

# **The Adventure**

**by**

**Stuart Byng**

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For my family and friends, past and present.

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Oliver had enjoyed going to Junk sales since he was four years old. Ever since the first one with his parents, a local car boot sale, he had quickly become addicted. Rummaging through the treasures to be found at these sales was a real thrill to Oliver. In the thirty odd years since, his obsession had not diminished in the slightest. Much of it could quite rightly be described as junk. But there was enough treasure to be found to keep him more than just interested. Over the years his house had become full of his finds. A look around would reveal rare books, even rarer memorabilia from the past century and beyond, plus much, much more.

It was a week ago now that Oliver had seen the sign for today's sale. He had been excited immediately. But now he was here, as awestruck as always. To most people it looked just like any other car boot sale. Okay it was one of the bigger ones, but nothing that special. But to Oliver, this was his world. Where he felt he really belonged. He zipped along, eyes scanning constantly. He had covered the whole area twice while most people were still arriving at the gates. Then he homed in on something. To most it just looked like an old board game. "The Adventurer" it was called. The box was in perfect condition. Oliver was drawn to it straight away. He bought it without arguing about the price of five pounds, and headed home.

Once back home, he couldn't wait to get a proper look at his purchase. He quickly cleared the table of his other recent find, a old pair of sunglasses. He had already had them checked and it was looking quite hopeful that he had been right - they had been one of many pairs to belong to the late, great Elvis Presley. He just brushed these aside however. He laid the box down on the table carefully. On the lid was a picture of a happy looking ships captain. He was standing in the foreground, with the ship some distance behind. In one hand he held some kind of walking stick, the other was thrust out in front of him giving a hearty thumbs up to all who cared. It was a sketched picture, which had been painted quite somberly. Most board games had bright covers, inviting you to pick them up and play. This was different. But to Oliver, it looked perfect. The captains eyes were staring out at you. There was actually some maniacal quality to them. Another strange oddity of the box.

Oliver lifted the lid. Inside was just the same perfect condition. The instruction leaflet was laid out neatly on the top. He picked it up and began to read it. It said it was the most exciting game ever 'me hearty's!'

It appeared to be a pretty standard board game, just with a sea theme. Sort of like snakes and ladders. It said it was for up to four players. You rolled the dice and took your moves to see where it would take you. Did you hit the shark and move back five places? Or did you land on the mermaid and get another turn? Oliver laid the board out and took one of the markers. He had a choice of a ship, a hat, a skull, or an anchor. All were silver metal. He chose the ship.

There were 2 dice and a little red cup to shake them in. He put the dice in the cup and rolled. A three and a four. He took his ship and moved it along seven places from the start. This landed him on a mermaid, but as he was the only player, he didn't really need the extra turn. He returned the dice to the cup and rolled again. Two fours. He moved along eight places. This landed him on an anchor, meaning he lost a turn. Again, this didn't really matter. He rolled again, scoring eleven this time. This landed him on the skull and crossbones. He checked the rules for this. Right at the bottom of the list here it was. Beware of what you desire. That was it. No lose your turn or move back. Nothing. Just beware of what you desire. What an odd rule. Oliver knew exactly what he desired at this exact point.

His neighbour of five years, Craig Jones, was a royal pain in the backside. For the first few years, Oliver had hardly heard a word from the bloke. More recently, he had been putting in complaints to the council about Oliver. The reasons for this were many and varied. Excessive noise and loud music was an odd one. Oliver rarely played music and had never had a party since moving in. Throwing rubbish into his neighbours garden was another. None had been proved as none were true. It was just annoying and embarrassing having to keep explaining these things to nosey people from the council. Oliver wished Craig would just disappear from his life completely.

Oliver continued his game. Several times he landed on a shark and had to move back five places. Other times he landed on a mermaid and took his useless extra turn. It was a fun game, and Oliver was enjoying playing it. To preserve it in its excellent condition however, he decided once was enough and packed it away carefully. He needed to get some things from the shop, so he put his coat on and headed out the front door. He arrived back at his front door twenty minutes later. He noticed a different car on Craig's driveway. A big, black estate car he had never seen before. A short, balding man came out of the door just as he arrived at his own driveway. "Hi Ollie" the man said, "lovely day. Must rush off though, catch you later mate!" With that he was in his car, and backing down the driveway before Oliver knew it.

Oliver stood by his front door for several minutes, unsure of what had just happened. He walked over to his neighbour's house. The front door was white plastic. Craig's was painted a vile blue. The driveway was now block paved, not white pebbles. The garden was immaculate with a nice flower border. Before it had been overgrown and a bit scruffy. The windows were plastic, not wood. 'What the hell is going on here!' Oliver thought. He was about to knock the door when he thought better of it. He returned to his own door and stepped into the sanity of his own house.

Oliver put his PC on. He decided to search Craig Jones. He was a local builder, and well known in the area. He tried Google and came up with nothing. He searched for local builders and found nothing. He knew he had been featured in the local paper not long ago for saving someone from a fire while on the way to work. He searched on the papers site. Nothing again. He phoned the editor of the paper. He had no idea what Oliver was talking about. The only explanation here was insane. The game had erased Craig Jones from the world?

Oliver tried to take his mind off this for the rest of the day. He went to bed early, hoping when he got up things would have sorted themselves out. This didn't happen. He woke at seven and looked out of the window over at his neighbours house. The black car was in the driveway. He lay on the bed, thinking things over. 'This is some powerful game. It can simply erase people just by you landing on a skull and crossbones?' It was totally insane. But it had happened. There was no question of that. Oliver considered his next step carefully. With something like this, the possibilities were endless. He lay back on the bed, closed his eyes, and drifted off again.

To someone watching Oliver sleep, he looked to be having a nightmare. He was very restless, constantly turning and moaning as he slept. His dreams were vivid. Though he would not remember them when he woke, during the dream, they felt very real. Strange things were happening. He would be walking down the street one minute, then suddenly he would be back home, but things there were weird. His house was not the same. There were people there. They did not look friendly. He woke suddenly, soaked in sweat. He went off to the bathroom after checking his watch, to freshen himself up. He spent the rest of the day thinking about the board game, thinking of the powers it may have. For as long as he could, he did not go anywhere near the game. He wanted to wait until he knew exactly what to do with it.

While thinking things over, Oliver decided to have a drink. It was now late afternoon, and he had thought of nothing but the game all day. He poured himself a small glass of whisky, and sat down. In the wrong hands, this game could be very dangerous. Whole countries could be wiped out on the throw of a dice. People got rid of, anything almost. In more considerate hands, the game could be a powerful force for good things. Disasters could be prevented, wars stopped before they can even begin. Hurt and pain could be a thing of the past in this world. But who could be trusted to know about this. Most people, Oliver had found, were primarily concerned with their own welfare. Looking after number one. This power could not be given to people like this. Not just anybody should have this kind of control over so much. There was a lot at stake here. Oliver poured himself another drink.

One thing Oliver hated was politics. During his third game of that night, when he finally landed on the skull and crossbones, he wished for the government and all that went with it to disappear. Oliver didn't notice the immediate effects of his wish. To him, nothing immediately changed. As he was now getting quite drunk, he hadn't thought through what the causes of his wish would be. Outside his home, chaos reigned. With no government, came no authorities whatsoever. No police. No anything. It was a free for all. People were just killing people on the streets with no consequence. Shops were smashed. Litter was everywhere. This was the same world, just without the same rules. And without those rules, life was different.

The streets were full of people. Hardly any of them owned houses on the street. There were people in most of the houses, but mostly not the actual owners. With no rules to the world any more, and no authorities, nothing belonged to anyone. A man walked straight into Oliver's new neighbours house, beat him senseless, and took his wallet and car keys. He was now 20 miles away, looking for more things he could have. He had picked up more cash along the way, and some nice jewellery. This new world had split into two types of people. There were the givers and the takers. The takers were the aggressive people, the ones willing to do anything to get what they wanted. With no rules, this now meant they literally could do anything they liked, without consequence. The givers were the ones still in the houses. Trying to keep out of the way of the takers. But how long would it last? Soon, there would be no sanity left. Chaos was now the new government.

Oliver had fell asleep on his sofa. He was sleeping soundly for now. If he made it through the night, this new world would come as a complete

surprise to him. The world itself was now depending on him waking, and soon. He was the only one able to reverse this, maybe, but he was sleeping. His dreams were peaceful now, unaware of what was really going on around him. Outside, all the houses were looking in a bad way now. His house stood out, as it was the only one still looking okay. For some reason, up to now at least, it had been ignored. More people were now coming into the street, looking for things to do. Or things they could take. A group of 3 men noticed Oliver's house straight away. They headed over to check what was available. Oliver snored, as his front door opened and let in the new world.

**THE END**

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