

Chapter 25

The Treasure Hunt

After all the pirates had been tended to by the doctor, we gathered around the fire for a hearty breakfast. Long John assured his crew that after we found the treasure and were off to sea, I would join them. In the meantime, having me along on the hunt would be insurance against any tricks the doctor might have planned.

The men then armed themselves with axes and shovels, and we all set off in the direction of the hill called the "Spy-glass."

We followed the directions on the map to

the letter. When we had gone over two miles, one of the men began to cry aloud, as if in terror. We heeded his shouts and ran towards him. When we reached the spot upon which he was standing we saw the reason for his cries. At the foot of a pine tree lay a human skeleton. A chill struck my heart. It must have been one of the men Flint had taken ashore when he first buried the treasure.

Long John examined the bones. They had been bleached white by the sun, but they seemed to lie in a peculiar position. Indeed, the body lay perfectly straight—his feet pointing in one direction, his hand raised above his head like a diver's, pointing directly the opposite way.

Silver took out his compass. The skeleton was pointing directly east. Flint had left a dead man's bones to point the way to the treasure.

Soon the men began to talk of death and

ghosts and the spirit of Captain Flint himself. They were frightened, and as we moved among the swaying trees we heard a faint cry:

"Darby M'Graw," it wailed, "Darby M'Graw, fetch me the rum!"

The men froze in their tracks. Those had been Captain Flint's last words. The men would have run away, but fear kept them together.

"Listen," said Silver, "that was an echo. It was like Flint's voice, but not exactly. It sounded more like someone else to me." He scratched his head for a minute and then said:

"Ben Gunn! That's who it sounds like. Why, alive or dead, old Ben Gunn was no one to fear, now was he, mates?"

The men at once picked up, and the color returned to their faces. They were not likely to let any man, alive or dead, get in their way now that they were so close to treasure.

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Soon we approached the site of the treasure. The men nearly ran over me in their excitement.

We were now at the edge of the woods.

"Here, here, mates, all together!" shouted one of the crew.

And suddenly, not more than ten yards away I saw them all come to a dead stop. Before them stood a great gaping hole.

All was now clear. Someone had found the treasure and taken it—Silver had been tricked at his own game!

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Silver's Men Rebel

The men stood stock still as they stared into the dark and empty excavation. Silver handed me a pistol and whispered, "Take that and stand by for trouble."

At the same time, he quietly began to move away from the crew. I was so revolted by his change of loyalty that I could not help whispering, "So, you've changed sides again."

Before he had time to answer, the pirates began swearing and shaking their fists.

One of the men called the others around, and facing Long John, he said in a loud, clear voice:

"Mates, there's the two of them alone there. One's the old cripple who brought us here, and the other's that boy—and I mean to get the both of 'em."

He was raising his arm and his voice, and he plainly meant to lead an attack. But just then—crack! crack! crack! Three shots flashed out of the thicket. Three pirates fell where they stood, and the other three ran for it with all their might.

At that moment, the doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn joined us. They held pistols which were still smoking from the gunfire.

"Thank you kindly, doctor," said Long John as he mopped his face. "You came in the nick of time. And so it *is* you, Ben Gunn!" he added. "I never thought I'd see the likes of you again!"

The doctor sat down on a rock and explained what really had happened from the start.

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Ben, in his long and lonely wanderings around the island, had somehow found Flint's treasure. He had dug it up and in many weary journeys had carried it on his back to a hiding place in a cave on the other side of the island.

The doctor had wormed this secret from him on the afternoon of the attack. The next morning, when he saw the ship was gone, the doctor paid Long John a visit. He gave him the map, which was now useless, and possession of the stockade. The purpose of this was to get a chance to move safely from the stockade to the cave where Gunn had hidden the treasure. Being closer to the cave meant the doctor and his men would be farther away from the possibility of infection from malaria and nearer to the treasure, which had to be guarded. But when the doctor learned that I was being held by Silver and his men, he had to change some of his plans. He knew that when the crew discovered that the treas-

ure had been removed, there would be a revolt and that Long John probably would be executed. But he now feared that I would be shot as well.

To head off the crew and ambush them, the doctor had to think of a way to slow the men down, so that he and Gray could hide in the bushes and ambush them at the treasure site. It was then that Ben Gunn got the idea to work on the superstitions of his former shipmates and to pretend that he was the ghost of Captain Flint. This gave the doctor and Gray time to set up their ambush of Silver's crew.

"Ah," said Silver when he had heard the story, "it was lucky for me that I had Hawkins here. You would have let old John be cut to bits and never even given it a thought."

"Not a thought," answered Dr. Livesey cheerily.

The next thing we did was prepare to find

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Ben Gunn's cave and begin the task of moving the treasure aboard the *Hispaniola*. We all loaded into a small boat and rowed clear across the island.

Soon old Ben Gunn gave a shout, and we knew he had sighted the cave. we brought the craft ashore and entered the hiding place.

It was a large, airy cave with a little spring and a pool of clear water. The floor was sand. Before a big fire lay Captain Smollett. In a far corner I could see heaps of coins and piles of gold bars. This was the treasure we had come so far to seek and that had already cost the lives of seventeen men from the *Hispaniola*.

Captain Smollett smiled when he saw me. All was forgiven, and he shook my hand like an old friend.

That night we prepared a feast to celebrate our good fortune. We ate some of Ben Gunn's salted goat's meat and drank a bottle of wine

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from the *Hispaniola*. Never were people more happy than we were that night. And there was Silver, eating along with the rest of us and smiling like an ordinary sailor—almost as if nothing at all had happened between us.

Chapter 27

The End of My Adventure

The next morning we got right to work, for transporting the treasure from the cave to the ship was a big job. We were well aware that three of Silver's men still remained on the island, so we posted one sentry to keep a lookout for them. Ben Gunn and Gray loaded sacks of gold and carried them one at a time to the ship, while I was kept busy packing the money into smaller bags.

It was a strange collection, for there were coins and paper money from all over the world. They came in all different shapes and

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sizes. There were strange-looking Oriental pieces, stamped with what looked like wisps of string or bits of spider's web, and round pieces that had holes bored through the middle. I was filled with wonder at all the different places Flint must have gone to collect this great treasure.

Day after day this work went on. Every evening a fortune had been stowed aboard, and every morning there was still more to be transported to the ship.

At last, after nearly four days, the doctor and I went strolling on the shoulder of the hill, and we heard the sound of voices.

"Heaven forgive them," said the doctor, "'tis the mutineers!"

"All drunk, sir," said the voice of Long John Silver.

We had allowed Silver complete freedom, although we were far from friendly to him. But nothing seemed to bother the old pirate,

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and he went about the tasks assigned him with cheerful eagerness.

When the doctor suggested that some of the mutineers might be in need of medical treatment, Long John spoke up for the first time.

"I ask your pardon, sir," he said, "but you would be wrong to tend to those men. They would kill you in a minute, I am sure of it. I'm on your side now, and I'd hate to see our chances of a safe return ruined."

As much as he hated to admit it, the doctor knew that Long John was right and that we had no choice but to leave the three men on the island to shift for themselves. We left them all our supplies and some medicine and hoped that they would survive somehow.

By this time we had stowed all the treasure and were ready to set sail for home. Early the next morning we boarded the *Hispaniola* and bid farewell to Treasure Island.

As we sailed away, the three mutineers

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called to us and begged us to take them aboard, but we knew that we could not risk another plot to mutiny. The doctor hailed them and told them where they could find the supplies and the medicine.

At last, when they saw we were not turning back, they began to shoot at the ship. Their shots just missed Silver, and we stayed under cover until we were safely out of range.

We were so short of men that everyone on board had to do the work of two. The captain, who was still recovering from his wounds, lay on a mattress and gave orders.

It was just sundown when we laid anchor in our first port on the way home. It was a beautiful landlocked gulf, and we were immediately surrounded by shore boats full of natives selling luscious fruits and vegetables. The sights and smells of this wonderful place helped us to forget our dark and bloody experiences on Treasure Island.

The doctor and the squire took me along, and we went ashore to pass the evening. When we returned to the *Hispaniola*, Ben Gunn was on deck alone, and he at once began to confess to us that Silver was gone. He had escaped in a shore boat a few hours after we left. Silver had not left empty-handed. He had taken a few sacks of coins and gold with him.

I think we were all pleased to be rid of him at last, for none of us were really sure what plans or tricks he still might have up his sleeve.

The voyage home was calm and uneventful. We got a few extra men to help us on board and made a good cruise back. Of the original crew, there were now only five men left. But we were not as bad as the other ship which sailors sang about:

“With one man of her crew alive,
What put to sea with seventy-five.”

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All of us got a fair share of Flint's treasure, and we all used it as we pleased. Captain Smollett used his share to buy a little house in the country and retire from his life at sea. This last voyage had showed him that the quiet life was more to his liking. Gray saved his money and put a good part of it towards studying the more technical aspects of his profession. Now he is a mate and part owner of a fine full-rigged ship. He also married his childhood sweetheart and started a family.

As for Ben Gunn, he got a great deal of Flint's treasure, since he was the one who led us to it to begin with. Unfortunately, those three years alone on Treasure Island did more damage to his mind than any of us had suspected. He went so wild with the comforts of civilization that he gambled and drank away all of his money in nineteen days. On the twentieth day he was begging in the streets. Then some seafaring men took pity

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on him and gave him an inn to take care of. He still lives there and is a great favorite of the men, as well as being a notable singer in church every Sunday.

The doctor returned to his practice and opened a free clinic for the poor. He is well-known for his medical skills and his generosity to the needy.

None of us ever heard of Long John Silver again. I believe that he has gone out of all our lives forever. I do know that he never returned to his wife and family who were waiting for him in Bristol. Perhaps they all met somewhere and are living a life of peace and luxury on some remote island. It is to be hoped so, I suppose, for his chances for comfort in another world are very small.

The three mutineers that were left on the island were never seen in England again. But who knows, they might have been saved by some other vessel and are continuing their life at sea.

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As for me, I am content to spend the rest of my days safely on the land. I will never forget the excitement of those days at sea, but nothing could drag me back to the sea or to Treasure Island.

When I returned to England with my treasure, I went to visit my mother. She was overjoyed to see me. She had been managing the inn, and for the first time in many years, she was happy and making a good living. I wanted to share my good fortune with her, but she would have none of it.

For many months I pondered how to spend the rest of my life. I visited the doctor often and spent many hours talking these things over with him.

My mother took ill, and although I gave her the best care money could buy, she died in the spring. The inn was left in my care. Both my father and mother had spent all their lives taking care of sailors and travel-

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ers. It was now my turn to carry on the family tradition.

One afternoon a gentleman from London came by the inn. He was impressed with the place and offered to buy it from me. He was tired of the city life and looked forward to spending his old age by the sea.

After visiting the doctor to talk things over, I decided to sell the inn.

In less than a month the deal was sealed. I shook hands with the elderly gentleman who was to take over what had been my home for so long.

I still live by the sea, and although I no longer take care of sailors, I have never lost interest in ships and tales of high adventure. But sometimes, when I hear the surf beating against the coast, I sit upright as if woken from a bad dream. For I can hear the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears: "Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"