flopped onto the floor, his various items falling from his grasp and scattering. The parrot flew off and headed down the stairs.

Andrew picked up the items that were now strewn across the floor and ambled down the stairs after the bird. The mongoose walked alongside him. He felt glad that saying the must-be magic word from the book had not separated him from his two new friends as they were the only friends he currently had.

He reached the bottom of the stairs and saw that the parrot was standing on the dirty rug. He was leaning over, his beak gently tapping the nails that held the rug in its place on the floor. He walked over to the table and sat down. The mongoose jumped up on his lap, so he reached in and gave him another few crackers which it munched on. The parrot began to squawk still louder. “Get the keys, get the keys,” it said.

He looked around, but did not see any keys. He believed the parrot was trying to tell him something, but was not sure. Then it struck him. He reached down and grabbed the hammer from the floor. He then stood up, and moved over to the rug. He knelt down next to the parrot which dutifully moved several feet away.

He maneuvered the claw of the hammer around the nails and gave it a gentle tug. The nail came right out. He repeated the process with the four other nails and they came out just as easily. He placed the nails inside the sack. He then moved the rug aside and with a mixture of excitement and bewilderment, saw a small ring of keys.

Andrew looked at the parrot and smiled. The parrot almost seemed to be grinning at him.

“Thank you for your help parrot.” he said.

The parrot replied “Pieces o’ eight.”

He shrugged and then picked up the claw hammer and sat back down. He paused in thought again for a few moments. He now had keys and knew that there were at least two locks. He was hopeful that he would be able to unlock one or perhaps both of them.

The island would be his next step in this adventure. He would return and try the keys on one of the locks, and then he hoped his next course of action would reveal itself. He walked to the stairs again and was about to head to the window when he heard a strange noise coming from the passageway behind the bookcase. It sounded much like his dad’s old lawnmower.

Curious about the noise, yet a bit fearful at the same time, he tiptoed softly over to the bookcase. He tried to peer around it, but saw nothing. He decided to go in, his curiosity getting the best of him. He walked around the bookcase and into the passage. What he saw was quite shocking. The pirate was lying there asleep, snoring loudly, on a bed that had not been there earlier this morning.

How, he wondered, had the pirate arrived here? It did not make any sense whatsoever. Of course he thought it made no sense that either of them were there in the first place. It reminded him of what Mrs. Hobbes would tell the class sometimes while reading stories; telling them, “Sometimes it helps just to believe in things even when it seems impossible.” This seemed to be much truer now, than it had with the various fairy tales that she had read to the class. Looking down on the floor, he saw the bottle of rum lying there empty and he picked it up.

He briefly considered waking the pirate, but decided that this would probably not be in his best interests. Besides he would be of little use in his current condition and truthfully, he did not know if the rogue was capable of returning back to the island, or would want to even if he could.

Frustrated, he exited the passageway. He circled by the bookshelf and, noting the mess of books he had left on the floor, began picking them up and putting them away. He lamented that he did not have a dish towel or even a rag with which he could clean them. Most of them were covered with filth and grime. He

had a respect for books and he believed they deserved better than their current circumstance. He rubbed a few of them with his shirt, removing a layer of dust, but quickly gave up. He was disappointed that he could not do a more complete job of cleaning them, but perhaps he'd find the means to do so later. For now though, he had the task at hand to return to. While he did not particularly enjoy the sensation of being whisked from the window ledge to the island, it was his only route back. He clambered awkwardly out the window and onto the ledge, carefully holding onto his items.

He clutched onto the book as tightly as possible and with a brief amount of hesitation said "YOHO". Once more the sensation of being transported from the ledge to the island hit him, though he apparently had become inured to the process, as he did not feel the nausea or dizziness this time. He opened his eyes and he was standing back on the beach. He noted that nothing had changed in the less than an hour since he had been gone. He actually had not been sure what to expect, the whole day still having a dreamlike quality to him.

He again walked east, heading for the shack. He heard a small noise behind him and smiled as he saw his mongoose running to catch up. It leapt onto the back of his leg and crawled up, settling again on his shoulder. He then felt something touch his other shoulder and grinned as his parrot gently gripped him with its claws. He reached the shack and walked in, possessing feelings of both great excitement and trepidation; he wondered if he was going to be able to unlock the chest and the door inside the rock cave. Moreover he wondered what he would find, if anything, once he did. He suspected from the bird repeating "Pieces o' eight" that there would be some kind of treasure inside the chest, but presumed nothing.

As he entered the shack, he looked around to see if the pirate was in sight. He had a bit of anxiety when he thought about opening the pirate's chest. He was not a thief, and was a bit disinclined to rummage through another person's things. Still, it seemed the necessary course of action if he wanted to return home and the pirate had taken his bottle. Steeling himself, he knelt beside the chest.

He reached into a pocket of his trousers and fumbled with the keys until he found one that appeared to be a correct fit. He inserted it into the serpent's mouth that was part of the lock and turned it to the right. He heard something click into place and he lifted the lid of the chest easily. He had expected to see treasure. He thought there would be gold coins, diamonds, jewels, perhaps a crown or something of value. He was disappointed to see nothing but a sheet of old, yellowed paper. Feeling a bit glum, he put the keys in his pocket and reached down to grab the paper.

He had expected this to be a treasure map or perhaps a map of how to get home, the latter of which he preferred. Instead it was a diagram that in very simple terms gave instructions on building a small pirate vessel. Ironically he thought, he had all the materials needed between the sunken ship and the timber in the rock cave, but they were not seaworthy, and he also did not have the muscles to haul the materials, nor build the boat.

Andrew sat down in the sand, feeling a bit dejected. Perhaps there might be something behind the locked door that could help him. Once again he walked across the beach and past the shack and to the foot of the hill. He walked upwards and reached the rock. He laid the mongoose down and the parrot as well, then also laid down the book. He shimmied through the crevice with a bit more ease this time, and walked down the pathway to the shed and to the north where the door was. He looked for the keyhole, but then discovered that the door was actually locked from the other side.

Slowly and with a feeling of despair, he then walked back to the crack in the rock and eased his way through. A bit cynically he said to the parrot, "Well now what."

The bird replied "YOHO" back to him. He thought for a minute. He could not recall anything back in the flat that would help him here. The only thing he had not taken was the old bag that was in the passageway and the pirate who was sleeping. It was then that it hit him. The pirate was very big and strong. He likely would be excited to have a ship of his own again to sail the seas with. He only wanted to get home, so perhaps in exchange for the plans and materials to build a new ship, the buccaneer would help him return back to his family.

Andrew again picked up the book, waited for his two pets to arrive on his right and left shoulder, and, closing his eyes, said, "YOHO".

Andrew was happy that this time, the disorientation he felt as he was again moved magically from island to windowsill, was minimal. Maybe if he did it a few thousand more times, he might even begin to enjoy it. He looked around and saw that there was a change in the scenery. The docks were completely bereft of ships except one barque flying the French flag and a Merchantman flying the flag of England. He hoped this meant that these two nations were not currently at war.

The pirate book he had read, gave some small details about both pirates and privateers who were basically just pirates in the employ of one nation or another, paid to conduct acts of war under their flag. For a French vessel to be docked in London meant that at least, for now, the two kingdoms were at peace, even if it were an uneasy one.

He thought about how much time had passed since he had arrived in this same flat. The sun did not seem to be in any different position than it was when he arrived. Many people still flocked about the various stores, and he believed that he saw a few of the same faces, though it was from a very considerable distance, so he could of course be wrong. Had it been a few minutes, a few hours, or even a few days? He really could not tell. More and more he kept thinking that this was no more than a dream. Perhaps as a dream it was more realistic, albeit more bizarre than most, but still a dream. Yet no matter the amount of effort, he could not wake up.

He wished his mom and dad were there. He had always been able to count on them when he was scared or in trouble; but they were not here. He was on his own and would have to try to act like a grownup if he had any hope of finding his way back home. He shuddered as a blast of cold, London wind struck him. This prompted a quick retreat back through the window and into the flat.

The snoring continued, but it was now even louder. He had no idea what rum was. Apparently though it was a strong beverage the pirate had taken from him as it had obviously made him very sleepy. Or perhaps the pirate was already tired? He did indeed look a little drowsy when he walked into the shack for the

first time, and looked even more so when he encountered him the second time. How long had the pirate been asleep? There was no clock either on the island or in the flat, and he did not own a watch. Perhaps when he returned home he would take some cash from his piggy bank and buy one.

He was reluctant to wake the pirate up before he had gotten enough sleep, but felt that there was little else he could do now. He was eager to return home and the pirate seemed his best chance of doing so. Slowly he edged closer to the pirate. Several times he moved his hands as if to tap him and each time he pulled away. Finally he whispered at him.

“Mister Pirate? Mister P-i-i-i-i-ra-a-a-te? Please Mister Pirate, I am sorry to wake you, but I need your help.”

The pirate did not respond and Andrew wondered if he might have to tap him after all, perhaps even pull on his whiskers. It likely would wake him up, unless he was in a really deep sleep, which actually appeared to be the case. He reached over to the empty bag on the floor. It still had a pungent odor. He remembered a scene on a television program on which someone was asleep and to wake him up, they placed a foul-smelling substance under his nose. He shook his head at the thought.

Andrew grabbed the bag and being careful not to touch the pirate, moved a part of the bag under his nose. He let the smell of the bag linger there for well over a minute. Nothing happened and so he wiggled it under his nose and again said “Mister Pirate, please wake up,” and yet he did not stir. He thought about the smelly bag, and then compared it to the smell of the pirate himself and noted that there was very little difference in smell. The pirate and the bag both emitted an awful stench. He concluded that the pirate was so used to his own scent, that the odor from the bag was imperceptible.

He decided that perhaps he would take a chance and gently pull on his beard. At this point he felt that he truly had nothing to lose. He reached down and with some hesitation gave it a gentle tug. The pirate only snored louder, but otherwise gave no reaction. He tugged harder and still nothing.

He was about to give up when the parrot cried, “Rum on Pirate Cove.” The pirate suddenly awoke and blinked several times. He looked at him and smiled. He shivered at that, but the smile was not one of malice, instead he appeared genuinely happy.

Andrew addressed him. “Mister Pirate, I have the plans and materials for...”

The pirate raised his hand, cutting him off in mid-sentence and said, “Aye matey, we be casting off soon.”

He then vanished. One second he was there, the next he was simply gone. Andrew jumped at this, but then just shrugged his shoulders and sighed. This

was, he thought one of the least weird of things he had seen today, or perhaps it had been several days. He was pretty much numb to any new surprises, he reckoned. He looked at the parrot and the mongoose that were on opposite shoulders and smiled. "I am lucky that I have you both and am not truly alone," he said, wondering inwardly if he would be able to take them back home with him; that was if and when he did get back home!

Andrew walked west out of the passageway and then went downstairs and sat for a few minutes. He looked at where the rug had been with the nails and remembered he had the nails still with him, as well as the plans. The pirate would not be able to build the ship without the plans, so he would need to head back to the island, hopefully for the very last time.

He ran back up the stairs and slid his body again out the window. He said, "YOHO" and nothing happened. He repeated it again, again, again. Still nothing happened. He took several steps to the left, and still, again, said the magic word, and still, again, it did not work.

Panic gripped him. If he could not return back to the island, then he could not help the pirate build the ship. Without the ship there was no chance he would ever be able to get home. He climbed back in through the window and walked past the bookshelf into the passageway. He saw the smelly bag, but nothing else was there. He left and looked around the room, but other than the bookcase, there was nothing.

He walked down the stairs and sat down at the table. He looked on the table and saw the book. He picked it up and realized something. The book had been in his hands each time he had said the magic word to transport him to and from the island. He picked the book back up and shifted it so it was held firmly under his left arm. He then stood up, pushed the chair back under the table, and walked back up the stairs.

He walked to the window and crawled through it once more. He stood up, taking a deep breath of the cool, fragrant air. He exhaled and then took another deep breath and with his fingers crossed, he once again said, "YOHO." This time he welcomed the sensation as the world spun and suddenly he was elsewhere.

Andrew closed and opened his eyes and with a smile saw he was standing on the island, his feet an inch deep in the sand, looking out towards the ruins of the stranded, broken down pirate ship. This time however, he was not alone. The pirate was standing there in front of him.

"Hi there matey," the pirate said. "You be having some nails and ship-building plans for me?"

6

Andrew stood there completely flabbergasted. People did not just disappear, but this pirate had not only somehow gone from the island to the flat, he had vanished in front of his eyes, and without even saying the magic word - if it even was a magic word - “YOHO.” Again the thought of this being a dream struck him, but he quickly cast the thought aside. Dream or not, he was stuck here for the time being.

Dumbstruck, he handed the plans to the pirate and looked him over again. He did not look much different around the face, but he wore a different outfit than before and it actually fit him and appeared new. His nose wrinkled a bit though, as the outfit had a distinct smell. His dad had an outfit that Andrew had pulled out of the attic about a year earlier. It had the same overpowering odor. He remembered his dad saying the suit had been packed in these white foamy items called “mothballs.” He never understood this. Moths did not seem to smell and, why anyone would want to buy little foam orbs that smelled like an insect - if indeed they did smell - really did not make sense to him.

The coat had an insignia that his prior outfit had not. It was a skull that appeared to be laughing, but it wore an eye patch and the other eye socket was dyed a very deep-hued red. He knew it was impolite to stare, but stare he did, first at the skull, then at the pirate whose one good eye he noticed for the first time was also a dark red.

The pirate stopped poring over the plans, becoming aware of the curious gaze of his young companion. An almost kindly smile creased his face as Andrew staggered back a few steps uncomfortably. The pirate gave a dismissive wave as if to help him relax.

“Aye matey, I have a red eye. That’s why I be called Red Eye the pirate. Both my eyes were blue once, but now I got me the one red one and we’ll talk no more about it, do you understand?”

Andrew nodded, but said nothing, still a bit ill-at-ease.

Red Eye resumed his examination of the plans. Andrew didn’t really understand them, and therefore could not help much at this point. Instead he

walked over to the lagoon and looked at a number of seashells. He picked up a few of them and skipped them across the water, one of them bouncing several times.

He walked up and down the sand for a little while, finding a few smooth, opaque black rocks that he put in his pocket. He found a slightly bigger rock and he lifted it up. This rock was white, the size of a small brick, but rounded at the edge. It was not really a rock, but perhaps a piece of something made of alabaster or maybe gypsum. He moved it aside as he saw something else that caught his interest.

He saw a smooth, rounded piece of wood just barely jutting out of the sand, the rest of it buried. He tugged on it and it moved, but very little. He used the claw part of the hammer and dug for several minutes, loosening several rocks and more of the strange white material. He finally unearthed it and pulled it all the way out.

What he held in his hand appeared to be an antique telescope, though he reasoned it may not truly be that old considering where and possibly when he was. The lens itself was in good shape, but it had come loose and he held it separately in his hand. He trotted the hundred or so yards back to where Red Eye stood. The pirate had resumed looking over the plans. The plans themselves were laid flat over a part of the wrecked ship that itself, was lying on the shore and leaning against a large rock.

The plans were more of a sketch with several small notations and arrows drawn indicating what pieces went where. Andrew saw a crude illustration of the anchor next to what looked like a chain and the word "hawsehole" written next to it. He raised his head from the plans and then walked over to part of the wood and knelt. He felt the sun strike the back of his neck and this gave him an idea. Andrew grasped the lens from the telescope with his left hand and angled it so that the sun light was shining through onto the wood of the wrecked ship. A wide beam of light shone down from the lens onto the wood. He pulled the lens back slowly, tilting it ever so slightly, narrowing the beam of light so that it was just a small dot.

A small bit of smoke began to spring up from the wood as the light from the sun magnified into a beam that started to scorch the wood. He slowly moved it around as Red Eye looked on, fascinated. After several minutes, he placed the lens down on the wood and blew the smoke away. Now Red Eye and Andrew looked at the result. Intricately burned into the wood was written: "THE ANDREW".

Red Eye laughed. "Aye matey, you found my plans and gave me my rum, so why not? You may indeed call the ship whatever name you like when we finish

building it.”

He smiled proudly. He had not really planned to put the makeshift sign on the boat, he was simply having fun playing with the improvised magnifying glass. Now thinking about it, he liked the idea of naming the boat after himself. However, he quickly angled the lens again and in the “D” of his name added a small eye patch, an eye, a nose, and a crude mouth, adding a small representation of Red Eye onto the name of the boat.

Again Red Eye laughed, but just for second, then his face became serious and he pulled up the plans and made a few grunting sounds. He then sat down on the rock and dropped the plans unceremoniously onto the ground. He stared at Andrew for several seconds. It was a piercing gaze, yet Andrew did not feel scared or even anxious. Andrew had accepted the pirate as a friend, albeit perhaps with some reservations. Red Eye spoke to him.

“Alright, I am ready to build us a small pirate ship. I read the plans and I understand them good enough.” He stroked his beard, deep in thought, then tugged at the bottom wistfully. “However Andrew, my lad, we do not have enough materials to build it. I have some lumber and some sails needed to build the boat, but they are in the cave over yonder. I also need my treasure map of the island we will be heading to, but they are locked in my chest and I lost the key. Even a cutlass of the very strongest steel won’t open it, a pity it truly is.”

He paused in thought. Red Eye did not know that he had opened the chest. He had found only the plans that he had handed to him. The map was not in there. Perhaps he thought, it was in the cave? He decided to check the chest one more time though.

He turned and headed east towards the shack. As he walked he gave little bits of crackers to his two companions. They both chewed the snacks quietly, the mongoose nuzzling the side of his cheek in appreciation, the parrot making a few squawking noises.

The unusual trio reached the shack and walked inside. The treasure chest was sitting there still open. He peered inside and it was just as empty it seemed as when he left it. His brow furrowed as he thought about what to do next. Perhaps if he could find a way to open the shed, the map would be in there. Of course the only other pathway he had found was guarded by those crocodiles.

He turned to exit the shack planning to walk along the beach, hoping the sun and the fresh air would clear his head and maybe help him figure out what to do next. Perhaps Red Eye could help him get past the crocs, though he had observed that the pirate did not have a pistol or even a cutlass with which to fight them or drive them off.

As he stepped out the door of the shack, he saw something out of the corner of his eye. A sliver of sunlight had struck the chest at an angle. He could make out some kind of shadow or silhouette in the bottom corner.

Andrew pulled out the lens again and held it aloft, directing a beam of light into the chest. The beam illuminated the area and it was then that he saw the map! It was painted to be colored exactly the same as the bottom of the chest, but the light had revealed it, the map now being plainly visible.

He practically ran to the chest and reaching in, snatched the map up in his eager hands. He noted that some kind of tar-like substance had been used to adhere it to the bottom. Red Eye had indeed been clever. Pirates, he had read, had a lot of enemies. These enemies consisted of the navy of various nations as well as other pirates. Some of these pirates were actually hired by the navy to catch other pirates. This was, he knew, the idea of using one thief to catch another.

He rolled the map up after wiping the gooey film off of it. He darted back outside excitedly and ran back the several hundred yards until he was nearly breathless. He reached Red Eye who continued to gaze intensely at the plans. The pirate did not notice his silent approach and appeared to be completely distracted. Without a word, he extended his hands, holding out the map for Red Eye to see. Red Eye did not react immediately, being almost oblivious to both Andrew and the map he held out to him. His one good eye then blinked, squinted hard, and blinked again. He appeared to be very dumbfounded by the sight and then smiled heartily.

He clapped him on the back, gently but it was enough to send him sprawling. Red Eye gave an embarrassed and guilty look, but Andrew smiled. He was unhurt and managed to laugh for the first time since he awoke in the flat, so very long ago, or so it seemed.

Red Eye fixed Andrew with a somber look. "Lad, ye should know that me map and chest be cursed!"

“You see lad, I was not always on this island. I had been quite the respectable pirate at one time, I was. I sailed all over the world. I had made and lost many treasures of my own, serving the queen herself, I did. However the sea, well, she be a fickle companion, and she decided that my current boat was not to her pleasure, she did. I found my boat and its crew washed ashore on this small island called “Tobago.”

Red Eye paused for a moment to take another drink of grog. “My crew and I made shelters out of the remains of our ship and then began to cut down trees, hoping to build a new boat to bring us back home. However, there was indeed a scurvy lout on my crew. You might say he was a worm slithering about a bad apple as my whole crew was disloyal. No sooner had we built a new boat and taken back to sea than the traitor pulled his cutlass and held it to me neck.”

Red Eye scowled, his face twisted in anger at the remembered betrayal. “The Spanish Guarda Costa was spied in the distance, and my new ‘Captain’ sailed for her under a flag of truce. Now ye must know that while the Guarda Costa be working for the Spanish king and queen, they are little more than pirates themselves. They be living for plunder as much, if not more, than a wretch like me.

“Aye, it is true, they be a lower form of scum than a snake wallowing in a pond of muck!” Red Eye spat at the ground. His face expressing great anger, and more, outright hatred.

“But I should be digressin’. The villainous thugs that they were took all me possessions. I had only me long johns left on. I became angry and tried to struggle, but in the process tipped a barrel of some strange dye. It splashed in me face and, well now ye be knowing why me eye is red.”

“I am sorry about your eye,” Andrew said, frowning, feeling sorry for his new friend.

“It be okay. Anyways, they took me ship and crew away from me. They then sailed with me tied to the mast. We landed at the island of Trinidad. The Guv, well he was more than a bit happy to see me. I had visited the island before and

made off with several barrels of something or other that had belonged to him. He stuck me in the deepest, lowest dungeon, telling me that when I finished rotting, he'd come open me cage."

Red Eye took another drink and continued. "The guards left me there, paying me no mind. That was their mistake. I was, and am, a very strong lad. The bars, well they were as weak as a rotten log. I was able to snap one of the bars right off. I then sneaked away into the night.

"I then found me some provisions in the kitchen and sneaking in the dark, found me clothes and me cutlass. I even found me a flintlock pistol. I dressed and armed myself and then set about leaving, hoping to find my ship anchored at the dock. Truly I had been hoping I'd find a nice, sizable war galleon with a crew seeking a good captain."

"What did you find Red Eye?" Andrew asked, eagerly wanting to know more.

"Arrr, patience lad. I will be getting to that. I was skulking about in the dark for an hour. I then heard the Guv talking about Blackbeard's treasure chest and his vast amounts of gold hidden away on a strange island. I listened I did, most intently. I learned that the chest held a map to an island where he hid his treasure. It be on an island that is not on any other maps and be hidden right in the middle of the ocean, far away from any other land."

Andrew smiled and found himself jumping up and down, excited by the story. "What next?" he asked.

"Arrr if ye not be the most anxious lad I've met." He then laughed. "Well I snuck into the Guv's room and he was nice and asleep. He had left the chest right on his bed table. I grabbed it and quietly sneaked out of the room, then out of the building. I then found me boat and a few of me crew. I hailed them to let me come aboard."

"Didn't they give you to the bad guys?" he asked.

Red Eye answered. "Aye lad, that they did, but they saw me escaping from the Guv's dungeon and had a newfound respect for me, or maybe it was fear. They would not dare cross me again."

Red Eye smiled. It was one full of either mischief or malice and it made him feel a bit nervous. He saw Red Eye as a friend, but he saw that the pirate had a side to him that seemed a bit rough or dark. He was not sure now that continuing to work with him was a good idea.

Red Eye continued. "So me crew and I, we left me little boat and commandeered the Guv's war galleon. It had been left mostly unmanned. The few men upon it either jumped off or joined us as we set sail. The Guv, well he was now an angry sort of man. His whole navy set off after us. He even boarded

one of the vessels himself, a 60-gun ship whose name I cannot recall. Well I had me a good lead on him and a fair wind favored me escape. The chase lasted well into the day until the sun went down and they decided they'd had enough of me and turned around."

"Were they afraid of the dark? Is that why they stopped chasing you?" Andrew inquired.

"Maybe, but a sea battle at night, well it be a treacherous prospect. Too much you cannot see. So I escaped and after a few days found myself at the "Island of Pines".

"Island of Pines?" he asked.

"Well that be what the sign said. It was a wooden post that someone had written the name upon. It was a small island not too far from Campeche, a Spanish city, where I had also spent some time in a dungeon, I must confess. I then made several of the biggest mistakes of me life."

"What mistakes did you make?"

"Well I did not truly trust me crew not to cross me again. So whilst they slept, I took a longboat from our galleon and left the island, taking the chest with me. I left the crew with the galleon not much caring what they did with the ship. I cannot say now whether it be me greed that thought for me that day, or was it truly my mistrust of my treacherous crew."

"Where did you go?"

"Well there be several other small islands in me sight, but I decided if me crew got angry they'd first head to those islands and search for me. So instead I rowed the boat about halfway around the Island of Pines. I thought that it may be the last place they would search for me.

"So I docked me boat and walked slowly inland about three hundred feet and hid inside a grove of pine trees. It was then that I made the terrible mistake of opening the chest."

"Why was it a mistake? What happened?" Andrew asked eagerly.

"Why the very earth itself shook matey. The ground beneath me trembled as if afraid or like in the grip of a child shaking a rattle. The pine trees I was standing next to were many times larger than I and they were strong, I be tellin' you. Nonetheless, they went and timbered over and landed almost on top o' me. The ground shook and me with it for what seemed like an eternity, then all of a sudden, it stopped."

"You mean opening the chest caused an earthquake?"

"If that what ye be calling it, then aye, that it did, but that was just the beginning of me troubles. I looked around and in every direction were trees that had been shaken loose from their moorings as it were. Not a tree stood for many

yards around. It was as if a giant had sneezed and blew them all down. The island looked like a graveyard of trees it did.”

“What happened then?”

“Well I looked on in surprise as the water from the ocean itself got taken out from the shore. There they were, many fishes from the sea, flopping about looking for air. Now I realized I had no provisions for me poor self, so I began to run towards the shore to grab few that I could cook for me supper. But as I did, I heard this loud noise. It was like a chorus of one hundred lions. I looked out into the ocean and the sea churned and frothed like a mug o’ bad grog. Then a big wave began to form it did, it was taller than a light house it was and coming for me!”

Red Eye took a few breaths, then continued. “I thought about trying to get in me longboat, but it was now no longer in the water, and was perched in the wet sand, I was unable to move it, stuck in the muck as it were. Instead I ran back inland as the wave came crashing in towards me, I managed to reach a tree that still stood and climbed upon it. It was next to a hill and I stepped off the top of the tree and onto that hill I did and ran up to the very top. I managed to stay safe as the water ruined the entire island.”

“What happened to the chest?” Andrew inquired.

“Well the water finally decided it had grown bored with tearing up me island and left. I climbed down the mountain and sure enough, the chest was there and the map was still in it. I got me this black tree sap and stuck it to the bottom of the chest. It was the same color, so no one, without a real close look, would know it was in there, thinking they’d found an empty worthless chest. I managed then to find me hardy and resilient longboat which had survived the onslaught. I got in and sailed to this island which I had seen in the distance.”

“What about your crew.”

“They were lucky. They had set out looking for me in the galleon and were away at sea when the water hit. Sadly the Island of Pines was swallowed by the ocean only an hour later and this time, the water never left, even the top of that hill I had stood on being dwarfed by the big wave and never again coming back to the surface. I was lucky that I decided to leave. I then built that shack you first met me in.”

“How long have you been here?”

“Maybe ten years, I am not sure. I made the plans to build the boat, and began stowing wood and sails that I had, to construct it. Then those crocs that I am sure you’ve seen took up residence. They are not eager to let me past. The only building materials I have are torn and old. They would not endure a sea voyage. We needs to get past those crocs and get me good lumber and sails.”

“Then how can we break the curse and open the chest?”

“Arrr, the curse only be for thieves and pirates like me. You be an honest lad, so when you opened the chest, nothing happened. You alone will be able to get past those nasty ol’ crocs there.”

He gulped. “You want me to get past those nasty crocodiles?”

“Aye, they only be interested in stopping me because I stole the chest. They be lured here by the power of the curse. Even if I chase the crocs off, some other threat will come to defy me. You are a good and true young man. They will not stop you. One way or another you must get past them.”

“If I can, then will you build me a boat?”

“Aye, and then I will be happy to share in me treasure. After all, that is what ye are here for right?”

“No Mr. Red Eye, I am hoping you can build a boat and take me back home.”

Red Eye gave a puzzled look. “All right then, I will build the boat and you help me get Blackbeard’s treasure from Pirate Cove and then I give me word to help you get home.”

Red Eye extended his hand and he took it and they shook. The pirate then smiled and spoke to Andrew.

“I think since we will be crewing together that perhaps it be best I get to know you lad. Sit down a while and we will swap stories and maybe along the way I’ll teach ye a few sea shanties!”

Andrew sat there and sipped from a mug of water that Red Eye had handed him. The water he hoped was from the clean pond he had found earlier. With relief he tasted it and it was indeed pure, or at least seemed so. He sat there perched on a small rock and gave several details about his adventure so far.

Red Eye for his part turned out to be a good listener. He looked Andrew in the eyes, asked several questions which indicated that he had heard, if not understood, much of his account of his experience. Much of what he shared was bizarre and outlandish to Red Eye who lived in an entirely different era and was unfamiliar with cars, airplanes, and many of the other things the young man described.

The most amusing part for Andrew was his description of a dream he once had where he defeated an evil giant using only a wiffle ball bat.

“Arrr, this wiffle ball bat must be a fearsome weapon indeed. It be too bad that such is not available to me now, I would rule the seas with such an artifact in me own possession.”

Andrew did not try to explain that the bat was made of plastic and really would be useless to a pirate, unless his opponent threw a wiffle ball at him.

Red Eye listened to all of his tales and then spoke a bit more in detail about his own journey. He shared that he had felt a good deal of guilt over the disaster he had brought upon the Island of Pines. “A truly magnificent island it was, lad. The water was as blue as the queen’s eye and so clear. On a good day, you could see to the bottom of it and watch the fishes swim amongst the reefs. The trees were larger and more regal than a 60-gun war galleon.”

He went on to share a description of the island before the ocean had swallowed it up. The trees on the island were two or three times larger than other pines and there were hundreds of squirrels that lived in and around them. He had actually briefly considered giving the chest away to his crew and making a quiet home for himself on the island, perhaps establishing a settlement or town where he could live a respectable life.

That, however, he shared sadly, was not to be. The chest it seemed, had called to him. It wasn't a call he heard with his ears, but rather it resounded like voice in his head. He had not even been there for a day when he felt an irresistible compulsion to open the chest. It had not, he shared, been the voice of the chest in his head that had led him to it, but instead had been the many images it had conjured up in his mind. These images were of him wearing a crown, commanding respect, sitting on a throne next to a beautiful queen. Those led him to believe that he had a duty to open the chest. He had the impression that, not to do so, was to rob himself of his rightful destiny. So, despite his desire to rid himself of it, in the end, he opened it.

The curse he further explained to Andrew was subtle. His first knowledge of the chest was when he overheard its mention. From there he decided it was his to take, compensation for the seizure of his boat and his freedom. He recalled a tiny suggestion that popped into his head telling him that it should be his. The chest then continued to encourage him further as he ran from the Spanish Armada, and even afterwards heartened him to continue running at full sails, impressing upon him the thought that he was still being pursued by an unseen enemy. His every waking moment seemed to be filled with thoughts of great wealth and influence. "Ye might say that the chest and me, well I guess it possessed me thoughts night and day. I lived and breathed the chest and the treasure it promised, aye."

"It be sad now when I think about the island. I be a pirate, it is true, but never did I intend to bring such a horrible fate as I did to such a splendid isle. My exile on Pirate's Island as I called it was deserved for my crime of greed and weakness. A true pirate would've shown strength and resolve and ignored the chest's malevolent taunting. Still, what is done, be done and now me thinks that ye may be able to help me gain the treasure. I hope that my many years of loneliness and solitude have earned me the right to claim it, or me half of it," he said looking at his young friend.

There was an unspoken and yet tacit agreement between the two which Andrew acknowledged with a smile. He then gave a more firm commitment by saying, "I promise to help you if I can. I keep all my promises too, Mr. Red Eye," he said, his eyes firm with conviction.

"Aye lad, ye strike me as the sort of sailor who knows the value of honor. I like the cut o' yer jib an' I be proud to have you by me side. Arrr..."

Red Eye turned away for a few moments, however Andrew could see a small tear forming in his one good, red eye. He pretended not to notice, and instead fed his animal companions a few crackers. They munched on them and he returned his gaze back to Red Eye who now seemed to have regained his composure.

"The parrot on my shoulder. Is he yours?" Andrew asked.

“No lad, he flew in one day a while back. He comes and goes. I give him a few seeds from some of the plants that grow nearby and built him his little perch out of me ship’s ruined timbers. I do consider him a friend, but he is his own bird, I say. He has taken quite a liking to you though I be seeing.”

“Yes, he seems to like me, and so does this mongoose.”

“Mongoose he be eh?” Red Eye said with a crooked smile that Andrew did not understand. “Well, then he be a good mongoose indeed,” he continued and then gave a small chuckle.

“Have any of your crew ever found you? Have you had any visitors at all, or any friends?”

“No lad, you be the first person to land on this island since I got here, and now be me only friend. To tell the truth, I began to think this place was me own little jail and I was consigned here for me acts of greed, perhaps to stay all me life. Your deliverance to me here truly did brighten me day.”

“I am glad to hear that.” Andrew answered. He still had to wonder about how Red Eye had moved from the island, to the flat, and back again.

“Mr. Red Eye, how is it you left the island and I found you in the secret passage behind the bookcase? How did you just vanish into thin air and return to the island?” Andrew asked.

Red Eye frowned and then answered. “Arrr, but that be a riddle to which I cannot answer. Perhaps the magic of the curse had something to do with it.” His eyes moved to the book and he glared at it. “Perhaps something else made this happen.” His brow creased a bit and he turned away for a second, and then looked back at Andrew.

“Well that be enough storytellin’ lad, it is time to get me the materials to make us a boat.”

Andrew smiled and with a quick glance at his two companions, dashed off towards the cave.

Andrew slowed his pace and began walking down the beach, his gaze fixed on the cave. A few things now were clear. Red Eye was an immense and strong man. He could've easily smashed open the treasure chest even without the key. However the events that had landed him on this island had made it more than abundantly clear that the pirate opening the chest was a bad idea. He would have to open it for Red Eye, if indeed he were worthy to do so.

He had no idea if the plans for the boat were adequate. Red Eye had drawn them, he said, but they looked not much different than something he drew once at school using a box of crayons and a ruler. Nonetheless, he really had no choice but to forge ahead and hope for the best. His dad used to tell him that a bad plan was better than no plan at all. However his dad had never seen the plans for this boat; he very well might have changed his mind if he had.

Andrew returned his thoughts to the problem at hand. The crocodiles were a serious obstacle. They were immense and he doubted that he could run by them. It would be foolish to try. He thought maybe he could find something to feed them, but the only thing he had was the bag of crackers and he doubted that they would provide a substantial enough meal to satisfy them.

He felt tired and a bit overwhelmed by his circumstances. It was a lot of responsibility for anyone, especially a seven year old. He considered finding a nice soft spot out of the sun and taking a nap. However, he wondered, if he fell asleep, would he wake up still yet somewhere else? If he were dreaming, perhaps he would wake up in his bed. He decided not to risk it. He had come this far and felt somehow he was on the right track. He would press on. For better or worse he decided that he would first help Red Eye get his ship built and find his treasure.

He had reservedly begun to see Red Eye as a friend, perhaps the pirate had a rough exterior, but he considered him a good friend nonetheless. He saw in the man a somewhat murky, even criminal past, but also a desire to correct his mistakes and fashion a new life for himself, even if he was planning to use Blackbeard's treasure to do so.

Andrew considered asking Red Eye for his help, but he could tell that the man was terrified of the crocs, too terrified to help. It seemed odd expecting a kid to surmount this obstacle, after all he was only seven years old, but the fact that Red Eye reposed such trust in him was somehow reassuring.

He sat down on a nearby rock and relaxed for a few minutes. A cool breeze wafted across his face and he felt himself letting go of his concerns. He looked out at the beach and saw the dolphins continue to gambol back and forth in the distance. He observed Red Eye off to the west pacing back and forth, occasionally lifting his head and staring out at the wreck of what he believed was his ship.

Looking out further, he saw several pelicans swooping low over the ocean, one of them disappearing into the water and emerging with a swell in its beak, he knew this meant that it had managed to catch a fish. It was then that an idea hit him. The ocean was abundant with food that he could feed the crocodiles. If he could catch several fish, then he could toss them their way and while the crocs feasted, he could run by quickly to the shed.

In no time at all, he found himself back at the entrance to the lagoon and standing near Red Eye. The pirate didn't even turn in his direction, yet he suspected that he was impatiently waiting for Andrew to produce results. He looked around and saw the pirate's bottle. It had been empty, and yet now it appeared full. Perhaps Red Eye had refilled it somehow. Another idea crossed Andrew's mind.

Andrew ventured out into the lagoon. The tide was coming in slowly, but the water wings would keep him afloat. He swam awkwardly against the tide and looked around for some fish. He tried to grab them, but they were much too quick and slippery. After several futile efforts, he gave up and began coming back into shore feeling glum over his failure.

As he trudged through the sand, his bare feet struck something hard. Looking down, he saw that it was a small metal container. He reached down into the shallow water and picked it up. It was a tin container with a pull tab that said "SARDINES" on it in big print. Sardines, he knew, were fish and the can had not been opened.

Andrew pulled on the tab and instantly regretted it. A foul odor poured out of the can. He eyed the fish and they looked worse than they smelled, if that was even possible. Steeling himself however, he pulled one fish out of the can and carefully pushed it into the bottle. It wasn't easy, the fish was slimy and the stench was overpowering. However, he held his breath and managed to get the first one in. He then grabbed another fish and did the same with it. He didn't want to litter, so he took the can ashore and laid it on a rock.

Red Eye sniffed, looked around and spied the can. Andrew expected him to feel the same sense of disgust and nausea as he did, but to his surprise, and revulsion, the hungry pirate instead ran over to the can and began popping the rancid “food” in his mouth. Andrew turned his head away unable to bear the sight, the mere image in his head unsettling his stomach. He walked over to the water and rubbed his hands in it doing his best to remove the odor from his fingers. He also took several deep breaths of the sea air which helped him feel a bit better.

He pulled his hands up and sniffed, a bit sickened still at the smell. It seemed that his fingers might retain this “fragrance” for a bit longer. He thought about these noxious-smelling fish being consumed by Red Eye and decided the pirate’s breath could also be a bit unpleasant, and it would be wise to keep more than a pace or two distant from him. He also joked quietly to himself that lighting a match would be quite ill-advised.

Andrew reached the cave and entered it again. He lit his torch, and then once more scaled the downgrade until he reached the bottom. He had half-hoped the crocodiles would’ve left, but, alas not. The two monstrous reptiles were still lying there. As before they gazed at him, but otherwise seemed passive. Perhaps, like guard dogs, they were somehow trained to watch, but take no action unless someone got too close.

Reluctantly he turned the bottle down and the foul liquid oozed onto his hands. Ironically, the liquid in the bottle made his hands smell a little better than they had before, but the fish as they came out felt slimy and it was all he could do maintain a grip on them. His stomach turned a bit again as he grasped them, the reek permeating the immediate area. The mongoose crawled down his shirt and the parrot flew a dozen yards away, both obviously not enjoying the scent either.

Oddly enough the crocodiles seemed less appalled by the aroma of the fish and eyed them hungrily. Both of the beasts glared intently at Andrew’s hand and they let out a hissing noise. Quickly he threw both fish as hard as he could over and past them. The crocs turned and pursued their unappetizing meal, ignoring Andrew completely. He was tempted to make a dash past them, but wisely decided to wait.

As luck would have it, both crocodiles let out a rather loud belch. The stink of it was awful and Andrew found himself coughing and spitting on the sand in disgust. “Ewww!” he yelled. He then turned his head, took a deep breath with his fingers clamped over his nose, and ran past the crocs and down a long hallway.

As he entered, he saw there were several torches hanging on the wall, held by metal containers in the shape of a sea serpent's mouth. It actually gave them the appearance of a dragon breathing out a torrent of fire from its mouth. The light from the torches splayed on the walls and he saw what appeared to be several cave drawings. He paused to admire them and was a bit taken aback by the odd story they relayed.

The drawings were crude, much like what he might've drawn in Kindergarten with crayons, but they seemed to depict what Red Eye had told him. The first drawing he saw showed what appeared to be a rather fat pirate holding a sword of some kind in one hand, and a treasure chest under his arms, running from several taller, thinner men and several dogs.

The next drawing showed what he believed was a pirate ship. There were several other ships of varying size seeming to chase it. One of them was of immense size and there were a number of black dots which, at the right angle, he thought could be cannons. The next drawing showed a boat docked or marooned on an island and a man in a small boat moving away from the larger one. This apparently had happened at night like Red Eye said, as there appeared to be a number of stars and a moon drawn above it.

There were three more drawings. The next one showed the same fat pirate opening the chest that had been under his arm in the first drawing. He noticed that the pirate seemed fatter in this drawing, considerably so, than the first one. Perhaps the fatter drawing represented his greed and gluttony becoming greater the longer he had held the chest. The next drawing showed an island and a bunch of lines that seemed to indicate that an earthquake had struck it. He noted that the pirate in this drawing appeared considerably thinner. A number of trees appeared to be uprooted as well and the chest was lying on its side.

The final drawing seemed too incredible for him to believe. It showed the pirate, now drawn to look very much like a scared child crying and moving from a tree to the precipice of a hill, just avoiding a massive wall of water.

All in all, it was a bit disturbing. The cartoons, as he thought of them, fairly well detailed the story Red Eye had shared with him. However, since the pirate had made it plain that he was terrified of the crocodiles, it was doubtful that he had come in here to draw them.

Then again, he thought that maybe he had drawn them before the crocodiles had arrived. He would ask him when he returned to the boat. Looking over the drawings, he believed they painted a rather bleak outline of piracy and the bitter harvest it reaped. It seemed to rather pointedly show a dire outcome for Red Eye who had survived with loneliness and regret as his punishment.

If and when Andrew and Red Eye built the boat and escaped the island, he wondered if new artwork would be added to the wall showing their adventures. The identity of the artist was a mystery, but he hoped that if further drawings were added, he would be portrayed as a hero and not a villain.

He shrugged and kept walking. However as he did so, he saw three more final drawings. It was a skull and crossbones drawn over the sketch of a treasure chest. It had some writing on it. "Captain Blackbeard's cursed treasure. A curse be upon thee if you touch me treasure and be unworthy."

This was disconcerting to look at, but then he looked at the second drawing. It showed a young child standing at an open treasure chest. The next illustration showed what appeared to be a pirate holding something withdrawn from the chest about to be swallowed by an ocean wave, while the child ran away.

He gulped and took an uneasy breath. The picture seemed to indicate that Red Eye would experience great misfortune if he removed the treasure from the chest. This was something he was not prepared to let happen.

This last drawing, primarily the text on it, made Andrew a bit uncomfortable. He had thus far been honest, forthright, and tried to do nothing that would meet with his mom or dad's disapproval. Was this warning real? His only desire was to get home. Yes, finding a hoard of treasure would be great. He could buy all kinds of great things for his mom, dad, and little brother Tyler, as well as his cousins Catherine and Lauren.

However, in thinking over the matter he realized that he would sacrifice his share in an instant if it meant he could get home and back to the life he had left behind before he came here. Was he worthy as the writing on the wall said? If he was or was not, how could he know except by trying? He knew that he would have to find out the hard way and hope for the best. Red Eye seemed to know that he himself was not worthy and had pinned his hopes on his young friend.

Andrew thought more about the treasure. If indeed he and Red Eye found it, was he entitled to a share of it? His dad had always asked him to consider his actions before he did them, by asking if they were expected or unexpected behavior. Red Eye expected him to keep part of the treasure and certainly he had worked hard for it, but was it really his to take? His one desire was to return home. Red Eye, on the other hand, had endured a great deal seeking this fortune, it meant a lot to him. It would be a nice gesture to allow him to keep it all.

Besides, Andrew thought, he had a good deal of money in his piggy bank, nearly forty dollars. He doubted it would have space for gold coins and jewels. Also, forty dollars was a lot of money. How much more could he need or want in a lifetime? After a few minutes reflection, he concluded that Red Eye could have both shares, and he would be very content with just finding his way back home, and keeping maybe just one gold coin as a souvenir.

He pushed all thoughts of the riches aside knowing Red Eye was waiting for him. He needed to hurry and bring back the supplies so he could begin construction of the boat. He walked forward and saw the shed, but from the other side, this end of it was embedded in a stone wall. To his dismay, he saw it needed a key to open. Would his key work? Only one way to find out.

He first peered through the keyhole and saw that the inside of the shed was much, much larger than he had anticipated. There was a good deal of wood along with a cart, and several swathes of thick fabric that he assumed were the good, undamaged sails Red Eye asked for. Andrew frowned; somehow he knew the wood was remarkably light despite its size. Still, he knew that he would have to make many, many trips to bring Red Eye everything he needed to build their boat.

Andrew inserted the key and turned it. With relief he felt the lock turn and click. He opened the door and stepped in. He walked over to the pile of wood and carefully lifted a plank off the ground. It was light, just as he thought, and he smiled. This would take time, but it would not be too difficult. He placed what lumber he could fit into the cart. He grasped its handles and pulled it back through the hallway and then turning it, began pushing it up the hill, all the while keeping a close eye on the crocodiles. They were, at this time, still snoozing comfortably. He wrinkled his nose however, as the air still retained that horrible fish odor.

He exited the cave and began the long trek back to where, in the distance, he could see Red Eye still appraising the plans, his head nodding periodically. He watched him as he walked down the path and the motions of the man's head reminded him of those penny movies at an amusement park where turning a hand crank, animated it back and forth, repeating still images. It was not too different from pressing rewind and then the play buttons on a movie, seeing the same scene replay over and again.

Andrew surmised that Red Eye was likely just nodding his head back and forth, much the same way he would rock his chair in school when he was reading or deep in thought. Probably, Andrew thought, the pirate was being very detailed and making sure he studied every iota of data on the plans before he began building the boat.

After a small pause, he resumed pushing the cart. The sand was actually not soft, but compact, so the winding pathway, which he thought would be a considerable impediment, actually was not much of a hindrance at all. It was though, still hard work to push it the many hundreds of yards to where Red Eye stood. He made several rest stops, sitting for a few minutes and handing a cracker or two to each of his companions.

It took a while, but Andrew arrived, perspiring and tired with his load. Red Eye's gaze was still intent on the plans, his head still bobbing back and forth. Then, as if awakening from a trance, his eyes became alert and he looked over at Andrew. His glance then turned to the cart and he muttered, "More lumber." He then resumed looking at the plans.

Andrew frowned at this, but tilted the cart. He had expected to need Red Eye's help since it held a great deal of wood. However, the front tipped over easy and the lumber slid gently into the sand. Red Eye took notice of the pile next to him, turned and began dragging the pieces over towards the other side of the rock that his plans were on.

Andrew turned with the cart again and began heading towards the cave. He reached it, walked past the sleeping crocodiles, and ambled across the hall. He placed more wood into the cart, filling it up again. Then he sat for awhile and rested. He stood up after a few moments and pushed the cart down the hall and up, out of the cave.

Lost in thought, he wondered how long it would take to build a boat. He had watched his dad assemble a model and it took days! Moreover, this boat was much larger and after all, Red Eye was just one man. His concern was made greater as he recalled that the pirate had seemed to stare at the plans for a really long time as if he did not truly understand them. Even when the boat was built, would it be seaworthy? However, to his surprise, as he came closer to the boat, he saw that a mast was already built and lying on the sand.

This had to be impossible. He did not think he had been away long enough for Red Eye to have erected a mast for the boat. Then again, it was equally inconceivable that saying "YOHO" would whisk him to and fro, between London and this bizarre island. Cursed and magic treasure was also hard to fathom, but he could not doubt his senses. He had seen and experienced these events unfold, so they had to be real. Of course, he still believed that this could all be a dream, his rather inventive brain creating this grand and strange adventure while he slept.

This last thought gave him a mixture of comfort and joy. He had wanted an adventure; it had been something he had indeed dreamed about. If indeed this escapade was a dream, or if it was real, it had all the elements he would want. It had pirates, magic, treasure, exotic animals, even a bit of hardship to make the whole ordeal worthwhile. This thought inspired him and he bounded to his feet and resumed pushing the cart back to where Red Eye stood.

As he arrived back at the spot where Red Eye stood. As before Red Eye had his gaze fixed on the plans, and his head still weaved back and forth. Andrew tipped the lumber again and this once more stirred Red Eye's attention. Again he mumbled, "More lumber."

So, still once more, he performed the same task, taking the cart to the cave and fetching still more wood from the shed for the boat. This time when he returned to the surface, he saw there was the prow of the boat almost completely

finished. He wheeled the cart back to Red Eye and was not surprised to get again the same, “More lumber” order from him.

Andrew sighed and then returned to the cave and back to Red Eye several more times, finding each time that the boat was nearing completion. Time itself seemed to stand still, Andrew moving back and forth between destinations as if in a trance. The tide continued to come in and out, but the sky and accompanying clouds remained frozen, as if it were a canvas and the scenery was painted upon it. He was aware that perhaps a whole day had passed, and yet the sun remained ever constant just over the horizon, providing warmth, lighting, and of course the great view of the island.

Finally, after what must’ve been a dozen “fetch quests” as he thought of them, he came back with the last haul of the lumber. Red Eye responded to this by saying, “Now bring me the sails, lad.” Andrew sighed breathlessly and complied, heading once more to the cave.

This last trip to the cave took longer, his legs feeling tired, and as he slowly walked in, he saw that the crocodiles were awake. Fortunately however, they appeared quite dazed. He cautiously began tiptoeing across, preparing to run if needed, but they seemed quite disinterested in him and made no effort to bar his path. Regardless of their current attitude towards him, he felt it would be best to try and limit future excursions to the shed if he possibly could. No sense in tempting fate.

He hurried and grabbed the sails and carefully folded them one over the other, and placed them on the cart. He slowly and quietly wheeled it back down the hall. He arrived at the bottom of the incline and was happy to see the crocodiles were no more attentive than when he last saw them. He moved past them and went up the incline and out of the cave.

As he came to the top and glanced through the opening, he saw that the boat was not only finished, but partially inside the lagoon. He had however learned to stop questioning things, at least as it pertained to this adventure. He reached the shore and waded a few steps into the lagoon. Red Eye extended his hand and accepted the sails from Andrew. He then extended a rope ladder down to him. Andrew climbed the ladder and heaved his body over the side and onto the boat.

The first thing he observed was that his plaque upon which he had written *The Andrew* was affixed right above the wheel. He looked over at Red Eye who smiled.

“Aye matey, ye earned it, and earned yer keep on the boat. Now get your gear aboard and stow it below.”

Andrew climbed back down the ladder and waded ashore, picking up all the items he had acquired thus far. He didn’t know if he’d need them, but figured he

might as well take them along. He made sure that he grabbed the mongoose, while the parrot flew aboard the ship and landed on the wheel. He finished bringing everything aboard and stood there looking at Red Eye expectantly.

Red Eye looked at him and scowled. "We be sailing soon lad, but first ye be getting that accursed thing off me ship!" This was actually said it to Andrew in anger. Andrew followed his gaze and saw that his eyes were fixed on the book. Andrew pretended to drop the book over the side of the boat, but believing that he might still have need of it, slid it under a slight crease in the railing and then hid it under his shirt. Red Eye seemed not to notice. Andrew stood straight and looked again at Red Eye.

"Aye matey, it be time to cast off! To Pirate Cove!"

Andrew had just taken big step forward in his journey, but he suspected the most difficult part still lay ahead.

Part Three

*“Look you then! I want men with iron in their blood and steel in their sinews.
And the first up here is the first enlisted!” - Captain William Kidd*

Andrew stood on the deck, leaning over the rail on the bow of the ship peering at the ocean. He had never been on a boat without a motor before. His only time at sea had been when he had accompanied his mom and dad on a whale watching trip. His mom at the time had his baby brother Tyler in her belly, and his dad got seasick easily. He had watched sadly as they had both become rather ill and turned green. Fortunately, both then and now, Andrew did not become nauseous, and in fact felt in fine spirits.

The island had vanished in the distance behind him. He had stayed in the aft section watching the land slowly turn into a speck on the horizon, until it had finally disappeared. It had, he thought, seemed like a lifetime had elapsed there, though in truth, it had probably only been a few hours at most.

The sun was bright and he felt its warmth upon his face, interrupted intermittently by the spray of the sea cascading onto the ship, some of it splashing upon his face and clothes. He learned quickly to keep his mouth closed as one particularly aggressive wave struck the front of the medium-sized ship and sent water up and over. He'd received a rather unwanted and distasteful drink that he did not particularly want to enjoy a second time.

Red Eye was behind him, though out of sight, his massive frame blocked by the companionway that was separating them. He did hear his voice stridently echoing over the roar of the ocean, as he bellowed out one sea shanty after another. He listened to the songs for a while, but did not recognize any of them. They seemed to have a good effect on Red Eye though as his spirits were lifted and his expression was one of happiness. Andrew, still feeling a mite melancholy about being away from home, had nonetheless felt his mood lift as well.

There was a break while Red Eye cleared his throat. The ship listed back and forth a bit as he walked up to the front of the boat and stood next to him. He smiled at Andrew who smiled back and complimented him on his singing.

“Arrr, singing do warm the cockles of me heart, lad. Would you like to learn a song that emboldens your spirit and banishes all foul moods away?”

“That sounds like a lot of fun. Can you please teach me?”

“Aye, it is a song I learned when I was but a sea pup, not much older than ye be now, eh?”

“I am seven years old now, were ye as old then?” Andrew asked, trying his best to imitate Red Eye’s unusual, but nonetheless charming, vocabulary.

“Ah, but I do not remember, me hearty, but it is true that I was a young lad at the time, my sea legs had not yet grown and were but mere twigs in the wind. Aye, I was much as you are now, though I might say I be not as brave.”

Andrew frowned, not truly understanding all of what he said, but then he smiled at Red Eye’s comment on his courage.

“I am ready to learn your song, Mr. Red Eye.”

Red Eye smiled, and then inhaled deeply, his bulbous belly appearing to quadruple in size as he sucked in several mouthfuls of air. He then began bellowing out the new song in a voice that sounded akin to a roar.

“A glint of steel as I charge upon the deck.

Me mateys and I a-standing neck to neck.

Hoist the Jolly Roger, me buckos wail and yell.

A hundred scurvy pirates, swords a-clanging like a bell.

A-charging and a-shouting, we roar upon your crew.

Surrender all yer rum, and we will not run you through.

The captain bobs and weaves, our blades meet like old friends.

To Davy Jones’ locker, will one of us descend.

A joy it be to take the ship, its treasure be reward.

The best of life for pirates is taken by the sword.

Say Yo, Say Ho, say aye-aye, aye-aye, ho.

Hold your head, and stand your ground,

We pillage to and fro.”

Andrew joined Red Eye in repeating the song. It did not flow well, some lines seeming to be longer than others, but his pirate friend seemed to enjoy it and even danced a bit in place, back and forth, in apparent joy at his young singing companion.

Red Eye ended the song sometime in the thirteenth or fourteenth repetition of the verse, did a quick turn, and hustled back to the wheel. The ship had taken a bit of a left turn several degrees off course, so he fixed the direction, but did not return back to where Andrew stood, instead keeping his hands holding fast to the wheel.

He heard still another song issue out from where Red Eye stood. It was still another new tune, and he listened to it, hoping to learn the words so he could join him in song later.

“A-vicious pirates three
A-vicious we shall be
Drop your blades
Drop your pistols
Give yer rum to me
A-sailing cross the sea
A-plundering I be
A yo A ho, a yo ho ho, a yo ho ho sing the pirates three”

Andrew continued to listen intently as the verse repeated itself several times, while continuing to look out over the expanse of ocean for several more minutes. He then wandered over amidships and stood next to Red Eye. He did not understand the song, so he asked him about it.

“Why the pirates three? Who are they?” he inquired, referring to the first verse of the song.

“Ah, but they be me father and me two older brothers. Arrr they were a good bunch o’ buccaneers were they. It was their treasure truly that you and I be seeking it is.”

“They lost the treasure? It was theirs? I thought it was Blackbeard’s treasure.”

“No, they lost the chest. The curse did not be affecting them as they found it by honest means. However, it be taken from them by a particular foul-looking, grog-swilling pirate by the name of Jack Frost.”

“Jack Frost, who is he?”

“He was a pirate who had eyes that were a dark blue, whose heart be as cold as ice. His real name is not known to me or anyone else, but he had a gaze that, it is said, could freeze a man in place, as if trapped in a block of ice. Aye, that be why he is called Jack Frost. A scary pirate he be.”

“Is he still roaming the seas?”

“Ah, I do not be knowing. He would be an old pirate indeed were he still out here, but you should never be doubting the temerity of a pirate such as he. He did have the impertinence to defy the Grim Reaper himself, I say.”

“So the plans and the map in the chest, did they belong to him?”

“No, they were indeed Blackbeard’s, but me family discovered them in the basement of an abandoned tulip dealer in Antigua.”

“A tulip dealer?” he asked.

“Aye, there was a strange obsession. It were a madness it was that seized most folks a good twenty or so years back. Tulips were highly prized despite being no more than a pretty bulb. Why a man with a tulip could fetch a king’s

ransom in a sale, earning ten or more times what a normal bloke could in a year!”

“You mean a flower was worth more than gold?”

“Aye, but only for a short time, like most madness, it subsided after people came to their senses and realized that they were buying and selling flowers.”

“That is really silly.” Andrew replied, but then smiled as he remembered his dad telling him a similar story about these dolls filled with beads that had caused a worldwide mania. That had also subsided after a short time.

“Arrr, that it be matey! If you ask ol’ Red Eye, he says that a rose by any another name still grows in the dirt.” He laughed at this remark, then his lips parted, then formed a frown.

“However then, Jack Frost stole me family’s well-earned prizes. He thought himself such the brigand he did, but then the Guarda Costa had managed to take it from him.”

Red Eye smiled. “He was none too happy about it being taken from him. However he knew well that he was not one who could open the chest, so I think he meant to stay near to the city of Trinidad where they took it, and wait for someone to open it.

“Did he find out about your stealing his chest?”

“Aye that he did. He set off in rapid pursuit. However he did not want the Spanish Navy to be aware of his presence. When they gave up the chase, so did he. I think perhaps he’d hoped to keep me ship in sight, but I am a fair sailor and my seamanship won out that day.”

“You said the chest was cursed though, that it brought doom to those not noble and honest.”

“Yes, but I did not tell ye the whole story. It be the book that be cursed. That is why I insisted that you leave it behind on the beach.”

Andrew gulped, wishing that he had listened to Red Eye’s warning. “I thought you said the map was cursed.”

“Well I confess, a bit of a fib I told you.” He paused, his expression contrite. “I be sorry for the lie I told, but I did not know yet that I could trust ye. I pulled the book out first, then it was that the ground shook and the wave came. I knew the power of the book, the magic word of ‘YOHO’ and said it, believing it would take me to the treasure. Instead it took me to the windowsill of some building far away. I be afraid of nothing, but heights do not do me well. I became a mite scared I admit, even more so when I slipped and began to plummet towards the ground.”

Andrew continued to regard Red Eye as he spoke, visibly upset at the memory of his story, however he remained quiet.

“As I quickly approached the ground and me certain end, I said 'YOHO' again. I then found myself taken again back to the island, landing in the middle of a whirlpool, a whirlpool that was bigger than the kraken itself. I do not know, truly now, what did happen, but I awoke on this here island, the book gone, the chest locked up, and no key - me boat, the wreckage that ye saw.”

Andrew frowned again, feeling truly sorry for deceiving his friend and bringing the book on board. Then again, he also knew that Red Eye had embellished and perhaps even lied about his original adventure with the chest. He began to speak, but Red Eye continued.

“There is more to this book too that I have not yet spoken about.”

“What is it?” Andrew asked anxiously.

“The book belonged to Jack Frost, a gift or perhaps a curse from the pirate Blackbeard. It has a powerful spell on it, crafted by a witch. Once Frost accepted it, he was doomed to forever seek the treasure without rest. A miserable type of curse, for he is compelled to stop at nothing to find the treasure.”

Red Eye swallowed some water and continued. “The book is also a powerful talisman. He can use it almost like a compass to find whoever holds it. His very soul feels the direction in which the book lies and obliges him to seek and capture its bearer.”

Andrew asked, “Is he still alive? If he is, why has he not found me on the island when I first arrived?”

“I am willing to surmise that he knew you were there. In fact, I think if he still be alive, that he wants others to find the book, unaware that he is using it to track his quarry. This is truly why I insisted that ye leave the book behind. It be too dangerous to carry on as cargo.”

He shivered despite the warm weather. He was scared to tell Red Eye that the book was on board. He had originally planned to not tell him, though his conscience was telling him to be honest. However, this last comment by Red Eye, convinced him to come forth and confess to Red Eye that he had surreptitiously hidden the book.

However, before he could say anything, Red Eye’s expression changed into a look that was surprise mixed with fear. Andrew moved to a few steps behind him and looked in the direction of Red Eye’s gaze. At first it appeared to be nothing more than a spec on the horizon. He quickly replaced the lens onto his telescope and handed it to Red Eye. Without hesitation, he looked into the telescope and muttered something under his breath. He then shouted aloud.

“Arrr, by the sea dragon’s foul breath, that be Jack Frost’s ship bearing down on us!”

“How be it that he found us so fast?” Red Eye asked to no one in particular.

Andrew began to answer him, but before he could speak, Red Eye’s face appeared to redden in anger. He again followed his gaze to the deck, where the book lay in the middle of the ship, having fallen out from within the folds of his shirt. It didn’t matter anyway. What mattered now was that Jack Frost was closing on them and doing so with incredible speed.

“Andrew, lad, I told you to leave the accursed book off the ship! Jack Frost would be on the island, a far stretch behind us. Now instead of a head start, we will be in range of his cannon in minutes!”

“I’m so sorry. I truly thought the book would help.”

“Aye, it helped alright; it helped Jack Frost find us. Truly yer treason was not intentional me boy, but just as deadly it was as a knife in the gullet! Arrr, children ever be a curse with their stubbornness.”

Andrew became angry. “You lied to me first! I am very mad at you! You are yelling at me and it is your fault! Grownups are not supposed to lie to kids! Is lying expected or unexpected behavior?”

Red Eye's expression changed and his tone softened. He then laughed and smiled at Andrew. “It be unexpected behavior, ye be right lad, and I be truly regretful of my own poor judgment. Now I ask ye to forget it for now as we will be having time for apologies later. At least I dressed down the sails with oil and wax, they be in good shape for the chase to come.”

Andrew stood there a bit stunned. Yelling at a grownup, especially a pirate, was foolish. Yet, he had done it twice already. However instead of getting in trouble, he had earned the pirate’s respect. Maybe it was because he had stood up for himself. Maybe Red Eye liked being yelled at? He shrugged. His dad always told him that being a grownup was hard, but maybe he had forgotten that being a kid sometimes required even more courage.

He looked around, not knowing what he could do to help, and also wondering about the curse of the book. Was it truly cursed or enchanted? How

had the evil Blackbeard, a treacherous pirate, managed to convince a witch to place an enchantment on it? Had his actions doomed them both?

There would be time for guilt and worry later he thought. He ran down the companionway and found a rather large cutlass. On the blade was engraved "E. Teach". Andrew paused for a moment; Blackbeard's real name was Edward Teach; that meant that he was holding Blackbeard's cutlass! How on earth did his blade come to be aboard the ship, he wondered? He personally brought all the materials to assemble the boat, and at no time did he spot a cutlass. Maybe the plans were also magical?

Andrew's pondering ceased as the ship was jolted hard to the left. He heard several thunderous noises nearby. He ran back up the steps and saw several plumes of smoke coming from Jack Frost's ship; it had managed to close a great deal of the distance between them.

"Matey, I've engaged the full sails on the ship, we now be moving much faster now, but we cannot turn quite as well."

"Will we be able to escape?"

"I'm afraid not lad, eventually his ship will overtake us. He has a full crew you see, and I can tell it be made up of the crew I abandoned. My guilt catches up with me. Arrr, will I ever be free of me past?"

"Your old crew is on that ship?"

"Aye, I am afraid so. He must have come across them and recruited or captured them. Our ship will travel slower as it is just you and I aboard. We have no crew to do all that can be done to bring us to the best speed."

"Then what will we do?"

"Arrr, I say let them follow us. If luck be with us, we will reach the Dragon's Bones in time and then lose them."

"The Dragon's Bones?"

"Aye, it be a formation of large rocks and reefs sticking up out of a long submerged island over yonder," Red Eye answered, pointing in its general direction. This ship can turn better with the battle sails drawn. Captain Frost's ship is fast, but it be handlin' like a rhino walking on ice while wearing a corset." Red Eye laughed at his own joke while Andrew wondered what a corset was.

"They will have to slow down or else risk an encounter with some very big rocks. With any luck whatsoever, we can lose them. Then we'll toss the book overboard and hope they will never find us."

"That is a good idea. I hope it works."

"Aye lad, me too," Red Eye responded.

Andrew learned an interesting fact about sea battles, that lesson being that they can last for a prolonged period of time, especially if one ship is running from another. He held on to various parts of the boat, losing his footing several times, and several times being flung hard, careening from one side to the next as both waves, and near misses from cannonballs, buffeted the smaller ship.

The Andrew did not have any cannon, so even if Red Eye was inclined to fight, it would have been a losing battle. In order to fight, they would have to board (or be boarded) and they were more than likely outnumbered by odds of thirty to one, or worse.

The cannon fire came closer and a near miss sent a small shard of wood just by him, lightly grazing his cheek. He felt for a wound, but it had not been enough to cut him, just enough to make a tiny scratch. He walked over to Red Eye who smiled at him.

“Aye, your first wound as a pirate. You will never forget it, your first mark. Arrr, you barely got a scratch, it did not even be drawing blood. That is too bad, it would be a right handsome scar it would.” he said laughing.

Andrew did not laugh, Frost was inching ever closer even though his gains were almost imperceptible. Minutes passed and he had yet to see the Dragon’s Bones, so he could not really comprehend Red Eye’s apparent good humor with their predicament. He thought of his mom and dad and wondered if he would ever get to see them again.

Suddenly, Red Eye raised his hands and pointed excitedly. “Ahoy matey! Look ahead, thar be the Dragon’s Bones!”

He looked up and seeing them in the distance ran to the front of the boat to get a better look. The rocks were large and jagged, looking interconnected almost like a series of chains. As a whole, they did appear to be the spine or skeleton of a giant sea creature. He ran back to the main mast and climbed up to the crow’s nest. He held on fast as the boat continued to tilt left and right as Red Eye steered a weaving pattern, doing his best to avoid the cannon fire. It was working, but it also was slowing them down, while Frost’s ship despite numerous turnings to fire, still managed to gain ground on them.

Andrew reached the crow’s nest and climbed in. He looked down and saw how high he was above the boat. He contemplated, the even scarier part, which was when it was time for him to climb down. He looked out across the sea to the Dragon’s Bones and saw that it looked almost like a maze of pathways which were only minutes away. However, as he looked astern, he saw that Frost’s ship had ceased turning to fire and was bearing quickly down on them.

He clambered slowly down the main mast as quickly as he could. He caught a glimpse of the ship’s name as he got about halfway down. It read *Chimera’s*

Wrath. The chimera was a mythical creature he had read about that had the body of a beast with three heads: one a lion's head, one a dragon's, and the last one a goat's. It was considered a most evil creature and seemed to befit the name of a vessel captained by such a wicked pirate.

Andrew reached the bottom of the main mast and stood next to Red Eye. He saw that they were just a minute - two at most - away from entering the Dragon's Bones, but then the boat shuddered and slowed. He looked behind him and saw that a grappling hook had taken a firm hold of the rail at the aft area of the ship. Seconds later another seized the rail, then another. He was frozen in fear. He then looked down by his railing and saw that Blackbeard's cutlass was propped against the side of the boat, glistening in the sunlight. He quickly sprinted over to it and picked it up. He suddenly felt himself seized with a hot fury. He screamed so loud that Red Eye heard it over the roar of the ocean.

He charged quickly to the aft of the ship to where seven hooks now were gripping the ship. Jack Frost's men stood on the enemy vessel, tugging hard on the ropes, slowing *The Andrew's* progress towards the Dragon's Bones. At the same time, several men began climbing on the ropes, hanging upside down, and slowly pulling themselves closer towards the beleaguered ship.

Andrew howled and raised the cutlass up above his head, and then quickly brought it down as hard as he could on the first rope. The blade severed it as easy as if slicing through so much paper. The hook dropped into the water, three pirates climbing across also fell into the sea. He heard a number of shouts from the other boat, but he ignored them, hacking away at the ropes and watching as the hooks, and a few men, dropped into the ocean each time.

He heard a popping noise and a shudder went through his arm which immediately went numb. He realized that one of the pirates had fired a pistol and struck his blade, which to his shock seemed to have deflected the blow and, more surprising, he did not seem to have the slightest blemish to show for it.

"Here lad! Gather to me!" he heard Red Eye shout.

He heard a small thud to his left and saw that several of the enemy crewmen had managed to make it across and alight on the boat.

Andrew turned to regard his opponent. The man was nearly two feet taller than him. His frame was thin and lanky, his eyes a dark green. His face was a tanned with a long handlebar mustache. His teeth were crooked and he saw several gaps in the mouth, along with a few cavities. On the whole, the man looked unhealthy, and it made his appearance actually seem more fearsome.

“Surrender lad or I’ll be running you through,” the pirate snarled at him, raising a very large cutlass.

“No! This is not your boat. You need to learn some manners!” Andrew replied angrily. He continued to surprise himself with his defiance

The pirate raised his cutlass over his head in a threatening manner. Andrew adopted what he felt was a strong defensive stance, and waited for his opponent to strike. The enemy pirate hesitated, perhaps not wishing to fight a child. Andrew saw from the corner of his eye that Red Eye was still steering the boat, unable to come to his aid. The pirate’s cohorts were standing there, waiting to see the outcome of the clash of steel between their comrade and his young opponent.

The pirate brought the cutlass down and across in a sweeping motion, aimed at Andrew’s waist. Andrew parried, with a simply flick of his wrist, and effortlessly turned the blade away. The pirate’s blade shook at the impact and was flung from his hand. Encouraged by his success, Andrew gave a cold, icy look at the now, unarmed, pirate and hefted the cutlass just above his head.

All three pirates regarded Andrew, and their expressions each changed to one of abject fear. The pirate he had disarmed jumped over the boat, diving head first into the water. The other two threw their blades down and ran to the other side of the boat, then leaped overboard, shouting fearfully as they did so.

Andrew felt his mood soften. He had seemed possessed of some uncontrollable fury only moments before, but it had passed. He saw then that his cutlass was glowing, but then observed that the glowing was beginning to dim. He wondered if the blade had exerted some kind of control over him. It was odd, the three pirates had him outnumbered, and in addition, were bigger and more

experienced, yet he had driven them off with relative ease. There was it seemed more to Blackbeard's cutlass than he had suspected.

Andrew saw that the enemy vessel was closing to within several feet. He grabbed one of the fallen cutlasses. It was lighter than it appeared, or perhaps he was stronger than he expected. He held it aloft, in his left hand, with Blackbeard's blade still clutched in his right, the cutlass again beginning to glow. He reached back and threw the enemy cutlass as hard as he could in the direction of the boat. The blade spun end over end as it flew and careened directly towards the wheel and the pirate that steered it.

The pirate ducked out of the way, but the blade struck the wheel and Andrew had the satisfaction of seeing it sheer right off. The enemy ship lurched to its right and away from *The Andrew*. He heard a number of loud shouts and saw that several of the pirates had been flung over the side of the enemy ship, while others were tumbling in various directions on the deck as they tried to right the ship.

Andrew turned and quickly ran back to where Red Eye remained standing, still holding the wheel. He looked drawn, he was breathing heavily, almost panting, and his face was covered with beads of perspiration. He was quite obviously exhausted from the ordeal, and looked barely able to stand. His tongue lolled out in front of him and his complexion was flush. Yet the fire still blazed in his eye and he saw the resolve to resist until the end remained on his face. Red Eye looked at Andrew and smiled.

"Good work lad, yer quick thinking saved us, at least for now. Aye, a rightful rogue ye be. Ye earned yer rum I say." He laughed at this last remark. "Proud am I to have ye as a first mate!" He then clapped Andrew on the shoulder in congratulations.

Andrew smiled, proud of himself. He felt that he had at least redeemed himself in some small part for his duplicity in smuggling the book on board the ship.

"Now hold on tight Andrew, we are in for a rough ride."

He grasped onto Red Eye's elbow and looked straight ahead. He heard more cannon fire as the enemy ship had again turned to send a barrage at them, but as before, the shots were close, but ultimately missed. Captain Frost, Andrew thought, might have the gunners walk the plank for being such miserable shots, but that was not for him to worry about. As his dad was fond of saying, "They had made their bed, and now they had to sleep in it."

"Take the wheel lad, just for a moment." Red Eye bellowed.

Andrew was surprised, but complied and gripped the wheel. It felt remarkably light. He had expected to need all his strength to hold the wheel, but

it was actually quite easy. Red Eye returned after a minute and took the wheel from him.

“Just in the nick o’ time, I just switched us to battle sails, we’ll move a wee bit slower, but will be able to outturn old Captain Frost.”

Andrew smiled and tilting his head fractionally to the side watched as *The Andrew* slipped between two very large rocks, each one adorned with hundreds of sharp edges. The boat passed through with just a few feet, on each side, to spare. *Chimera’s Wrath* would, indeed, be able to fit inside this maze of rocks, but it would be a tight fit, and Frost would surely have to order his crew to slow down in order to enter it safely.

He breathed a sigh of relief as he saw the larger ship slowing down drastically. He then smiled as he looked around and saw that even Red Eye had relaxed. Red Eye looked at Andrew and smiled heartily.

“Lad, we are now inside the Dragon’s Bones. You did a fine job, me lad. Now let’s press forward and hope he is not awaiting us on the other side.”

Andrew sat down in a chair that Red Eye had brought up from below. He was tired, his clothes were soaked, and he was shaken; his body still had the sensation of adrenalin coursing through him, though the feeling was subsiding. He closed his eyes for a few moments, feeling as if he was about to fall asleep. However, another jolt struck the ship and he became instantly alert.

He surveyed his surroundings and saw that the enemy vessel was quite a ways distant, but had managed to turn and fire a volley at them. It had missed, but struck the rocks and those in turn had splashed into the water which caused *The Andrew* to shake violently for a few seconds. He was flung to the left as Red Eye performed a hard right turn, narrowly avoiding another set of rocks that had the appearance of large claws.

Andrew lost sight of *Chimera's Wrath*. Many of the rocks the ship was sailing between were many stories high. As they continued to move deeper into this maze of monstrous stones, he knew that Captain Jack Frost was falling behind, but suspected that he was not a man to give up the chase. Moreover, he could, according to Red Eye, continue to follow them as long as they retained the book on board. He went over and retrieved it, and prepared to toss it overboard, but Red Eye stopped him. "No lad, not yet. I feel this book has a purpose still on this journey. I have a suspicion as it were, that we need to keep it with us."

"Why?" Andrew asked plainly.

"It is a feeling deep down in me gut. Truly I do despise this book. I wish never to see it again, and yet it continues to confound me in being ever-present no matter where I go."

"Perhaps it is part of the curse?" he asked.

"Yes, perhaps, but if this book is determined to haunt me, then I would prefer it close where I at least know it is by me side, and not stealing its way into my path, when I not be expecting it."

He shrugged, not knowing what to say, and placed the book back down on his chair and stood there watching Red Eye steer the ship. He stared at him for

several moments, Red Eye not seeming to notice, but instead continuing to look ahead. The pirate's head was slowly moving back and forth repeatedly, as his hands caressed the wheel, making subtle changes in direction as *The Andrew* navigated through the treacherous straits.

They remained unspeaking for several minutes with the only sounds being the rustle of the waves and the sound of the ship breaking the water.

Andrew asked Red Eye, "Mr. Red Eye, what treasure is it we are seeking? Is it gold, diamonds, or maybe jewels?"

Red Eye laughed. "If the truth be told lad, I do not rightfully know what treasure we will find. I know according to the map that there is, indeed, treasure on the island, but as to what it is, I have not the faintest of ideas."

"What if there is no treasure?"

Red Eye looked thoughtful for a moment. "Well then, I guess you and I be wasting a good deal of time, but ye cannot say it has not been a fine adventure at that aye?" They both smiled in agreement at that remark.

Andrew walked a circuitous route around the ship, getting a thoroughly good look at it for the first time. He found the cutlass that had once belonged to Captain Blackbeard and now, he supposed, belonged to him. He picked it up and returned back to Red Eye's side and held the blade up. Red Eye looked at it, turned back to steering for a second, and then quickly looked back in astonishment.

"Shiver me timbers! That be Blackbeard's cutlass I see! How did you come by this fine piece of steel?" Red Eye asked, his face alit with surprise and excitement.

"I found it in that small room." Andrew answered pointing to the companionway near the middle of the boat.

"I had thought maybe it was from the Captain's quarters. It is what I used to cut the grappling hooks that Captain Frost's men threw onto our boat."

"Aye, I saw ye do that. A fine piece of work I meant to say to you. But I had no idea that ye had come across this particular blade."

Andrew turned it around so the blade was facing away from Red Eye and, hilt first, extended it to him.

"You may have it if you want. I don't really like swords; they can hurt people."

Red Eye looked shocked. "Why I be flogged! A pirate who doesn't like a good cutlass and even gives it away? If I were but to see a mermaid, then I could say I've seen it all."

Red Eye laughed aloud. Andrew smiled, though he didn't quite get the joke. Red Eye accepted the blade and discarded a rusty old cutlass that was loosely

attached to his belt. The old sword clattered on the deck and Red Eye kicked it aside. He commented, "The blade was old and getting a bit tarnished anyways. I doubt it could hit a fly without breaking into a thousand pieces."

Andrew sat back down, picking up the book first and holding it in his lap. He looked around. The sea was still relatively quiet and he had completely forgotten about the danger they had been in just a short while ago. The bang of cannon fire no longer reverberated amongst the rocks. He wondered if Captain Frost had given up after all. He looked at Red Eye who appeared calm and not worried in the slightest.

Andrew was amazed. Red Eye had appeared almost done in by the effort to escape, and yet now they could be on a Sunday outing for all the worry he appeared to display. It was almost as if he had taken a nap and awoken refreshed, when Andrew had not been looking, but he knew that the pirate had not let go of the wheel, except for the few moments when Andrew had taken over the task of steering.

A sound came from above them and he saw a pelican flying overhead. He looked over at Red Eye who winked at him.

"Aye lad, we be nearing the island soon. These pelicans like to be staying near land. I think when we round this here grouping of rocks, we'll be seeing Pirate Cove at last. Our journey, I think, is nearly over."

Andrew had to confess he was relieved. It had indeed been an amazing adventure so far, but in truth, all he really wanted was to get back home. He'd had enough unwanted adventure to last a lifetime. Perhaps two.

The Andrew turned past a last outcropping of rocks that were some three stories high. He looked past the rocks and his eyes widened. "Sail ho!" he exclaimed, but it was too late. *Chimera's Wrath* was directly in front of them.

Red Eye could not stop the ship, nor turn it in time to evade them. One grappling hook, then another and another leaped out from the enemy boat and clamped onto their boat. There was no time to neither grab the cutlass back from Red Eye nor find the one that the pirate had kicked to the side. In moments, pirates from *Chimera's Wrath* had boarded their ship and surrounded them.

Andrew looked at Red Eye hoping the crafty pirate would know what to do, but he merely dropped his cutlass to the deck and frowned.

"Surrender lad, they have captured us."

He had no sword to drop, so he merely raised his hands as more pirates climbed aboard the ship. Then several of them stepped aside as a figure walked between them. The man was tall, well over six feet and skinny. His clothes were all pitch black. He had a thin wisp of beard on his craggy face. He looked up into

the pirate's eyes and saw they were a very dark shade of blue. He knew this could only be one person. Jack Frost!

Andrew and Red Eye stood back to back, both men unsure of what to do next, or what their captor would do with them. He put on a brave face hoping to match the stoic countenance of Red Eye, who gave an expression of boredom, despite their mutual predicament.

“Steady lad, keep an even keel and we will weather this storm together matey.” Red Eye said quietly.

Andrew nodded and tried to adopt an almost defiant expression, but inwardly he was terrified. Jack Frost had walked back and forth across the ship, his face lit by a sneer that was anything but reassuring. He knew that if that look was directed at him, he’d have a hard time not crying, but he would do his best.

Frost walked over to Red Eye and his gaze, Andrew saw, almost seemed to burn itself into Red Eye’s face as his friend’s look changed from resolve to one of near dread. Frost then cast his glance over to Andrew. He surprised himself by returning a defiant gaze back with equal vehemence. Frost was either impressed or just shocked by the young boy who seemed not only courageous, but bold, and even a tad insolent, in the face of such danger.

“Arrr, so there do be a small rooster betwixt the chickens aboard this ship, do there?” he said casting a mocking look at Red Eye, who perhaps buoyed by his shipmate’s great display of bravery, seemed to have found his own nerve and shot a rebellious look back.

“You do not own this ocean, this is our boat! No, this is MY boat! Get off of it and let us be! You are a bully!” Andrew shouted angrily at Frost. Frost merely threw his head back and laughed.

“Aye, my claim of a rooster on board was correct then. Perhaps he be not worried since he has not had his feathers plucked yet? Perhaps he be needing a lesson in manners when greeting a guest, aye?”

The crew of Frost’s ship chuckled, but Andrew could see it was a forced laugh. It was strange, but as he looked among them, he saw that their physical appearance was incongruous with who they were. On the outside, from boot to hat, they had the look of dangerous and wicked pirates, but he saw deeper. He

could see in their eyes and their expressions that these were not true villains; but scared men. Perhaps these men had been shanghaied by Frost and forced to play the role of buccaneer. He frowned at this realization. Perhaps these men had been children like him, at one point. Perhaps they had once been taken away by the curse of the chest or the magic of his book. He shivered at the thought.

Andrew scowled at Frost, his anger at him even fiercer than before, now that he suspected the fate of his poor crew. He saw one of the pirates glance at a small locket around his neck which held a small drawing of a child, perhaps his own daughter. Frost took in his stare and returned a smug grin back at him, then gave a more malevolent look to Red Eye.

“Well Red Eye, your charge appears to have much more courage than wisdom. I suggest you advise him on the folly of angering me.” He turned back towards Andrew.

“I would be tempted to show you all the fine aspects of the pirate’s life, including the extracting of information. One never speaks so fine as when he’s been lowered into the icy water of a well.”

Andrew gulped, his expression changing from angry to scared for a brief moment. However, he quickly regained his composure. He had been raised never to hate, but he did not like bullies, and he discovered that he intensely disliked Captain Frost. The look of disdain was not lost on the evil pirate.

“Arrr, methinks this lad could benefit from my teaching him the value of respect. Then again, I not be wanting to spoil the good health of, perhaps, the only one who can help me find Blackbeard’s treasure.”

“I will never help you find the treasure! You are a chicken and a bully!” Andrew flapped his arms together and imitated the clucking noise of a chicken. He saw that some of Frost’s crew laughed, others appeared fearful, but whether for themselves or for him, he could not tell.

“Aye, so ye have a sense of humor eh? Perhaps you even have the steel in your soul to back up your words. But I see you also have the misfortune of loyalty and compassion. You surely would not like the punishment I give to Red Eye and me crew, should ye deny me my prize.” Frost gave an icy smile to Red Eye and to his own crew. Most of them cast their gazes downward, not wishing to meet Frost’s withering stare.

Frost returned his attention to Andrew. “I say, let us strike a bargain.”

Andrew scowled and asked “What kind of bargain?”

“You and I sail to Pirate Cove together. You help me unearth the two great treasures buried there by Blackbeard. Then I will have no more need of you.”

“You will then release me, Red Eye, and my ship?”

“Arrr, Red Eye be a scurvy scalawag. He not be worth a pint of pickled snail, but aye, if ye make that be part of the deal, then I give me word that I will release both ye and yer ship.”

Frost extended out a hand and Andrew reluctantly took it. His own hand was sweaty and more than a bit clammy. However, Frost’s hand was nearly ice cold and felt rough, as if his entire body was hewn from stone, a statue seemingly brought to life, or perhaps a dour walking skeleton. Andrew withdrew his hand from the steel-hard grip as quickly as he could. Frost turned on his heels and walked several steps away, then turned his head and eyed Andrew who realized that he was expected to follow.

He tailed his new “captain” down the length of the boat and then the two of them climbed into a longboat, Frost pulling on a lever that lowered it into the water, ending abruptly with a painful thump.

Andrew could feel his heart racing. He could not shake the feeling that Jack Frost was something more than just an evil man. He seemed unearthly in many ways. His eyes, when caught by the rays of the sun, seemed to grow darker instead of being highlighted. In the shade, his eyes seemed almost to burn and smolder. His whole body seemed to radiate a cold which made Andrew shiver a bit, despite the extremely warm air surrounding them.

Frost rowed the boat. Andrew began reaching for a pair of oars, but he was waved away.

“Save yer strength, I will be having a dire need of it when we reach the island.”

So he sat in the boat, hands at his sides and looked around as they moved, at an unnatural speed, towards what he assumed was the island. He suspected the reason that Frost had kept him and Red Eye alive, was that if the treasure in its entirety were truly cursed then Frost could not open the chest. Nor could he remove the treasure from it without extremely dire consequences. It had to be obtained by someone honest and, even then, the treasure had to be given freely.

Of course this was perplexing. He would certainly give any treasure he found to Captain Frost to save the life of Red Eye and Frost’s own crew. However, was this truly giving treasure away freely? Frost was not physically making Andrew help him, but, was threatening to harm his friends really any different? If not, then Frost might find that his methods would bear the same horrible outcome.

What also struck him as strange was Frost’s obvious preoccupation with treasure. It was clearly evident that Frost had wealth. His ship was well-equipped and designed. His crew all bore new clothes and arms, and seemed healthy and well-fed. Frost’s cutlass had a large diamond pressed into the hilt that was worth

a fortune. Perhaps it was just greed, but it seemed that Frost's desire for the treasure was more than that. Andrew decided to ask him.

"Captain Frost, why are you so intent on possessing all of Blackbeard's treasure? You seem to have way more money than you need."

Frost fired a glance at him that perhaps he hoped would intimidate the young man into silence. Andrew however remained nonplussed by it, still displaying an inquisitive look, waiting for an honest answer. Frost smiled at him.

"Aye, ye be a brave one for but a mere pup."

"I am NOT a pup, I am a big boy," he rebuked Frost defiantly.

Frost laughed. "Aye, that ye be. Well then, I will answer yer question if not but to pass the time till we get to the island. We do have a bit of distance to cover you see."

Frost cleared his throat, it sounded almost like the roar of a bear mixed in with a pig's high-pitched squeal. Andrew shuddered a bit at it, but said nothing.

"I do not need the treasure, I have amassed enough jewels, doubloons, and other wealth to enjoy me life, living both recklessly and merrily. But the map you see, well it was my greatest find. I found it through no small effort and it was a prize to be admired." Again Frost made the same wretched noise with his throat, then continued.

"Then the map was stolen. Red Eye be not the first, and aye he may not be the last. Truth be told, I was content to enjoy the bountiful harvests I had reaped by my many travels to and fro.

"But this map, well it was mine and it was stolen by Red Eye. He did not of course steal it from me, but stole it he did. I do not need the treasure, but it is mine. I sought it for many years, plundering isles of the French, English, Dutch, and Spanish in me search. The treasure you see, called me to find it. It haunted my very dreams, telling me not to rest until I found it."

Frost looked very agitated for a moment, but then seemed to calm down.

"I sacked several islands including Tortuga, Trinidad, Barbados, and Antigua looking for it. The governor of Havana himself, was hiding the map and I battled through a whole fleet of Spanish warships to reach the city and storm his mansion. I even took a few nicks from a rapier in me side, but I succeeded in acquiring the chest that had the map in it."

Frost stopped for a second, seeming to revel in memories of his adventure. His brow furrowed for a minute and then he continued. "So you see lad, that I own the chest as surely as perhaps it owns me. I am not about to let anyone take the treasure. If anyone is to possess it, then it is me. I earned it."

Andrew nodded, though he really didn't agree at all with him. There was though, a glimmer of realization coming to him; the value of working towards an

accomplishment was what brought satisfaction. It did make some sense that Captain Frost might want to keep some kind of trophy after all he had done, albeit in an evil fashion, to obtain the chest.

Andrew thought about what Frost had told him in more detail. Andrew had accomplished much since his arrival at the flat. Whenever he arrived home, he would appreciate some kind of reminder of this adventure and his achievements. Frost might feel the same way about all he had done and accomplished, even if he had a rotten and villainous heart. Perhaps, Andrew thought, I am growing up.

They continued in silence for a time. Andrew occupied himself watching the many different sea birds, and a pod of pilot whales that playfully followed them at a distance. The sun continued its constant illumination, never changing or setting.

At length Andrew sighted an object in the distance. "Land ho!" he exclaimed excitedly.

"Aye, good work lad. Ye might make a fine first officer on me ship if the good works ye put in continue. For now though, stow yer tongue as I navigate the treacherous shoals of Pirate Cove."

It took ten or fifteen minutes to get close enough for them to make it out. *The Andrew* and *Chimera's Wrath* were not anywhere in sight, and he wondered if ever he would see them again. The whales had been left behind, obviously not wishing to approach too close to the island.

Andrew cast a sideways glance at Jack Frost. His icy blue eyes were aglow and his expression seemed a mixture of both fear and excitement; perhaps he was experiencing elation at finally nearing his goal, and apprehension at achieving it. Being a grownup, Andrew mused, was more difficult than mom and dad made it seem. No wonder they always told him not to be in such a rush to become an adult and to enjoy every moment of his childhood.

The waves became choppier as they approached the last twenty or so yards off the coast of Pirate Cove. The current was strong enough that Andrew took a pair of oars, and this time Jack Frost did not make any effort to dissuade him. His muscles struggled hard with the oars as they fought against the current that was seeking to drag the longboat back out into open ocean.

They continued the fight, moving a few feet, perhaps, every minute. His muscles continued to rebel against the action, but still he continued his efforts to move the boat towards shore. Even so, he was doused with sea spray mixed with sweat from his efforts. Frost, for his part, did not appear tired in the least, his eyes and face still looking full of vitality.

After twenty minutes, Andrew felt a thump and was lurched forward into the front of the boat. He looked up and saw an immense span of beach with

numerous palm trees covering the expanse of land ahead of him. Closer still were several skeletons, two of them formed as a makeshift home for a few small families of crabs with a pale red skin color.

Andrew climbed out of the boat with some help from Frost, whose hand he took. His skin seemed to convulse at the near bony grip of Frost's hand, but Andrew accepted it and took a welcome step onto the dry land. One of the skeletons still gripped a flintlock pistol in its bony hand, and Andrew wanted to take it, but Frost took it first.

“You not be needing a pistol here lad, but then again I just might,” Frost said, looking at him warily. He had no plans to betray or otherwise cross the evil pirate, but he reasoned that a man as wicked as Frost probably saw others in the same light, sadly trusting no one, not even a child.

Andrew walked a few steps, looking back occasionally towards the boat; it remained landlocked. He felt his shoulder hit something and he turned around. It was a sign built out of rotting ship timbers and, written on it in faded dark red paint, it read: “Welcome to Pirate Cove. Blackbeard’s treasure and doom be lyin’ here, so beware!”

Andrew stood still as he regarded the sign. His arduous journey was complete and his adventure almost over. He had indeed reached Pirate Cove. Now he only had to find the treasure, rescue Red Eye, and then find his way back home. All three tasks promised to be very challenging, but he was all the more determined after his recent experiences.

Jack Frost had bounded far ahead of Andrew, leaving him behind in his zeal to find the treasure. Andrew heard a small rustling in the sand behind him and he grinned as he heard a familiar squawking noise. Turning around, he saw that the mongoose and the parrot had accompanied him, quite unbeknownst to Frost. The journey had just taken a turn for the better.

Part Four

*“I will spit on the bones and the very grave of Blackbeard!” - Pirate Captain
Jack Frost*

Andrew raced to catch up with Jack Frost who had all but forgotten him. Frost had also not noticed the book that Andrew had smuggled under his shirt when they climbed aboard the longboat. Examining it, Andrew saw that it was a bit wet, but otherwise seemed no worse for wear, this small piece of good fortune smiling upon him.

Andrew returned the book to his shirt just as he caught up with Frost, and just before the pirate turned to look at him. They stood amidst a number of palm trees, some over forty feet in height. Andrew had never seen any trees that tall before. There were also several different trees sprouting coconuts and a dozen or more that had bananas, plantains, and even cherries growing. This struck him as odd as he believed this the wrong environment needed for these trees to grow, but maybe, Andrew joked to himself, no one had told the trees. The island seemed almost idyllic, except of course for the skeletons on the shore.

Andrew listened calmly as the wind meandered its way through the trees and various bushes, and it seemed to sing a tune that was both happy and melancholy at the same time. He tried to place the melody as familiar, thinking that if this were truly a pirate's island, the wind itself may have learned the many songs seafaring visitors sang.

Frost came to a stop, his face rising from the map he held. He looked ahead at a path that had its beginning start between two stones. He crossed over to them and stood there.

"It says here that we must walk thirty paces," and without another word he began taking steps and counting them off. He looked ahead on the pathway and was disappointed that there was not a red "X" or anything there to mark the spot. Instead, when the two reached thirty paces, there was nothing there but for a few empty bottles and what looked like a fossil. He picked it up and realized it was actually a petrified piece of old bread. Andrew gave a cry of disgust and dropped it on the ground, Frost giving a small chuckle at this reaction.

Frost reached behind him and pulled a small shovel from his back. Unceremoniously, he began to dig. Andrew walked over to a small bench that he

spotted, that looked as if it had been crafted out of a large rock. He looked around and saw that twenty yards ahead stood a monastery. It was in quite a bit of disrepair. He looked at it in more detail and saw that much of the building was laced with structural cracks. Ivy grew up the sides, and he observed more than a few large spider webs that eerily adorned the entrance; one of them held a huge spider.

“Aha! I have found something.” Jack Frost reached down and pulled up a small chest. It was three feet wide and equally as long. It had a rusted iron padlock on it that bore marks of what he guessed were strikes from a hammer or a sword trying to, unsuccessfully, break it apart. He withdrew the key to open it and Frost stopped him.

“No lad, not here, there may be many eyes watching. And, there is still more treasure. It be there in the monastery, according to the map. I will heft this chest back to the longboat, you go forth and get the second treasure. I will be waiting for you.”

Jack Frost trudged off with the chest, leaving Andrew alone and gape-mouthed at the prospect of walking past the giant spider, not to mention any other dangers which lay ahead. He began to press forth reluctantly. The sounds from his two friends made it abundantly clear that he was not the only one feeling reluctant.

The spiders’ webs straight ahead was a warning that he should not proceed. However he really had no choice. He would have to travel through the webs and brave the danger of the giant spiders if he had any expectation, whatsoever, of rescuing Red Eye and eventually finding his way home. He took a deep breath and then stepped forward.

Andrew had always detested and feared spiders. He even avoided the spider-like daddy longlegs despite their being harmless and relatively useful as arachnids went. He continued to close in on the entrance and the massive spider directly in front of him. He found his teeth chattering and he shivered in fear. He did not know if this spider had a poisonous bite, but he did know he had no desire to find out the hard way.

Reaching a point about ten feet away, he laughed in great relief; the massive spider was nothing more than a painted construct someone had built out of wood and dyed black. The web itself was made from strips of torn cloth stretched across and nailed into the wood of the monastery and tied to branches and plants where they touched the ground.

With a greater sense of calm, he pressed forward past the spider and into the building. It was very dark inside, and he lit his torch. The room was even more decayed on the inside than out. There were a number of holes where burrowing animals had made their home and lichen and mushrooms, of differing kinds, proliferated at least a quarter of the area. The ground made squishing noises as he walked across the area. He continued traversing the room and came to a door. It was in relatively good condition. As he looked closer, he saw that it was made of fine oak and contrasted with the rotten wood in the rest of the monastery. He pulled on the door, not expecting it to open, but instead it fell forward and he had to leap to his side to avoid it, falling into a wet, slimy grass-like substance.

He jumped as he heard a croaking noise and turning to his right, glanced down and saw what was either a toad or a frog, he did not really know the difference. There were a number of them, small and with patterns of blue, a few had an orange pattern on them instead. Perhaps they were male and female he guessed.

He looked through the doorway and saw something glimmering in the back of the next room. He walked in and saw a pile of something under what looked like a few dozen candles. He extinguished his torch, not needing it anymore, and

ran forth, the parrot and mongoose clutching onto his shirt as he bounded across the room, leaping over a variety of puddles and plants that looked and smelled of mold.

As he reached the end of the room, he stood in front of the pile and saw a mountain of gold coins sitting in a wagon. It was the treasure! He saw that the wagon had a handle attached to a long rod that could be used to push it back out of the monastery. He realized it might be too heavy, but if needed, he could run back and find Jack Frost to help him.

He felt a crisis of conscience. Jack Frost did not deserve the treasure. For all his talk of effort, he had committed a large number of crimes against many different people, many of them innocent, and should not be rewarded with heaps of gold. However, he also held his friend Red Eye as a captive, so Andrew knew he had to do as Frost wanted, if he were to free Red Eye and get back home.

He began to move towards the pile when he heard a loud hissing sound. The parrot squawked, "Mamba, Mamba, poison, go away!" Andrew did not know what mambas were, but he looked a few feet ahead of the wagon and saw it - it was a black snake, fully grown and as much as fifteen feet long. It did not appear at all interested in him, but instead slithered back and forth in front of the treasure.

Andrew stepped back a pace or two and thought about the situation. He remembered reading, back in kindergarten, that snakes had few true enemies, but one of them was the mongoose; they actually ate snakes. He thought, for a brief second, that the snake would be a more fitting snack than the crackers he had been feeding it.

He set the mongoose down and waited. If he recalled correctly, the mongoose was not affected by snake venom, so would be in no danger. However in this case, it did not appear eager to confront the much larger reptile. Instead it ran up the side of his leg. He frowned.

"I don't understand. I thought you'd want to eat the snake. You are a mongoose aren't you?"

The parrot answered instead. "Squirrel, squirrels not good, no snake dinner."

Andrew felt a bit silly. It had been a squirrel the whole time, but it had so looked like a mongoose to him. He shrugged, it was not important. He was happy that the snake had not bitten his friend, but his situation was still the same. He needed to find a way past the mamba and quickly.

Andrew decided that maybe he could scare the mamba away with the lit torch or, if all else failed, he could try and fight it. He turned to light the torch again, but then saw out of the corner of his eye that the mamba was now advancing. It had obviously deduced that he was a serious threat, either to itself

or the treasure it watched over. Andrew began to run, but the mamba was much, much quicker. After taking only a few steps, Andrew slipped and fell, landing in the muck. The mamba closed in, ready to strike. Andrew lay prone and looked up terrified, expecting this to be the end.

Andrew closed his eyes, not wanting to see the approach of the snake's fangs as it struck him. His thoughts were on his mom, dad, and his baby brother, and also his friend, Red Eye. He expected to be bitten any second, but nothing happened. Instead, he heard a loud noise coming from the parrot. He opened his eyes and the bird was flying about madly, screeching at the snake, which in turn tried to bite him, but the parrot was too smart, staying just out of reach.

The snake chased the bird, moving away from Andrew as it flew near the treasure. As it got just under the wagon, the parrot knocked over several of the candles. They struck the snake which hissed loudly, then slithered away out of the room. He had been saved and the treasure was now unguarded. The parrot had not only rescued him from a near certain fatal bite, it had helped him triumph over the greatest obstacle in his quest. "Thank you parrot!" he said, unable, at the moment, to say anything else. He repeated it several times, "Thank you, thank you, thank you!"

There was a chirp from the mongoose/squirrel and the parrot just squawked. It then said, "Pieces o' eight, no mamba."

Andrew walked over unsteadily to the wagon, still quite a bit shaken by the encounter. He thought about the many times he'd viewed snakes behind glass at the zoo. He would not look at them the same way again after today, he thought to himself, a smile slowly creasing his features.

He gripped the handle and began pushing the wagon across the room. Despite the weight, it was fortunately well-balanced, and he found it moved across the room with much less effort than expected. He did have to rest a couple of times, but after about twenty minutes, he found himself exiting the monastery and moving down the path.

He reached the hole where Jack Frost had unearthed the chest of treasure. He wondered what was in it. The chest was not as big as he expected, and he did not know if it would be worth all the work, were it only to be filled with gold coins. Frost had risked a great deal of danger, as had Andrew and Red Eye, and he

really had no idea what could be so valuable that they would put themselves through this ordeal.

He did not particularly care if Frost wasted his time, of course, but after all he had endured today, he wanted the chest to contain something of value. If it turned out to be full of worthless junk, then he would be most disappointed indeed. He was not being greedy, but he wanted to believe that whatever he risked his life for, it was worth it.

It didn't really matter, he supposed. He had to get back. He wheeled the wagon further down the path. He found that this lane had sand that did not accommodate the wagon as kindly as the dirt did leading up to it. He had to push harder and found it was moving only inches at a time, and he had to take a number of breaks. He decided that he should go ask Captain Frost for help with this as he was certainly strong enough to move the wagon about, if not with ease, then with less trouble than Andrew was experiencing.

Laying the handle down, he walked slowly, his shoulders slumped from all the exertion. He heard some noises above him and saw a tree he had not seen before. In it was a family of squirrels and the tree itself was replete with more acorns than any tree he had ever seen, or imagined. He turned his head and saw the squirrel on his shoulder staring at the tree eagerly.

Stifling a small tear, he lifted the squirrel off his shoulder, and hugged it. He reached into his shirt and gave it a cracker. "I'll miss you. Be happy with your new family."

The squirrel responded to his hug by nuzzling against Andrew's face and gently nibbling on his nose, giving what he believed was its equivalent of a kiss. Andrew forced a smile and then set it down. It ran a few steps, gave a lingering look back, and grabbed a few acorns. It ran back to him and dropped several on his shoe and dashed into the tree. He could not say for certain, but he thought it smiled at him.

Andrew picked up the acorn and placed it in his pocket. The Parrot squawked a "Goodbye" to the squirrel as well. Andrew then resumed his walk down the path towards the beach, feeling both sad. He reached back and gently stroked the parrot's feather. "At least I still have you, Squawky, or I hope I do," he said, finally giving a name to the bird. It did not answer, but gave him a gently nudge with his beak. He felt a small tear stream down his cheek. "I will miss him," he said to his remaining companion.

The longboat came into sight a few minutes later and he saw that Captain Frost was lying on the sand, asleep by the looks of it. Andrew walked quietly over. A thought occurred to him. He had the chest and the boat. Captain Frost

was sleeping. He could possibly take the boat, escape into the ocean and leave him behind.

Frost's men did not appear happy to serve under the pirate. Actually as he had surmised earlier, they did not look like pirates at all; except of course for their clothing. If he could sneak away and board the longboat, perhaps he could leave Frost behind, and then free Red Eye. Yes, if he could do that, then they could press onward, although it would be with half of the treasure they had sought.

The thought lasted a second. It was, Andrew realized, a foolish notion. He lacked the strength to guide the longboat back into the water, let alone past the strong current that assaulted the beach. Between them both, they barely were able to make it in, and the tide he saw was much stronger now. Another problem was that he had no real idea how to find the boat as they had traveled quite far away. Even if he found the boat, he did not believe he would know how to navigate back to *Chimera's Wrath*. No, he would need Captain Frost to help him, much as he wished it truly were otherwise.

More importantly, he thought, he had given his word to the pirate. It was, he knew, a word he gave without a real choice, but his mom had once told him that the promises we least wish to keep are sometimes the most important ones to honor. It did not make sense to him, but he felt that his mom was right. He had given his word and had to keep it.

He walked over to Captain Frost and gently nudged his arm. Frost stirred slowly, then his eyes opened, blinked a few times, then closed them again. He began snoring. He was not truly awake yet. The parrot flew off Andrew's shoulder and landed on Captain Frost's cheek. It leaned its head down and bit him hard on the nose. Frost practically leaped to a standing position.

"Aargh! Me nose you bilious morass of moldy feathers! Arrr! I will be having you for my supper!"

"Gross taste, gross taste!" the parrot squawked back in response. Andrew did not know if the parrot referred to how he'd taste to the pirate or the taste of Frost's bulbous and ugly nose.

He grabbed a small conch shell that he saw was full of water and as Frost began approaching squawky, splashed water from the shell onto his face. Frost halted for a second, his face further twisted in anger, but then his eyes skimmed across the chest and he stopped moving.

He then visibly calmed down and looked at Andrew. "The key lad!" he demanded. Andrew reached into his pocket and produced it. The pirate snatched the key excitedly and then kneeled down in front of the chest. He inserted the key into the lock then stopped.

Frost sat there, the key inside the lock, his hand quivering. It was apparent that he was wrestling with his desire to open the chest versus his knowledge that it would be unwise from him to do so. Andrew understood. Despite the pirate's many failings, he had indeed gone to great effort to secure the chest and it was natural to want to open it. However Frost had to know the curse would make opening the chest by himself, or taking anything out of it, lead to disaster. Frost reached over with his left hand and pulled his right hand away from the key.

“Andrew, you must open the chest,” he said, sighing.

Andrew walked up to the chest reluctantly. He remembered that the person opening the chest had to be worthy. Was he that person? If he was not, he invited sure catastrophe upon himself as well as Frost, Squawky, and the other life on the island. He was not really confident that opening the chest was the best thing to do. However, he knew that if he did nothing, then he would be stranded on the island. He had to act.

Taking a deep breath, he removed the lock and opened the chest. Andrew, the parrot, and Jack Frost looked down into the chest at the second treasure. The last and most critical part of his journey was now complete. Jack Frost would have the treasure, release Red Eye and his ship, and then he could then find his way home.

Unfortunately, events were not about to unfold for him quite as neatly as he expected.

Jack Frost looked into the chest, his face a mixture of disbelief and anger. His cheeks flushed red and to Andrew it looked as if Frost had developed a nasty sunburn. Even his eyes seemed to change color as they appeared to smolder. The tinge of his features became even redder as he continued to stare into the chest.

“Stamps! This is what I traveled around the world for? Stamps is what I battled the navies of the world for? Stamps is what Blackbeard buried on this island? Curse Blackbeard for all eternity! Only the lowest and contemptible of all rascallions would play such a horrible trick. I will spit on the bones and the very grave of Blackbeard! I dare his ghost to confront me and answer for his vile treachery! Arrr! This be too much to take!”

“Maybe they are rare and valuable stamps, Captain Frost.” Andrew volunteered.

“No! They be nothing but gutter trash! I cannot bear to look at them, especially when they be stored in such a fine chest, deserving it be of much superior treasure than these worthless pieces of decrepit parchment! Arrr! I need to get these cursed things far from my sight. I will burn them in the hottest fire I can make and right now!”

“No, wait! Captain Frost! I found gold coins! Is that not what you wanted?”

“Burned be the gold coins! I expected more and deserved more than a pitiful sum of doubloons. I sailed and plundered for years to gain this prize, and it turns out to be but a taunt by a long-dead lout named Blackbeard. Arrr, if I could but meet him, he would rue the day his cursed chest crossed my path!”

Frost reached into the chest and grabbed the stamps. He then began to lift them out. Andrew shouted at him to stop, but it was too late, Frost held the stamps in his outstretched arms leaving the chest empty.

Almost immediately the ground began to rumble. It shook softly at first, but then began shaking harder and harder. Several of the trees quickly became uprooted and tumbled over. The longboat shifted off the sand and began rolling over, then was pulled out into the ocean, disappearing beneath the waves, one part of it bobbing up and down.

Andrew was flung hard into the sand. He was knocked senseless for a second, and lolled there while the whole ground around him convulsed. He tried to stand up, but the Earth was moving so violently that he repeatedly got pushed off his feet, one time being thrown several yards. Frost, he saw just stood there, seemingly unaffected by the earthquake, shaking his fists in anger, oblivious to the ground's turmoil all around him, the stamps dropped onto the ground, forgotten.

He looked for the parrot and saw to his relief that it was flying about twenty feet in the air, hovering above him, waiting for the quake to subside. A rock, twice his size suddenly upended and he dove out of the way just before it could fall upon him.

After several minutes, the quake stopped. Andrew knew from school that there would likely be several more quakes coming, also known as aftershocks. He slowly staggered to his feet, his knees shaking as he stood unsteadily in the sand, looking at the chaos surrounding him. Several dozen trees had been lifted out of the ground and were lying on their sides, their roots exposed. There were at least four or five large holes that had opened up. The tide around the shore was also very agitated, looking as if it were being shaken back and forth.

He managed to calm down and walked over to Frost. He knew that his angry, careless action of withdrawing the stamps had caused the earthquake and he was rather upset with him for his recklessness. He knew that Frost was definitely not worthy of handling the treasure, the quake had made that quite obvious. Frost was a notorious pirate, thief, and kidnapper.

It was odd, he thought, that a pirate as wicked as Blackbeard would place a curse on a treasure that would specifically deny other pirates access to his wealth. He did not feel sorry, at all, for Frost, of course, but the man's crestfallen look was sad to see, nonetheless. Andrew stared at him, as he simply kept shaking his head side to side, the red in his face becoming pale and his appearance deflated, like a balloon slowly losing its air.

Andrew suddenly noticed something that drew his attention. The tide began receding in on itself. It withdrew quickly exposing the shore hundreds of feet in front of him. He looked out and saw, within moments, almost a mile of beach line exposed, that only seconds before were covered by the ocean.

He then heard a noise that reminded him of a sink full of water being drained. It was a slurping noise of sorts. It actually looked as if a giant was sucking in all the ocean water around it with a straw, leaving the area bereft of water in all directions. He glanced over at Captain Frost, but he barely seemed to notice, he remained motionless, still just shaking his head.

Andrew saw a number of fish flopping about on the exposed beach. He took a step forward and began walking outward to try and pick them up and throw them back into the water, though the tide was still nearly a mile outward from where he stood. His feet touched the wet sand and sunk a few inches. Everywhere strewn about was seaweed, shells, rocks, crabs, and other sea life.

He had taken about ten or fifteen steps when he heard an ear-splitting roar. It sounded a lot like a jet airplane was flying only a few feet above his head. Instinctively he looked up, but he realized that was not actually where the sound was coming from. He glanced at the area ahead of him and saw it.

The ocean itself was frothing violently. A gigantic wave was beginning to form that held a foamy top looking not unlike head of a mug of root beer. With a stark realization he knew that the sea was returning back to the beach and with great force. It was moving towards him at hundreds of miles per hour.

The parrot squawked "Tsunami, tsunami, tsunami, run, run, run!"

He heeded the parrot's advice and ran as fast as he could. He saw a hill way in the distance that he hoped he could reach in time. If he could make it, it might be high enough for him to avoid the onrush of water. It was far away, but he saw no other areas where he would be safe, he had to try.

He looked around for Captain Frost. The pirate captain still just stood there, no longer shaking his head, but staring up at the wave, saying nothing. He considered trying to help him, but already the massive wave had closed half the distance back to the beach. There was no time to try and rescue him, even if he could.

Andrew and the parrot continued to run, occasionally slowing down a small bit to look behind him. The wave did not look like a regular ocean wave, but instead resembled a wall of water, not too different from a flood; it just pushed forward crushing and devouring anything and everything in its path. He saw that, as it surged forward, it picked up and carried trees, rocks, and other debris. He saw the longboat also at the crest of the wave, being carried like a child's plaything.

He reached the wagon with the gold doubloons in it. He believed that he had gone far enough inland that the ocean would not get him there. It could not possibly reach this far inland. However he quickly grabbed the handle and pushed the wagon, his muscles straining against the soft sand.

He had moved it back onto the pathway and then looked behind him. His original thought that he had escaped far enough was wrong. The coming water was still a good twenty or so feet high and while it had slowed down considerably, it was still moving towards him very quickly. He managed to get a

glimpse at the tree his squirrel friend was in and saw that it had withstood the wave. The squirrel and his new family standing atop it were fortunately safe.

Andrew turned to run, but tripped, ironically into the hole from which the treasure chest of stamps had been dug. He tried to dislodge his foot, but it was stuck in the hole. He could not get out. He looked up and saw that the wave was much closer now and still very large. Inside the water he saw bits of sand, rocks, plants, and small shards of what once were trees being carried along as it swept inland towards him.

He knew this was the end. He tried one more time to pull his foot from the hole and with a great deal of strain, succeeded. The water was only twenty or thirty feet behind him now, looming larger as it closed upon him.

He tried to run, but his ankle must have been injured. He didn't feel any pain or look hurt, but he was having difficulty finding proper footing as he moved. He fell down once again after only a few more steps. The wave was now towering many feet over him. He grabbed Squawky which stood next to him and tossed it into the air, hoping it would fly away to safety. The bird flew several feet into the sky and then looked down at Andrew and screeched at him.

“YOHO, YOHO, YOHO, YOHO!” it said frantically.

Andrew looked down and saw the book was on the ground next to him. He grabbed the book and opened it seeing the word “YOHO”. The sound of the onrushing water was deafening and he looked up, the wave being a mere nice or ten feet away. He took a deep breath and shouted “YOHO” as loud as he could as the water rushed upon him. Everything spun around and then Andrew saw and felt nothing.

Andrew sat in a chair, a pair of odd glasses covering his eyes, giving the room a greenish tint. He was leaning back panting, his tongue lolled out in front of him. Directly ahead was a desk that held a computer, mouse, keyboard, and several monitors that were connected together.

He removed them and looked around. The room itself was small; it had stairs to the right side and blue painted walls. It was, he realized, the flat he had started out in, and yet it had a different, more modern appearance now. He rubbed his eyes trying to come to terms with what had happened and where he was.

It was then that he realized he was not alone. There was an older gentleman, tall with black and silver hair wearing a suit and tie. He also wore a pair of steel-rimmed glasses which added to his professorial appearance. This was contrasted with a black cowboy hat sitting on the table next to him. Also in contrast to the suit were a brown pair of leather sandals, giving the man more of a casual look.

He looked at the man's tie. Its design was unique, the artistry on it showing a fortune teller holding a crystal ball, a mischievous smile on her red lips. The ball itself had the image of a doll with pins protruding from it. There were also spider webs to her left complete with small black spiders crawling on it. In the background were black bats flying in front of a large castle, partially concealed by fog or smoke.

The man stood there smiling at Andrew, who still had a puzzled look on his face. He waited there patiently as his breathing slowed down and he became calm. The man then walked closer to him, took his hand and shook it.

"Well done Andrew, I don't believe anyone has beaten this game so quickly since I began testing it," the man said to him.

Andrew now remembered where he was and who was speaking to him.

"Professor Adams, I had forgotten I was playing a game the whole time. I really thought I had arrived in London and then met real pirates and journeyed to Pirate Cove."

"Well I guess in a sense you did, didn't you?"

“I guess so. It was quite an adventure.” He paused for a moment. “I’ll miss my squirrel and of course Squawky.”

Scott smiled and said “I had not really anticipated those creatures really being more than a minor piece in the story, but you really developed a bond with them, a rather pleasant surprise if I may say so.”

Scott continued. “Virtual reality is an amazing new ground for gaming. I am hoping that Pirate Cove will enable people to not only play, but feel immersed in the world as well.”

“But why could I not get out when I wanted to? I really wanted to get home from the moment I arrived.”

“If you really wanted to exit the game, you just had to tap your toes together. You obviously wanted to earn your way home, or perhaps the world was so real, you forgot about the easy way to exit the game. That is a curiosity I will have to look into.”

Andrew regarded the professor. Scott Adams was a game designer who had come to his school looking for bright young children interested in science to explore his virtual gaming environments. Andrew had volunteered along with most of the class, but the professor had gauged the enthusiasm in the young child’s eyes and selected him. He realized that the room he was in was actually the school’s computer center that had been modified a bit for Mr. Adams’ project.

Off to the side, he saw several other large computers that had labels on them. He assumed the labels bore the titles of other games. One of them said Strange Odyssey, another said Ghost Town, and still another said The Count.

He saw a flyer on top of the computer that had the same illustration as on his tie. It said Voodoo Castle which then reminded him of the flyer he had found soon after first arriving in the flat.

Scott saw him gazing at the flyer and commented “Product placement,” and smiled, also tapping his tie. Andrew frowned and looked plaintively at him.

“Professor Adams? What about Red Eye, Jack Frost, and the rest? What happened to them? Did that tidal wave hurt them?”

“Oh, you mean the tsunami that Frost caused when he pulled the stamps out of the chest? Well they, of course, are not real people, but rest assured that no pirates or animals were harmed in the making of this game.” Adams laughed.

“I am glad.” Andrew answered smiling.

“And I am glad to see that you connected with the characters. I truly hope that my new wave of games are a big success. If so, then perhaps they will all be brought back, even the wicked Captain Frost, in future games.”

“I would like that very much. Well maybe Captain Frost does not need to return.”

“We will see, okay? For now young man, I thank you for a very exciting test of my games and suggest you return to class. I am sure your teacher will mark your card as excellent for today.”

Adams extended his hand and Andrew took it. He then left the “flat,” as he would now remember it, and returned to his classroom. He did indeed get an “Excellent” on his daily progress card from his teacher. This of course was an excellent finale to a rather exciting day, one that he would remember for quite some time.

Epilogue:

Andrew had gone on to his day care located on the school grounds after class. Instead of playing board games inside or on the playground outside, he began reading the book *Edward Teach*, by a young author named S. J. Vickers. It was the author's first book, and it was about the infamous Captain Blackbeard. He sat there and read quietly until his dad arrived to pick him up after work.

On the way home, he spoke to his dad about his adventure, telling him about the squirrel, Squawky, Red Eye, Jack Frost, and all the other details about his exciting day in Pirate Cove. He then told him about the thirty pages he had already read about the wicked pirate Blackbeard. His dad smiled and shared that he was proud of him, not only for how well he had done in school, and the volunteering he'd done for the professor, but for his excitement about reading.

That night he enjoyed a present from his dad. He had gone to the store and purchased *Edward Teach* for him so he could read it at home. Andrew read while eating at the dinner table, then read still more while taking a bath, and before falling asleep in bed he read a little more. Some of what he discovered about the pirate was not good, but he knew he was learning something not only useful, but also quite important.

He fell asleep dreaming about Pirate Cove, his friend Red Eye, Squawky and the squirrel whom he decided to name Oliver. A few hours later, he awoke and felt the need to get a small glass of water. As he walked across his bedroom, he stepped on something. It was something small and round, feeling a bit like a marble.

Andrew turned on the light and looked down. He was actually standing on the pants that he had worn to school. His foot had stepped on the pocket and he saw a small round lump in it. He reached down and picked up the pants, and reaching into the pocket pulled the object out.

Andrew's eyes widened as he looked at the item in his hand. It was an acorn.

The End...for now!

ARRR! Be wary, matey! The next book in The Andrew Chronicles be heading your way. I be promising a return of Red Eye and maybe even that curdled wretch, Jack Frost. Be looking out for another grand adventure with Andrew and some brand new friends. Till then I say a hearty YOHO and be wishing you a safe voyage on yer travels!

With me best regards,

Red Eye

About This Book - An Author's Narrative

When I was just a child, maybe nine or ten I think, my mother bought me a Commodore VIC-20. It came with five game cartridges, three of them being the first text adventure games I had ever seen. To my knowledge they may have been the first text adventure games ever made. They were created by a young programmer named Scott Adams.

I spent the next couple of years consumed by these games, trying to find the treasure in Pirate Cove and break the curse in Voodoo Castle. It was usually fun, sometimes frustrating, but always engaging. The stories were simple to read and easy to understand, yet contained a great deal of depth intertwined with some very casual humor. (The mongoose and the snake encounter is still hilarious).

As I have progressed a little in my attempt to forge a career as an author, I reached out to Scott Adams, as a 41 year old man writing a fan letter. I was pleasantly surprised to receive a friendly and enthusiastic response. Scott, I discovered, is a very down-to-Earth, regular guy whose passion for his fans is as strong as it is for computer gaming.

My son, Andrew, is also my best friend in the whole world, along, of course, with my other son Tyler. I tell him stories every day and recently he asked me to write a pirate adventure book with him in it. I reached out to Scott and inquired about the possibility of writing Pirate Cove (the first of his adventure games that I played) as a children's novel and he graciously gave his blessing.

It is my hope that I will do justice to the original game in this conversion to book form and that readers of all ages along with those who count this game among their fond memories will enjoy this story. Pirate Cove was, and is, a great adventure that rivals even the legendary classic *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson.

From my own experience I will say that playing a Scott Adams' adventure is like stepping into a novel and being a pivotal part of the story and its events.

Afterword by Scott Adams

Computer Gaming Pioneer and creator of the personal computer gaming industry.

R.D. Trimble was a fan of my early adventure games, who has since become a friend over time. He writes books with his autistic son as the protagonist, using part of the proceeds to help children with autism everywhere.

In this very special story, he takes one of my most beloved classic games, written back at the dawn of personal computing in 1978. He is amazingly successful in rounding out the rough edges and filling in the all the missing pieces.

His story kept me on the edge of my seat, even while thinking I knew its ending. But then even I was surprised with the eventual turn of events!

Don't wait, please go and join Andrew on his awesome adventure!

Now all I can do is say 'YOHO' and everything spins around and suddenly I am elsewhere...

Scott Adam's web site is at <http://msadams.com/> and is a link to both our gaming past and hopefully its future. He can be reached by e-mail at msadams@msadams.com and joyfully responds to anyone who takes the time to write.

About Pirate Cove – The Game

Pirate Cove, also known as *Pirate Adventure* is a text adventure game created in 1978 by legendary gaming pioneer Scott Adams and published by his company Adventure International. It was among the first game of its kind and gave birth not only to the text adventure genre, but is the parent and grandparent to almost every computer game you see today. The game itself does not feature the fancy hi-resolution graphics, voice-acting, or other effects you now experience, yet 35 years later it has not lost any of its relevance or inspiration to game players and programmers world-wide. Scott's games are available for download and purchase on his website at <http://msadams.com/>.

Give them a try, I promise you will not be disappointed. ~ R.D. Trimble

Upcoming Children's Books

by R.D. Trimble:

- Andrew the Inventor and the Great Rocket Ship Adventure
- Andrew and the Red Dragon
- Andrew and the Great Train Adventure
- Andrew's Pet Dragon

*Other Books from
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“The Personal Publisher.”

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