

Maria The coastguards is watchin' the place like hawks, Bob. I don't know what you plan to do about the other three kegs, and the tobacco!

Bob: Aye, well let me have a think.

Maria: Thought you had a think yesterday!

Bob: I was sick. I will catch up on my thinking now... (*lights pipe*)

Bob: Well it's a known fact that I have suffered from the gout from time to time; maybe it's time I had it come on serious like... Supposin' in all this weather we've been havin', it should come on severe like, and I should have to take to my bed. No one, not even you, Maria, would know if I might recover or not, and suppose I didn't, there would be a mighty big funeral. With a mighty big coffin, if you catch my drift.

Maria: You are a big man.

Bob: Pray continue.

Maria: and bury the merchandise in the coffin. And how can they tell if the poor man ain't buried by mistake, so that the sorrowin' widdler, might have thought she heard callin' from the grave. You know, wishful thinking that her husband ain't gone, so that the vicar ain't got no choice to have the coffin exhumed, and taken to Gillard's house for inspection as it were... The coastguards think you be dead and pay no attention...

Bob: A true miracle from the Almighty! Praise be the Lord! Bob is alive! No one will question that, if only for fear of poor Maria, so overcome she will be.

Maria: I want a new bonnet out of the deal. And you had better find something for Emily as well. ... I'll have promised to send your hat back out to sea, like you asked before you died...

And we can swap one coffin for the other... aye, a most excellent plan. And I am thinking we can trust Master Gillard and his missus, for all they are so pompous.

You'll have to be sure that there ain't no way the coastguards might catch on; they might not be too bright, but they is dedicated to their work, I'll give them that!

Bob: Dedicated to confiscating our hard-earned goods for themselves.

Maria: Now now; you don't know that. And can the lads help us?

Bob: Aye, to mourn me untimely passin'.

Clip from The Ballad of Resurrection Bob, written by Laura Jury (c) 2019. Performed as part of a bigger local factual history drama about the towns fishing industry "The Great Gale of 1866" by the South Devon Players Theatre & Film Company; winter 2019-2020

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(background: this is a local folklore story from Brixham in South Devon, where a notorious local smuggler (and honest trawlerman by day) in the early 19th Century, faked his own death, in order to take contraband through to the inland small town Totnes, under the noses of the coastguards. The house where he lived is now a hotel, known as "The Smugglers Haunt". Bob Elliott became known as "Resurrection Bob" after this escapade. Maria is his wife, a tough but kind fishwife.)