



UNFOUND PIRATE TREASURES ♦

The Oak Island Money Pit

An AI Wrangler illustrated story



From the film

MARTY

Come in close to the fire tonight, friends, because this one comes to us out of the cold grey fog of Nova Scotia, off a little scrap of land called Oak Island, out in Mahone Bay on the wild Atlantic coast of Canada. It is barely a mile long, this island, thick with old oaks and salt wind, and buried somewhere beneath it is a secret that has swallowed two hundred and thirty years, a fortune in money, and the lives of six men, and has never, ever given up its treasure. This is the tale of the Oak Island Money Pit, Carol, and it begins, as the best ones do, with a curious boy and an old oak tree.

CAROL

Oh, Marty, an island of oaks on the edge of the Atlantic, and a secret underneath it. I have been waiting for this one. Tell me about the boy. What did he find under that tree?



MARTY

His name was Daniel McGinnis, Carol, and the year was 1795. He was just a teenager, rowing out to the little island one summer day to explore, the way boys do. And in a clearing, under one great spreading oak, he found something that stopped him cold. There was a round depression in the ground, a saucer-shaped dip in the earth maybe twelve feet across, as though something heavy had once been sunk there and the soil settled over it. And above it, hanging from a sawed-off branch of that old oak, was a ship's tackle block. An old rope-and-pulley, Carol, the kind sailors use to hoist heavy loads. Now why, out on an empty island, would there be ship's tackle over a hole in the ground?

CAROL

A ship's block hanging over the exact spot. Marty, that is no accident. Somebody hauled something up, or lowered something down, right there. What did Daniel do? Surely he couldn't just walk away from that.



MARTY

He could not, Carol. He came back with two friends, John Smith and Anthony Vaughan, and they brought their shovels, and they began to dig. And the deeper they went, the stranger it got. The walls of the hole were firm clay, with the pick-marks of old tools still in them, which meant this shaft had been dug by human hands and filled back in. Ten feet down, they struck a platform. A floor of oak logs, laid across the shaft, their ends sunk into the clay walls. They pried it up and kept digging. And twenty feet down, another platform of oak logs. And thirty feet down, another. Every ten feet, Carol, a deliberate floor of timber, sealing something below. Three boys with shovels could go no further, but they never forgot it. And the story of the Money Pit was born.

CAROL

Every ten feet, another floor laid down on purpose. Oh, Marty, whoever dug that meant for it to be deep, and meant for it to be hard to reach. Somebody went to enormous trouble to bury something. Did the grown men come, then, with real equipment?



MARTY

Company after company came, Carol, for the next two hundred years. And what they pulled out of that pit only deepened the mystery. As they dug down through the platforms, they found layers of charcoal, and layers of putty, and layers of coconut fibre. Coconut fibre, Carol, on a cold island in Nova Scotia, where no coconut has ever grown. That fibre came from the tropics, carried north by ship, packed into the pit as drainage. And then, around ninety feet down, one company found the thing that set the whole world's imagination on fire. A flat stone, a slab, and cut into its face was a line of strange symbols. A code.

CAROL

A carved stone with a coded message. Marty, my heart. Down ninety feet in the dark, a message left by whoever built the thing. Did anyone ever read it? Please tell me somebody read it.



MARTY

They say it was decoded, Carol, though the stone itself has long since vanished, which is its own kind of maddening. But the tale goes that a scholar worked out the cipher, and that those crooked symbols spelled out this: forty feet below, two million pounds are buried. Two million pounds, Carol, in the money of two centuries ago. A king's ransom. Imagine those men reading that by lantern light at the bottom of the shaft, forty feet of earth between them and a fortune. They dug like demons. And that, Carol, is exactly when Oak Island showed them what it really was.

CAROL

What do you mean, what it really was? Marty, they were forty feet from two million pounds. What could possibly stop them so close?



MARTY

The sea itself, Carol. For whoever built the Money Pit was a genius, and a cruel one, and they had booby-trapped it. As the diggers passed ninety feet, the pit began to fill with water. Not rain, not groundwater, but cold salt seawater, rushing in faster than any pump they had could throw it out. They bailed with buckets, they brought in bigger pumps, and still the sea won, the black water rising in the shaft until they had to scramble for their lives. And in time they understood the horror of it. The builders had dug tunnels, flood tunnels, running hundreds of feet out to the ocean, so that any thief who dug too deep would open the very channels that drowned the treasure. The deeper you dig, Carol, the more the sea pours in. The pit defends itself.

CAROL

Flood tunnels to the ocean, so the digging itself drowns the prize. Marty, that is fiendish. That is the most cunning thing I have ever heard. And you said men have died. Tell me, but tell me gently.



MARTY

Six men have died in the Money Pit, Carol, across the long years, some in a collapse, some overcome by foul gas at the bottom of a borehole. Six lives the island has taken. And out of that grew the darkest piece of the legend, whispered on the docks of Mahone Bay to this day: that seven must die before Oak Island gives up its treasure. Six have died. One more, they say, and the pit will finally open. Whether you believe such a thing or not, Carol, there is not a soul who has worked that ground who does not feel the weight of it when the fog rolls in.

CAROL

Seven must die, and six already have. Oh, Marty, that gives me a chill right down to my boots. But you still haven't told me the greatest thing. Who built it? And what in the world is down there at the bottom?



MARTY

And that, Carol, is the question that has never been answered, and it is why the world cannot let Oak Island go. Nobody knows. So the theories have grown as deep as the pit. Some say it is the pirate hoard of Captain Kidd, or of Blackbeard himself, who bragged he had buried treasure where none but the Devil could find it. Some say it holds the lost crown jewels of Marie Antoinette, spirited across the sea to safety when the French Revolution came for her head. Some say deeper things still: the holy relics of the Knights Templar, or the secret lost manuscripts of Sir Francis Bacon, hidden away in a vault beneath the Atlantic. Kings' treasuries, pirate gold, or the secrets of the ages, Carol. Nobody knows, because nobody has ever reached the bottom.

CAROL

Pirate gold, a lost queen's jewels, holy relics of the Templars. Marty, any one of those would be the find of the century. And with all our modern machines, all our science, nobody has gotten to the end of it?



MARTY

Two hundred and thirty years, Carol, and millions upon millions of dollars. They have brought in steam pumps and drilling rigs, divers and dynamite, sonar and cameras lowered into flooded caverns far below. They have found bits of gold chain on a drill bit, scraps of parchment, timbers carbon-dated centuries old, a stubborn shadow on a scan that might be a chamber, or might be nothing. And every single time, Carol, the sea rushes back in, the shafts collapse, and Oak Island closes its fist and keeps its secret. The best minds and the best machines of two centuries, beaten by three flooded tunnels and a hole in the ground. And so tonight, out in the cold Atlantic fog of Mahone Bay, that little island still sits there in the dark, its old oaks bending in the salt wind, and somewhere far below, past the platforms and the coconut fibre and the rising black water, the treasure of the Money Pit is still down there, still waiting, still unfound. I'm Marty Shepard.

CAROL

And I'm Carol, and tonight I'll be dreaming of that lonely island in the fog, and a fortune sitting quiet in the dark beneath the sea, still waiting for the brave and the foolish to come find it. Keep a little wonder in your heart for the mysteries that won't be solved, be glad the world still has a secret or two left in it, and

always, always come back to the fire.

