

Pirate Family Smith

Chapter 5

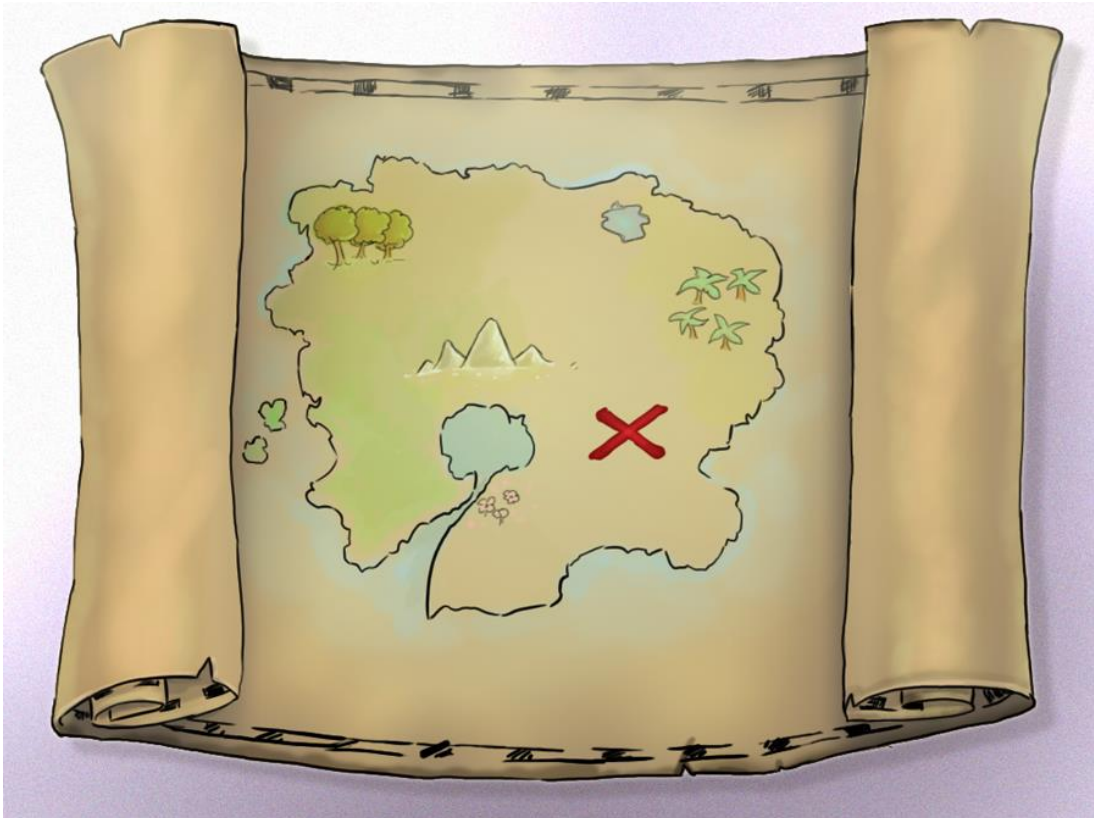
“Err...everyone,” said Bo. “I think you’d better come and see this!”

A second after he’d said this, the last panel opened. Its groove was not like the others. It was wider and straight. Nestling down inside it was a weather-beaten, curled up scroll.

Everyone ran over and gasped in shock when they saw all of the jewels.

“What’s on the scroll?” asked Vera.

Bo unrolled it. It was covered with red and black markings, some numbers and strange-looking letters.



“What does it mean?” asked Vile.

“I think those are instructions for how to find the Elixir of Life,” said Pirate Smith softly. “The drink that makes you live forever.”

“But that’s worth more than all of the treasure in the world put together,” said Hope. “If we find that, we’ll not only be able to live forever, we can sell drops of it for huge sums of money.”

“You’re right,” nodded Pirate Smith. “The Elixir is priceless.”

“But how will we work out what these instructions mean?” asked Bo. Pirate Smith looked up and saw that the sun was starting to set. “We’ll have to leave the code-cracking until later,” he declared. “We have a meeting with the King and he hates people being late. I think he’ll be pleased with our booty.”

“What shall we do with the scroll?” asked Hope. “Should we take it with us?”

“We’ll halve the jewels with the King but he doesn’t need to know about the scroll,” said Pirate Smith softly. “It can be our secret.”

“I agree!” nodded Vera, “but if we leave it here and Purple Beard and his crew show up, they’ll easily overpower Ears, Toe-rag and Vile and steal it.”

“I can keep it in my backpack,” said Bo. “The King won’t be interested in that.”

Pirate Smith turned to his son with an admiring look. “Spoken like a true pirate,” he grinned. “Well done boy!”

They quickly replaced the precious gems in their grooves and shut up the chest. Bo stuffed the scroll into his pack.

Forty minutes later, they reached the coast of Moonshine Island.



“You lot take care,” said Vile, giving them a salute. “And don’t forget to bring back half of those jewels and the scroll of course.”

Pirate Smith, Vera, Bo and Hope climbed down, holding the chest between them. Then, carrying a corner each, they proceeded along the stone path leading up to the King’s palace. The sun had set and fingers of the evening’s slim moon lit up their path. As they walked, they couldn’t stop smiling at each other, imagining all of the ways they would spend the money raised by selling their half of the jewels and some drops of the Elixir.

“This is the best day ever!” grinned Bo. “First we find the chest, then we get the scroll. I can’t wait to go searching for the Elixir.”

“Me too,” nodded Hope, “I mean, as long as your parents allow me to stay travelling with you all.”

“Allow you?” smiled Vera. “None of this would have happened without you, Hope. You’re part of the Smith family now.”

Hope grinned.

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They stopped in front of the giant wooden gates at the front of the castle. Pirate Smith knocked three times. A small square panel was pulled open and a pair of eyes peered out. "State your name and purpose!" demanded a deep voice.



"We are the Pirate Family Smith," announced Vera, "and we have jewels for the King."

"Well you better come in then," said the voice. "The last people who knocked on this door were selling cleaning powders. I told them to get lost."

There was a loud scraping of bolts and chains and the gates creaked open. A very tall guard ushered them inside and shut the gates behind them. "I will just go and tell the King you are here," he said.

Before five minutes were up, he returned and led them down a path, through two further sets of gates and into the main hall of the palace.

King Hugo was sitting on his giant gold throne with two guards standing on either side.

"Pirate Smith," smiled the King, "how wonderful to see you back on these shores. I've been told that you have something for me?"

The guests placed the chest on the floor and then fell on one knee and bowed their heads.

"Come, come, there's no need for all that," said the King, "please stand and show me what you have got."

Bo produced the small star-shaped slab of marble and placed it in the hole on the chest. The King watched in delight as the grooved panels slid open and the shimmering gems appeared. The final panel – the one that had held the scroll – opened at the end.

"What a wonderful collection," gloated the King, rubbing his hands together. But then he frowned. "What about that empty groove?" he demanded. "What was in that?"

"Alas, there was nothing in there, Sire," replied Pirate Smith. "We think it's just for decoration."

"It doesn't look decorative," replied the King. "Are you sure there was nothing in it?"

"Nothing at all, your majesty," replied Vera.

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“But why would anyone leave a groove empty when all the other ones are full?”

“We’d need to ask the person who made the chest,” said Hope, “but we don’t know who that is.”



The King pushed his floppy hair out of his eyes and fixed the Pirate Family Smith with a grave stare. “If you have no idea why that groove is empty, you won’t mind me taking a look at your bags, will you?” The King clicked his fingers and in a flash, his guards stepped forward. They looked inside Pirate Smith’s leather pouch and Vera and Hope’s knapsacks. There was nothing of interest in any of them. But when they checked in Bo’s bag, they gasped, pulled out the scroll and handed it over to the King.

“A-ha!” cried the King. “I was sure you were hiding something and this looks like the scroll that can lead me to the Elixir of Life. You lied to me, Smith.”

“We can explain,” said Bo but the King wasn’t interested.

“Guards,” he snarled. “Take these four to the royal jail and lock them up!”