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The Gold-Bug

Edgar Allan Poe

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"The Gold-Bug" is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe published in 1843. The plot follows William Legrand who was bitten by a gold-colored bug. His servant Jupiter fears that Legrand is going insane and goes to Legrand's friend, an unnamed narrator, who agrees to visit his old friend. Legrand pulls the other two into an adventure after deciphering a secret message that will lead to a buried treasure.

William Legrand becomes obsessed with searching for treasure after being bitten by a scarab-like bug thought to be made of pure gold. He notifies his closest friend, the narrator, telling him to immediately come visit him at his home on Sullivan's Island in South Carolina. Upon the narrator's arrival, Legrand informs him that they are embarking upon a search for lost treasure along with his African-American servant Jupiter. The narrator has intense doubt and questions whether Legrand, who has recently lost his fortune, has gone insane.

Legrand captured the bug but let someone else borrow it; he draws a picture of the bug instead. The narrator says that the image looks like a skull. Legrand is insulted and inspects his own drawing before stuffing it into a drawer which he locks, to the narrator's confusion. Uncomfortable, the narrator leaves Legrand and returns home to Charleston.

A month later, Jupiter visits the narrator and asks him to return to Sullivan's Island on behalf of his master. Legrand, he says, has been acting strangely. When he arrives, Legrand tells the narrator they must go on an expedition along with the gold-bug tied to a string. Deep in the island's wilderness, they find a tree, which Legrand orders Jupiter to climb with the gold-bug in tow. There, he finds a skull and Legrand tells him to drop the bug through one of the eye sockets. From where it falls, he determines the spot where they dig. They find treasure buried by the infamous pirate "Captain Kidd", estimated by the narrator to be worth a million and a half dollars. Once the treasure is safely secured, the man goes into an elaborate explanation of how he knew about the treasure's location, based on a set of occurrences that happened after the gold bug's discovery.

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