

# Captain Z and the Treasure of Castle Island



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To my wife, daughter, and son.



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# 1



Our story begins, as most pirate stories do, in the dark.

The low glow of a lamp, running out of oil, was nearly the only light about. The glow of the stars and moon up above helped a bit, but its always darkest, as they say, just before the dawn.

The lamp shined its light on a little dirt path that ran between the rocks. The path wound its way up through the steep cliffs of a forlorn and bare little isle. The cliffs, the rocks, the path, and some palm trees were the only

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things to be seen on this island. But it also had something unexpected hiding on it. Treasure!

It was because of this treasure that our pirate friend was on this little island in the dark. Though friend might not be the word to use for such a character as this one.

The little lamp she held gave a glimpse of her face. A jagged scar ran across it. Starting at the left ear, it painted a crooked Z across her cheek, ending at her nose. She held up a map for a closer look at the markings on it.

Her mouth was turned down in a deep frown of concentration. Her eyes looked like two pieces of coal, black and smoldering, as they stared down at the scrap of paper. This map, she hoped, would soon lead her to the treasure that lay hidden on this island. As rare a treasure as anyone had ever known, and twice as mysterious.

Assured she was still on the right track, the pirate rolled up the map, checked over her shoulder again, and started back up the path.

This is our hero, as it were, Captain Sophia Zephyr, or simply *Captain Z*.

But Captain Z doesn't start this tale as a hero. She starts it, as you might expect from such a story, as a pirate! An especially crafty no-good villain of a pirate.



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But, there is a chance she might not stay that way. Yes, there's a chance, ever so slim, that she might have a bit of good in her, and that good may come out and turn her into a hero.

Will she really turn the corner from villain to hero? Does she have it in her?

I don't know. All we can do is watch and listen to find out.

## 2

Captain Z stopped for a bit to rest on one of the large rocks along the steep path. She checked the map again, making sure she was still on the right path, then continued to trudge up the mountain.

The map in her hand was a treasure map of the very island she was on. Pirates and fisher folk alike called this place *Castle Island*.

The path she was taking ended at an X on the map, and as you may know, an X always marks the spot. And at this particular spot was the treasure that Captain Z was hoping to find, and escape with, before she was discovered.

You see, Captain Z was not the only pirate creeping

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about on this island in the dark night.

The Dread Captain Spears and his crew of scoundrel pirates were searching and scouting the island as well. Except they didn't have a treasure map, as Captain Z had stolen it from them. So they were not searching for the treasure. Instead, they were searching for her!

### 3

Earlier, that same night, things were a different story altogether.

The Dread Captain Spears was on his ship, the Sea Breaker, with the treasure map all locked up and safe. At least, he thought it was all locked up and safe.

But he probably would have thought differently if he knew Captain Zephyr was on her way to take it from him.

The Sea Breaker was moored up a stones throw from Castle Island. Captain Spears's plan was for he and his pirate crew to get a good night's sleep, and then have the whole next day to search for the treasure shown on his map. He had even made his crew go to bed early, much to their grumbling and complaining.

But as he and his crew were putting on their pajamas,

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a little rowboat slowly and quietly stole its way toward their mighty pirate ship.

Captain Z was in that little rowboat, along with a hook and rope, her lamp, and her feathered hat.

As the sky darkened into night, Captain Z pushed right up to the side of the big pirate ship. Swinging her hook around, she threw it up and snagged the railing of the ship. Quick as a wink, and quiet as a mouse, Captain Z climbed up and was on the top deck.

She tiptoed across the deck, toward the door leading below. Carefully, she skipped over squeaky planks and big heaps of tangled rope.

The door gave a little groan as she opened it, but not one of those scoundrel pirates stirred as Sophia slipped below deck.

## 4

What a commotion those pirates made while they were sleeping!

The snoring was so loud that it sounded like a thunderstorm down there.

Captain Z crept past the loud bedrooms and shuffled into the cluttered map room. Maps were everywhere.

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They hung on every inch of the walls. They covered the tables and were scattered on the floor. Rolled up maps stuck out of vases and pots and pans. But none of these maps was the one that Captain Z was looking for.

Over in the corner of the room lay a small wooden chest, no bigger than a crab trap. In that chest, Sophia knew, was the map she wanted. The map that showed the way to the treasure of Castle Island.

The chest was locked. Such an important map would be well watched. Captain Z knew that the only key to the chest was strung around Captain Spears's neck. But there's more than one way to steal a map, and luckily for Captain Z, some pirates never think about these other ways.

But she did.

Instead of trying to unlock the chest to get the map, Captain Z simply grabbed the chest in her arms, with the map still inside, and carried it out of the room.

Out of the map room and back down the hall went Captain Z and her new chest. The chest was heavy, but not too heavy to be carried for a few minutes, which is all it would take to get it off the ship. *Yes, Captain Z thought, in a few seconds I'll be off to the island to find the treasure, while this crew is still fast asleep in their pajamas.*

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But while Captain Z was smiling to herself and thinking of how smart she was, she forgot to watch where she was going. She reached the steps to the deck but missed the first one. Bam! She tripped and the chest came crashing down, with her behind it.

All of a sudden the snoring stopped. Out of the bedrooms came shouts.

“Avast! Who goes there?”

The frightened captain grabbed her stolen chest and flew out of the door and on to the main deck, slamming the door behind her.

## 5

Captain Z scrambled as fast as she could toward the front of the boat.

The back and forth of the waves and the jumbles of rope nearly made her lose her balance as she looked for a place to hide. She had to get out of sight before the pirates found her with their stolen chest.

Towards the side of the boat she found a loose tarp covering a few crates and barrels. She ducked under the tarp and squeezed herself between two of the barrels. Then she held her breath.

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Almost immediately, a slew of pirates burst out of the doorway and onto the main deck. Still sleepy and confused, they stumbled about looking back and forth for whatever could have caused all the ruckus that had woken them.

Peeking out of her hiding spot, Captain Z had to cover her mouth to stop herself from laughing out loud at the way the sleepy pirates were dressed.

They were wearing footie pajamas, like children! The feet on their pj's made them slip and slide around on the deck. The pajamas were blue, or green, or pink. And on each of their heads was a little sleeping cap with a long tail.

They looked more like baby dolls than terrible pirates!

The biggest of them all, the Dread Captain Spears, finally appeared on the deck too, in bright red pajamas. He had ran from his captain's cabin in the back of the ship and was still holding one of his cuddly stuffed animals. It was a little monkey, one of his favorites.

Hissy, his cat, trotted along beside him.