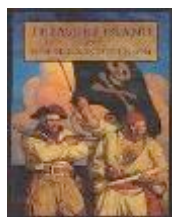


TREASURE ISLAND



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Adapted for The Ten Minute Tutor by: Debra Treloar

BOOK SIX – CAPTAIN SILVER

CHAPTER 33.

THE FALL OF THE CHIEFTAIN*

(* A chieftain - leader of the group but not really the captain)

I had never seen such a change of heart happen so quickly. All the men looked as though they had been struck by lightning. Even Silver, who had his heart set on the money knew in a single second, that he had to change the plan before the others had time to let their disappointment set in.

"Jim," he whispered, "take that, and stand by for trouble."

He passed me a double-barrelled pistol and let go of my rope.



At the same time, he began quietly moving to the north and with a few steps had put the empty hole between the two of us and the five other men. Then he looked at me and nodded, as if to say, "Here is a small chance," as, indeed, I thought it was too.

But he did not look friendly, and I was so angry at his constant changes, that instead of whispering, I said aloud "So you've changed sides again!"

But there was no time for him to answer. The buccaneers, started to yell and leap, one after another, into the pit. They dug at the dirt with their fingers. Morgan found a piece of gold. He held it up and then passed it from man to man for a full minute.

"One coin!" roared Merry, shaking it at Silver. "That's your seven hundred thousand pounds, is it? You're the one that never bungles anything, you wooden-headed lubber!"

"Dig away, boys," said Silver with the coldest voice, "you might find some root vegetables too I would think."

"Vegies!" repeated Merry, in a scream. "Mates, do you hear that? I tell you now. That man there knew all along. Take a look at his face and you'll see it written all over it."

"Ah, Merry," replied Silver, "standing for Captain again? You're pushing it mate, that's for sure."

But this time everyone was on Merry's side. They began to scramble out of the hole, darting furious glances behind them. One thing I did notice, which looked better for us was, they all got out on the opposite side of the hole to us. So, there we stood, two on one side, five on the other.

The hole was between us and nobody was quite ready to make the first move. Silver didn't move. He just watched them, as he stood very tall on his crutch. He was brave; there was no doubting that. At last Merry seemed to think a speech might help things.

"Mates," he said, "there is only two of them. One's the old cripple that brought us all here and fooled us. The other's a boy cub that I am going to take the heart out of. Now, mates..."

He was raising his arm and his voice, and clearly meant to lead a charge. But just then... crack! crack! crack!... three gun-shots flashed out of the bushes. Merry tumbled head first into the hole. The man with the bandage spun round like a totum pole and fell on his side, where he lay dead. The other three turned and ran for it, as fast as they could. Before you could blink, Long John had fired two barrels of his pistol into the struggling Merry. At the same time, the Doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn joined us, with smoking guns, from among the bushes.



"Let's go!" cried the Doctor. "Double quick, lads. We must stop them before they reach the boats."

We took off at great speed, sometimes through bushes up to our chest. Silver was very keen to keep up with us. The effort that man put in, leaping on his crutch until the muscles in his chest looked like they would burst.

Even the Doctor thought his effort could not have been matched by a fully fit man. Even so, he was already thirty yards behind us and on the verge of choking when we reached the edge of the slope.

"Doctor," he called, "see there! No hurry!"

Sure enough there was no hurry. In a more open part of the plateau, we could see the three men still running in the same direction as they had started. Straight for Mizzen-Mast Hill. That meant we were already between them and the boats. So the four of us sat down to breathe, while Long John, slowly caught up to us, wiping the sweat off his face as he went.

"Thank you kindly, Doctor," he said puffing. "I guess you came in the nick of time, for me and Hawkins. So... it **is** you, Ben Gunn!" he added. "Well, you're a nice surprise, to be sure."

"I am Ben Gunn," replied the man, feeling a bit embarrassed. After a long pause he added, "And, how are you, Mr. Silver? Pretty well, I am sure you will say and thank you."

"Ben, Ben," murmured Silver, "to think it was you that outsmarted me!"

The Doctor sent Gray back for one of the pick-axes left behind by the mutineers in their hurry. We walked easily downhill to where the boats were lying and listened to a brief story on what had taken place.

It was a story that interested Silver very much. Ben Gunn, the maroon, was the hero from the start to the end.

While Ben, had been doing his lonely walking around the island, he had found the skeleton. He was the one that had searched taken everything from it and then found the treasure. He had dug up the treasure (and it was his half a pick-axe handle that lay broken in the hole). He had carried it on his back. It took many slow, long trips, from the foot of the tall pine, to a cave he had found at the north east end of the island. It had stayed there, stored in safety for two months before the HISPANIOLA arrived. The Doctor had managed to get this secret from him on the day of the

attack. So the next morning when he saw the anchorage deserted, the Doctor went



to Silver and gave him a now useless chart. He gave him their supplies too, as Ben Gunn's cave had a good supply of salted goats' meat that he had caught. The Doctor would have almost given anything to move safely out of the stockade. He wanted to be clear of malaria and fever and keep a guard on the money.

"As for you, Jim," he said, "it went against my heart, but I did what I thought best for those who had stood by their duty. As you did not, well... whose fault was that?"

When he knew that I would be there when the mutineers found the treasure gone, he had run all the way to the cave, and left the Squire to look after Captain Smollett.

The Doctor, Gray and Ben Gunn raced in a diagonal line across the island to watch from the pine trees. But when he saw our group were way ahead, Ben Gunn had to run ahead to do his best alone. He had the idea to play on the fear of ghosts by his former shipmates and pretended to be a spirit. He was so good at slowing them, that Gray and the Doctor easily had time to be ready in the bushes before the treasure-hunters arrived.

"Ah," said Silver, "it was lucky for me that I had Hawkins here. You would have let old John get shot to bits too, and never even given it a thought, Doctor."

"Quite right. Not a thought," replied Dr. Livesey cheerily.

By the end of his story, we had reached the boats. The Doctor, chopped at one of them with the pick-axe. Then we all got on board the other and set off to the North Inlet by sea. There was a trip of eight or nine miles. Silver had to row, like the rest of us, even though he was dead tired. Soon we passed the place where, four days ago, we had towed the HISPANIOLA.

As we passed the two-pointed hill, we could see the black mouth of Ben Gunn's cave and a figure standing by it, leaning on a musket. It was the Squire, and we waved a handkerchief and gave him three cheers. Even the voice of John Silver joined in as heartily as the rest.

Three miles further on, just inside the mouth of the Inlet, what should we meet? The HISPANIOLA, cruising by herself!

The last tide had lifted her, and if there had been much wind or a strong current, we would never have found her. But she did not seem to have too much damage other than the state of her main-sail. We got another anchor ready and dropped it in deeper water. Then we all rowed around to Rum Cove, which was the nearest point for Ben Gunn's cave of treasure. Gray went on his own in the boat, to guard the HISPANIOLA, for the night.

The Squire met us and did not blame or praise me for taking off on my own and leaving them. Silver gave him a polite salute, which made him blush.

"John Silver," he said, "you're a true villain and you lied to me about what you are. I am told that I am not to prosecute you. Well sir, then, I will not. But the dead men, will hang around your neck like a mill-stone."



"Thank you kindly, sir," replied Long John, again saluting.

"You dare to thank me!" cried the Squire. "It goes totally against my duty. Stand back."

After that, we all entered the cave. It was a large, airy place, with a little pool of clear spring water. The floor was sand and Captain Smollett lay in front of a warm fire.

In a far corner, I could see heaps of coins and gold bars by the faint light of the fire.

That was Flint's treasure. We had come so far to seek it and it had already cost the lives of seventeen men from the HISPANIOLA. I wondered how many other lives it had cost being collected. What blood, grief and good ships had been taken at sea? How many brave men had walked the plank blindfolded, or been shot with a cannon? What shame, lies and cruelty had been? Perhaps no man alive could say. Yet there were still three men on that island. Silver, old Morgan, and Ben Gunn; they all had shared in these crimes and also hoped to share in the reward.



"Come in, Jim," said Captain Smollett. "You're a good boy in general, Jim, but I don't think you and me will go to sea again. You're too much of a free rider for me. Is that you, John Silver? What brings you here?"

"Come back to my duty, sir," replied Silver.

"Ah!" said the Captain, and that was all he said.



What a supper I had that night! I had all my friends around me and Ben Gunn's salted goat and a bottle of old wine from the HISPANIOLA.

Never before, had we been happier. Even Silver, sat back almost out of the firelight, eating heartily. He jumped up when anything was needed and even quietly joined in our laughter.

He was back to the same, polite, obedient seaman cook that he was at the start of the voyage.