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THE SPANISH GALLEON

A PREQUEL TO

RETURN TO TREASURE ISLAND



John O'MELVENY Woods

L7.AZ5.A50X+KZ#

The Spanish Galleon



An Intellect Publishing Book

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Eight years before the adventure chronicled in ‘Return to Treasure Island’, Long John Silver was first mate to the infamous pirate Red Beard on his ship, the Meriwether. A member of a secret organization within the confederacy of Southern States, Red Beard has prowled the Caribbean waters plundering ships for his cause and burying the spoils.

In this tale the Meriwether encounters a fleet of six Spanish vessels loaded with treasure from South America. Against all odds, a daring plan is hatched, followed by a traitorous bargain between Silver and Red Beard.



www.TreasureIslandBook.com

February, 1854

Captain Stuart P. Jackson was awakened moments before sunrise by the frantic knocking on his cabin's door.

“What is it?” he demanded in a half stupor.

“Sir, Helmsman Bartlet requests you meet him forthwith on the main deck,” responded the apologetic voice behind the door.

Captain Jackson used his elbow to balance himself in his bunk. He looked over at his clock next to the miniature painting of his wife and two young daughters that was sitting on his desk.

“Regarding?”

“A ship’s been spotted, Captain.”

He sat straight up and pushed his legs over the side.

“Five minutes!” he shouted.

“Aye, Captain.”

A gloomy overcast sky looming above a swelling sea greeted Captain Jackson as he made his way up the ladder from his cabin to the deck above. A golden glow edged the low hanging clouds.

William Bartlet was standing next to the helm engrossed in observing through his looking glass. Upon hearing Jackson approach he acknowledged the captain with a nod.

“Captain, we spotted a ship just before dawn and started to follow her. When the light became brighter we noticed the other five ships accompanying her. They are flying Spanish colors.”

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“I was sound asleep, William.” The captain rubbed his eyes and ran his fingers through his tangled bright red hair. “Could this not have waited?”

“The one we first spotted seems to be falling behind, low in the water.” William replied, lowering the looking glass. “I would guess that she is full of extra weight.”

“And your point?

“I think we should relieve that ship of its excess weight.”

Captain Jackson raised his eyebrows.

“Daring, wouldn’t you say?”

“Hopefully.” Bartlet returned the smile.

“Another one for our memoirs, eh, William? Our fellow Knights are already incredulous at the stories we tell, although they seem to enjoy the spoils well enough.”

Captain Jackson paced the deck looking toward the horizon at the Spanish ships. It had been a long, six month voyage this time, and they had yet to find a ship that would yield the quantity of gold and silver they needed. Two of the ships captured had contained only hemp from the Southern Americas, and another one was full of nickel ore for smelting. Although valuable in their own right, they were useless for what he had been sent out to find.

“Our cause has great need of some of that ‘weight’ if we are to remain viable,” said Jackson, “especially if the rumors of war prove true.” He inhaled a breath of crisp cool sea air. “Seems we’ve been delivered a challenge.”

“Indeed,” Bartlet responded.

“Do we have the flags ready?”

“Already up, Stuart.”

Captain Jackson peered upward and observed two flags flapping in the wind; the Stars and Stripes and a Marine flag.

“Then we shall rise to the challenge.” He turned toward the foredeck, calling for his first mate. “Mister Silver!”

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John Silver walked up and over to the two of them standing next to the helm wheel. "Aye, Captain."

"Alert the crew and gunners. Prepare them for battle."

"Agin' six ships, sir?" Silver asked.

"Hopefully not. Any other questions?" he asked sternly.

"Avast, Captain sir. None 'tall. I'll be gettin' 'em ready as a baited hook, and you can lay to that." Silver saluted and turned to leave.

"Silver."

"Aye Captain," he replied half turning back.

"Make it look normal. I do not want to alert those ships that anything is amiss."

Silver smiled and nodded assent as he hurried toward the waiting crew.

"I assume you have a plan?" Captain Jackson continued with William.

"I say divide and conquer."

"My thoughts exactly."

Cupping his hands to his mouth he called the ship's flagger. "Flag the lead ship and inform them of our friendly intentions. Tell them we are simply passing through." He turned back and faced William. "Can you make it between the main fleet and the straggler?"

"Easily."

The captain thought for a moment.

"Do not make it look too easy. It might alert them."

"Listen up, you swabby scalawags!" Silver ordered. "Cap'n says we're to be on the ready fer a fight. Seems we're gonna lighten the load of the Spanish crown. And don't be makin' it look like it either. We wants it to be a big surprise for 'em, by thunder!"

He turned to the lead gunner. "Have ball and powder on the ready."

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“Aye, Silver.”

Silver eyed the crew, hands on hips.

“Get to it, ya bunch of lazy herring!” the gunner shouted.

Quickly scattering, the men started readying the ship. Silver’s five-foot eight inch gangly frame belied the power that he held over his crew. Half of them had sailed many an adventure with him as their first mate. Although feared, he was also known to be fair and just, and would fight to the death alongside any of his crew. The other half were Americans who were fiercely loyal to Captain Stewart. Silver had won their respect, but knew their loyalty was never his. He approached Jameson, the deckhand leader.

“Keep yer eyes and ears about yerself,” Silver whispered. “We may needs to be usin’ yer Spanish language real soon like.” Silver winked at him. “And of course, if things goes astray, you’ll be rememberin’ yer ol’ friend long John Silver.”

The Meriwether was a typical three-masted merchant frigate built in the Maryland Works shipyards in the mid-eighteen hundreds. She was custom fitted in Charleston to double as a war ship, with cannons hidden behind hinged doors. Originally used to haul cotton to the northern mills, for the past five years Captain Jackson had been using her to roam the Atlantic and Caribbean seas in search of gold and silver.

The ship slowly tacked her way over the rough seas toward the Spanish fleet. William was keeping the ship above wind of the fleet so he could make a slow arc toward the last ship, their target. The flagmen from both the lead Spanish ship and their ship had been communicating back and forth, with the Meriwether indicating it was a merchant ship on its way back to Charleston with a load of hemp from South America. The Spanish were not concerned in the least – they were at peace with the United States

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and knew the reputation of the Marines as fighting piracy in those waters. A belief Captain Jackson was counting upon.

It took almost two hours for William to sail into the position he desired; directly crossing the path broadside between the five ships to the right and the straggler portside.

“Are the guns ready, Silver?” Captain Jackson shouted.

“Aye, Cap’n. Awaitin’ yer orders,” Silver yelled back.

“To the cause, my friend,” Captain Jackson said quietly to William, taking a deep breath.

“To the glory of the Golden Circle,” William responded, equally solemn.

Captain Jackson surveyed the crew, the ocean and the Spanish fleet, then turned back to William.

“Well, my friend, it is surely a good day to die, yes?”

“And a good day to succeed.”

“Either way,” Captain Jackson, responded, “We will have done our duty.”

Jackson turned toward Silver and motioned with his arm. “Drop doors fore and aft!” he shouted. “Open fire at will on the main fleet. I do *not* want the portside ship sunk. Disable her only!”

The crew spun into action, manning two dozen canons gracing each of her sides; twelve above deck, and twelve below. The roar of the canon fire was deafening. Trails of smoke followed the glowing balls of iron as they arced their way toward their startled prey. The balls hurled at the straggler ripped through the fore and main masts, causing the heavy oiled sails to crash down upon deck and crew.

The searing projectiles heading toward the main fleet of five ships ripped into them from the rear. Sails fell, holes appeared near water lines. One of the ships exploded from within its middle deck, a plume of smoke erupting into a dark cloud above it.

“Reload and fire at will!” the gunner shouted.

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Another volley was released. By now, the straggler was in complete submission, only the rear sail and mast still standing. The foreword fleet began a slow turn to return fire, but by that time more of the Meriwether's balls had made it difficult for them to maneuver. The crews scrambled in pandemonium.

"Tack quickly to that ship, William," Jackson urged. "Time is short before they start gunning us."

William turned the wheel and sailed straight for the now disabled vessel. A volley of shots from one of the five Spanish ships ripped into the sails of the Meriwether. Undeterred, William kept a solid eye on his target, and sailed perilously close to her.

"Grab rope and prepares to lash 'er sides!" yelled Silver. "Heave to!"

The men picked up coiled ropes lying on the deck and swung the ends with grappling hooks toward the ship, looping the free ends around cleats. The ropes groaned taut as the ships hove close together.

"We are too close for the Spaniards to fire without hitting their own ship, Captain," said William.

"Was that your plan?"

"I am sort of making this up as we go along." William grinned while wrestling with the wheel.

Shots rang out from the captured ship as the two slammed together, creaking loudly. The Meriwether returned in kind. Crew from both sides fell, wounded or dead.

"Do not harm their captain," Jackson ordered. "Hold your fire."

An eerie silence ensued. Shouting could be heard in the distance from the five other ships. As predicted, they stopped firing their cannons.

The captain of the Spanish ship came to the forecastle and was shouting animatedly in Spanish. He was a short, stout, bearded man in full uniform.

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“What is he saying?” Captain Jackson asked William.

“Do we have someone who knows the Spanish language?” William asked the crew.

“I do,” Jameson, the deckhand leader replied, winking at Silver.

Captain Jackson jumped down to the lower deck where Jameson was standing while William steadied the ship.

“What is he saying?” the captain asked.

“Leaving out the colorful language, sir, he wants to know the meaning of a United States vessel attacking his ship. He says it is an act of war.”

“Indeed. Tell him that his ship is now ours, and that if he and his crew want to live, they must surrender immediately. Otherwise, all will be killed.”

Jameson relayed the message to the Spanish captain, who appeared stunned, then escalated his tirade.

“Now what?” the captain asked Jameson.

“He says you have no right to take his ship. It is the property of the king of Spain.”

“Men,” Jackson roared, pointing. “Ready and aim all of your rifles directly at that captain.”

“Sir?” Silver asked.

“You heard me. Every gun on that captain.” Jackson looked to the flagger. “Let the rest of their ships know that if they do not stand down at once, this captain will be fed in pieces to the sharks.” He turned to Jameson, gesturing. “And relay that same message to the good captain himself. We will measure how loyal he is to that Spanish king of his.”

Captain Jackson stood facing the Spanish captain, hands on hips, and watched as he listened to Jameson’s translation.

“They are standing to, sir,” relayed the flagger. “They say they want no harm to come to him or the ship. They demand to know your intentions.”

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“I would think it should be obvious to them at this point.”

Jackson walked to the edge of his ship, now no more than ten feet apart from the Spanish treasure ship.

“Hold your aim, men.” He looked to Jameson.

“Tell him these are my terms, and translate as I speak. You surrender your ship. Our crew will take what we will, and then be on our way. If you cooperate, then your crew lives. If not, you will all die, and your ship will be sunk. And impress upon him the fact that he will be the first to die. Tell him that, *exactly*.”

The Spanish captain became slump shouldered as he listened. He spoke to his first mate, and then nodded an assent to Captain Jackson. The men on the Spanish ship lowered their guns as the first mate called an order in Spanish and set them on the deck.

“So much for loyalty,” Jackson observed aloud.

‘Men,’ Silver shouted, “prepares to board and be at yer guard. I don’t trusts no Spanish crown boys, and there be danger aplenty. Heave to and pull ‘er in.”

A gangway plank was stretched between the two ships, rocking with the swells. Captain Jackson crossed the makeshift bridge and faced his diminutive Spanish counterpart. The contrast was stark. Captain Stuart Jackson stood several inches above six feet tall. His Scottish heritage had blessed him with a muscular physique, commanding cheek bones and piercing blue eyes. But his most striking feature was the color of his hair and beard – bright red. He took in the ranting Spanish captain from head to foot and then turned to Jameson, who had followed him aboard, with a questioning look.

“He says this will mean war between our two countries,” Jameson told him.

“So be it.” He eyed two of his crewman still aboard the Meriwether. “Pull those flags down and hoist up the Jolie and our flag at once.” he ordered, pointing.

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The men sprang into action. Jackson returned his attention to the Spanish captain.

“Tell him to have *his* flagger inform the rest of their fleet the following: We will not take all of their cargo. What is left is theirs to keep. However, if they in any way try to interfere with us, we will use their captain for bait *and* sink the ship. And just to impress the point,” he motioned for Silver and whispered in his ear. Silver smiled.

“Aye Captain, it’ll be a pleasure.”

Silver motioned for two crewmen to join him. He grabbed the Spanish captain from behind.

“Tie up ‘is feet, men, good and secure like,” Silver ordered. “Then we’s gonna pull him up over the rear mast and hang ‘em like a fish. Cap’n’s orders.”

The men helped Silver tie up the screaming and struggling Spanish captain and hoisted him over the beam. The first mate of the Spanish ship ran toward Captain Jackson, shouting in Spanish.

“What is he saying?”

“This is an outrageous act of cowardice on your part, Captain,” Jameson responded. “As near as I can tell.”

“That is what I thought.”

Jackson fluidly pulled a pistol from his belt sash and pressed the trigger, creating a crimson hole in the center of the first mate’s forehead as he violently flew back and flopped onto the deck. Jackson turned to look up at the main mast of his ship. A large white skull and crossbones on a black flag above a red, blue and grey Dixie were flapping in the gusting wind where the previous two flags had been. He smiled.

“Let us find out what is weighing this ship down and get it onboard, now.” Captain Jackson ordered the crew.

Silver reappeared above deck after a few minutes. “Cap’n sir, there be gold ingots and silver coin aplenty. A king’s fortune, it

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‘tis. Them Spaniards is nothing if not industrious, and you can lay to that.”

“How long to load it?”

“We don’t have the room for all of it. But me guess is two hours by the glass should do.”

“Get on with it, then, as the seas are getting rougher. No point in our sinking after we weigh ourselves down.”

Silver started barking orders to the crew.

“William!” Jackson yelled, gesturing for William to leave the helm of the Meriwether and join him aboard the Spanish ship. William cautiously crossed the swaying gangplank.

“How is *your* plan going?” Jackson asked.

“Splendidly. I think we have struck another blow for the cause. And will probably live to tell about it.” William smiled.

“Let us create a little insurance for ourselves, my friend. Set a timed charge below decks in their powder room. We will activate it upon our leaving.”

William nodded, crossed back to the Meriwether and disappeared down the ladder into the hold.

The Spanish captain was still shouting from his precarious position of hanging upside down by his feet. Jackson summoned Jameson to translate, as he motioned with his thumb upward.

Jameson listened for a few moments.

“He says he knows who you are. Red Beard, the pirate. He says that his king will track you down and bring you to justice. He will never relent”

“Red Beard I am,” Captain Jackson acknowledged loudly as Jameson translated. “However, I doubt if your king will capture me.”

“He says he will see you again before he dies, Red Beard,” Jameson continued, “that you will not get away with this.”

“Hmmm. I believe he may be right... about the dying part.” He turned to Jameson. “Tell him I demand that he shut up.”

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William enlisted Jameson to help him as he made his way back to the Spanish ship and down into the powder room while the men were furiously transferring the gold and silver. He started to set up the charge. It was a technique they learned while training for the Knights of the Golden Circle for use in blowing up buildings and banks. They would take a small wooden container, usually a barrel, and then fasten a dowel in the middle of it sticking up about a foot above the top. Around this dowel they would place a piece of wood about six inches long and two inches thick with a center hole that would allow it to slide up and down. On this sliding piece they would wedge a piece of tar lighter stick. On the rim of the barrel they would attach the wick that led to the charge of powder. After filling the small barrel with water, they would punch a hole in the side near the bottom, and then light the tar stick on fire.

As the water drained, the floating fire stick would lower on the dowel, and eventually it would touch the wick. Simple, yet deadly effective.

When they were finished setting it up, they went above deck and William informed Jackson they were ready.

Almost four hours later, the men had managed to offload thousands of pounds of gold and silver bars. The Meriwether was noticeably sitting lower in the water. Silver informed the Captain that they had taken about a quarter of the ingots and coins.

“I assume we are at our maximum tariff?”

“Aye, Cap’n. By the powers and then some,” Silver replied.

“Men,” Captain Jackson commanded, “return to the ship at once. Our business here is finished.”

The men shouted for joy as they bounded over the gangplank onto their treasure-laden vessel.

“Captain,” one of the mates yelled, “a long boat has been launched. Looks like one of the captains is aboard her with some crew. They have flagged for a parley.”

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"Wishful thinking on their part," Jackson stated aloud, looking at William. "Take care of that charge and get back quickly. This promises to be most exciting."

William ran below deck of the Spanish vessel with a flint rock as Jackson made his way back to the Meriwether.

Jackson looked up and shook his head at the Spanish captain, who was still shouting at him, while Silver oversaw the unwinding and cutting of the ropes tying the two ships together.

The sea swells started rising, pulling the freed Spanish ship away from the Meriwether. William appeared above deck and saw the ships separating. The gangplank fell off the side of the Spanish ship, swinging down and slamming onto the side of the Meriwether. William took a running start and jumped, missing the rail of his ship by inches. As he fell he desperately reached out and grabbed a rope on the gangplank that violently arrested his fall. Jackson ran to the rail and looked over. Relief graced his face.

"Are you done having fun there, William?"

"As I said, I am making this up as I go along," William panted.

"Pull him up," the Captain ordered.

Two crewmen ran to the railing and pulled both the gangplank and William up and over onto the deck.

Captain Jackson called Silver over to him.

"Do you have a man who can hit that captain sitting in the longboat with a ball?"

"Aye, I do indeedy, Cap'n. The gunner, over and away."

"Have him at the ready. On my mark, take down that Spanish bird."

Silver approached the gunner who listened, nodded and then ran below deck, reappearing moments later with a long-barreled flintlock in hand. He poured powder into it and inserted a ball.

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"Let us set sail for the south with the wind," Jackson shouted.

William waved and took the helm to tack downwind. Partial sails were raised and easily caught the fifteen knot gusts.

Jackson walked up to the aft deck next to William.

"Everything set?" Jackson inquired.

"Should be any minute now."

"Good."

He pulled out his other pistol and took aim at the dangling Spanish Captain who was now over a hundred feet away and screaming louder than ever. Aiming carefully, he slowly pulled the trigger. The captain's body went limp on the rope.

"Now he will be quiet."

He looked at the longboat rowing toward them. The Captain witnessed the shooting and was shouting to his men, who raised their arms and started firing.

"Silver, the time is now," Jackson commanded.

Silver nodded toward the gunner. A puff of smoke left the end of the barrel. Seconds later, the long boat captain's body went limp and tumbled into the ocean. Crew scrambled to catch him.

"That should give us a few moments," Jackson nodded to William.

Cannons began firing from the other ships. Glowing balls were landing wide, hissing as they hit the ocean's water. Probably still trying not to hit their own ship, Captain Jackson guessed.

William slowly swung the Meriwether toward the back of the Spanish ship, using it to create a barrier between them and the firing cannons. Some of the cannon balls finally hit their mark, splintering railings and punching holes in the Meriwether's' sails.

"I hope our surprise happens soon," Jackson noted to William.

"As do I, Stuart. We are unable to outrun those ships with this weight, and they know it."

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Suddenly, a huge explosion erupted from the Spanish treasure ship, ripping the entire top of the deck up into the air. Plumes of black smoke rose as flames shot hundreds of feet upward. More explosions followed. A huge black cloud billowed between them and the remaining ships.

The men cheered at the Spanish ships' complete disarray and confusion as the Meriwether hoisted full sail and gathered speed.

"Cap'n sir," said Silver approaching Jackson moments later, tipping his three-pointed hat reverently, "I was wantin' to say how pleasurin' it be to work with you. That was pure poetry, 'twas. And we ends up with plenty of bundt for all. Yessir, Captain, it 'twas a master at work. And you can lay to that."

"Tell the crew it was a job well done. Extra rations and rum tonight for all."

"Aye, Cap'n."

"William," said Captain Jackson after Silver left, "let us divest ourselves of this cargo and then head to Pirates Cove. We can send word of our successful acquisition and its location to Charleston once we arrive."

The Meriwether sailed south south-east for four days where she anchored off a small island in the warm Caribbean waters. The voyage had been uneventful; the Spanish fleet did not pursue them. Silver and the men on the ship, at least the ones brought aboard in Bristol when Captain Jackson was looking to supplement his crew, were happy and looking forward to the end of the voyage when they could spend their new-found wealth.

It took two days to offload and bury the bars of gold and silver coins. Captain Jackson had taken four of his trusted crew and three of Silver's, and had them bury the treasure somewhere near

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the middle of the island, beyond sight of the crew. A list of the treasure was kept with the promise by Captain Jackson that the crew would be paid their fair share upon arrival in Pirates Cove in either gold coins or notes.

The afternoon before they were to sail only Captain Jackson's four men accompanied him back to the ship after the digging. Once boarded, Silver approached Jackson near the helm.

"Beggin' yer Cap'n's pardon, but what happened to me crewmen?"

"They had an accident."

"Aye, an accident it be?" He thoughtfully rubbed his chin while surveying the island. "I sees yer point. Fatal I be suspectin' to?" Jackson remained stoic. "Very dangerous in that there deserted island, and that's a fact."

"Could be very dangerous on board this ship, if loyalty were to be questioned in any way," Jackson icily remarked.

Silver raised an eyebrow, looked back at the crew and then turned around again.

"Oh Cap'n," Silver started with an exaggerated smile, 'there's no shortage of loyalty on this here ship in no way. No sir. We's as loyal as a barnyard dog, and that's a fact.' He pulled off his cap and covered his heart. "You got me full affy-davy on that point Cap'n. And you can lay to that."

"That is good, Silver," Captain Jackson nodded, eyes fixed. "First mates are difficult to find."

The next morning, just before getting ready to weigh anchor, Silver climbed down the captain's ladder that led directly to his door and started to knock. The door was slightly ajar, and Silver could see Captain Jackson and William inside. Jackson was drawing and writing on a map with a peculiar green colored ink. Silver stepped back into the shadows.

"What about the crew's share?" he heard William ask.

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“They will have to wait for us to get this map home first. It may well be that this wealth is needed for our cause – especially if the winds of war are truly starting to blow back home. We will put it on a ship to Charleston once we arrive at Pirates Cove. The Grand Council can decide if they want to send a crew out to retrieve it or not. As to Silver’s men, the larger portion of their share will come later.”

“Could we not pay them from the stores kept hidden below deck?”

“I am not authorized to release those monies, nor do I want to. As far as I am concerned, Silver and his ilk are a bunch of degenerate pirates with no morals or character. They will have to take what we give them, for the time being.”

“How will we handle that?”

“As usual, with tact and a sufficient dose of lying,” Captain Jackson laughed mirthlessly.

“That will certainly work for *our* men. They are loyal Knights. But I seriously doubt if the crew from Bristol will take kindly to that arrangement.”

Captain Jackson set down the quill pen he was using to mark the map and turned to William.

“Then they will die.”

Silver crept back up the ladder.

Two days after setting sail the Meriwether and crew arrived in Pirates Cove, a small town composed of dilapidated taverns and busy warehouses. The docks were used to sell goods that had been liberated from their former owners and reshipped out to legitimate dealers worldwide. In short, a giant fencing operation for pirates and buccaneers alike.

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Captain Jackson was hoping to meet a ship going back to the United States so he could deliver a note and his map to his fellow Knights. It was too dangerous for him and the Meriwether to make the voyage, with prices on their heads in every major country including the Americas. He was prepared to wait for safe passage of this essential communication.

Once docked, Jackson called Silver into his cabin. William stood nearby.

“Silver, I have some news for you.” He stood up from his desk and faced Silver squarely. “We will not be able to pay your men their full share until after I send this correspondence to Charleston and my employers release the funds. I hope that it will be agreeable for them to wait?”

Silver remained silent, frowning.

“Beggin Cap’n’s pardon, and hopin’ you take no offense personal, but this here not splitten’ the bundt as agreed, well, sir, ‘tis wrong. Fact is, fair and square, it be part of the crew’s by contract. We lives by the code. And the code be clear. And on behalf of me crew, I be demandin’ what’s due be paid.”

“Demanding, Long John Silver?” Jackson frowned. “And on what basis is this demand of yours?”

“Looky, Cap’n. fair is fair.”

Jackson dismissively swung his arm. “I’m not one of your buccaneer blood brothers, Silver. I am a Knight. And as such, I will decide what is fair.”

He walked back to his desk and picked up a ledger book.

“I will pay each one of your crew one-hundred dollars in gold coin and throw in their lives. It is both options at the moment. I may not continue to remain so generous.”

Silver’s eyes debated the captain’s words.

“Well, Cap’n sir, when ye puts the offer in such a rosy perspective, seems mighty fair after all, and that be a fact, ‘tis.

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Truth be told, me crew will think gold dust of yer offer, it will. And you can trust me to make sure it be so."

"Wise choice." Jackson tossed the ledger down, sat back in his chair and tapped his fingers on the desk. "I must say, Silver, you have surprised me."

Jackson eyed William and smiled.

"I will have the gold tomorrow morning. Have your crew leave this ship at once. All possessions are to be removed. I have stationed my men with guns ready throughout the ship. Just to make sure you continue to feel this is a fair deal."

"Aye, Captain. I'll do as you wish, and you can lay to that."

Silver tipped his cap and left the room. After they heard him scamper up the stairs, Jackson turned to William.

"Watch him closely. Anything goes amiss; he is the first to die."

A tropical storm moved over Pirates Cove that evening. Strong winds gusting over fifty knots were accompanied by warm rain and flash floods in the low-lying town.

The docks and ships were drenched in ominous shadows cast by the flickering light of the torchlight lanterns. No one was to be seen above deck aboard the rocking Meriwether. With a loud creak, the forward hatch door lifted and out climbed one of Silver's crew straining to pull up a wooden chest. Below him stood Jameson who was struggling to push it up. At the bottom of the ladder was Silver, whispering urgently for them both to try harder. Finally, they wrenched it onto the deck with a loud thump.

Jameson and the crewman rested a few moments to catch their breath, while Silver climbed up and out of the hatch, slamming the door closed. They picked the chest up and started to descend the gangplank. Suddenly, the crewman let out a

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screeching cry, writhed in agony and fell forward over the box revealing a large dagger in his back. He rolled off the plank into the murky waters below.

Silver pulled his pistol and peered into the darkness. The wind howled and blew his long black hair into his eyes as he strained to see. Out of the dark appeared Captain Jackson, pistol raised and aimed at Silver, with William and five other buccaneers following behind him, weapons in hand. A shot rang out from one of the crewmen's weapons that wrenched the pistol from Silver's hand, nicking his thumb.

"So much for loyalty, I see," Jackson spat out.

"Loyalty to anything other than yer personal cause be a wasted effort, Red Beard," returned Silver. "I'll spend me loyalty where it be welcome."

"You will surely never get a chance to spend anything, Silver. As you can see, you are outmanned and outgunned. Where are the guards I left?"

'Oh, that be a funny story, Red Beard, and I'm a guessing you'll enjoy the irony of it. You see, they all had an accident, right here, on this very ship.'

"I see. Ironic it is," Jackson replied smirking. "But I do have a problem."

"A problem, be it?

"Yes. Perplexing really. I can think of so many ways to kill you, it is hard to choose which one would satisfy me the most."

"Now listen here, Red Beard, and hear me well. We's known each other a good long while, and there's been no breach of faith 'tween us. But fair is fair, I say. And you violated the oath of fairness, and all I'm a tryin' to do is even the score. All 'fficial like. I don't want more, nor less, than our fair share. And that's all what I be takin. And you can lay to that."

The Spanish Galleon

"As I was saying," Jackson continued, eyes narrowing, "I am not sure which way would bring me the most pleasure. Perhaps skinning you alive?"

"By the powers, Cap'n, many a man, before and after the mast, has uttered them words of me demise, and they's a layin' in Davy Jones locker waitin' for me to visit, while yer own eyes tells you I still be here."

"Perhaps this is lost on you, Silver, but you are as good as dead where you stand. It is only my indecision that keeps you alive."

Silver looked over at Jameson who gave him a slight nod. Jackson observed it too.

"I understands me predicament Captain," Silver went on. "I surely do. But it be a fathom of sea water between talkin' and doin'. You know me. Death is more affeared of me than me of it. And if dyin' be the fruit of this here standoff, then so be it. But it'll be nothin' less that'll be stoppin' me from takin' what be rightfully me and me crew's, by thunder."

Captain Jackson glanced at William's stony expression, and then back to Silver.

"True to the end, you certainly have the stones, Silver." He started to pace the dock area while still holding his pistol on Silver.

"I think I have decided that shooting you will be the most pleasurable. At least I won't have to continue listening to your babbling--"

A shot rang out. Jackson's pistol flew out of his hand, along with part of his index finger. Out from the shadows stepped the Meriwether's gunner with his long rifle, followed by a dozen of Silver's crew, all sporting rifles aimed at Jackson's men.

"Looks like the tides be turned, Red Beard," said Silver. "Imagine that." Motioning with his arm. "Tell yer men to lower their weapons or they surely will die!"

"They can still kill you where you stand, Silver."

The Spanish Galleon

“Aye, they can, and that be a fact.” Silver slowly rubbed his chin. “But I be thinkin’ that there cause of yers might be worth more to you than my hide. That be me major thought on the matter. You still have the treasure, and will surely not miss the spoils you owes us.”

A voice came from the darkness of the dock.

“Ahoy, Silver. The ship is ready to set sail upon your boarding.”

“Tell yer Captain we’ll be there shortly, by thunder,” he replied.

“You should kill me Silver,” Jackson stated matter of factly, “for it will surely be your demise someday if you do not.”

“Aye, I should. But it not be yer time, Red Beard. I don’t kill a mate behind the mast for no reason. It be the code, and I don’t want no Black Spot put on me. This is just bizness. And our bizness be concluded, once we get this bundt onto the ship we’re sailin’ out upon tonight.”

The guns of Jackson’s five crewmen were still trained on Silver. Silver looked past Jackson to them.

“Gentlemen of fortune, hear me clear. It be yer choice. You can die tonight, or live another tomorrow. A handsomer choice you’ll not get, and you can lay to that.”

The men looked to Jackson, who eyed William.

“No dishonor waiting for better odds, Stuart,” William offered.

Jackson turned to his men and acknowledged them with a slight nod and a lowering of his eyes. They reluctantly lowered their rifles, while still holding triggers at the ready.

“This is not over, Silver,” Jackson declared.

“Aye, Captain, ‘tis not. But that be for another day.”

Two crewmen ran over to help Jameson lift the chest and carry it into the darkness. Silver walked past Jackson and stopped in front of William.

The Spanish Galleon

"You trained Jameson well, William," said Silver with a smirk. "I hopes you appreciates it."

He moved his attention to Jackson.

"Captain, as I said, our bizness be concluded. I'm not fer long goodbyes."

"Until we meet again, Silver."

Silver touched his three-pointed hat in a mock salute and disappeared into the darkness, along with the rest of his men.

"We'll follow them in a few minutes," Jackson started, "and pick them off like—"

An explosion erupted from the dock side of the Meriwether. Flames shot out of four of the lower cannon holes. Plumes of smoke poured from the hatches.

"What the—' Captain Jackson raised his arm against the heat and staggered back.

"He time-delayed a charge, damn him!" shouted William. "We must get in there and put out the fire and seal up that hole, or the ship will sink." William motioned with his arms. "Men, to the fore, now!"

Captain Jackson looked to where Silver disappeared in the night shadows.

"Our day will come, Silver. Mark my words."

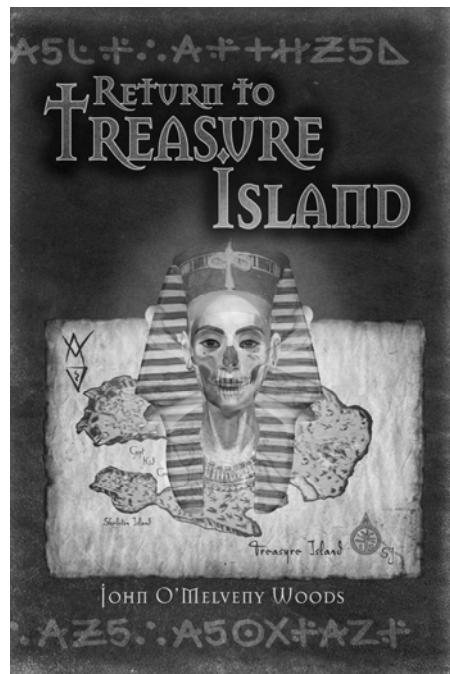
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The Spanish Galleon

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The Spanish Galleon

This is a cleverly crafted story that entices and entralls, teaming with well-choreographed and fast-paced escapades, expanding upon the framework of Robert Louis Stevenson's original *Treasure Island* with exotic and penetrating dimensions while carefully preserving overall consistency of characters, vernacular, settings, and style.

Lori Erbs,
Reviewer

About John O'Melveny Woods

John has been writing television and movie scripts, online articles and books since attending USC School of Cinematic Arts. Prior to this he was the CEO of various companies including USA Print, International. His company, indieTV, created the first interactive television show in partnership with Microsoft Corporation. His books include *10 Minute Win*, and *The Jesse James Enigma*, which is the basis of a special which will air on the History Channel in fall, 2009.

Return to Treasure Island, his first novel, is a sequel based on the original Robert Louis Stevenson classic, *Treasure Island*.²

He divides his time between his homes in Woodinville, Washington and Leucadia, California.

www.JohnOmelvenyWoods.com

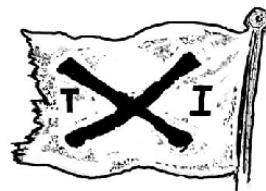
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