

Chapter 14

Long John Strikes the First Blow

I was so pleased at having escaped that I began to enjoy myself and look around the strange island.

I had crossed a marshy tract full of willows and other swamp trees when I came upon a piece of sandy country about a mile long. I examined the little flowering plants and watched snakes slither between the foliage.

Soon I heard voices, so I hid under an oak and sat straining to hear what was being said.

I immediately recognized Long John's voice.

He was talking with one of the mates. This man obviously had not known about the plan, and as Long John described it, the mate answered him angrily.

"I thought you were an honest man," he said. "Mutiny is not my style. I'm an honest sailor and I curse the day I joined this crew."

Just then a cry of anger echoed over the hill. Then we all heard one long, horrible scream.

"What was that?" shouted the mate.

"That?" returned Silver with a sly smile. "That was the last sound of your friend Joseph—another honest sailor. He too wouldn't go along with my little plan."

"Joseph!" shouted the mate. "God rest his soul. And as for you, Long John, you're no mate of mine. If I die like a dog, I'll die doing what's right. Kill me too if you can, but I dare you!"

And with that, this brave fellow turned his

back directly on Long John and set off towards the beach. He did not get very far. With a cry, John grabbed the branch of a tree, whipped the crutch out of his armpit, and sent it hurtling through the air. It struck the poor fellow with incredible force right in the middle of his back. His hands flew up and he fell to the ground.

I couldn't tell how badly he was injured, but from his groans I would guess that his back was broken. He had no time to recover. Silver was on top of him in a moment and buried his knife in the fallen body. I could hear him pant loudly as he stabbed the mate.

I felt myself grow dizzy and I knew I was about to faint. I blacked out for only a second. The sound of the birds screaming overhead brought me to. I saw the monster, John Silver, put his hat upon his head as if nothing had happened. Then he simply cleaned his knife and put it away.

TREASURE ISLAND

Stepping over the body of his poor victim, Long John gave three shrill whistles that rang in the air. He was calling his men. They already had killed two mates, and I couldn't help wondering if I was their next victim.

My heart pounding, I ran silently through the bushes. I had no idea where I was going. I only knew I had to get away. I was so frightened I could hear my own heartbeats and feel the sweat as it streamed down my neck.

I soon found myself among some pine trees. Here I saw a sight that brought me to a total standstill.

Chapter 15

The Man of Treasure Island

There under the pine trees, I saw a figure leap swiftly behind a tree. I could not be sure if it was a man or a beast. It seemed dark and shaggy. All I knew was that no beast could be worse than Long John Silver.

I stood stock still and did not attempt to hide or run away. The shaggy creature came out from behind the tree and held out his hands toward me. I immediately saw that this shaggy, ragged creature was indeed a man.

“Who are you?” I asked.

“Ben Gunn,” he answered in a hoarse and almost rusty-sounding voice. “I’m poor Ben Gunn, I am, and I haven’t spoken with another human being for three years.”

I could see now that he was an Englishman like me. His skin, where it was exposed, had been burned by the sun. He was dressed in the most incredible rags I had ever seen. They were mere tatters of an old ship’s sail. On his waist he wore an old brass-buckled belt.

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

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

I had heard that word before. I knew it stood for a horrible punishment where pirates would actually put someone ashore on a desolate and distant island. They would not provide the unfortunate sailor with food or drink. Most men in this situation would not survive.

But old Ben Gunn was a clever man. He

told me how he had learned to live off the berries and fruits he had found on the island and the oysters and fish in its waters.

“Do you happen to have some cheese with you?” he asked. “Many’s the long night I’ve dreamed of cheese—toasted and dripping off a thick slab of brown bread. Then I wake up and I’m still here on this lonely island.”

I assured Ben Gunn that I had nothing at all with me, but if I ever got back on board the *Hispaniola*, he could have cheese by the pound.

After the old man asked me my name, he asked if I was sailing with Flint. I assured him that Flint was long since dead. Next he asked me if Long John Silver was on the ship. Seeing how afraid he was, I decided I’d better tell him the whole story.

He heard my tale with great interest, and when I was through he told me I was a good lad. He wanted to know whether he would be

rewarded if he were to help me and my friends aboard the ship. He asked for a thousand dollars and passage home.

I assured him that the squire was a gentleman, and he would greatly reward any favor that would get us all out of this terrible trouble. Upon hearing this, Ben Gunn showed much relief and told me this story.

He was among Flint's crew when the captain buried the famous treasure. When Flint went on shore, he took six strong mates with him to bury the chest. After one week, Flint came back—alone. He had killed all six of the mates. No one knew how he did it, and only Flint knew where the treasure was buried. Billy Bones and Long John were aboard the ship. When they saw Flint come back alone, they asked him where the treasure was hidden. All he answered was, "Go ashore if you like. This ship sails tonight." So they sailed away and old Flint kept his secret.

Three years later, Ben Gunn was aboard another ship. He sighted this island and recognized it as the one where Flint had buried his treasure. He convinced his mates to go ashore and hunt for the gold. They searched for twelve days in the sweltering sun and found nothing. Each day they grew more angry at Ben. On the thirteenth day, they handed Ben a gun, a spade, and an axe, and told him he could stay on Treasure Island and hunt for Flint's money as long as he pleased.

Just as Gunn finished his story, I heard the thunder of a cannon.

"They have begun to fight!" I cried. "Follow me."

I began to run towards the shore while close at my side, Ben Gunn trotted easily and lightly. He talked constantly, but I could hardly hear or understand a word of it.

Soon I saw the British flag fluttering in the air above the trees. One look, and I knew that

TREASURE ISLAND

this must be where the doctor, the squire, and Captain Smollett had set up camp on the island. That flag meant safety for me.

Chapter 16

The Captain Tells How the Ship Was Abandoned

"It was about one-thirty when two boats left the *Hispaniola* to go ashore. The doctor, the squire, and I were talking matters over in the cabin. Hunter, one of the crew members, came to tell us that Jim Hawkins had slipped into a boat and gone ashore with the rest.

"We were worried about Jim and afraid we would never see the lad again. We decided that Hunter and I would go ashore in one of the lifeboats and see if we could find Jim.

“We sailed towards the small stockade that had been built on the island. I had a pistol hidden under my jacket and was ready for anything.

“We were already ashore when I heard a bloodcurdling scream. It was the scream of a man at the point of death. My first thought was that Jim Hawkins, poor lad, had been captured and killed by Silver and his crew.

“I knew we had little time to waste. So we returned immediately to the lifeboat. Hunter rowed powerfully, and we were soon back on board the ship.

“The squire and the doctor were white-faced with fear. Even Hunter was shaking with fright.

“We made a daring plan. Holding off the crew with our guns, we loaded the lifeboat with necessary supplies. We were going ashore to fight it out with Silver and his crew. There was nothing else we could do.

TREASURE ISLAND

—“We made it to shore safely with the first load, then we decided to risk a second try. We knew we would need guns, ammunition and food if we were to stay alive.

“By this time the tide was beginning to ebb, and the ship was swinging round to its anchor. Redruth—the doctor’s companion, the squire, the doctor, Hunter, and two crew men—Joyce and Gray—joined me as we shoved off in the lifeboat, which was heavy with supplies.”

Chapter 17

The Doctor Tells of the Lifeboat's Last Trip

"The last trip to the island was the most difficult. The boat was loaded down with goods and supplies, and this time all seven of us were aboard. The sea was beginning to get rough, and it took all our skill to keep from being swept off course.

"When we were about midway between the ship and the island, I saw, to my horror, that Long John's men aboard the *Hispaniola* were loading the cannon and aiming it at our little boat. And the worst of it was that we were

right out in the middle of the sea—a perfect target.

“I could hear as well as see that rascal, Israel Hands, plumping down a round of fire on the deck.

“‘Who’s the best shot?’ asked the captain.

“‘Mr. Trelawney is,’ I answered.

“‘Mr. Trelawney, will you please pick off one of those men, sir? Israel Hands, if possible,’ said the captain.

“‘The squire was as cool as steel. He aimed his gun and fired. There was a great commotion on board, but the shot passed right over the head of Israel Hands and downed one of the other mates. It was clear that they did not intend to let this stop them. They never so much as looked at their fallen mate though he was not dead, and I could see him trying to crawl away.

“We pulled on the oars with great effort while fire passed over our heads. One of the

TREASURE ISLAND

shots must have hit us in the stern, since the boat began to sink. Luckily, by this time we were close to shore, and the captain and I found ourselves standing in three feet of water. There were no lives lost and we all reached shore safely. But our supplies were gone. To make things worse, only two guns out of five remained in a state of service.

“To add to our worries, we could hear Silver’s men on shore, and we knew we’d have to make a run for it if we were to reach the stockade alive.”

Chapter 18

Jim Continues the Story

I approached the stockade with great care. I knew the doctor and his crew had reached the island safely, since they had already strung up the flag. But there was a great deal of fighting going on. Silver's men were shooting at the cabin, and the doctor and his crew were fighting back with all they had.

I bid farewell to Ben Gunn, who reminded me of my promise. He told me where he could be found and asked that whoever looked for him should carry a white banner, so he'd know there was no danger.

TREASURE ISLAND

I hid for some time watching the attack. Silver's men were demolishing the lifeboat with their axes. Boats kept coming and going between the ship and the island. The men shouted and laughed, and I could tell they had been drinking rum.

Finally I made my way to the cabin. The doctor couldn't believe his eyes when he saw me. He had taken me for dead. I told him and the men my story. Next, I looked carefully around the cabin. It was a log house made of unsquared trunks of pine. There was a porch at the door and under the porch was a little spring of fresh water. There was not much inside the house, just a stone slab to sit on and an old rusty iron basket in which to make a fire.

If we had been allowed to sit idle, we would have become bored and unhappy, but Captain Smollett was too smart to let that happen. He called us all together and divided us into

watches: the doctor, Gray, and I for one; the squire, Hunter, and Joyce for the other. Tired though we all were, two were sent for firewood and two were to bring water from the spring. I was put on as sentry at the door, and the captain moved among all of us, keeping our spirits up and lending a hand.

From time to time the doctor came to the door for a little air, and whenever he did he talked with me.

"That man Smollett," he said, "is a better man than I am. And when I say that, it means a lot."

Another time he asked me more about Ben Gunn. I told him that I could not be entirely sure that the old man was sane. The doctor explained that no man who had been left all alone for three years could be expected to appear normal, but the fact that he had managed to survive indicated a certain amount of sanity. He told me that he had with him

TREASURE ISLAND

a small amount of cheese that he was saving for Ben Gunn. He had a feeling we would be needing the old man's services sooner than we thought.

That evening, we speculated upon our chances for survival. The doctor figured that the rum and the climate would be working against our enemies. Those that didn't get too drunk to fight would get ill from sleeping outside beside the marsh. The captain hoped that eventually they would give up and return to the ship and get to buccaneering again.

I was dead tired, and as soon as the sun went down I got to sleep. I was awakened by the early sun and the sound of someone shouting:

"Flag of truce!"