

Famous Short Stories

**Edgar Allan Poe
Collection**

The Gold Bug

retold by
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Part 1

Wolf



One day I was hiking alone on Sullivan's Island. Sullivan's Island is near the coast of South Carolina. I had just stopped for a rest when I heard someone shouting, "Wolf! Wolf! Wolf!" I could hear an animal crashing through the bushes nearby. I quickly looked for a tree to climb but there were no trees. And then a huge, gray animal landed on my chest. I fell to the ground. I thought that I was going to be killed. Then I heard two men laughing. I was scared and angry at the same time.

How could they laugh when I was going to die?

Well, I didn't die because the huge, gray animal wasn't a wolf at all. It was just a big dog. The dog started to lick my face. The two men were looking down at me and they were still laughing. One of the men called to the dog. "Get over here, Wolf." Then the man said to me, "I'm sorry about my dog. That's the way he says 'hello.' His name is Wolf. I hope he didn't scare you too much."

I got up and brushed off my clothes.

“Well,” I said, “I was a little scared.”

The two men smiled and invited me to their hut.

But wait a minute! Let me start this story at the beginning.

I live in Charleston, South Carolina. In my free time, I like to hunt and fish and hike. Hiking is my favorite thing to do. The land and the water around Charleston are beautiful for hiking.

One morning, I crossed over to Sullivan’s Island.

This island is three miles long but it's not very wide. Someone had told me that no one lived on Sullivan's Island. So I was surprised to see the two men and their hut. And I was really surprised to see that dog!

One of the men was named William Legrand. The other man's name was Jupiter. Jupiter worked for Legrand. Jupiter did all the cooking and the cleaning.

William Legrand had once been a very rich man, but now he was poor. He said that he wanted to be rich again.



But he didn't know how he could get any money. He worried about it, and this worry made him very unhappy.

It was good that he had a kind man like Jupiter to take care of him.

Legrand was an artist and a scientist. He loved to study bugs and insects. He showed me his collection of rare insects. I went to see him often and we talked about many things. In a few short weeks, William Legrand and I got to be close friends.

One cold evening, I crossed over to Sullivan's Island and walked to the hut.

I knocked on the door but no one was at home. I opened the door and went in. There was a fire going in the fireplace. It was cold outside, and I was happy to sit by the fire.

After a while, Legrand and Jupiter came back to the hut.

“Well, well, well. Look who’s here!” Legrand shouted as he shook my hand. Then he said to Jupiter, “Make one of your great chicken dinners for the three of us.”

Legrand sat down in a chair next to me.



He stretched out his legs and held his hands out toward the fire. He said, “We were out hunting for bugs. I have found some good bugs over the years. But the bug that I found yesterday is the best. Let me show it to you.”

Jupiter was over by the stove but he could hear us talking. Jupiter said to Legrand, “You can just forget about that bug. That bug is bad luck.”

Part 2

The Gold Bug



Legrand laughed when Jupiter said that the bug was bad luck. He spoke softly so that Jupiter could not hear. He said to me, "I call it the gold bug!"

"Let's have a look at it," I said to Legrand.

Legrand opened a small box. He took out the gold bug and handed it to me. The bug felt very heavy.

"Are you sure it's dead?" I asked.

"It's dead," said Legrand. "But before it died, it bit me."

Just then, Jupiter came into the room. He said, “Yes, sir. That bug bit Legrand. It sure did. And Legrand has not been the same ever since.”

Legrand laughed. “That’s a silly thing to say, Jupiter,” he said.

I asked Jupiter, “What do you mean Legrand has not been the same?”

Jupiter said, “Ever since that bug bit him, all he thinks about is gold. All he talks about is gold. He thinks that he is going to find some gold. He thinks that he will be a rich man again.”

“It’s possible,” said Legrand with a smile.

I looked at the bug in my hand. It really did look like it was made out of gold.

Then Legrand handed me something else. He said, “I found this near the gold bug.”

At first, I thought it was a piece of paper. But it didn’t feel like paper, so I asked him what it was.

Legrand said, “It’s a piece of parchment.”

“Parchment?” I asked. “What’s parchment?”

Legrand told me that parchment is made from the skin of a sheep or a goat. “When it’s all dried out, you can write on it,” he said. “It’s much stronger than paper so it can last a very long time.”

I looked down at the parchment. It was blank on both sides. No one had written on it.

Just then, Wolf began to bark. Wolf was outside in the cold and he wanted to come in.



Jupiter opened the door, and Wolf ran into the room. He was happy to see me. He liked it when I scratched him behind his ears. Wolf ran over to my seat near the fire. I was still holding the piece of parchment in my right hand, so I scratched Wolf behind his ears with my left hand.

“Look out,” Legrand said. “Wolf is pushing you into the fire.”

Legrand was right. I pulled my right hand away from the fire, and I put the parchment on the table. Legrand picked up the parchment.

He looked at it and started to say something, but then he stopped.

He just stood up quickly, and put the parchment in a safe place.

After dinner, I saw Legrand put the parchment close to the fire again. It looked like he was reading something, but I knew that the parchment was blank.

Finally, I said to him, “What are you doing, Legrand? Why is that silly parchment so important to you?”

Legrand said, “When the gold bug bit me, I dropped the bug in the sand.

I had to get down on my hands and knees to find it. That's when I found the parchment. The gold bug is not that important. But this piece of parchment might be very important."

"Why?" I asked.

"I can't tell you just yet," he said.

"Why not?" I asked.

"Because you wouldn't believe me if I told you," Legrand said.

And that was all that he said. It was late and it was time for me to go home.



A few days later, I woke up and heard someone pounding on my front door. I jumped out of bed and opened the door. It was Jupiter. He was shouting at me. "I knew it! I knew it!" he yelled.

"What's the matter, Jupiter?" I asked. "Tell me what's wrong."

Jupiter spoke fast. "Legrand is gone. He's been out all night long. He still hasn't come back. Wolf is gone, too. And so is that gold bug."

I patted Jupiter on his back. "Relax, Jupiter," I said.

“Maybe Legrand couldn’t sleep. Maybe he just took a long walk.”

“No, sir! No!” said Jupiter. “It’s all because of the gold bug. The bite from that bug has made him crazy.”

I went back to the hut with Jupiter. Legrand was not there. We decided to wait a little while longer before we called for help. “If he isn’t back in one hour, we will call the police,” I said.

Part 3

The Map



Jupiter and I had only waited a few minutes before Legrand and Wolf came through the door. Legrand was smiling, but he had a strange look in his eyes. He took off his backpack and put it down.

Jupiter was angry. He shouted at Legrand, “Why did you go off by yourself? Why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t you take me with you?”

“Everything is OK, Jupiter,” Legrand said.

“Nothing is OK,” Jupiter yelled.

“That gold bug has made you a crazy man!”

Legrand sat down next to me.

I said, “Jupiter has good reasons to be mad. He is supposed to take care of you. And then you run off like that.”

“Jupiter thinks that I’m crazy,”

Legrand said. “Do you think that I’m crazy?”

“Well, I’m starting to think so,” I said.

Legrand looked at Jupiter and me.

He said, “I want to show you both something. But first we need to build a fire.”

Jupiter started the fire. I took my chair over to the fireplace. Legrand took something out of his backpack.

When the fire was started, Legrand handed me the piece of parchment. “Look at it,” he said.

“I’ve already seen it,” I said. “There’s nothing to look at. It’s blank on both sides.”

“Now, hold it close to the fire,”
Legrand said. “But don’t let it burn.”

I did what he said to do. Jupiter
looked at us and shook his head.
He said, “Now both of you are crazy.”

Legrand kept looking at the
parchment. He said to me, “Now take
it away from the fire, and look at it.”

I was so surprised that I almost fell
out of my chair. There was something
on the parchment! It looked like some
sort of map. I showed it to Jupiter.



Jupiter looked at the parchment and said, “Oh, no! Now I’m going crazy, too.”

“It’s like magic,” I said to Legrand.

“It’s a map,” he said. “You can only see it for a while. Then it fades away. But when you hold the parchment near the fire, the map comes back again.”

“How is that possible?” I asked.

Legrand said, “It’s some kind of secret ink that can only be seen when it’s near heat.”

“Who drew the map on the parchment?” I asked. “And why did that person use secret ink?”

“Look at the very bottom of the parchment,” said Legrand. “There is a small drawing below the map. I think that’s a clue.” Then Legrand asked us, “What does the drawing look like to you?”

“An animal?” I said.

“Yes, but what kind of animal?”

Legrand asked.

Jupiter shouted, “A sheep! A goat!”

“Yes, a goat,” I said.

Legrand looked at us both and asked, “What is another name for a goat? What do you call a young goat?”

“A kid,” I said. “A young goat is called a kid.”

“That’s right,” Legrand said.
“Have you ever heard the name Captain Kidd?”

I jumped up from my chair.
“Captain Kidd! The famous pirate!”

I remembered the stories about Captain Kidd. He was the most famous of all the pirates. He was caught and hanged in 1701. But before he was caught and hanged, he buried a huge treasure chest somewhere. People looked for the chest, but nobody ever found it.

Jupiter picked up the map and looked at it. “This is a confusing map,” he said. “I don’t know how to read it.”

“Yes, it is a confusing map,” said Legrand, “but I can read it.

That's what I was doing last night. I made a copy of the map, and I followed the map last night."

"Do you know where the treasure is buried?" I asked him.

"Yes," Legrand said. "At least I think so." Then he picked up his backpack and said, "Let's go get it!"

Part 4

The Treasure Hunt



Legrand had a boat ready for us. There were three shovels and three lanterns in the boat. Wolf barked as we left Sullivan's Island. He was happy that he was going with us. We rowed the boat for about an hour. Then Legrand pointed to a small beach and said, "That's where we stop. That's where we leave the boat."

We left the boat on the beach and walked for another hour. I carried one of the shovels, and Jupiter carried the other two.

As we walked, Legrand said, “Jupiter, can you still climb a tree?”

“I am still the best tree climber there is,” Jupiter said.

Legrand stopped walking. He took out his map and looked at it by the light of his lantern. He pointed to a tall, old tree. He asked Jupiter, “Can you climb that tree?”

“How high up in that tree do I have to go?” asked Jupiter.

Legrand looked at the map and said, “The seventh branch.

Can you climb up to the seventh branch?”

“Sure,” Jupiter said. “But why did we bring shovels if we were only going to climb trees?”

Legrand laughed again. “You just climb. And take this with you.”

Legrand handed Jupiter a long string. The gold bug was tied to one end of the string.

“That bug sure does give me the creeps,” said Jupiter.

Legrand just laughed.

Jupiter took the string, but he was careful not to touch the bug. Then he started to climb the tree. There was just enough moonlight to see Jupiter climb from branch to branch.

When Jupiter got up to the seventh branch, he called down. “OK, I’m here. What now?”

Legrand called up, “Now crawl out on the branch. And, Jupiter, don’t be afraid, no matter what you see.”

Jupiter called down, “What am I going to see?”

Just then, he yelled out. “Oh my Lord! There’s a skull up here! I’m up here in a tree with a dead man’s head!”

Legrand laughed. He called up to Jupiter, “Don’t you worry about the skull of that dead man. He’s been dead for over 100 years. Now, listen, Jupiter. Put the gold bug through the eye-hole of that skull. The left eye-hole, not the right eye-hole. Then lower the bug on the string all the way down here and don’t let go of your end of the string.”



Jupiter called down to us, “Why do I have to do this?”

Legrand called up, “Do you want to be a rich man?”

Jupiter called down, “OK, OK. I’m doing it. I’m putting the dead bug through the dead man’s eye-hole. But it’s not a very good way to get rich.”

I didn’t say anything. I didn’t know what to say. I just looked at Legrand. I must have had a funny look on my face because Legrand laughed.

He said to me, “We dig at the spot where the gold bug hits the ground. That’s where Captain Kidd’s treasure chest is buried.”

“So tell me,” I said. “What does the gold bug have to do with it?”

“The gold bug has nothing to do with it at all,” Legrand answered.

“We had to tie something to the end of the string, but it didn’t have to be the gold bug. We could have used a nail, or a rock. I just thought that the gold bug would be lucky.”

Little by little the gold bug came down out of the tree. When it hit the ground, Legrand called up to Jupiter. “You can let go of the string now and come down from the tree,” he said. “We need to start digging.”

We picked up the shovels, and the three of us began to dig. After about an hour, the shovels hit something that was made out of wood. Wolf barked and jumped down into the hole. He started to dig at the ground with his feet.

“Wolf!” shouted Legrand.

“Get out of there!” The dog jumped out of the hole, but kept on barking. We all held up our lanterns and looked down. We saw human skeletons in the hole. Jupiter let out a little cry.

“Who were these people?” I asked.

“They were the pirates who buried Captain Kidd’s treasure,” said Legrand. “Captain Kidd killed them so that no one else would know about the treasure chest.”

Legrand jumped into the hole and pushed the bones off to the side.

Now he was standing on a wooden chest that was three feet wide and three feet long. “Captain Kidd’s treasure chest!” screamed Legrand.

We opened the huge chest. It was full of jewels and gold coins from Spain and France and Germany. And there were gold rings and gold watches and gold bowls, too. We thought that it must be worth more than a million dollars. The three of us were suddenly very rich.

Legrand started laughing and shouting.



**“You can thank the gold bug for this!”
he yelled.**

**So that’s the story of the gold bug.
It took us two trips in the boat to get
all of the treasure home. And if you
want to know how much treasure we
found, I’m sorry but I can’t tell you.
I can’t tell you because we’re still
counting it all!**

The End