

# Treasure Island by Robert Louis Stevenson



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## **PART THREE: MY SHORE ADVENTURE**

### **13. How My Shore Adventure Began**



The island looked completely different when I came on deck next morning. We had sailed a long way during the night. We were now about half a mile to the southeast of the eastern coast.

Even after being so long at sea, my heart sank into my boots. I hated the very thought of Treasure Island.

I volunteered for one of the boats to take us ashore. It was hot and the men complained fiercely. The sight of the island seemed to relax their discipline.

We dropped anchor between the two shorelines. The splash sent up clouds of birds over the woods. In less than a minute they were down again. All was silent once more.

The mainland was on one side and Skeleton Island on the other. Below us was clean sand. From the ship, we could see trees but no houses.

It felt like we were the first ever visitors to the island.

### **The island**

The only sound was of the surf booming along the beaches and against the rocks outside. The smell of wet leaves and rotting tree trunks hung in the air.

Doctor Livesey sniffed the air and frowned "I don't know about treasure," he said. "But I'm certain there's fever here."

The men lay about the deck, complaining in low voices. The slightest order was received with a black look. Mutiny hung over us like a thundercloud.

Long John went from group to group, trying to encourage his men to work harder. When the officers gave orders, John was on his crutch in an instant, with the cheeriest "Aye, aye, sir!" in the world.

We held a council in the cabin.

"Sir," said the captain, "if I risk another order, the whole ship will mutiny. We've only one man we can rely on."

"And who is that?" asked the squire.

"Silver, sir," returned the captain. "He wants to avoid problems for now. Let him take his men ashore. We will arm and be ready to fight if we need to."

The captain went on deck and addressed the crew.

"My lads," he said. "We've had a hot day and we're all tired! You may go ashore for the afternoon. I'll fire a gun half an hour before sundown."

In a moment, the mood changed. A cheer went up that sent the birds once more flying into the air.

### **My mad idea**

The captain cleverly allowed Silver to arrange the party. Six fellows were to stay on board. The remaining thirteen, including Silver, began to embark.

Then I had the first of the mad ideas that helped to save our lives. I knew we could not defend the ship with only six men. I decided in that instant to go ashore.

Slipping over the side and I curled up under the sail of the nearest boat.

Seconds later, she sailed off.

No one took notice of me. Then Silver, from the other boat, looked sharply over.

"Is that you, Jim?"

From that moment, I began to regret what I had done.

The crews raced for the beach. The boat I was in was far ahead of the other but it ran into the shore-side trees. I caught a branch and swung myself out.

Silver and the rest were still a hundred yards behind. "Jim, Jim!" I heard him shouting.

I ran and ran till I could run no longer.

## 14. The First Blow



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Relieved at escaping away from Long John, I looked around me at this strange land. I was open, sandy country. A rattle snake raised his head from a ledge of rock and hissed at me!



The marsh was steaming in the strong sun. A wild duck flew up with a quack. Another followed.

A great cloud of birds were screaming and circling in the air.

### Shipmates

Soon I heard the low tones of a human voice in the distance. It grew steadily louder and nearer. In a great fear, I crawled under the cover of an oak tree.

I now recognised the voice. It was Long John Silver. Another voice answered him. They spoke quickly. I could hear no distinct words.

I tried to get closer. Crawling on all fours, I made steadily but slowly towards them. Eventually I raised my head and looked through the leaves.

Silver was with Tom, another of the crew. They stood face to face in conversation.



“Silver,” said Tom, in a voice as hoarse as a crow “People say you're honest. You've money, too. Don't turn against Captain Smollett —”

This was good news. Tom was not with the mutineers!

Suddenly there was a loud noise in the distance. Far away out in the marsh there arose a sound like the cry of anger. Then there was a long, horrible scream.

### **Murder**

Tom leaped up at the sound. Silver did not move. He stood where he was, resting lightly on his crutch. He was watching his companion, like a snake about to spring.

The cry echoed around rocks of the Spy-glass. The marsh-birds rose again, darkening heaven. Then, silence.

“John!” said the sailor, stretching out his hand.

“Hands off!” cried Silver, leaping back, like a trained gymnast.

“John Silver, do your worst. If I die like a dog, I'll die in my duty. You've killed Alan, have you? Kill me too, if you can.”

With that, this brave fellow turned his back directly on the cook and set off walking for the beach.

He did not get far.

With a cry, Long John Silver struck Tom right between the shoulders in the middle of his back. Tom's hands flew up and he gave a sort of gasp. Then he fell.



Silver, agile as a monkey even without his crutch, was on the top of him the next moment. Twice he buried his knife in that defenceless body. I could hear him pant aloud as he struck the blows.



Silver and the birds, and the tall Spyglass hilltop were spinning before my eyes. Bells were ringing. Distant voices were shouting in my ear.

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I think I fainted. When I came round, I looked again at the murderer.

Silver was quite relaxed — his crutch under his arm, his hat upon his head. Just before him, Tom lay motionless. The murderer continued calmly cleaning his blood-stained knife with grass.



Everything else was unchanged. The sun was still shining on the marsh and the mountain. I could scarcely believe that a human life had been cruelly cut short moments earlier before my eyes.

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John took a whistle from his pocket and blew upon it. He was calling the other mutineers.

Two honest men were dead. Would they kill me next?

Instantly I began crawl back to the more open portion of the wood. Behind me, I could hear the other pirates moving towards their leader.

When I was clear of the thicket, I ran as I never ran before. I ran without direction other than away from the murderers. My fear grew with every step.

It was all over, I thought.

Goodbye to the Hispaniola.

Goodbye to the squire, the doctor, and the captain!

I reached the foot of the little hill with the two peaks. In this part of the island, the trees were taller and grew more widely apart. The air too smelt more freshly than down beside the marsh.

Here a fresh alarm brought me to a standstill, with a thumping heart.

## 15. The Man of the Island



From the side of the steep, stony hill, gravel fell rattling through the trees. I saw a dark, hairy figure leap behind the trunk of a pine tree.

Was it a bear? A man? I froze in terror.

I was now cut off upon both sides. Behind me were the murderers. Before me was this creature of the woods. And immediately I began to prefer the dangers that I knew to those I knew not.

I turned on my heel, and looking sharply behind me over my shoulder, began to retrace my steps in the direction of the boats.

Instantly, the figure reappeared, jumping between the trees..



I almost cried out for help. But my fear of Silver was even greater.

The creature - a man I was now sure - hid behind another tree. As soon as I began to move in his direction, he reappeared.

Taking a step to meet me, he hesitated. Then he came forward again.

“Who are you?” I asked.



“Ben Gunn,” he answered. His voice sounded like a rusty lock. “I’m poor Ben Gunn. I haven’t spoken with an Englishman for three years.”

His appearance was most extraordinary. Beneath his tattered clothes, his pale skin, wherever it was exposed, was burnt by the sun. About his waist, he wore an old brass-buckled leather belt.

“Three years!” I cried. “Were you shipwrecked?”

“No, mate,” said he. “I was marooned.”

### **Marooned**



“The pirates left me behind on this island,” he continued. He felt my hands and the material of my jacket. “I have been marooned here for three years.”

“How have you survived? What have you eaten?”



“I’ve lived on berries and oysters,” he said. “But, mate, I miss English food. You don’t have a piece of cheese on you? Many nights I’ve dreamed of cheese—toasted, mostly.”

“If ever I can get aboard again,” said I, “you shall have all the cheese you can eat.”

“What do you call yourself, mate?”

“Jim,” I told him.

“Jim,” he said, quite pleased, apparently. “Well, now, Jim, I look rough, don’t I?”

“A little,” I answered.

Looking all round him, he lowered his voice to a whisper. “I’m rich,” he said.

The poor fellow had gone crazy in his solitude

“I’m rich! Rich!” he repeated. “And lucky you, Jim! You’ve found me first!

Suddenly he tightened his grasp of my hand. He raised a forefinger threateningly before my eyes.

“Now, Jim, you tell me the truth. Is that Flint’s ship?” he asked.

I began to believe that I had found a friend. I answered him at once.

“It’s not Flint’s ship. Flint is dead. But there are some of Flint’s men aboard.”

“Not a man—with one leg?” he gasped.

“Silver?” I asked.

“Ah, Silver!” says he. “That was his name.”

“He’s the cook, and the ringleader too.” He was still holding me by the wrist. “If Long John sent you,” he said, “I’m a dead man! But where have you come from?”

I told him the story of our voyage. He listened closely and patted me on the head.

“You’re a good lad, Jim,” he said; “And you say this squire is a generous man?”

“Yes, he’s very generous.”

“I see,” said Ben Gunn, “Do you think he might give a little of the treasure to a man who helped him find it? Say one thousand pounds?”

“I am sure he would,” said I. “Everyone who helps us will share the reward.”

“And a passage home?” he added.

“Why, of course,” I cried, “the squire’s a gentleman! And, besides, we would want you to help sail our ship home.”

“Ah,” said Benn Gunn. He seemed very much relieved. “Now, I’ll tell you what happened to me,” said Ben Gunn.

### **Ben Gunn’s story**

“I was on Flint’s ship when he six strong seamen ashore one night to bury the treasure. A week later, Flint returned in a little boat. He was alone – the other six were dead and buried. None of us knew what had happened.”

“Billy Bones and Long John asked Flint where the treasure was. He wouldn’t tell them and we sailed away.

“Then three years ago I was in another ship with another crew. We sailed past this island. ‘Boys,’ said I. ‘Let’s land here and look for Flint’s treasure.’

“We went ashore. Twelve days we looked for it. Then one morning the captain ordered everyone back to the ship. ‘Everyone except you, Benjamin Gunn,’ he says. “You can stay here and look for the treasure!”

“Well, Jim, I have been here three years. I haven’t had a bite of English food from that day to this.”

And with that, Ben Gunn winked and pinched me hard. Then he carried on talking, saying very strange things. Eventually I had to stop him.

“I don't understand one word that you've been saying,” I said. “But please tell me how I can get back to my ship?”

“Ah,” said he, “Well, there's my boat! I made her with my two hands! She’s under the white rock. We could try that after dark.”

Suddenly a cannon shot echoed across the island.

### **Fighting Begins**



“What's that?”

“They have begun to fight!” I cried. “Follow me.”

And I began to run towards the harbour. Close at my side was Ben Gunn, in his goatskins. “Keep to your left, Jim! There’s where I killed my first goat. They don't come down here now because they fear Benjamin Gunn.”

He kept talking as I ran. He neither expected nor received any answer.

In the distance, I saw the Union Jack flying. It fluttered in the air above a wood.

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