

# ADA'S PIRATE

by James Gelsey

## Chapter 1

"But what if it explodes?"

Ada Dover shook her head while everyone else in Mrs. Stovall's sixth grade class craned their necks in Oliver's direction.

"Oliverrrrrrrrrrrr..." Ada quietly cringed at her friend's outburst, hoping he wouldn't continue. "Don't say it."

"I mean, what if it's really a booby-trap that's wired to explode when you open it, right?" Oliver continued, his words gathering momentum. "So then all of Treasure Point blows up and flames shoot a hundred feet into the sky. And a wall of fire burns up the boardwalk all the way to Sunny Shores, right? And the big resort up there blows up into a million pieces KA-BLAM! And a huge chunk of the resort sails all the way back over here and BLAM! slams right into the school? So then there's no school, right, and we have to hang out on the beach for the rest of the year."

It seemed to Ada that all of Ada's classmates were enjoying their front-row seat to Oliver's train wreck. But not Mrs. Stovall.

"Oliver, dear boy, it's not a bomb," the teacher sighed. "It's not a booby-trap. It's not a land mine. It's not a bundle of dynamite sticks tied together with string. It's a time capsule, plain and simple that was buried by Ada's great-great-grandfather with the hope that whoever opened it would have the chance to peer into Treasure Point's glorious past and get a glimpse of life during simpler times. And what's more, I don't

think that Mr. Beauregard Jackson Chantilly would go through the trouble of planting a bomb smack-dab in the middle of Treasure Point—” and here Mrs. Stovall paused to take a particularly deep breath— “just so he could ‘KA-BLAM!’ blow the town he founded to smithereens. Wouldn’t you agree, Ada?”

Heads swiveled in her direction, and Ada felt herself shrink into her seat. It was questions like those that always bothered her. Like she would have any idea what her great-great-grandfather was thinking a hundred years ago. But that didn’t stop people-- including Mrs. Stovall--from doing it to her all the time. They just assumed that she knew every last detail about “Great-Great-Grandpa Beauregard” and the town’s “glorious” past. Ada fingered the gold chain around her neck while she searched for an answer to Mrs. Stovall’s question.

“Um, I guess so, I mean, I don’t really know, but...yeah, I guess.”

“Well, I suppose we’ll all just have to wait and see until the opening of the time capsule after school,” Mrs. Stovall said. “Until then, I believe we have just enough time for Ada and Oliver to rehearse the--what number is it, Ada, the fifth revision?--of their pageant scene.”

With those words, Ada felt her lunch morph into a hot lump of worry in her stomach. She took off her new rimless glasses and raised her hand.

“Mrs. Stovall, I could really use—”

“No, Ada, today’s the day,” Mrs. Stovall said. “Honestly, I don’t think William Shakespeare spent as much time on all of his plays combined as you have on this five minute scene. Every year the sixth grade has the same three weeks at the end of testing to put together the pageant, and every year we’ve been able to put it all together

just fine. This is our last chance before Sunday's performance to see what you've got, so your time is up. If you please."

Ada looked back at Oliver. He smiled and whipped a red bandana out of his pocket and wrapped it around his head, pirate-style. He marched to front of the room, wisps of hair sticking out every which way. A cardboard sword covered in foil dangled from a carabinieri clip on his belt loop. Tommy Brown and Evan Endicott snickered, but Oliver took it in stride.

Ada grabbed her papers and the boom box from under her desk and went up front. She clutched the script, adjusted her glasses, and noticed Libby Montrachet staring at her.

"Any time now, Ada," Mrs. Stovall nudged.

Ada took a deep breath and turned on the boom box. Nothing happened. Her hands began shaking as she fiddled with the buttons. A blast of music shot ricocheted around the room.

"ROCK ON!" Tommy Brown sang out, his eyes flying open. Everyone cheered and bopped to the music. Ada slapped at the buttons until the music stopped.

"Maybe you should skip the sound effects," Mrs. Stovall whispered.

Ada took a deep breath and started the boom box again. The sound of a driving wind and rain storm filled the air. Ada cleared her throat and began to read.

"The year was 1805, and a fierce nor'easter followed the dreaded pirate, Heartless Dan Hunt, and his pirate ship, the Saber, in pursuit of a British merchant ship returning to England."

At that moment, Oliver leaped across the front of the room and posed with one

hand on his hip and the other holding his shiny sword aloft. Everyone laughed as Ada continued.

“Dan Hunt and his band of corsairs caught up to the British ship and fired their cannons at it, blasting holes in the ship’s hull. Heartless Dan Hunt and his pirates stormed the British ship looking for the treasure.”

Oliver wagged his sword, pretending to threaten a group of British sailors.

“Avast, ye scurvy vermin, I’ll give ye bilge rats till the count of three to hand over the treasure or ye’ll face the wrath of Heartless Dan Hunt! One! Two!”

“At that very moment, one of the British sailors pointed to a wooden chest lashed to the deck,” Ada said. “In a flash, Dan Hunt and his men took possession of the treasure.”

Oliver reached down to grab the treasure chest when he froze.

“Uh--hold that thought!” he announced in his regular voice. Tommy and Evan led the laughter as Oliver raced back to his desk and tore into his backpack. Ada couldn’t remember how many times she’d reminded Oliver not to forget the treasure chest. It was the one prop he was in charge of, and he still couldn’t get it right.

“Aha! I’ve got it now!” Oliver roared in glee as he hoisted a small shoe box painted like a treasure chest. “No one tangles with Heartless Dan Hunt and lives to tell about it!” Oliver jumped back to his “ship” by the door.

“Even though it was sinking, the British ship had one last cannon and fired it at the Saber. With that single blast, the Saber began to break apart. The storm raged, and both ships soon disappeared into the depths below, drowning all on board. But somehow Heartless Dan Hunt managed to survive and grabbed onto bits of the

wreckage to stay afloat. As the storm subsided, the pirate clutched the treasure chest in one arm and bobbed along the ocean's currents."

Ada turned off the sound effects.

"Finally, the waters of the Atlantic Ocean tossed the pirate's sodden body ashore on a deserted patch of the New Jersey coast."

Oliver threw himself onto the floor and landed with a heavy THUD that made everyone wince, including Mrs. Stovall.

"Are you all right, Oliver?" she asked.

"Aaargh!" he yelped. "This is the hardest beach I've ever felt!"

"When Dan Hunt regained his senses, he knew that he had to hide the treasure in a safe place," Ada read, "so he decided to bury it and return for it later."

Oliver pretended to dig in the sand like a dog burying a bone.

"But the treasure chest was too big, and the sand too hard, so--"

"Arr, this treasure chest is too big, and the sand is too hard! Oh, the humanity!"

Ada glared at him over the top of her glasses until she caught his eye. He looked at her, smiled, and stopped digging.

"That's when Dan Hunt saw three figures staggering towards him on the beach. He immediately recognized them as sailors from the Drake. He enticed the sailors with a promise to share the treasure in exchange for their help burying it. Greedily, the sailors agreed and soon had the treasure well hidden. That's when Heartless Dan Hunt earned his pirate nickname."

Oliver jumped up. "Now I shall repay ye for your work so ye can't tell anyone what ye saw here today!" he growled. He took out his sword and thrust it forward.

Oliver turned to face the other way and held the sword beneath his left armpit.

“Ooooh, ya got me!” he groaned, and fell to the ground. Then Oliver jumped up and was Dan Hunt again.

“Take that, ye second varmint!” he said, thrusting forward again. He spun around and pretended to be stabbed again.

“Right in the *kishkes*!” he moaned, falling to the floor.

“What are *kishkes*?” Tommy Brown called out.

Oliver raised up his head, said, “Guts,” and then put his head back down. Then he jumped up to be Dan Hunt again and raised his sword. He turned and became the third sailor, and cried, “Eeek!” and collapsed to the ground. The giggles were coming pretty steadily now, and Ada was having a hard time staying focused.

“Uh, that’s when...um...,” Ada’s eyes danced over her script, trying to find where she left off. She heard Oliver’s “Psssst,” looked up, and saw him standing all hunched over with his bandana wrapped around his head. Ada nodded and turned the page

“That’s when a strange old woman stepped from the shadows,” she read.

Oliver tottered over and wagged a crooked finger in the air. “I saw what you did,” he said in a shaky old lady voice. “And I’m going to tell!”

“But Dan Hunt was not only heartless, he was a quick thinker,” Ada said. “So he immediately had another idea.”

Oliver turned and faced where the old lady stood, moved the bandana back into “pirate” position, and said, “I’ll give you my golden ring if you’ll promise not to tell anyone.”

“The old woman was as greedy as the British sailors, so she agreed,” Ada read.

“But as the pirate handed her the ring with one hand, he took out his sword and stabbed her with the other.”

Oliver thrust out his sword, switched positions, moved the bandana, and fell to his knees like the old lady.

“Ooooh, I’m meIIIIIIIIlting....” he cried. “But before I go I’m going to curse you and your treasure forever! Flibbledy goggly blannit blannit carnin tintintin SHPLOCK!”

“And then she died,” Ada said.

“Arrgh!” Oliver fell to the floor. Ada had to raise her voice to speak over the laughter.

“Dan Hunt grabbed his ring from the old lady. But as he put it back on, an incredible thing began to happen.”

“My legs suddenly feel very stiff and leaden,” Oliver panicked. “Oh, no! I can’t move my legs at all! That old lady really cursed me! And now my stomach and chest are feeling very solid and thick, almost stone-like. What’s happening to me? It must be the ring! I must throw away the ring!”

“But it was too late,” Ada said. “Feeling his heart itself turn to stone, Dan Hunt clutched at his chest with one hand and tried to throw the ring away with the other. His whole body turned to stone, now a statue cursed to an eternity of guarding the treasure beneath his feet.”

Oliver locked his limbs into position and stood motionless, except for his panting. By now, Ada’s arms had dropped to her side as she recited the rest from memory. Legend has it, the storm that brought Dan Hunt to the beach raged up again and battered the beach through the night. When the third British sailor regained

consciousness the next morning, there was no sign of his fellow sailors, the pirate, or the treasure. The storm had wiped the beach clean like an eraser across a whiteboard.”

Oliver ducked down behind Mrs. Stovall’s desk.

“The sailor wandered for miles down the beach until he found help. He told his story to everyone he met, but no one believed him. Many years later, in 1884, the legend of Heartless Dan Hunt found its way to the ears of a newcomer to that tiny corner of the Jersey shore. That’s when a young man from Virginia named Beauregard Jackson Chantilly arrived at a half-finished lighthouse on Farley’s Point. It was there that he learned the legend that inspired him to establish the town of Treasure Point twenty years later. Some would say that was the end of the story. But for Treasure Point, it was only the beginning.”

Oliver’s hand reached up and started the boom box from behind Mrs. Stovall’s desk. Oliver boogied and bowed all the way back to his desk while the rest of the class--except for Libby--clapped and danced along. Ada took the boom box back to her seat and dialed down the music. She carefully put her script away, took off her glasses, and flopped over onto her desk.