

Curse of the Pirate King – Patrick, Year 6, NSW

John Roberts, self-proclaimed pirate king of 1720, was alone in his cabin. Sunlight streaked in from the cracks in the *Royal Fortune's* wooden planks, warmed his flesh. He could hear blasts from his forty cannons' blowing apart enemy ships, sending their wreckage spiralling to the bottom of the sea.

Good, thought John. He needed all the time he could get.

His spies had informed him that the navy and rival pirates had teamed up to destroy him. Every cannon in the world couldn't save them from their fury. Their rage was like a relentless fire that would burn him and his crew.

"Captain," a panicked voice said, "We're under attack."

John rose to his feet, mumbling something under his breath, addressing the treasure he had been looking at all day. This was his last stand. When he was gone, John's treasure would be at risk. So he protected it. Woe betide anyone who went after it. Even his descendants would perish. A smug smile crept across his lips, as he holstered his revolver, and went out to fight the battle in vain. This was the pirate king's last stand.

6 generations later

Luke's muscles were aching as they pulled his body weight up the metal bar. His grey tank top was soaked with sweat from the hours of training he had been doing.

Since birth, Luke had been training for one moment. The moment where he, the last in the blood descended line of the pirate John Roberts, found the hidden treasure of his ancestor and brought glory to his once fabled family. That moment was approaching soon. After fifteen years of training Luke had been declared ready. Ready to restore his family to honour. In fact, Luke would depart today, now even.

Luke left the gym and walked down to the sea edge. It was a lovely day, sunbeams reflected onto the crystalline ocean, Luke finding himself humming sea shanties. He boarded the *Royal Fortune* replica, feeling the splintered wood beneath his boots.

"Everything alright, master Luke?" came the voice of the faithful first mate Crowley.

Crowley was dressed in true pirate style, brown pants with stitches showing, a white shirt, black laces threaded through three miniature holes and a large leather trench coat, intricate designs embedded in it. Luke looked enviously at the chic outfit the butler wore, he was still in his tank top, which was beginning to reek of sweat.

"Here, master Luke, thought you would like a wardrobe as flashy as John Roberts," the voice of Crowley rang out, tossing another pirate set of clothes. Minutes later, Luke was in Crowley's outfit, plus a captain's hat with a traditional ostrich feather and the ship was sailing into the broad horizon.

Later that night Luke was looking over the stars, as they shone like fireflies over the navy blanket of the night sky. He had never felt as he did now, like a raging fire of anticipation was clashing against the water of peace.

Luke felt eerily calm, as he looked over the sky. He often imagined his parents were there. Like him they had gone on this quest, with Crowley's father as well. They perished, all of them. Not a trace of what killed them had been discovered, only the charred remains of what had once been his loving mother.

Luke went back inside, but didn't notice Crowley behind the mast. Crowley stepped out from behind the wood post, knife at hand, scowl on face and a silent vow of murder upon his lips. Crowley came upon the foreground and called to the empty night sky, as though an extra-terrestrial force was listening,

"I will murder him, for his father led mine to death, I will murder him for the treasure of John Roberts should be mine, I will murder him." Then, a treasonous smirk crept across his face and he went below deck...

Rough hands shook Luke out of subconsciousness, then a whisper came: "Master Luke, we're here."

Luke rose from his bed, changed and came to the upper deck. He saw it then. *Treasure Island* his parents had called it when it was first discovered. It was your average island, sand trees, clear skies. The only thing that stood out was the enormous skull. It was bone white, and almost like a cave, the mouth looking like the gaping maw of a regular one. Luke gazed at it in awe, then proceeded to the dinghy with Crowley at his heels. They hopped in the small boat then Luke strained his muscles and began to row to shore.

Minutes later, sand was crunching under Luke's boots as he strode to the skull. Luke handed the cutlass in his belt as he stepped into the cave. As soon as both Crowley and Luke were in the cave, the mouth shut behind them and rows of torches lit up.

"Stay here," Luke told Crowley, and walked cautiously into the tunnel that lay ahead.

Luke strode into the labyrinth of tunnels, trying not to lose his way. In the catacombs there were strange holes everywhere. The purpose of these was soon revealed when arrows shot from them. Luke dived to the ground to avoid the piercing metal arrowheads.

Luke soon discovered this wasn't the first of the traps in the maze to the treasure. Spikes, axes, rocks and arrows were some of the things he faced. After braving these, Luke was convinced he'd gotten through everything. Then smoke filled his nostrils, and flames shot from the walls. Just in time, Luke ducked and rolled away. He stood up and noticed his hat's feather was burnt off, smoking at the tip.

The holes had come to an end, so Luke relaxed a little. Then, he felt a cold metal press against his neck and he knew he had relaxed too early.

There's something about a gun pressed to your skin that you instinctively know. It's not just the cold steel shaft with a small bullet loaded, ready to end you but the whisper of death. You

can almost feel Satan upon you. This is what Luke was feeling as the pistol pressed against his body.

“Move,” said a voice, one that Luke knew well.

“Crowley?” asked Luke, a mixture of shock and betrayal roaring inside him.

“That’s right,” said Crowley “Now move.”

As the pair wandered down the catacombs a rather smug Crowley told Luke everything. “When your father led my father to death, I was torn,” the villain spat. “So, I decided the treasure that killed him would be mine. So I studied for months to find the long lost pirate treasure. It’s in a chamber at the centre of these caves, one that can only be opened by the pirates’ descendants.”

From the evil glint in Crowley’s eye, Luke knew opening that chamber would be the last thing he did. They continued down the path and at last the chamber door came into view. It was a large cement door with a Jolly Roger engraved upon it.

“Go on,” ordered Crowley, not taking his eyes off the thing that was holding him back from the treasure.

Luke cautiously approached the door. He reached forward, and at the slightest touch of his finger, the door slid open. Crowley fingered his gun, no doubt going to shoot Luke.

Fearing his life, Luke ran inside and saw what his life had led up to.

The cavern was like a TARDIS, considerably bigger inside. The setting itself was like a cenote, with a water moat glistening from the few cracks of sunlight streaking through the roof. The treasure itself could only be described as a giant gold mass of looted treasure. Luke had only moments to take this scenery in, before his pursuer entered, already fingering the gold-edged cutlass hanging from his belt.

Luke met his old companion on a bridge over the watery moat, which was filled with humongous crocodiles. Luke drew his own sword just in time to meet his opponent’s. Metal met metal as the two pirates clashed. Each was equally skilled, but Crowley was older and slower. Too slow. After trying at his head, Luke sliced at Crowley’s legs, toppling the villain into the croc-infested waters.

After defeating his foe, Luke strode to the fortune. He reached for a shiny necklace, that would be his first touch of treasure, but as Luke’s fingers grazed it jewel, pain shot up his arm. It felt like fire blazing in his biceps. Cradling his arm, Luke ran to the ship, knowing that he failed in restoring honour to the Roberts.

Sailing away, Luke realised why no one had gotten the treasure. It was cursed. By his ancestor. That fiery pain must’ve killed his parents, and their parents before them. Luke wondered how many of his family had perished trying to get the treasure. He alone had survived dangers that nothing else had. Not even his parents. Luke thought about this as he sailed to new horizons, the pirate king’s last descendant.