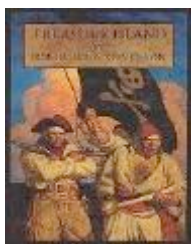


TREASURE ISLAND



Author - Robert Louis Stevenson

Adapted for The Ten Minute Tutor by: Debra Treloar

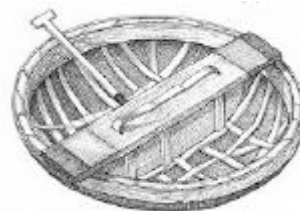
BOOK FIVE – MY SEA ADVENTURE

CHAPTER 23.

THE EBB-TIDE RUNS

The Coracle turned out to be a very safe boat for my height and weight. It floated and was smart, in a 'sea' kind of way. But it was a very lop-sided boat to steer.

It was very good at turning round and round in circles. Even Ben Gunn said that she was a bit "queer to handle until you got to know her way."



I did not know her way! She turned in every way, but the one I wanted to go in. I am very sure I would not have made it to the ship at all, if it had not been for the tide. By good luck, it didn't matter which way I paddled, as the tide was sweeping me right in a line with the HISPANIOLA and I couldn't miss her.

As I went on, the tide got faster until I was along side the anchor and was able to grab hold of the rope.

It would only take one cut with my knife and the HISPANIOLA would go sailing out with the tide. So far... So good.

But then, I began to think that if I cut the tight anchor rope, it would be as dangerous as a kicking horse. I bet if I was silly enough to cut the HISPANIOLA from her anchor, the Coracle and I would be knocked clean out of the water.

Just then, a puff of wind came, which caught the HISPANIOLA and forced her up into the water current. To my great joy, I felt the rope go loose in my grip and my hand dipped into the water for a second. With that, I made up my mind. I took out my knife and cut one strand after another until the anchor, was only held by two strands.



Then I lay quietly, waiting for the next breath of wind to loosen the rope. I could hear the sound of loud voices coming from the cabin, but to tell the truth, I was so busy with the job at hand I had not taken any notice. Now that I was waiting for the wind, I began to listen.

One of the voices I could hear, was Israel Hands. The other was, of course, my 'friend' in the red scarf.

Both men were drunk and still drinking, as one of them threw an empty bottle over the side of the ship. They also sounded angry.

Some times, the voices rose so loudly, they seemed they would come to blows. Then they would quieten down again.

On shore, I could see the glow of the big camp fire burning warmly. Someone was singing, a dull, old, sailor's song. I had heard it on the voyage more than once and remembered these words:



"But one man of her crew alive,
What put to sea with seventy-five."

I thought it was a song too close to home after the cruel losses of men that morning. But, from what I saw, all these buccaneers were as rough as the sea they sailed on.

At last the breeze came. I felt the rope go loose once more and with one good, hard effort, I cut the last strands through.



The breeze did not have much effect on the Coracle and I almost swept against the bow of the HISPANIOLA. At the same time, the ship began to turn across the current.

I feared at any moment I would be swamped by water from the ship, as I could not push the Coracle away. But after much effort of pushing, I felt my hands come across a light cord that was hanging overboard.

I just grabbed it! Why I did, I don't know.

But now, that I had hold of it in my hands, I wanted to have a look in the cabin window.

I pulled myself inwards, hand over hand, until I was close to the ship. When I thought I was near enough, I tried to stand up in the Coracle to see inside. By now we were gliding pretty fast through the water. In fact, we were nearly level with the camp fire. I was being splashed the whole time by the water but finally, I got my eye above the window-sill for a quick look.

I could see Hands and his mate locked together in a fierce wrestle, with their hands on each other's throat. I dropped back down again, just in time, as I had nearly fallen out of my Coracle.



The ballad had stopped on the beach and now they had started a new chorus that I had also heard so often:



"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest...
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
Drink and devil had done for the rest...
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

I was just thinking how close drink and the devil were, when the Coracle suddenly tipped. I seemed to change course and my speed was faster.

I was being whirled along behind, in the wake of the HISPANIOLA. But I could see I had done my job and the HISPANIOLA was free and heading on her course in the night.

Just then, I glanced over my shoulder and my heart jumped in my chest. A long way behind me was the glow of the camp-fire. The current had swept me along with the tall ship. My little dancing coracle was now *also* bubbling its way out to the open sea.

Suddenly, the ship turned slightly and almost at the same time I heard a shout and then another, from on board. I could hear feet climbing on the ladders and I knew that the two drunks had stopped their fight and found out their disaster.

I lay down flat in the bottom of my tiny Coracle and prayed. I felt sure I would fall into the raging waves, where I would die. I must have lay there for hours, getting beaten to and fro in the wind and sprayed with salt water.

At each rise and fall, I feared my death.

I was so cold and tired I must have fallen asleep. I dreamed of being home at the old Admiral Benbow.

