

Treasure Hunt III *(Prologue)*

This is a continuation of my short story series “Treasure Hunt”. In case you haven't read the two previous ones, here is a recap.

Jeremy is the son of Luke and Angie. Two things Jeremy learned from his father before he died in a oil rig explosion. Self defense and some remnants of geology.

Treasure Hunt featured Jeremy and his girlfriend Wendy looking for the Lost Dutchman's Gold Mine. Treasure Hunt II had Jeremy looking for Aztec gold in Montezuma's Well and later in Xian, China searching for Qin Dynasty's “Seal of the Realm”.

On their return to the US, two important things happened. #1 Jeremy and Wendy got married. #2 Jeremy started chronicling his stories called “Real Life Treasure Adventures”. That led to a Youtube.com channel of the same name. Royalties from his writing and video documentaries became the source of his livelihood. Enough to finance his next treasure hunt.

Stay tuned for Treasure Hunt III Chapter 1. “Inca Gold”.

Treasure Hunt III *(Chapter 1)*

The Wedding:

I thought Catalina Island was the ideal place to have our wedding. A beautiful reception venue.

Desconso Beach was a popular spot. We didn't need that many seats for our wedding. Jeremy's father had passed away a few years back. He lost his life and life savings on a failed oil rig that literally blew up in his face. His mother Angela attended along with Wendy's parents and a few friends.



Jeremy's profusion of love sounded corny, but not to Wendy. I've been looking all over the globe for treasures and the greatest treasure of all was standing right next to me. They did the traditional vows everyone uses too. Instead of the traditional vows, Jeremy should have said, I take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife to follow me everywhere even though I put my life and hers in danger all the time. He didn't say that, but he should have. The next adventure could be their last. They didn't skimp on the food selection. Buffet style and plated cooked to order.





So where are we going on our honeymoon? Our honeymoon starts right here. After this one, I will take you on a second one. You remember my mention of the Galapagos Islands. An island where Darwin landed in 1885? After seeing the unique species living there he started to develop his theory of Evolution (Natural Selection). That is where we are going. I have already sent to Ecuador for our visas. Before we get there, I have arraigned for a special tour in the Amazon Rain Forest. I am sure you will appreciate the variety of animals that can be seen there. Which resort will we be staying at? Well, it's not exactly a resort. It's more like a camping trip. You like camping don't you? I remember you enjoyed our camping in Arizona. This will kind of be like that.

In fact, camping in the Amazon rain forest is nothing like camping in the Arizona desert. Scorpions, snakes, centipedes, tarantulas, and coyotes are small potatoes compared to what can kill you in the Amazon. He didn't mention that to Wendy. You trust me don't you? Of course, if it is safe for you to go, it is safe for me. You know I always like surprises. I am sure you

will be surprised. For now, lets enjoy this island. It has some unique history and tourist attractions too.

Author's note: Catalina Island indeed has a fascinating history and is a great tourist spot. My wife and I have been at least twice. This next section might seem like an advertisement, but I will still include it in this story.

Avalon Harbor



Facts about Catalina Island's early history:

The Tongva people inhabited the island for approximately 7,000 years, calling it Pimu, or "mountain in the sea".

Spanish explorer Juan Rodriquez Cabrillo claimed the island for Spain in 1542, though no permanent settlement was made.

The Mexican government granted the island to a private citizen in 1846, before the United States took control of California.

In 1887, the Banning Brothers purchased the island and developed it for tourism.

William Wrigley Jr., of chewing gum fame, purchased the island in 1919 and invested heavily in developing it into a resort destination.

He built hotels, established Avalon's first electricity and water systems, and made Avalon the site of the Chicago Cubs' spring training from 1921 to 1951.

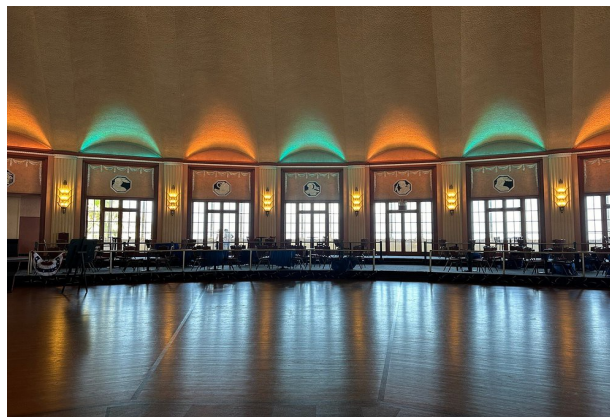
The Avalon Casino, a large dance pavilion and movie theater, was built in

1929.

During World War II, the military used the island for training, and the island was restricted to military and residents, which caused the economy to suffer.



Many Hollywood celebrities made Catalina Island and its Casino a hot spot for entertainment. The Casino dance floor accommodated 1500 dancers.



It took 15 months to build the Casino completed in 1929 at a cost of \$2 million. That was a lot of money then. The foundation slab was a continuous pour of concrete and took 9 months to complete.

Although the name casino indicated a gambling place, it gets its name from the Italian language meaning gathering place. No gambling ever took place there. The Avalon Theater inside had perfect acoustics and has the original pipe organ built by the Page Organ Company. It's the last of its kind.



The black walnut panels that adorned the perimeter cost \$8K each.



Catalina tile making began in the 1920s with the Catalina Clay Products Co., founded by William Wrigley Jr. to attract tourists. The company used native red clay to produce decorative and functional tiles, pottery, and dinnerware from 1927 to 1937. Production was eventually discontinued due to high costs, but the vibrant tiles remain a prominent feature of the island.



Author's note:

My wife and I took a walking tour of the residential area. A relatively short walk since the town is small. Almost all of the homes were decorated in these tiles.



A former fountain from the Bird Park has been moved and repurposed as an eye-catching planter in the transportation plaza.

The famous western writer who lived in Catalina Island was Zane Grey. He built a home, now called the Zane Grey Pueblo, overlooking Avalon Bay where he spent his later years writing and fishing from 1926 until his death.

Author's note:

I read many of his stories in my youth.



They turned his house into a hotel.



Jeremy and Wendy saw all that and also took the city tour. This is definitely worth the price if you ever visit. They tell you the history and take you to see all the places mentioned above.



Next stop Ecuador

Treasure Hunt III *(Chapter 2)*

Jeremy and Wendy flew to Cuenca, Ecuador. Cuenca was once touted as the #1 city to retire in. Why? A cultural city with good cheap transportation, medical facilities, and an inexpensive life style. Its main appeal though is its weather. Two seasons, wet and dry. You might think a city in Ecuador would be too hot. Not so. It's elevation is 7000 ft and temperatures stay around 70 F plus or minus 5 degrees all year. From there they rode a bus to Ambato. There are hiking expeditions originating in Ambato to view Llanganates National Park.

As previously stated, Jeremy had arranged a “camping trip”. Besides protection gear, mosquito nets, snake bite kit, and sun block hat, he also brought an improved version of his metal detector/ground penetration gadget. His dad had left detailed plans on how to convert it from a store bought one. The Chinese government took his first one.

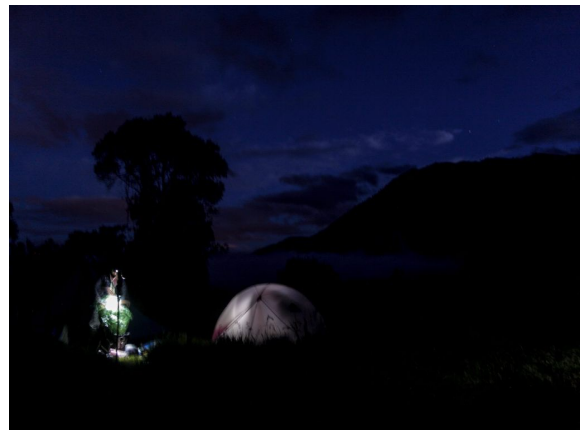
Jeremy knew that area near the National Park had been picked over for centuries looking for the Inca Gold. He had his own plan. He had surveyed the terrain and reasoned that when the Spanish conquistadors didn't receive the gold shipment, the Inca general Ruminahui would have diverted the convoy to an area difficult to access. Even though Llanganates National Park is located in rugged terrain, he felt it was still to easy get to. He had mapped

out an area south of there. It would be difficult to reach that place, but that is where he decided to hike. He and Wendy left the well traveled trail and veered off to the left on an animal game trail. His guide didn't want to follow. A few well placed dollars insured that he would. It didn't take long before they needed to hack their way through dense brush.



Two things that he was lacking was a GPS and knowledge of the local weather conditions. This would turn out to be a big mistake.

They had gotten through the dense brush and a view opened up in a meadow and a beautiful lake. They stopped there and set up camp for the night.



The next morning, they continued their ascent. This didn't look too difficult, but a big storm was brewing. Before they reached the top, a torrential downpour hit them full force. Creating a flash flood that brought them back down. The guide ended up in the lake and drowned.



Wet and cold, they needed to build a fire and strip off their wet cloths. They huddled together in the tent until their clothes dried. That night, Jeremy had a vision. Still stunned from their ride down the mountain on an avalanche of water, it was a miracle that they had not been ground up in the debris and rocks that came down with them. He had a dream of the ghosts of the Spanish conquistadors that had waited for the gold wagon.



He was not sure if this was a good omen or a warning to not go on.

Losing their guide was a tragic loss. Jeremy was not the type to quit. Wendy pleaded with him to return to Catalina Island. That was the honeymoon she relished. He didn't to listen. Typical male thinking that woman are too weak and give up too easily. She lamented, I would surely like to be around for our first wedding anniversary. Actually, that was a good point. The next morning the rain let up. They continued their route from the day before. Once they reached a plateau, the ground leveled off. Jeremy's sixth sense triggered. He felt they were getting close.

He brought out his metal detector and started to scan the grounds. He was

closely watching his screen and did not see what was going on around him until he heard Wendy scream. Before he knew it, he was surrounded by indigenous natives. They bound his hands and led him and Wendy to an underground encampment. This was not the way he had hoped to find Inca Gold. But to his amazement, that is what he was seeing unveiled before him.





This was the scene he saw. Invaluable treasures spread all around him. The only problem was he didn't think he would be alive to reveal this to the world.

Once again, Wendy provided him with a way out. One of the warriors told Jeremy that his woman was very much admired for her golden hair and crystal blue eyes. How is it that you speak English? We have know about the outside world. I myself have lived in it. But I chose to return to my natural tribe and protect what countless treasure hunters have tried to steal. I don't want to steal your treasure. I just want to share it with the world. This has been in our tribe for centuries now and we don't intend to let it go. Jeremy said this woman is my wife. We don't honor outside traditions. We have our own. If you want to keep her, you have to fight for her. This seemed like deja vu. He had read a short story by some unknown author called "Amazon Adventure". In one part of the story, the main character was challenged for the hand of a beautiful maiden. Only this time the maiden was his own wife. It looked like he had no choice. A ring was scratched in the sand. One warrior was selected from the tribe as his opponent. Of course they picked the most robust one of all. Jeremy was not intimidated. One of the things his father had imparted to him was self defense. His father had been a star wrestling athlete in college. Jeremy was not as good, but good enough. So the bout was on. Jeremy did not want to hurt anyone, but he did want to win. Each time the brute advanced on him, Jeremy pinned him down

then let him up. This happened so many times that his opponent threw up his hands in frustration and defeat. The loss of face was worse than if he had suffered a debilitating wound. You have won your freedom, but we can't let you go because you will tell of our treasure and dozens of unscrupulous persons will descend upon our location. I will give you my promise that I will not disclose your whereabouts. I am a treasure hunter adventurer and I have discovered two long lost treasures already. If you don't believe me, go back to a civilization spot and check out my Youtube.com channel. Just let me photograph some of your artifacts to show that I found something, but I won't tell anyone where I found these. You would be set out and tortured for your knowledge. What if I told my audience that you gave me some herbal substance that erased my memory of where I was? We actually have something like that. I think your American Indians call it peyote. If you ingest it, you would indeed forget how you got here.

Author's note: I am not a drug addict, but I have tried marijuana and I did inhale unlike what Bill Clinton claimed. I also tried peyote. I was at a party and my girlfriend Donna gave me some. After taking it, my sensory perception completely altered. Sound and visual imagery was distorted. Outside of the party, I sat on the grass and could smell the dirt 10 fold. It also made me paranoid. I was afraid to cross the street to my car even though the on coming traffic was a mile away. My girlfriend drove me back to her place. I watched the Moon and saw an illusion of horses charging down toward me. An experience that I would never want to repeat.

They kept Wendy and Jeremy for two more days before they checked out his story. During that time, they treated both as honored guests. Their last night there they both ate some peyote.



Kaleidoscope of colors



Strange visions and colors invaded their dreams. In fact Jeremy and Wendy had the same bizarre dream where they were entwined together.

The next morning they woke up in their tent by the lake. They didn't remember how they got there.



On the way back to civilization, they passed this unusual staircase.

Once again, Jeremy put Wendy's life in danger. He knew he had to make it up to her somehow. Why not take her to Galapagos Island like he had first suggested?

As long as they were there in Ecuador with their passports why not take advantage of it.

Once they returned to Ambato, they took a bus to Quito. This is one of the jumping off spots for flights to the Galapagos Islands. Jeremy was able to send off the videos and photos off their trek to Inca Gold. As promised, he

spread the true story of the peyote they had eaten and of his memory loss of where the Inca hoard was located. This still caused rumblings and vibrations among the treasure seeker's nets as well as his own Youtube.com channel. His fame as a treasure hunter reached new heights. He now had 3 out of 4 successes. He needed to keep his itinerary secret if he wanted any resemblance of peace. The media was clamoring for an interview.

Wendy was happy to return to civilization. She thought the trip to the Galapagos was just going to be a real vacation and not a working one. She was not aware that Jeremy had read the history and knew that the first ones to visit those islands were pirates. There had to be buried pirates treasure somewhere on one of those islands.

One thing nice about his metal detector. It used microelectronics and was compact enough that it just looked like a camera tri-pod. This let Jeremy get away with using it in unauthorized places. Many tour guides and rangers did not allow metal detectors on tour locations.

Quito and Galapagos Island next

Treasure Hunt III *(Chapter 3)*

The Galapagos Islands' history began with their accidental discovery in 1535 by Bishop Tomas de Berlanga, who named them "Las Encantadas" (the Enchanted Islands). Initially used by pirates and whalers who decimated tortoise populations for food, the islands were annexed by Ecuador in 1832, marking the start of a period of colonization. The islands gained international fame after Charles Darwin's visit in 1835, which provided crucial evidence for his theory of evolution by natural selection, as detailed in his book "On the Origin of Species".

Charles Darwin was chastised and faced significant criticism for his theory of evolution, but it was more from a public and religious standpoint than a scientific one. Many scientists, however, already accepted evolution, though they had not agreed with his specific theory of natural selection. By the time of his death, his work had gained widespread acceptance, and he received a state funeral and was buried in Westminster Abbey, a testament to his status as a respected scientist.

Jeremy wanted to treat Wendy to the best accommodations in the Galapagos. He booked a week at Pikaia Lodge on Santa Cruz Island. There wasn't an immediate opening, so they had to stay two nights in Quito. That was not a problem. Quito is the capitol of Ecuador and has its own charm. In fact, every city has some unique aspect about it. Here is a picture from across the bay.



A city of vibrant colors.



This image was a little too unsettling for Jeremy. It reminded him of his psychedelic night.

Top street foods in Quito, Ecuador, include empanadas, bolon de verde (plantain dumplings) salchipapa, and llapingachos (fried potato cakes). Empanadas are like tacos but with baked crusts instead of tortillas.



Salchipapa (hot dogs and fries)



After 2 days, they took their flight to the Galapagos. Here is their hotel Pikaia Lodge.



The islands are the subject of numerous stories and rumors about buried pirate treasure. A pirate named Lewis was rumored to have hidden treasure

on Barrington Island, though he took the secrets with him to the grave. This is a rumor that Jeremy intended to check out. For now, they spent the next couple of days viewing the “real” treasures of the Galapagos.



Similar in structure to the terrestrial snakes, but the only species recorded in Galapagos, the Yellow-bellied (or Pelagic) Sea Snake, is entirely marine. It is characterized by its black and yellow pattern and flattened tail, an adaptation for swimming.



This could have been a scene from 1,000,000 BC

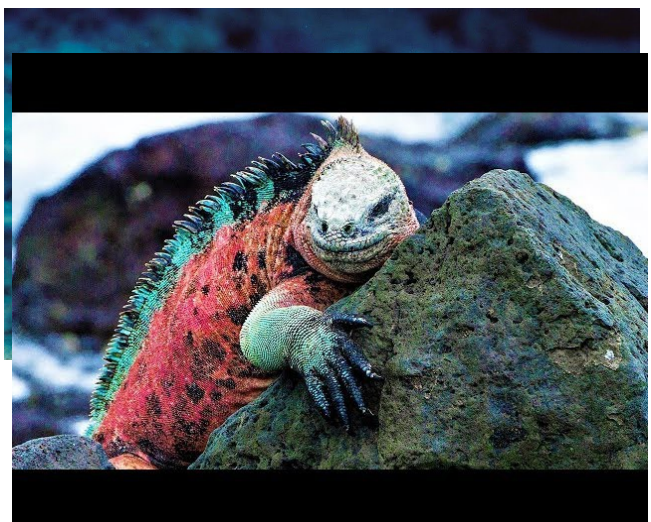
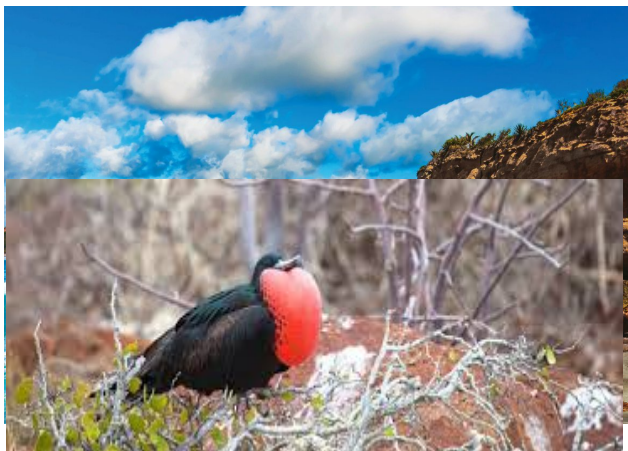


This sure looks like paradise or Eden

The movie “Eden” is inspired by a true story of European settlers on Floreana Island in the Galapagos in the 1930s who attempted to start a Utopian society but ended up in a conflict-ridden, crime-filled struggle for survival. The film dramatizes events based on the accounts of a German doctor, Friedrich Ritter, and his partner Dore Strauch, and the arrival of the Wittmer family and a baroness, leading to a series of disappearances and deaths that remain a mystery today. A good movie to watch.

The Wittmer family still operates the Wittmer Lodge (also called Hostal Wittmer) in the Galapagos Islands, on Floreana Island. Descendants of Margret Wittmer, one of the first families to settle on the island, continue to run the historic hotel. Sydney Sweeney plays Margret Wittmer in the movie. She does have good genes.

The most unusual animals exist there. I can see why Darwin was inspired.



Pirates used the Galapagos Islands as a hideout and resupply stop from the 1500s until around 1820 due to their remote location, strategic position near Spanish shipping routes, and availability of food supplies like giant tortoises. Famous pirates like Richard Hawkins visited, and the islands were also a base for others such as the crew of the *Bachelor's Delight*, who left behind artifacts like large jars. Jeremy thought there might be more hidden there besides jars.

Jeremy and Wendy did not take the offered tours. He wanted to do his own tour and didn't want the prying eyes of officials. He hired a private boat to take them to Barrington Island. He paid the boatman extra to just leave them there for the night with a promise to return in the morning. It didn't take long before Jeremy's detector rang with a large box-like image buried only 4 feet down. He had brought one of those army shovels used to dig fox holes. Two hours later, he opened a chest just like you would see in pirate movies.



He took out one golden cup, took pictures, and reburied the chest. He tried to tamp down the dirt, covered it with leaves, branches, and brush to make it look unmolested.

They both returned to their hotel and booked a tour of Barrington Island for the next day. While on the tour, Jeremy threw the Golden cup into the brush covering the hidden chest. Then nonchalantly walked over near and declared he saw some shinny object in the weeds. The tour guide found the cup and was ecstatic. When they returned to the main island, he gave the cup to the local authorities. Officials from the island visited Barrington Island and miraculously dug up the treasure chest. This worked in Jeremy's favor. He would have been hard pressed to explain how he found the chest himself.

After leaving the Galapagos, he and Wendy returned to the states. His next

Youtube.com channel presentation showed photos of the pirate treasure. The Galapagos Island officials could not explain how he had acquired the pictures. They said he must have bribed someone to get exclusive coverage. Another mystery that would remain unsolved.

Wendy did not want to go on anymore treasure hunts. She rightly argued that up until now, they had been extremely lucky. Jeremy could not disagree. He vowed to give up his treasure hunting. He came up with another idea that eventually led him to becoming a millionaire. He decided to market his metal detector/ground penetrating instrument. He called it the “Treasure Stick”. Backed up by the real treasures he had uncovered using it, it was a marketing success.

He increased his wealth immeasurably by investing in US Oil Funds. His father would have been pleased.

The End