

Treasure



T H E H E I G H T S

Chapter 1



Todd Bardo Jr. walked across the Penn State campus. He was lost in thought. He was thinking about South America.

Todd was a well-liked junior in college. His roommate and best friend was Franco Silva. Franco and Todd were football players. Now that the season was over, they had a lot of free time.

Franco and Todd met for lunch in the cafeteria. Franco got there first and waited. When Todd sat down, he put his head on the table.

“What’s wrong?” asked Franco.

“I am stressed,” Todd said. “You know I was born in Ecuador. My dad was a doctor. After medical school, he went to South America. He went to help the poor for a month. But he ended up staying there for forty years.”

“Yeah, I remember you telling me about your dad. He was a respected doctor,” Franco said.

“Yes, he was. Most of his patients were poor. He never charged anyone a lot. He asked them to pay what they could,” said Todd. “He got paid in fruit,

vegetables, chickens ... Everyone loved and respected him. He even built a clinic in Quito, the capital.”

“Why does that make you stressed?” Franco said.

“After my dad retired, the government wanted to thank him. They gave him exclusive salvage rights to five miles of reef. The Ecuadorian government did that for people who helped their country.”

“That’s awesome. Did you ever dive on the reef?” asked Franco.

“No. After my dad died, I inherited the salvage rights. But only for five years. This is the fifth year. I need to set up a diving trip now. My rights are set to expire,” Todd explained.

He continued, “Ecuador has the safest harbor in South America. Guayaquil is a deepwater port that’s centuries old. There’s a bunch of reefs offshore. These reefs aren’t dangerous now. But hundreds of ships were wrecked during Spanish rule. These old ships usually carried gold, silver, and jewels. I could be a millionaire!”

“So? Set up a diving trip. It sounds like fun,” said Franco.

“I can’t,” Todd went on. “I can dive, just like you. But I don’t have a clue about salvage work. And it costs a lot of money.”

“Wow!” Franco exclaimed. “Now I know why you’re so worried. I think I know someone who can help.”

“Really?” Todd asked. “Who?”

“My dad,” Franco replied. “He was a salvage diver in the navy.”

“No way!” Todd said.

“Yeah. I’m going home this weekend. Come with me,” Franco said. “You can tell my dad about your salvage rights. I bet he’d love to help!”

Chapter 2



Franco and Todd went to Rockdale Heights that Friday.

“Dad, Todd has a problem. I thought you might be able to help him,” said Franco.

“I’ll try,” said Rafael. “What’s going on, Todd?”

Todd explained his problem with the salvage rights.

“That’s a great problem,” Rafael said. “You’re very lucky.”

“Oh, there’s one more thing,” Todd said. “Half of what I find goes to the government of Ecuador. I’ll split the other half with anyone who helps me.”

Rafael wanted to hear more of Todd’s story. He looked interested.

“I’ve Googled the reefs,” Todd continued. “Several ships sank on my five-mile stretch. Last year a man found over three million dollars in gold. His salvage rights were only ten miles south of mine.”

“It looks like you have something here. And I want to help,” Rafael said. “I have a friend in Florida. We go diving together. If he joined

us, we'd have four divers. That's a perfect salvage team."

"But it's going to cost a lot of money," Todd said. "And I can't afford it."

"Well, what if I pay our expenses? We'll take these costs out of any treasure we find. Then, after we pay the government, we'll divide what's left. Todd, they're your diving rights. You should get most of the money. At least fifty-five percent of what's left. Then we'll divide the rest. Fair?" asked Rafael.

"Yes. I think your plan is perfect," Todd exclaimed.

"Great, I'll give my friend Jorge a call," Rafael said. "If he's in, I'll set up the dive for June."

That night Rafael called Jorge. He was in. Everything was set. The four divers would be looking for treasure in Ecuador.

“We have to go to Guayaquil as soon as we can,” Rafael told the boys. “We have to check all the rules. Then we’ll charter a boat. We also need to order our equipment. We have five months to get ready. But there’s a lot to do!”