

TREASURE ISLAND



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BOOK SIX – CAPTAIN SILVER

CHAPTER 31.

THE TREASURE-HUNT... FLINT'S POINTER

"Jim," said Silver once we were alone, "I saved your life and you saved mine. I won't forget it. I saw the Doctor waving at you to run for it... And out of the corner of my eye, I saw you say no. Jim, that's one to you. This is the first glint of hope I've had since the attack failed, and I owe it you. Now, Jim, we're going treasure hunting, with sealed orders from the Doctor too, and I don't like it. You and me must stick close, back to back like, and we'll save our necks in spite of fate and fortune."

Just then a man hailed us from the fire that breakfast was ready, and we were soon seated on the sand eating biscuits and fried pork. They had lit a fire big enough to roast an old cow.



In the same wasteful spirit, they had cooked, three times more than we could eat; and one of them, with an empty laugh, threw what was left into the fire, which blazed and roared again over the fatty fuel. I had never in my life seen men so careless about the future. They wasted food, slept when they should be on watch and I did not think they were fit for a long stay on this island. Even Silver, with Captain Flint on his shoulder, did not growl at them or blame for their foolish ways.



He was very cunning and just said "Aye, mates, it's lucky you have Barbecue to think for you. I got the news I wanted when I was talking to Dr. Livesey. Sure enough, they have the ship. I don't know where it is yet, but once we find the treasure, we'll have to hurry up and find out. Then, me mates, I reckon who ever has a boat, will have the upper hand."

He kept talking, with his mouth full of hot bacon and while he did, he was giving them back their hope and confidence.

"As for our hostage," he continued, "that's the last time the Doctor speaks to him. I've got the bit of news that I wanted, thanks to him. I'll tie Jim to me on a rope line when we go treasure hunting, and we'll keep him like gold, just in case something goes wrong.

Once we get the ship and the treasure off to sea, then we'll talk Mr. Hawkins into coming over to our side and we'll give him his share, for his help."

Now the men were in good spirits. But, I wasn't feeling very good about his plan. Silver, was already a double traitor, and would not hesitate to do it again. He still had a foot on both sides. I had no doubt he'd prefer wealth and freedom with the pirates, than hope for escape from hanging. But, it was the best offer he was going to get from our side. Then again, if things went really wrong, he may be forced to take sides with Dr. Livesey. His men might turn on him again and we might have to fight for our lives. A cripple and a boy against five strong seamen! And I still don't understand why my friends left the stockade and handed over the chart to Silver. I was also thinking about the Doctor's last warning to Silver... "Look out for bad winds when you find it." All this left me with no taste for my breakfast and a bad feeling about hunting for treasure.



We would have looked very strange had anyone been there to see us all. Everyone was in dirty sailor clothes and loaded up with guns except for me. Silver had two guns slung about him and his great cutlass at his waist. He carried a pistol in each pocket of his coat and to complete it all, Captain Flint sat perched upon his shoulder and babbling away with useless sea-talk.

I had a rope around my waist and had to follow after Silver, who held the loose end of the rope, sometimes in his free hand, and sometimes between his strong teeth. The other men were loaded up with picks and shovels or pork, bread, and brandy for the midday meal. I noticed all the supplies came from our stock and could see that if Silver had not struck a deal with the Doctor, he and his mutineers would have had to survive on water and anything they could hunt. I don't think sailors would have liked to just live on water.



We all set out, even the fellow with the wounded head, and staggered, one after the other, to the beach. Two small boats were there. They were covered in mud and water and were showing the signs of the drunken pirates by the state of them. We were to use them between us for safety.

There was some talk about the chart. The red cross was, of course, far too large to be a guide and the words of the note on the back, seemed confusing:

Tall tree, Spy-Glass shoulder, bearing a point

To the N. of N.N.E.

Skeleton Island E.S.E. and by E.

Ten feet.



A tall tree seemed to be the main mark.

Right in front of us, the bay was surrounded by a plateau, about two or three hundred feet high.

On the north side, was the rough cliff called Mizzen-Mast Hill. The top of the plateau was dotted with dense pine-trees of different heights. One of the trees, was forty or fifty feet higher than the rest, and of course was the "tall tree" of Captain Flint. It could only be seen from this spot, and by the readings of the compass.

We rowed easily, by Silver's directions, so we did not tire the men too early, and after quite a long stretch, landed at the mouth of the second river. It ran down the woody hill of Spy-glass bay. We began to climb the slope towards the plateau.

At first, the ground was boggy and covered in low bushes, which made it hard to walk, but soon the hill began to get steep and stony under our feet. It was almost nice to walk on that part of the island. The air was fresh and the smell of the pine trees warming under the sun, was very pleasant.



The group spread itself into a fan shape, shouting and leaping about. Silver and I followed with my rope tied around my waist, he sliding on the gravel. Sometimes, I had to lend him a hand, or he would have fallen backward down the hill. We were getting closer to the plateau when the man up front began shouting and the others began to run towards him.

"He can't have found the treasure, because he's not at the top yet" said old Morgan, hurrying past us from the right.

In fact, when we also reached the spot, we found it was something very different. At the foot of a pretty big pine and partly tangled in a green vine, was a human skeleton. There were a few shreds of clothing, on the ground and a chill struck every man for a moment.

"He was a seaman," said George Merry. George was bolder than the rest of us and had gone up close to look at the rags of clothing. "Well, this is good sea-cloth anyway."

"Aye, aye," said Silver; "true enough; you wouldn't find a priest here, I don't reckon. But look at the way the bones lie. It's not natural is it?"

At second glance, it did seem strange. Apart for birds that might have fed on him or the vine that had slowly covered him, the man lay in a perfectly straight line. His feet pointed in one way and his hands were raised above his head like a diver.



"I've had an idea in my old skull," said Silver. "Here's the compass. The tip-top point of Skeleton Island is sticking out like a tooth. Take a bearing, will you, along the line of those bones."

They did. The body pointed exactly in the direction of the island, and the compass read exactly East Southeast by East.

"I thought so," cried the cook; "this skeleton is a pointer. Right up there is the line to guide us to the jolly dollars. But, by thunder! It makes me cold inside to think of old Captain Flint. This is one of 'his' jokes... make no mistake! He and six men were alone here. He killed every one of them. This one he dragged here and lay him down by compass. Shiver me timbers! They're long bones, and the hair was silver. Aye, this would be Allardyce. You knew Allardyce, didn't you, Tom Morgan?"

"Aye, yeah," said Morgan; "I knew him. He owed me money, he did, and took my knife too."

"Speaking of knives," said another, "why isn't his lying around? Flint wasn't the type of man to pick pocket a seaman and the birds, wouldn't have taken it."

"Shiver me timbers, that's true!" cried Silver.

"There's not a thing left here," said Merry, still feeling around among the bones. "Not even a tobacco box. It doesn't look natural to me."

"No, by gum, it doesn't," agreed Silver; "not natural, and not nice, as you say. Great guns! Me mates, if Flint was living, this would be a hot spot for you and me. I mean, six were there then, and now we are six. All that's left of them, is bones."

"Flint is dead..." said Morgan. "I saw it with my own eyes. Billy Bones took me to see him and he had penny coins on his eyes."

"Dead... aye, sure enough he's dead and gone below," said the fellow with the bandage; "but if ever a spirit, walked on this earth, it would be Flint's. He died a bad death, Flint did!"

"Aye, he did," said another man "he yelled for rum, and he sang 'Fifteen Men on a dead man's chest' and to tell you the truth, I've never really liked singing it since. "

"Come, come," said Silver; "stop this talk. He's dead, and he can't walk. Well, at least, he can't walk by day anyway."

We all moved off slowly, no longer running and shouting.