

The Journey is the reward

Martin Attwood stood at his control and planning desk, a map laid out in front of him. As he looked over the map, studying its many paths, he heard a knock at the door. "C'mon in," said Martin.

The door swung open and Martin's colleague, Tim Green entered, looking serious but excited just the same. Tim looked even shorter than usual as he stood in the excessively large doorway to Martin's planning centre. Tim had often asked Martin why the doorway was so large but Martin had replied that it was like that when he moved in.

"How's it going, Doc?" asked Tim.

"Good, thankyou Tim." replied Martin, a smirk crossing his face. He wasn't a doctor, but his obsession with maps and adventures had earned him the nickname Doc from his closest friends.

"Well, everything here appears ready." stated Martin, looking around and counting on his stubby fingers. He had been planning this adventure ever since he was old enough to read. Tim also looked around, his eyes falling on the map and two hats lying on the planning desk by the window.

"So, let's go!" exclaimed Tim, pulling on one of the hats. "Just one thing though, does the map say what the treasure is?"

Martin looked shocked, before a smile crossed his face, "Yes, it says there is a pot of gold." Tim couldn't believe what he was hearing. Gold! He would be rich, he would be famous!

The two companions didn't say another word until they had exited Martin's control centre and were outside in the open air. Martin's centre was located in the middle of South America and backed on to the deep, vast *Danga jungle* and Tim could tell by the look on Martin's face that's where they would be heading.

Martin walked over to a nearby rock and laid the map out.

"According to this we have to go past '*Lion Rock*', cross the *Nirda* River and navigate the dense and though-to-be impenetrable '*Thorny Gap*.'" exclaimed Martin with a very determined tone.

Tim nodded and Martin rolled up the map, shoved it in his back pocket and the two ventured into the jungle. It was about twenty minutes before they reached '*Lion Rock*' and stopped.

"Be very quiet," Martin whispered, "legend has it that this rock has been a sacred place for lions since the beginning of time. We don't want to wake any sleeping lions."

Martin and Tim tiptoed towards the rock, trying desperately to be as quiet as humanly possible. They were almost level with the rock when...snap. Tim had accidentally trodden on a twig and snapped it in half. The two exchanged nervous glances as a deafening roar could be heard coming from behind the rock.

"Oh no," exclaimed Martin, fear gripping him.

Before Martin even had time to say 'run', the lion leapt down from its perch on the rock and stood between Martin and Tim. It growled and Martin could swear he had just seen the beast's lips mime 'you first.'

Tim looked horrified, as though fearing a very premature end to their quest. But Martin had one surprise up his sleeve, literally. He pulled back his sleeve to reveal a handgun strapped to his arm.

He whipped it off and 'sprayed' his entire ammunition towards the beast. Yelping, roaring and evidently panicking, the lion sprinted off, desperate to avoid Martin's blasts.

Tim, despite the threat of a lion attack now over, still looked horrified.

"I didn't know you owned a gun?" Tim asked incredulously.

"When my parents heard I was going to be venturing after the lost treasure in the *Danga jungle*, they bought me one so I could protect myself." Martin replied.

"Good thinking, I reckon." Tim answered, still looking bemused. "Got anything else up your sleeve?" he then asked, smirking.

Martin laughed, "We'll see."

The two companions gathered themselves and started once more on their quest that would bring them fame and fortune, as they continued searching for the lost treasure of the *Danga jungle*.

They walked on for what seemed like hours, stopping only to check that they were on the right path. Eventually, the forest eased back to reveal the *Nirda* river in all its sparkling glory.

Martin walked over to the edge of the river and peered in. Below the surface, Martin could see fish swimming ferociously, darting one way then another.

"It's just as I suspected," exclaimed Martin, "the river is full of piranhas."

"That's just great." replied Tim sarcastically.

Martin scanned the shoreline for something to take them to the other side. A little way to the left Martin spotted a narrow bridge that extended across the river about two metres above the surface of the water.

Martin signalled to Tim to follow him and the two reached the bridge.

"Whoa," said Tim, noticing how narrow the bridge was.

"Just take it slowly, you'll be right." reassured Martin.

Martin and Tim walked slowly out over the bridge. Martin reached the other side first, and jumped the last few planks. However, the jump shook the bridge and Tim overbalanced...and fell. Reaching out, Tim grabbed hold of the edge of the bridge, his legs dangling close to the water. Martin ran back onto the bridge to help him.

Below Tim's dangling legs the piranhas were gathering, waiting for their prey to fall helplessly into their river. Martin reached Tim, grabbed his arms and heaved. He pulled Tim up onto the bridge and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Thanks Doc," Tim gasped.

"No problem, now let's get off this bridge." Martin replied.

Below them, the piranhas, looking slightly disappointed, were returning to their usual swimming patterns.

Martin and Tim got off the bridge and began the final stage of their journey. Martin couldn't help thinking about the glory and the riches that were coming nearer.

Martin was awoken from his thoughts to find they had reached '*Thorny Gap*'.

"Here we go!" exclaimed Martin, as the two dropped to their hands and knees and crawled.

The dense, thorny underbrush was difficult to pass through and Martin and Tim were both being spiked by the razor sharp thorns. Tim was struggling. He had jagged himself on a bunch of thorns and was trapped. Martin tried to help him but it seemed useless. Martin was beginning to think things couldn't get any worse when...thud. The ground shook, someone, or something massive was coming their way. Martin looked up into the bright sunlight to see a dark shadow cover him.

'Giant!' thought Martin, horrified. It looked like the end for their quest.

Two enormous hands bent down and lifted Martin out of the bushes and then did likewise for Tim.

"Marty and Timmy, you should no better than to crawl in mummy's rose bushes. And don't go wetting the cat, not to mention scaring the goldfish." Martin's mother instructed harshly.

"Now, let's get you to inside, Tim's mother's here to pick him up." She continued.

As Martin and Tim were led back inside the house, Tim leant over to Martin and said, "Well, we didn't find any treasure."

"No," replied Martin, "but think of the story we have to tell at kindergarten tomorrow. Besides, there's always next time for the treasure."

And they pulled off their hats and launched into a discussion about their journey.