

Synopsis

Smee welcomes us to our first day as new enrollees in Master Smee's Finishing School for Gentlemen Pirates and Ladies is Welcome Too, a-flustered between heaving of ropes, hoisting of sails, and emptying of slop buckets. Quickly, though Smee confesses that his agitation has all been an act, designed to distract us from the fact that we've actually hove out to sea for real. He's stolen Captain Haitch's ship, and we're to be Smee's crew. (Yes, he tells us, *that* Captain Haitch...the one with hook.) Smee assures us that he'll treat us well, if we ourselves behave like gentlemen and lady-moiseselles. He fantasizes how rich and hoity-toity we'll all be, for he has a secret treasure map which will take us to the legendary isle of Koka Lelu, the site of buried riches beyond our imaginings.



Smee says he'll be happy to share the treasure, unlike Captain Haitch who has diminished Smee's portion of the spoils every time Smee has made a blunder, so there's now little left of either Smee's treasure or self-respect. Although, Smee acknowledges that Hook has hung men for less offenses, and it's only on account of Smee's daughter that Hook treats him well. Smee tells us how he and Haitch met at Eton (where Smee was a potscrubber), and both fancied the same woman, an actress by the name of Bessie Busk, whom Smee got pregnant and vowed to do the right thing by her, as a gentleman, and he married her. When Smee saves Hook from drowning, Hook repays Smee by vowing forever to take care of Smee's wife and daughter. Smee confesses that his daughter doesn't look much like him (dark black hair), but he blames himself for the blackness of his self-pity and brooding, and thinks his daughter might be better off without the damaging influence of her father. So when Hook offers Smee a position as first mate, Smee accepts...grateful that Hook continues to send money to both mother and daughter.

Smee is determined to find the buried treasure, so he can finally send some money himself. So where is the treasure? Hook has made it clear that the treasure's map is locked in a box, the key to which is hidden in plain sight inside a glass box, which Smee takes as a direct challenge: *Dare* he smash the glass box? He dares! However, instead of a map, he finds a letter from Hook, chastising Smee for betraying him. Smee rues not beginning first day of school as he had planned: with fighting lessons. For now, surely, Hook will find a ship and come after Smee...and us.

Smee gives us a few panicked lessons...but frets we're too green to win any battle. It dawns on Smee that a better tactic will be to come up with an alibi which we all must adhere to or swing. But the more Smee tries to work out the details of the alibi for all of us, the less plausible it becomes, and he realizes his only way out is to take the fall himself, and confess to his betrayal. Undoubtedly he'll be hung, but he'll die a gentleman, defending us -- and Honor and Hethics.

In that very confession, however, he realizes, lies his salvation. For Hook will realize that Smee *could* have stolen the ship and the treasure -- but instead, turned the ship round, and came back to shore, loyal to the end...Hook's man forevermore. A fine lesson for all of us enrolled in Smee's Finishing School...but we're to leave the ship now, as it don't belong to us!

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