

TREASURE ISLAND



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BOOK SIX – CAPTAIN SILVER

CHAPTER 34.

AND LAST

Early the next morning, we had to move the huge amount of gold to the beach. Then we still had to move it by boat to the HISPANIOLA. It was a huge task for the small number of men that could work. The other three men, still on the island, had not bothered us, so we had a single watchman on the edge of the hill. It was likely they had done enough fighting.

The work was carried out quickly. Gray and Ben Gunn went back and forwards in the boat, while the rest piled up the treasure on the beach. Two bars gold, slung each end of a rope, made a good load for a grown man. I was kept busy all day in the cave, packing the coins into bread-bags. I was not much use at carrying.



It was a strange collection of coins. Like Billy Bones's stash. But the coins were so much larger and much more varied. I had fun sorting them into their different currencies. English, French, and Spanish. There were pictures of all the kings of Europe for the last one hundred years.



Other pieces had holes through the middle, like as though you could wear them around your neck. It was like collecting autumn leaves and soon my back ached from stooping and my fingers hurt sorting them out. The work went on for several days and by every evening a fortune had been stowed on board the HISPANIOLA. But there was always more waiting to be loaded the next day.

On the third night, the Doctor and I were walking on the shoulder of the hill where it overlooked the lower part of the island. We could hear on the wind, noises that sounded like a cross between shrieking and singing. It was only for a short time then silence again.

"Heaven forgive them," said the Doctor; "'It's the mutineers!"

"All drunk, sir," said a voice from behind us.

It was Silver. He had been given complete freedom, except for being ordered around every day. He seemed to think he was quite lucky and he took their rudeness very well.

All of them treated him like an outsider except for Ben Gunn because he was still a bit afraid of his old boss. So, it was pretty gruff, the way the Doctor answered him.

"Drunk or mad," he said.

"Right you are, sir," replied Silver; "not that they mean much to you and me anymore."

"As I don't think you are a human man," said the Doctor with a sneer, "my feelings may surprise you, Mr. Silver. If I was sure they were mad... and I am certain one, of them at least has a fever... I would leave this camp, and risk my life to give them my medical help."

"Beg your pardon, sir, but you would be very wrong," said Silver. "You would lose your life. I'm on your side now, and I wouldn't want to see the group weakened, let alone yourself. But those men down there, they couldn't keep their word even if they wanted to."

"No," said the Doctor. "You're the man to keep your word, we all know that."

We only ever heard the three pirates one other time. We heard a gunshot a long way off and thought they must be hunting. We held a meeting and it was decided that we must leave them on the island. (Ben Gunn was very happy, and Gray strongly agreed.)

We left a good supply of gun powder, most of the salted goat, a few medicines, and some other tools. We also left clothing, a spare sail, lots of rope, and a good stash of tobacco.

Once the treasure was stowed and the ship had enough fresh water and goat meat, we were ready to haul up the anchor. The colours went up and flew as we made our way out of the North Inlet. The three men must have been watching us more closely than we thought. As we came out the narrow mouth of the river, we saw all three of them kneeling together on the sand, with their arms in the air. We all felt bad leaving them. But we could not risk another mutiny. If we took them with us, they would have only been hanged.



The Doctor called out to them to tell them about the supplies we had left them and where they were. But they just kept waving and yelling at us. Then when they saw the ship was still on her course, moving away, one of them leapt to his feet and sent a gun shot whistling over Silver's head and through the main-sail. We ducked for cover until we were too far away for the shots to hit. To my delight, by noon, the highest rock of Treasure Island had sunk into the blue horizon of the sea. We were so short of men that everyone on board had to lend a hand.



Even Captain Smollett who was lying on a mattress in the stern, was giving orders. We set a course for the nearest port in Spanish America so we could pick up fresh men for the long voyage home.

We dropped anchor in a beautiful land-locked gulf, surrounded by shore boats full of people with skins of all colours. Indians and all sorts, selling fruits and vegetables. The sight of so many happy faces and the taste of the tropical fruits, made a warm welcome after our hard trip. The Doctor and the Squire took me with them, when they went ashore for the early part of the night. They met another Captain of an English ship, and had such a good time talking to him that it was early morning when we got back to the HISPANIOLA.



Ben Gunn was on deck alone. As soon as we came on board, he started waving his arms and told us that Silver was gone. The maroon had noticed his escape in a boat a few hours ago. He said that he did not try to stop him as he was sure our lives would have been in danger if "that man with one leg had stayed aboard."

But this was not all. The sea-cook had taken one of the sacks of coin, to help him on his further travels.

I think we were all pleased to be rid of him so cheaply.

Well, we got a few extra hands on board, had a good sail home. The HISPANIOLA reached Bristol just as Mr. Blandly was getting ready to put a rescue ship together. Of all the men that left, only five men who had sailed, returned.

"Drink and the devil had done for the rest," was true although, it was not quite as bad as that other ship they sang about:



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

All of us got more than enough share of the treasure and used it wisely or foolishly! Captain Smollett retired from the sea. Gray not only saved his money, but went on to study sailing. He is now part-owner of a fine ship. He also married and became a father.

Ben Gunn, he got a thousand pounds, which he spent and lost in exactly nineteen days. He was back begging on the streets for a while, but then he was given a basic place to stay. He lives in it like the cave he had on the island.

I did not hear any more of Silver. The amazing seafaring man with one leg has at last gone out of my life.

I like to think he met his old wife and perhaps still lives in comfort with her and Captain Flint. I hope so, I suppose. The bars of silver and the weapons are still where Flint buried them. For me, they can lie there. Wild horses and pigs would not get me back to that cursed island again.

The worst dreams I ever have are when I hear the surf waves booming about the coast or when I sit bolt upright in bed with the sharp voice of Captain Flint still ringing in my ears:

"Pieces of eight! Pieces of eight!"



THE END