





CJ'S TREASURE CHASE

Jessica Brody



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NEXT: FREDDIE'S SHADOW CARDS

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MARCONED

The girl was a child of the Isle of the Lost. You know the one. Just off the coast of the United States of Auradon. The isle was home to every evil villain and sidekick who had ever plotted, cursed, cheated, plundered, or wreaked havoc.

The girl was seven, and although she had been marooned there when she was a baby, she always knew she was destined for greater things. Far-off places and grand adventures. Storming seas and buried treasures. Especially buried treasures . . .

One night, after the hanging oil lanterns had burned out, the little girl crept through the dark ship she called home to sneak into her father's study. Most of his belongings had been confiscated after he was exiled to the Isle of the Lost, but just under the old ship wheel sat a large wooden treasure chest with a rusty gold clasp, concealed by a dusty white sheet.

The girl was sure there had been a time when the treasure chest was overflowing with diamonds, rubies, sapphires, and pearls as white as the foam of crashing waves.

Now the wood was old, peeling, splintered. The hinges creaked when she lifted the lid. In the moonlight that shone through the porthole, she peered at the item hidden deep inside.

It was a map.

The girl lifted it and touched the yellowed paper, with its crisp brown edges and faded ink. The map was incomplete. The finely drawn details started at the bottom left corner of the aged paper, depicting a compass, waves of an ocean, a forgotten island, and the beginnings of a dotted trail. Then the map just stopped. Maybe it was the girl's keen intuition, a trait passed down to her by her shrewd and cunning father. Or maybe it was hope. But the girl had a feeling that the map was magical. That was what lured her back to look at it night after night.

The girl believed that given the opportunity, the map would cease to be just a piece of a paper and turn

into something else. Something greater. She considered the possibilities. Maybe it led to an all-powerful treasure. Maybe someone had enchanted the rest of the map to disappear . . . only to reappear in the right place at the right time to the right person.

She traced the dotted trail with her fingertip until it vanished into nothing. She ran her hand over the empty space that she dreamed held the promise of adventure, wondering if the rest of the map would ever be revealed to her.

Magic was banned on the Isle of the Lost. King Beast had made sure of it. The girl knew that. But she also knew that magic did exist someplace else: Auradon. The girl spent that night, like every night, dreaming about finally stealing the map and taking it there, activating its magic, and using it to find the greatest pirate's treasure ever known. . . .

As she placed the map back in the chest and closed the lid, she whispered into the darkness, "Someday."

Oh, how time flies.

AHOY ... AND STUFF

Hi. I'm CJ, the teenage daughter of Captain Hook.

You may think that as the descendant of a villainous pirate, I'm all "plunder" this and "pillage" that. And you wouldn't be entirely wrong. But what I am, more than anything, is an adventurer. That's definitely something I get from my once-upon-a-time-swashbuckling dad. But enough about him. This story is about me.

The problem is it's pretty hard to have an adventure when you're trapped on the Isle of the Lost with no way out. And for a while there, I was convinced that I was as stuck as a barnacle on a boat. But then something unexpected happened. I was magically transported to Auradon Prep through Jordan's genie lamp.

I won't get into all the details . . . blah, blah, blah, magic lamp, three wishes, whatever. One minute I was hanging out on the Isle of the Lost with my best friend, Freddie, minding my own business, and the next minute, Freddie and I both disappeared in a puff of pink smoke and were magically transported to Auradon Prep!

As soon as we got there, I hid. Freddie, on the other hand, was more than happy to make her presence known. Freddie, I should mention, is very persuasivesomething she got from her dad, the evil and awesome Dr. Facilier. One of Freddie's secret weapons is her "velvet voice," which is so smooth and mesmerizing, it gets her exactly what she wants. It's like vocal black magic. She managed to convince King Ben (the son of that beast who locked us all away on the Isle of the Lost) to let her stay at Auradon Prep as a student. She even got her own dorm room.

And you know what that means, don't you? I, CJ Hook, am now her roommate. Well, her secret stowaway roommate. But it doesn't matter. I don't plan on hanging around here for very long. I have big plans now that I'm finally in Auradon-very big plans. Let the pirate games begin. . . .

STOWAWAY

So I finally got off the Isle of the Lost and into Auradon!

But it turns out hiding in Freddie's room is worse than being stuffed into Davy Jones's locker. (I hear that place is cramped.)

"So why exactly are you stowing away in my room?" Freddie asked CJ.

They were settling into Freddie's new Auradon Prep dorm room, which fortunately had two beds. CJ would need a place to sleep while she enacted her big plan. She'd also need some food to eat and maybe a sink to wash her face in—although pirates were known for going months without bathing. (The past year, CJ had gotten her father, Captain Hook, a bottle of Rotting Kelp cologne for his birthday, to remind him of his glory days on the high seas.)

CJ glared at one of the beds, as if she were staring down an incoming enemy ship. It was pink and covered in ruffles. CJ didn't mind ruffles, as long as they were white and on her shirt. *Not* on her bed. "Blimey. This just won't fly."

"CJ," Freddie prompted, "do you have a plan or something?"

CJ pulled off the blanket, ripped the ruffles from the hem, and flung the blanket across the four posters of the bed, fashioning it into a makeshift sail. Then she grabbed a black marker from the nearby desk and drew a skull and crossbones on the pillowcase. She took a step back to examine her work. "Better," she said.

Freddie placed her hands on her hips and frowned. She was wearing a pin-striped red-and-purple dress, white-and-black ankle boots, and a tiny purple top hat, which sat slightly crooked atop her long, shiny black hair. "Please tell me you aren't just going to crash here and play a bunch of pranks on people."

CJ collapsed onto her newly transformed bed and flashed Freddie one of her signature mischievous grins,

complete with a wink. She was really good at those. Freddie might have had the "velvet voice" market cornered, but CJ could smirk her way out of any plank walk.

CJ was just counting the minutes until Freddie would leave and she could finally be alone. But she couldn't tell Freddie that. If Freddie knew what CJ was really up to, she might want to help. And CJ didn't need help. Not even from her best friend.

"CJ," Freddie said warningly.

CJ glanced around the room, her smirk quickly morphing into a disapproving scowl. "Eew. The decoration in this place is truly disgusting. I mean, it looks like a fairy threw up in here."

Freddie walked to CJ's bed and sat down next to her. "Stop changing the subject."

CJ yawned, kicked off her crocodile-skin boots, and fell onto her back, her red pirate coat flaring out around her like wings. "What was the subject again?"

Freddie threw up her hands. "What are we doing here?"

"You," CJ said, sitting up to face her friend, "are going to school to learn about kindness and decency and the chemical compound of fairy dust." The sarcasm was thick in her voice. Freddie shuddered. It was clear from the look on Freddie's face that she hadn't quite thought this whole student thing through yet. "And you?" she asked CJ.

CJ reached out and touched her friend's nose. "Don't you worry your pretty little shrunken head about me."

Freddie didn't look convinced. "Whenever you say that is when I worry the *most* about you."

CJ just flashed her the smirk again. Then, for the tenth time since they'd magically arrived in Auradon, CJ reached into the pocket of her coat and ran her fingertips over the very special object she'd been keeping with her since she was a little girl. Fortunately, it had survived the trip. Her whole secret plan depended on it.

Freddie sighed in surrender and stood up. "Well, maybe they'll have a music class I can take or something. Singing will be a good distraction from whatever horrors Headmistress Fairy Godmother has in store for me." She turned back to CJ and pouted. "Whatever it is you're planning, can you at least *try* not to get caught? The last time you plotted secretly, you got us both in huge trouble."

CJ shook her head. "Two minutes in Auradon and you've already gone soft on me? Since when do *you* care about getting in trouble?"

Freddie seemed to think about that for a second. "I just . . ." She hesitated. "I don't want to get kicked out of this place before we've had a chance to do some real damage, you know?"

But CJ wasn't at all convinced by her explanation. Freddie's usual mischievous spirit wasn't in it. She sounded almost worried. And Freddie *never* sounded worried. When you're the daughter of the great and powerful Dr. Facilier, a man who can turn another grown man into a frog, you have very little to worry about.

CJ wondered if Freddie was already starting to like it there, which was *not* acceptable.

What if Freddie ended up wanting to stay? Like for*ever*?

Maybe CJ was just paranoid after what had happened with Mal and Evie, but she didn't want to lose *another* friend to this pixie palace.

Not that she had time to worry about that. The clock was ticking and she had work to do. Plus, she *hated* ticking clocks.

Some things are just hereditary.