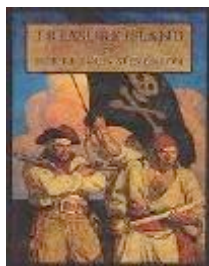


TREASURE ISLAND



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BOOK THREE – MY SHORE ADVENTURE

CHAPTER 14.

THE FIRST BLOW

I was happy with myself, for getting away from Long John. I started to look around at the strange land I was in. I had run across a muddy creek with high grasses and twisted trees then ended up in an open sandy area. On the far side, I could see the two craggy peaks of the hills shining in the sun. I was, all alone. I could stop now and start exploring the island.

I saw plants with flowers and even snakes. One lifted his head from the edge of a rock and hissed at me. I didn't know it was a deadly rattle snake!

Everywhere was hot and steaming in the strong sun and I could see the Spy-Glass Hill through the haze. I heard a rustle among the reeds and a wild duck flew up with a quack and then another followed.

Soon the whole area had a great cloud of birds screaming and flying in circles in the air. I thought some of the men from the ship, must be getting closer to me. Then I heard a voice a long way off, but it slowly got louder as it got nearer. I started to worry, so I crawled under the nearest big tree and sat there as quiet as a mouse to listen.

I could hear another voice, which I knew was Silver's.

Once again I started to run along a stream, stopping sometimes to listen. I could still hear them but not what they were saying. Soon they must have sat down, as the birds had settled and the voices were not getting any louder. I started to feel that I was not doing my job. I had been the one to jump off the ship, the least I could do, was listen in on their talks and find out what their plans were.

I tried to get as close as I could, by staying under the trees. I could tell which way to go by the sound of their voices and by where the birds were still circling in the air. I crawled along on my hands and knees until I could see between the leaves to where they were stood talking. Silver had thrown his hat down on the ground, and his face, was all shiny with sweat.

"Mate," I could hear him say, "you know I think you are worth gold dust! If I didn't like you so much, do you think I would be here to warn you? I am here to save your neck and if some of those other rough men knew that I was Tom, well... what do you think they would do to me?"

"Silver," said the other man, "you're old, and they say you are honest and have money too. A lot of us poor sailors don't. I know you are brave but I would rather lose my fingers or hand than not do my duty on that ship."

All of a sudden, he heard a noise and stopped. I thought to myself, I had found one of the trusted men - Tom.

Then at that same moment, I heard the sound of a cry of anger, followed by one long, loud scream. The birds flew up in the air again making more noise and I could hear the death, yell in my ears. Tom had jumped at the sound, but Silver had not blinked an eye. He stood where he was, resting lightly on his crutch, looking at Tom like a snake ready to strike.

"John!" said the sailor, stretching out his hand.

"Hands off!" cried Silver, stepping back with speed.

"If you like, John Silver," said the other one. "But what in heaven's name, was that?"

"That?" smiled Silver, "Oh, I reckon that'll be Alan."

And at this point, Tom stared at him.

"Alan!" he cried. "Then rest his soul, he was a true seaman!

And as for you, John Silver, you have been a mate of mine for a long time, but you are not my mate any more.

If I die like a dog, I will have died doing my duty. You've killed Alan, have you? Then kill me too, if you can."

And with that, this brave man Tom, turned his back on the cook and set off walking for the beach. But he did not get very far.



With a cry, John Silver grabbed hold of a branch from a tree, whipped the crutch out from under his armpit, and sent it flying like a weapon through the air. It hit poor Tom, right in the middle of his back. His hands flew up in the air and as he gave a short gasp of breath, he fell. His back was broken. He had no time to get up. Silver was like a monkey without his leg or crutch and was on the top of him with his knife in an instant.

I do not know what it is like to faint, but for a little while I felt weird with everything spinning in a circle and I could not see very well. When I felt better again the monster had pulled his crutch under his arm and put his hat back on his head.

Tom lay dead still in front of him. He did not seem to even notice him. He wiped the blood off his knife on some grass and everything went back what it was. I still could not believe I had just seen a murder with my very own eyes.

But now, Long John put his hand into his pocket, and took out a whistle.

He blew on it in short blasts, like a signal. Suddenly I knew that more men would be coming. They might see me. I knew they had already killed two honest people in Tom and Alan and I might be next!



I began to crawl backwards again with as much speed and silence as I could. As I did, I could hear calls coming and going between the old buccaneer and his crew. The sound of this danger helped me go faster, than I had ever run before. I did not even care which way I went, as long as it was far away from the killers.

I began to think about what to do when the gun was fired. How could I go down to the boats with these men, still smelling of their crimes? Would the first one to see me, wring my neck? Or if I did not show up, would it tell them of my fear and what I know? I thought it was all over.

Good-bye to the HISPANIOLA. Good-bye to the Squire.
Good-bye to the Doctor and the Captain!

As I was running, I was thinking there was nothing left for me, but death by starving or by those mutineers. I had not noticed that I had run near the foot of the little hill with the two peaks. And now I was in a part of the island where there were really tall, pine trees and the air smelt much fresher.

I stopped. Then a new fear made me stand still with a thumping heart!