

TREASURE CHEST

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. TOPSAIL ISLAND SOUND - DAY

SUPER: TOPSAIL ISLAND 1920

A rowboat bobs gently in the small waves on a hot, summer day.

In the boat, BOBBY, 12, a middle class kid, fiddles with the reel on his wooden pole. At the other end of the boat, BOBBY'S FATHER, 45, a successful man taking the afternoon off, smokes a pipe and slowly reels in his line, hoping for a bite.

Bobby clumsily misses the pole, and the reel falls into the water. The splash causes his Father to turn around.

BOBBY
(pointing to the water)
My reel.

His Father takes out his pipe.

BOBBY'S FATHER
It's not deep.

Bobby understands. He peels off his shirt and shoes and dives over the side while his Father balances the boat.

While he waits, Bobby's Father knocks out the ashes from his pipe and tests the draw. As he reaches for the tobacco pouch in his back pocket, Bobby surfaces. He shows the reel to his father.

BOBBY'S FATHER (CONT'D)
Good job.

BOBBY
There's something down there.

BOBBY'S FATHER
Something?

BOBBY
A box.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

A smallish, corroded, metal box sits on the work bench in this old fashioned garage. To one sides sits a 1920 car.

By the bench stand Bobby and his Father. They both examine this artifact hauled to the surface from the sound.

BOBBY'S FATHER
Go ahead, try.

Bobby grabs the box and tries to pull off the lid, but it's too corroded.

BOBBY
It won't open.

Bobby's Father hands him a hack saw.

BOBBY'S FATHER
Everything opens sooner or later.

Bobby grins and sets the hack saw.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - GARAGE - LATER

Sweating, Bobby has finished sawing through the box. With his Father's help, they wrestle off the top of the box.

Bobby looks and pulls out a perfectly dry, small chest of intricate design. He sets it on the bench and lifts the lid. Inside, the driest tea leaves ever, leaves hundreds of years old.

BOBBY'S FATHER
It's a tea chest.

BOBBY
Where did it come from?

BOBBY'S FATHER
Some ship. Got dumped or lost when a ship foundered.

BOBBY
Foundered?

BOBBY'S FATHER
Sank.

BOBBY
Oh.

Bobby's Father reaches into the box.

BOBBY'S FATHER
What's this.

He pulls out a shiny, gold doubloon.

BOBBY
What's that?

BOBBY'S FATHER
Treasure.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Bobby lies in bed and tosses the doubloon into the air. He catches it and smiles.

INT. BOBBY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Bobby's Father carries in the tea chest and places it on the mantle above the fireplace in this well-appointed home.

INT. MOLLY'S ANTIQUES - DAY

PRESENT DAY

The intricate tea chest sits on a small table from the 19th century. Looking at the chest is CLAIRE SLEEVE, 35, pretty in shorts and top, a interior decorator on the prowl. She touches the chest and looks across the small store.

CLAIRE
Know anything about the one?

Behind the counter, MOLLY, 55, heavy, and her tank top does nothing for the fat. She looks up from a beauty magazine.

MOLLY
Not a thing. The seller said it came from his grandmother's estate.

CLAIRE
Know anything about grandma?

MOLLY
Nada.

Claire opens the tea chest which is empty.

CLAIRE
Have any idea what this was used for?

MOLLY
Treasure.

Molly laughs loudly.

CLAIRE
 (to herself)
 Yeah, a treasure chest.
 (to Molly)
 What do you want for it?

MOLLY
 More treasure.

She laughs again.

EXT. MOLLY'S ANTIQUES - DAY

A small place on an asphalt road with a dirt parking lot. Fields surround this wannabe market.

Claire exits with the tea chest under her arm. She walks to her dusty convertible and places the chest in the trunk. Donning sunglasses, she gets behind the wheel.

INT. INNER SPACE - DAY

Store front filled with color boards, paint samples, fabrics, floor and tile samples, interior decorator's show room.

Behind the counter, FRANCOIS, 40, rail thin in artsy black and silver rings, bald, affected.

FRANCOIS
 (on cell)
 No, darling, you cannot use cherry paneling in a beach house. For one thing, the sea salt will play havoc with it. For another, your friends will know you're not avante garde but incredibly dull.

Through the front door comes Claire, the chest under her arm. Francois holds up a finger as he talks.

FRANCOIS (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 It's a beach house, not a hunting lodge. Glass, white, and blue. Nautical, think nautical. Yes, call me tomorrow.

She places the chest on the counter as he kills his connection. When he talks with Claire, his affectation disappears.

FRANCOIS (CONT'D)
What have we here?

CLAIRE
A tea chest nee treasure chest.

He examines the chest with a practiced eye.

FRANCOIS
What year is this? I don't think
I've seen anything like it?

CLAIRE
No history on this one. What do
you think?

FRANCOIS
It's old, and the carving is
different from anything I've
encountered.

CLAIRE
I'm thinking 18th, maybe 17th
century.

FRANCOIS
But no one knows nothing?

CLAIRE
Dead owners tell no tales.

FRANCOIS
Are you thinking the Fussells?

CLAIRE
I'm not thinking anyone until we
can add some history. Attach this
to some British queen, and the
price skyrockets.

FRANCOIS
Google?

CLAIRE
Start digging.

FRANCOIS
Post a photo?

CLAIRE
Not yet. If this piece is unique,
we don't want to stoke someone
else's fire.

FRANCOIS

Roger that. Your messages are on your desk. Jaxie has called three time.

CLAIRE

You couldn't handle it?

FRANCOIS

Jaxie doesn't talk to my kind.

Claire laughs.

CLAIRE

She should see you at a rodeo.

FRANCOIS

Not bloody likely.

EXT. PARKER'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

A modern townhouse in a row of townhouses. Walking away from a taxi is PARKER MASON, 30, in shape, carrying a duffel. He looks like the bad boy he's become. He reaches the door and unlocks it.

INT. PARKER'S TOWNHOUSE - DAY

Parker enters, drops his duffel, and takes off his shades.

In front of him, his place has been ransacked. Everything has been taken apart and tossed on the floor. A first-class burglary.

And he takes off, tearing through the mess and up the stairs as fast as he can run.

INT. PARKER'S TOWNHOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The bedroom has bene trashed. Parker bursts into the room and straight to the bureau.

He stares at the empty bureau before he whirls and tears into the flotsam and jetsam around him, tossing blankets and pillows, kicking away dumped clothes.

PARKER

Shit! Shit, shit, shit.

He stops and closes his eyes. Then, he SCREAMS in frustration.

Pressure relieved, he takes out his cell and dials 911.

PARKER (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 I've been robbed.

EXT. JAXI'S HOUSE - GARDEN - EVENING

JAXI MASON, 70s, sips lemonade in a classic Southern garden, flowers and shrubs and beauty. The heat doesn't bother her as she talks on a cordless phone.

JAXI
 Now, Claire, I'm not talking about some moth-eaten bear rug. It might be a mountain cabin, but it needs a softer touch. You got the photos, didn't you?

Through the garden stumbles GRAHAM MASON, 22, the proverbial prodigal son. He looks high, and he is. If he sees Jaxi, it doesn't show. But she sees him.

JAXI (CONT'D)
 I beg your pardon, but I have to go. Call me tomorrow. Thank you.

Frowning, she pushes to her feet and shuffles after Graham.

INT. JAXI'S HOUSE - BASEMENT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Graham pulls out a bureau drawer and retrieves a baggy of marijuana. Grinning, he opens the baggy and grabs some weed. He fishes out a pipe and loads the weed.

JAXI (O.S.)
 What are you doing?

Graham whirls to face Jaxi whose dander is up.

GRAHAM
 Nothing, grandma.

He tries to hide the pipe and weed behind his back. She marches over.

JAXI
 Show me your hands.

He hesitates, too high to figure a way out.

JAXI (CONT'D)

Show me!

He shows her his hands, and she grabs his pipe.

JAXI (CONT'D)

What did I tell you? None of these shinanigans in my house. It's illegal, and I won't have it.

Anger sueges through Graham.

GRAHAM

You don't know anything. The cops don't you unless you got enough to sell.

(grabs the pipe)

And this ain't enough to worry about.

JAXI

I will not--

Her voice catches. Fear fills her face as pain wracks her chest. She clutches her blouse.

JAXI (CONT'D)

Graham--

She reaches for him, and he steps away, letting her collapse to the floor. She GURGLES at his feet, but he does nothing to help. With callow disregard he pulls out his lighter and fires tup his pipe as he walks out.

INT. INNER SPACE - MORNING

Francois sips espresso while he surfs on his laptop. Claire enters with a foam cup of coffee and the morning paper.

CLAIRE

Get to work, Frenchy. We lost one yesterday.

FRANCOIS

A big one? And I am working. Trying to find your chest.

CLAIRE

Jaxi of our mountain cabin. And my chest is fine.

FRANCOIS

Ouch. Not your chest chest, your treasure chest. That didn't come out right either.

He points to the ornate tea chest.

CLAIRE

Any answers? And how long do we wait before we see the executor for our money?

FRANCOIS

Lots of chests but nothing like ours. Stories too but no links that help us. If I were you, I'd file a claim as soon as possible.

She walks on into the back office.

CLAIRE

After the funeral, Frenchy, after the funeral.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

Graham and Parker, in black, stand side by side in front of a coffin still above ground. Behind them, several rows of MOURNERS. Next to them, ANN MASON, 50, tan and thin and flaky, the mother of Graham and Parker.

One row behind the trio stands JAYDEN MABURY, 40, handsome in all black, the family attorney.

INT. JAYDEN MABURY OFFICE - CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

The expansive conference room of a successful attorney. On one side of the table sit Parker, Graham, and Ann. On the other sit Jayden and his ASSISTANT, 25, pretty female.

JAYDEN

Miss Jaxi neither made any changes to her will nor indicated that she was considering any changes.

PARKER

We know that. What we don't know is the contents of the will.

ANN

Let him finish, Parker.

GRAHAM
Yeah, what did she leave us?

JAYDEN
I'm afraid she didn't leave a lot
to you, Graham. A small amount and
the right to continue to live in
the family home.

GRAHAM
What?

PARKER
And I suppose she left nothing for
me either.

JAYDEN
The same as your brother, minus the
basement bedroom.

GRAHAM
Then, who the hell gets all the
money?

JAYDEN
That would be your mother, Ann.
The bulk of the estate goes to her.

Graham turns on Ann.

GRAHAM
She left everything to you? Hell,
you haven't been around for fifteen
years.

PARKER
(to Jayden)
Are you sure about this. Our
mother abandoned the whole family
some time ago.

JAYDEN
I'm afraid the instructions are
explicit.

ANN
Oh my. I had no idea.

GRAHAM
This is bullshit!
(stands)
I'm not going to just take this.
I'll get my own attorney.

Graham stomps out of the room.

PARKER

(to Ann)

You know, Grandma always did think you would come back some day. Now, you have, and you're the big winner.

ANN

I...I...I didn't know.