



There, in the depths of the cave, was the cask full of loot just as the old buccaneer had left it.

ON THE EVENING that I told the story about the powder keg and the emerald brooch, the Island was still a haven of tranquility. It was the perfect setting for talk of ghosts and buried treasure — or it would have been if the Dodsons were the sort of people who could enter into the spirit of the thing.

We were having coffee on the terrace after dinner, the Dodsons and Linda and I. At our feet were the waters of the Great Scund dotted with jagged islets. Mr. and Mrs. Dodson sat there like two paunchy seals. They made me feel like a real estate agent trying to put over a deal — which, in a way, I was.

But Linda was an audience to make a Homer out of a hack writer. When she leaned forward in her chair every line of her body, every fleeting expression of her brown, adorable face was a quick response. When I looked at her—which was most of the time—strength was added to my resolution to preserve her as a permanent audience, to require Mrs. Thorley Dodson to find herself a new social secretary.

I started by telling them about the emerald brooch I had seen that morning in Hamilton, in the window of a store in Queen Street. The thing fascinated me—it so clearly belonged to another

age. The people in the shop couldn't or wouldn't tell me how it came there.

The Dodsons' interest in the trinket was less than mild. "Sort of thing they fake up to catch the tourists," sniffed Mrs. Dodson.

They thought I was stretching things very far indeed to connect the brooch with the statement made and attested by the pirate John Ridge, follower of Nathaniel North, on the night before he was hanged at Port Royal. They even doubted whether there ever was such a person.

"At any rate," I told them, "there was a real Nathaniel North. His life is history. He was born and spent his boyhood here in Bermuda and was as remarkable a scoundrel as ever sailed under the black flag. This legend has to do with his latter days when he was living on the coast of Madagascar, rich with plunder. It's easy to believe that his thoughts may have turned back to his native islands, that he conceived the idea of spending his last years here.

"In those days, more than two hundred years ago, this Island was much as it is now, with only the one house on it. The owner, who lived here alone, was an ancestor of mine—Phineas Pavey by name.

"One sultry afternoon in July, Phineas saw a brigantine slip by the end of Spanish Point. It kept to its course until it let go its anchor here in the Sound, not half a mile off the Island.

"All afternoon Phineas watched the ship uneasily. From the number that it carried he was convinced that it was no peaceful trader. No sign of activity was visible on board. At last, when the sudden tropical night had blackened the waters and the lights of the harbor were out, Phineas saw a long-boat put off from the side of the stranger. Fearing an attack, he hurried out of the house and hid himself in some bushes close to the shore.

"The long-boat came in swiftly and grounded on a strip of sand. The crew sat motionless and silent at their oars,

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but one figure moved from the stern and stepped ashore. Phineas saw him walk up and cautiously inspect the house. Then he returned to the boat and there were low murmurs.

"One of the crew rose from his place and the two of them rolled out what looked like a large keg. Carrying it between them they disappeared in the darkness toward the center of the Island. For a long time old Phineas crouched in the bushes, not daring to

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move. He could have tossed a pebble on the backs of the long-boat crew who sat as still as the rocks around them. Once or twice he thought he heard sounds from behind the black curtains that hid the interior—bumping, jarring sounds.

"At last Phineas heard boots stumbling over stones and one of the figures reappeared, walking fast. He stepped into the boat, there was a brief parley and they pulled away. Phineas lay where he was until morning. The dawn showed that the brigantine was gone.

"When it was full light Phineas made a careful search, peering fearfully behind every bush and outcrop of coral. He found nothing.

"ABOUT SIX MONTHS later the master of the British sloop 'Polly' put into St. George's Harbor. He had been in Kingston, he said, when the crew of the notorious pirate Low had been brought in, tried before the Admiralty Court and duly hanged on a gallows.

"One of the wretches, John Ridge, had made a statement on his last night, probably hoping that its investigation would postpone his execution. Unfortunately for him he wasn't believed. But when the story came to old Phineas he had no trouble in believing it.

"Before he joined Low's crew, Ridge said, he had served under North. On a certain occasion, the latter had anchored in the Bermudas and after nightfall had put the long-boat ashore on Cavallo Island, a spot with which he seemed to be very familiar. Ridge was one of the crew. They had carried with them a powder keg, fetched up from North's cabin, a keg clamped and coopered with unusual care. Arrived on the beach the captain had called on one of the crew, Pedro by name, to help him ashore with it. They had carried it inland. Presently North came back alone and ordered them roughly to row back to the ship.

"That was the story. When it got about Bermuda there was a general movement toward Cavallo. An official searching party scoured the place, with Phineas sourly looking on.

"Many predicted that North would be coming back one day to reclaim his treasure. It wasn't known then that he had been killed in a quarrel of native princes on the Madagascar Coast."

Mr. Dodson roused himself. "Well," he demanded, "and what's all that to do with this emerald thing?"

"Probably nothing," I answered. "Only that brooch is just the sort of thing that would have been in the keg—"

Mr. Dodson snorted. "Young man," he said, "your abilities are wasted. You should be writing sales literature for suburban developments."

The Dodsons heaved themselves to their feet to go inside. "Linda, dear," said Mrs. Dodson briskly, "I'll want you to help me with my shopping list."

I smoked a pipe on the terrace, reflecting on the status and prospects of myself, Tom Pavey, New York hack writer and land-poor Bermudian.

Dodson knew exactly how keen I was

by EDWIN MULLER