

XAVIER
DORISON

MATHIEU
LAUFFRAY



LONG JOHN SILVER



I - LADY VIVIAN HASTINGS





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Original title: Long John Silver 1 – Lady Vivian Hastings
Original edition: © Dargaud Paris, 2007 by Dorison & Lauffray
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English translation: © 2010 Cinebook Ltd
Translator: Jerome Saincantin
Lettering and text layout: Imadjinn
Printed in Spain by Just Colour Graphic
This edition first published in Great Britain in 2010 by
Cinebook Ltd - 56 Beech Avenue
Canterbury, Kent - CT4 7TA
www.cinebook.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library
ISBN 978-1-84918-062-7



1785
FAR UP THE AMAZON
RIVER

MY DEAR ORPHEUS,

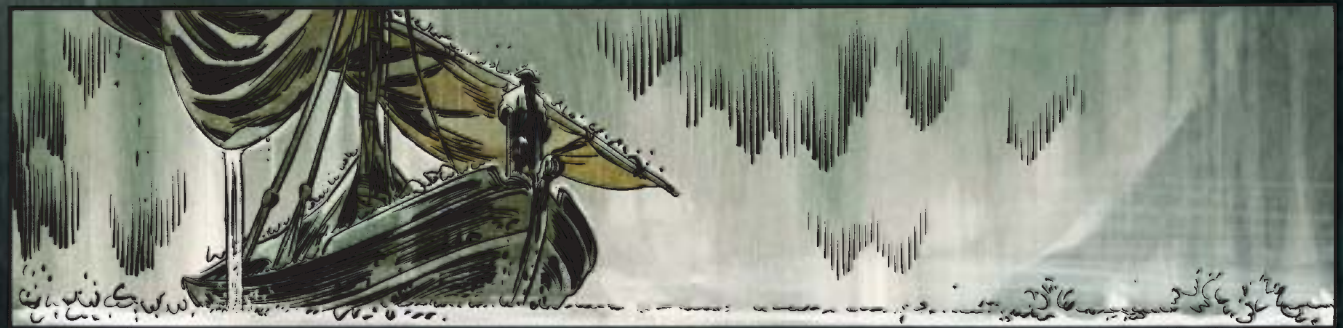
BY THE TIME YOU READ THESE LINES,
I WILL PROBABLY HAVE DEPARTED THIS
WORLD. YET, DO NOT SEE IN THEM THE
LAST HESITATIONS OF A FRIGHTENED
OLD MAN, OR SOME REQUEST FOR
ABSOLUTION. I DESERVE NEITHER PITY
NOR FORGIVENESS.

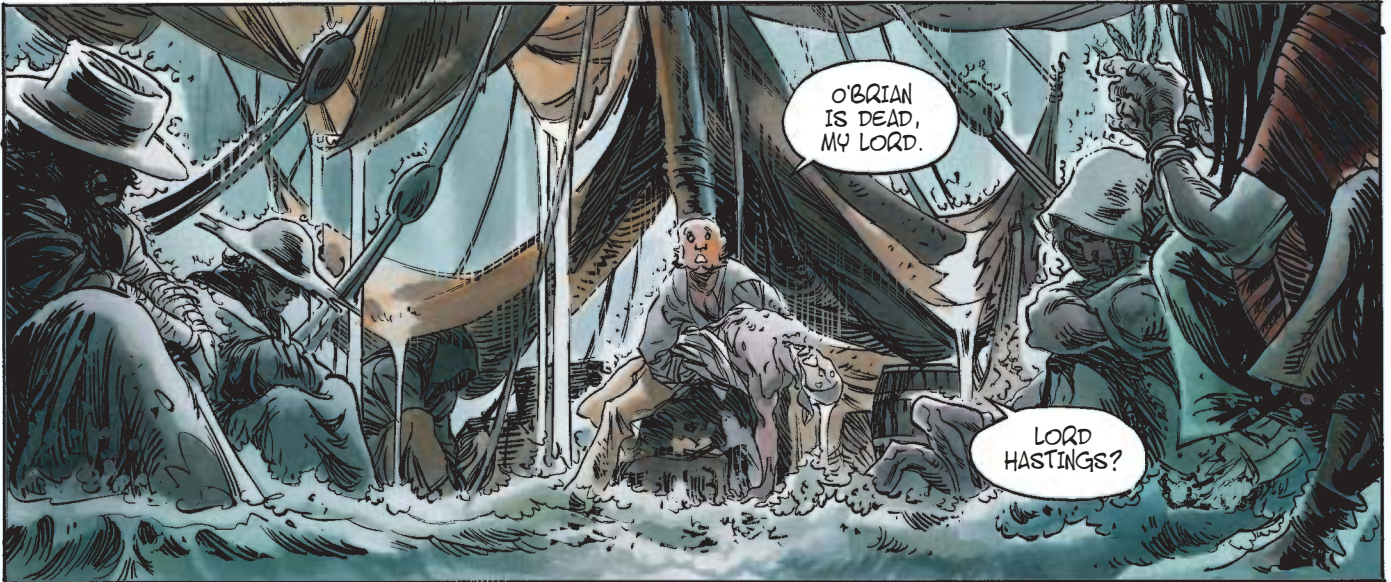
A THOUSAND TIMES, YOU ASKED
ME ABOUT MY PAST. A THOUSAND
TIMES, SHAME SEALED MY LIPS.

BUT IN THESE DARK HOURS, AT LAST,
I FIND THE COURAGE TO PASS ON TO
YOU THESE TERRIBLE MEMORIES. MAY
YOU PARSE THEM FOR NUGGETS OF
TRUTH, AND FIND IN THEM THE ANSWERS
THAT YOU SOUGHT SO FERVENTLY.

MY HANDS ARE SHAKING, AND TO TELL
IT ALL, I MUST FIRST APPEASE THE
FEVER THAT SEIZES ME EACH TIME
I LOOK BACK ON THESE EVENTS OF
1785. BARELY HALF A CENTURY HAS
PASSED SINCE; BUT IT IS A TIME
ALREADY FORGOTTEN, AND
FOREVER LOST.

THIS STORY BEGINS IN A
DISTANT WORLD. A WORLD
THAT GOD HIMSELF SEEMED
TO HAVE FORGOTTEN..





O'BRIAN IS DEAD, MY LORD.

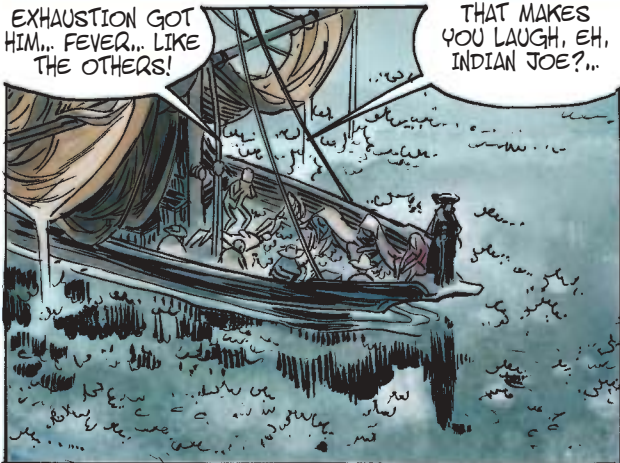
LORD HASTINGS?



EXHAUSTION GOT HIM... FEVER... LIKE THE OTHERS!

THAT MAKES YOU LAUGH, EH, INDIAN JOE?...

WATCHING THE WHITE FOLK PUKE THEIR GUTS OUT WHILE YOU CHEW ON YOUR PLANT.. THAT MAKES YOUR DAY, DOESN'T IT?



BUT ME, I KNOW... THERE'S NOTHING IN YOUR RUDDY JUNGLE! NO MORE GOLD HERE THAN GROG IN A CONVENT!



SO, NOW, YOU'RE GOING TO GET UP NICELY AND TELL LORD HASTINGS EVERYTHING...

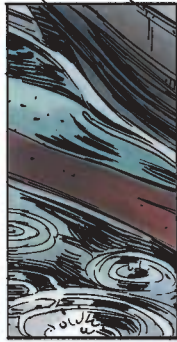
YOU'RE GOING TO TELL HIM THAT WE'RE NOT GOING TO FIND A THING; THAT WE'RE GOING TO HEAD HOME; AND THAT YOU TRICKED US!

AND THEN, I'LL BE THE ONE LAUGHING, YOU HEAR?

YOU HEAR?!

YOU HEAR ?!





MEANWHILE, AT THE OTHER
END OF THE WORLD...

IT WAS A THURSDAY, I THINK...
LORD PRISHAM WAS VISITING LADY
VIVIAN HASTINGS. FOR YEARS, THE
LADY HAD BEEN NEGLECTED BY HER
HUSBAND, LORD BYRON HASTINGS,
GONE TO THE NEW WORLD...

THAT DAY... BUT WAIT!
I GET AHEAD OF
MYSELF ALREADY.

BEFORE I GO ANY FURTHER
WITH THIS STORY, I MUST
TELL YOU SOMETHING OF
LADY VIVIAN HASTINGS...



I DO NOT WISH TO SHOCK
YOU, BUT I MIGHT AS
WELL ADMIT IT RIGHT
AWAY...

OF PROPER BEHAVIOUR,
SHE HAD...

... HER OWN INTERPRETATION...



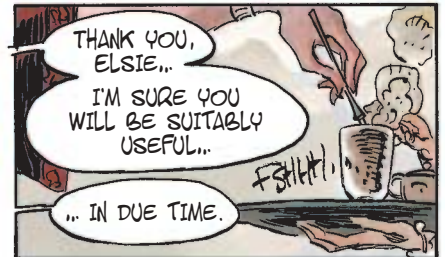
I DON'T SEE
ANYTHING.

BUT THERE'S NO
DOUBT ABOUT IT,
MY LADY. I'M QUITE
FAMILIAR WITH SUCH
SIGNS. YOU'RE WITH
CHILD.



WHAT A
BOTHER! AS IF
I NEEDED THIS
RIGHT NOW!

IT WILL ONLY SHOW IN FOUR
TO SIX MONTHS, MY LADY. IT
ALL DEPENDS ON THE BELLY
AND THE MOON. THEY SAY THAT
WHEN IT'S FULL AND VENUS...



THANK YOU,
ELSIE...

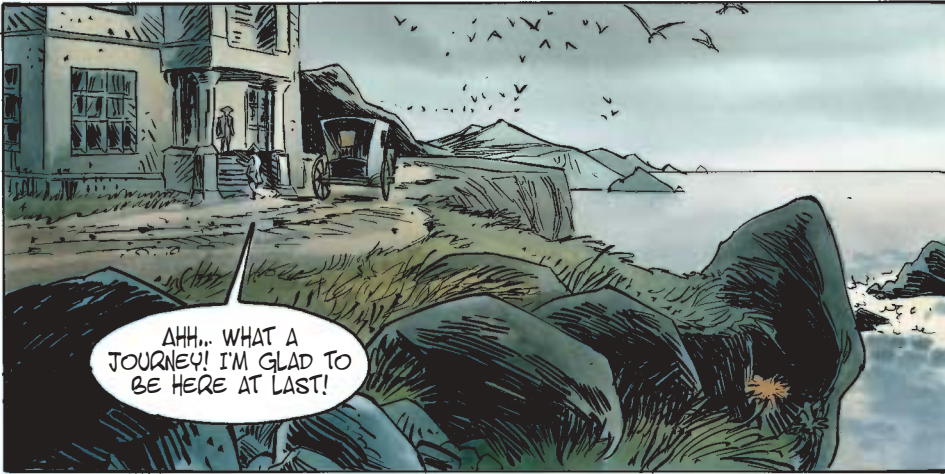
I'M SURE YOU
WILL BE SUITABLY
USEFUL...

... IN DUE TIME.



IT'S TIME FOR YOU
TO GET READY. LORD
PRISHAM SHOULD ARRIVE
ANY TIME NOW.

ALREADY!?



AHH... WHAT A JOURNEY! I'M GLAD TO BE HERE AT LAST!



HMM... MILORD, WHO SHALL I SAY IS CALLING?

LORD PRISHAM, MY GOOD MAN! COMING DIRECTLY FROM BRISTOL! LADY HASTINGS IS DYING TO SEE ME!



BRING OUT THE BLUE MADRAS DRESS AND THE NECKLACE OF PUNJABI SAPPHIRES. HURRY!!!

BUT... MY LADY...



WE SOLD THE NECKLACE TO PAY FOR LAST WINTER'S WOOD.

I FORGOT... WHAT ABOUT THE CASAMANCE PEARLS?

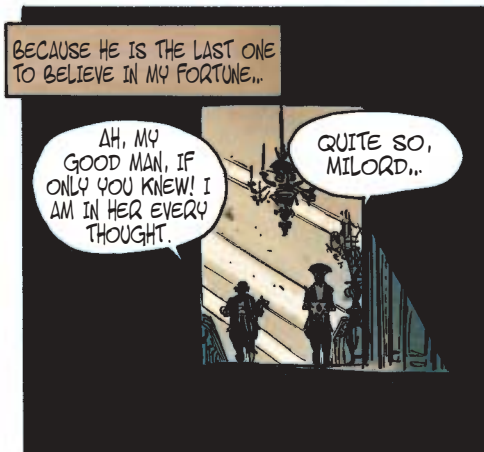
THEY PAID FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY PARTY.



IT'S HIGH TIME I FIND MYSELF A HUSBAND...



BUT... LORD PRISHAM... I THOUGHT HE WAS ONLY A MISTAKE OF ONE NIGHT... WHY HIM, MY LADY?



BECAUSE HE IS THE LAST ONE TO BELIEVE IN MY FORTUNE...

AH, MY GOOD MAN, IF ONLY YOU KNEW! I AM IN HER EVERY THOUGHT.

QUITE SO, MILORD...



THAT'S HIM! HE'S COMING!!

CALM DOWN, ELSIE. I'M COUNTING ON YOU: DELAY HIM AT ALL COSTS! BUY ME A MINUTE...



AHH, LORD PRISHAM! WHAT... WHAT A SURPRISE, REALLY... WHAT...

GOOD GRIEF, GIRL, LADY HASTINGS IS EXPECTING ME! STEP ASIDE!



ER... I'M VERY MUCH SURPRISED, MILORD. I...

IT'S ALL RIGHT, ELSIE. PLEASE SHOW THE GENTLEMAN IN...

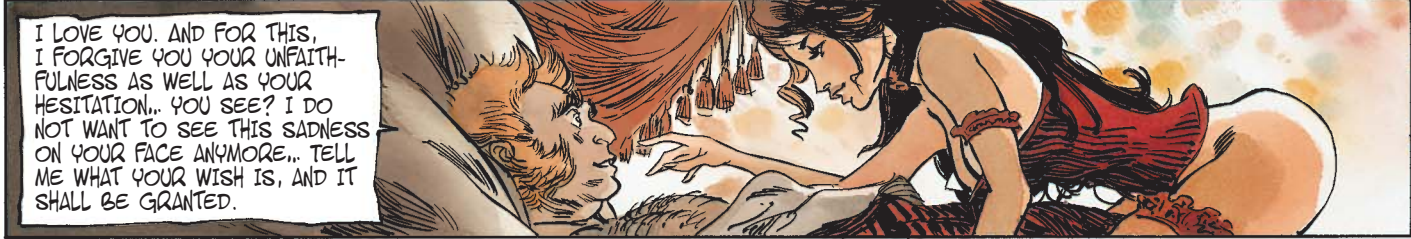


!...

PRISHAM, WHAT A PLEASURE! I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE YOU SO SOON...

YOU FIND ME RATHER UNPREPARED...

YOU KNOW, VIVIAN, I KEPT DREAMING, BUT I HAD LOST HOPE...

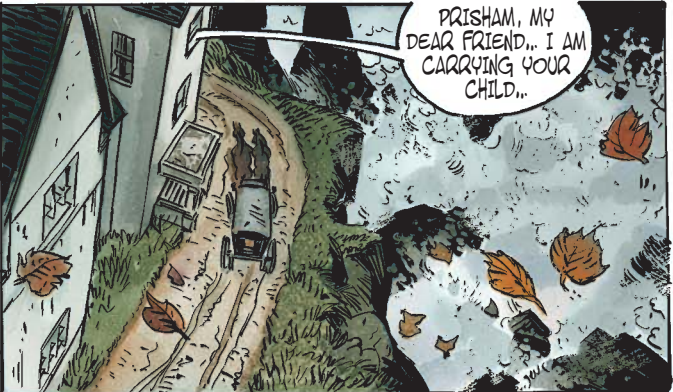


I LOVE YOU. AND FOR THIS, I FORGIVE YOU YOUR UNFAITHFULNESS AS WELL AS YOUR HESITATION... YOU SEE? I DO NOT WANT TO SEE THIS SADNESS ON YOUR FACE ANYMORE... TELL ME WHAT YOUR WISH IS, AND IT SHALL BE GRANTED.



DEAR FRIEND, I KNOW WHAT I FORCED YOU TO ENDURE. IT IS MY TURN, NOW, TO MAKE YOU HAPPY...

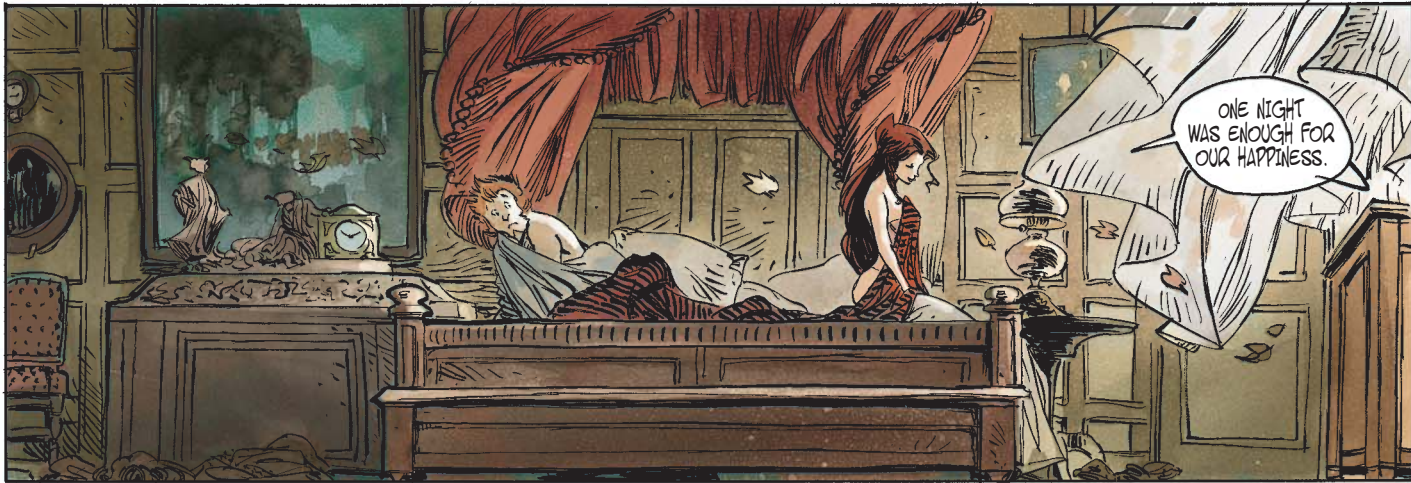
FOR THIS, I HAVE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF GIFTS...



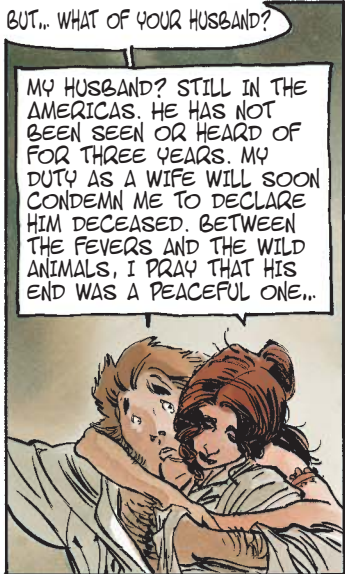
PRISHAM, MY DEAR FRIEND... I AM CARRYING YOUR CHILD...



THAT... THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE...

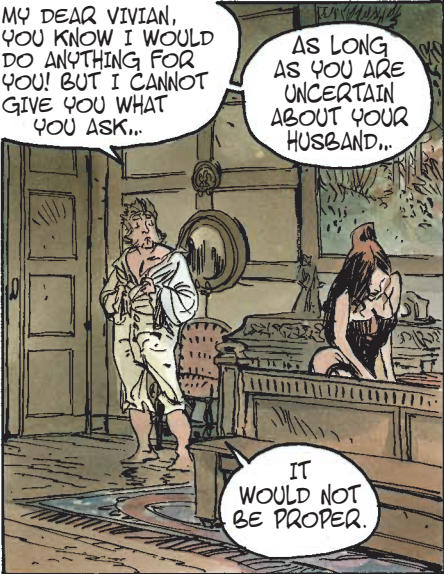


ONE NIGHT WAS ENOUGH FOR OUR HAPPINESS.



BUT... WHAT OF YOUR HUSBAND?

MY HUSBAND? STILL IN THE AMERICAS. HE HAS NOT BEEN SEEN OR HEARD OF FOR THREE YEARS. MY DUTY AS A WIFE WILL SOON CONDEMN ME TO DECLARE HIM DECEASED. BETWEEN THE FEVERS AND THE WILD ANIMALS, I PRAY THAT HIS END WAS A PEACEFUL ONE...



MY DEAR VIVIAN, YOU KNOW I WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR YOU! BUT I CANNOT GIVE YOU WHAT YOU ASK...

AS LONG AS YOU ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT YOUR HUSBAND...

IT WOULD NOT BE PROPER.



PROPER... LORD BYRON HASTINGS IS DEAD, PRISHAM. HE HAS TO BE. AND THE CHILD I AM CARRYING NEEDS A FATHER. A FATHER WHO WILL INHERIT THE HASTINGS ESTATE.



THE WHOLE ESTATE?