

SECTION 8

The red light of the torch showed my worst fears were true. The pirates had taken over the blockhouse and all the supplies. The food and brandy were still there, but there was no sign of any prisoners. I feared my friends were dead, and I felt terrible that I had not been there with them.

There were six pirates left. Five were standing, still flushed from drink. The sixth was badly wounded and barely able to sit up. I recognized him as the man who had been shot during the earlier fight.

Silver stood with his parrot on his shoulder. He looked pale and worn, his fine clothes torn and dirty.

“So,” he said, “here’s Jim Hawkins. Dropped in on us, eh? Well, I take that friendly.”

He sat on the brandy cask and filled his pipe. “Stick the torch in the wood, Dick,” he said. “And you men, relax. Mr. Hawkins will excuse you.”

They forced me against the wall, and I stood facing Silver, trying to look brave while feeling hopeless inside.

Silver spoke calmly. “Jim, I always liked you. You’re smart and bold, like I was once. I wanted you to join us, and now you must. You can’t go back to your old friends—they’re angry with you. So you’ll have to join Captain Silver.”

I felt relieved to hear my friends were still alive.

“I won’t threaten you,” Silver continued. “You’re free to choose.”

“Am I to answer?” I asked.

“No one’s rushing you,” he said.

“Well,” I said, “I want to know what happened and where my friends are.”

Silver explained that the doctor had come under a flag of truce and told them the ship was gone. They made a deal, and the pirates got the blockhouse and supplies. My friends had left.

“And now you must choose,” Silver said.

I took a breath. “You’re in trouble—ship lost, treasure lost. And I’m the one who caused it. I overheard your plans and warned the captain. I cut the ship loose. I killed the men on board. You can kill me if you like, but if you spare me, I’ll speak for you when you’re put on trial.”

They all stared at me in silence.

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"If things go badly," I added, "tell the doctor I did my best."

One pirate shouted that I had known Black Dog and stolen the map. Another raised his knife.

"Stop!" Silver roared. "I'm captain here!"

The men backed down.

Silver defended me. "This boy's braver than any of you. Touch him and you answer to me."

The pirates argued among themselves and left the room to hold a council.

Silver whispered to me, "They want me dead. But I'll stand by you. You're my last chance to escape hanging."

I agreed to help.

The pirates returned and handed Silver the black spot.

Silver laughed. "You cut this from a Bible! That's bad luck."

They accused him of losing the ship and protecting me.

Silver answered each charge, blaming their mistakes and revealing he had the treasure map.

He threw it on the floor.

The pirates cheered and declared Silver captain again.

Silver tossed me the black spot. On it was written the word "Deposed."

That ended the night. After a drink, we lay down to sleep. Silver made George Merry stand guard and threatened him with death if he failed. I could not sleep for a long time. I kept thinking about the man I had killed, my own danger, and Silver's strange game—trying to keep the pirates loyal while also searching for any way to save his own life.

Silver slept soundly and snored, but I felt sorry for him, wicked as he was, knowing the gallows waited for him.

We were all awakened by a clear voice from the woods. "Blockhouse, ahoy! Here's the doctor!"

It was Dr. Livesey. I felt ashamed when I saw him. I remembered how I had run away and how that had brought me among pirates.

"You, doctor! Good morning!" cried Silver cheerfully. "Come in and see the patients."

"We have a surprise for you," Silver added. "A new guest—Jim Hawkins himself."

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“Not Jim?” said the doctor.

“The very same Jim,” said Silver.

The doctor entered and calmly treated the wounded pirates, as if nothing were wrong.

“You’re doing well,” he told one. “And George, your liver’s upside down. Did you take the medicine?”

“Yes, sir,” said Morgan.

“Since I’m now mutineers’ doctor,” said Dr. Livesey, “I make it a point not to lose a man for the gallows.”

The pirates laughed nervously.

“Dick looks ill,” said one.

“Of course he does,” said the doctor. “Another fever.”

“That comes from spoiling Bibles,” said Morgan.

“That comes from being fools,” replied the doctor. “Camping in a swamp will make you all sick.”

After treating them, the doctor said, “Now I want to speak with that boy.”

“No!” cried George.

Silver silenced them. “Hawkins, give me your word you won’t escape.”

I agreed.

“Then doctor, step outside. I’ll bring the boy to the fence.”

The pirates accused Silver of betrayal, but he argued them down.

Outside, Silver whispered, “Doctor, I’m scared of hanging. Give me one good word.”

“You’re not afraid, John?” asked the doctor.

“I’m afraid of the gallows,” said Silver.

“If we survive,” said the doctor, “I’ll try to save you.”

Silver was overjoyed.

“Keep the boy close,” said the doctor. “When you need help, call out.”

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Then he shook my hand and left.

Silver told me, "You saved my life. We must stick together now."

We ate breakfast and set off for the treasure. I was tied with a rope like a prisoner.

The men carried tools, food, and brandy. Silver talked cheerfully, rebuilding their confidence.

Soon we reached the plateau and found a skeleton lying under a tree.

"He was a sailor," said one pirate.

"This is Flint's work," said Silver. "Look how the bones point."

They used the compass and saw the skeleton pointed toward Skeleton Island.

"Flint killed them all," said Silver. "This is one of his jokes."

The pirates grew afraid, speaking quietly.

"Dead men don't walk," said Silver. "Let's go get the treasure."

But the fear stayed with them as we climbed the hill together.

From where we stood, the plateau sloped down toward the west, giving us a wide view. In front of us we could see the Cape of the Woods and the waves crashing along the shore. Behind us lay the anchorage, Skeleton Island, and beyond that the open sea. Above us rose the Spy-glass hill, covered with scattered pine trees and steep cliffs. The only sounds were distant surf and insects in the brush. The emptiness made everything feel lonely.

Silver checked his compass. "There are three tall trees in line with Skeleton Island," he said. "The Spy-glass shoulder must be that lower slope. Finding the treasure should be easy. I almost feel like eating first."

"I don't feel right," said Morgan. "Thinking about Flint."

"He's dead," said Silver. "And he was ugly enough."

Suddenly a thin voice sang from the trees: "Fifteen men on the dead man's chest—Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

The pirates turned pale. Some grabbed each other. Morgan dropped to his knees.

"It's Flint!" cried Merry.

The voice stopped as suddenly as it had begun.

Silver forced himself to speak. "This is someone alive. No ghost has an echo."

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The voice returned, crying, "Darby McGraw! Fetch aft the rum!"

The men froze in terror.

"They were his last words," whispered Morgan.

Dick pulled out his Bible and began praying.

Silver tried to calm them. "It's Ben Gunn," he said suddenly.

"Yes, Ben Gunn!" cried Morgan.

The fear faded quickly. "Nobody minds Ben Gunn," said Merry.

The men laughed nervously and moved on.

Dick still looked sick and frightened. The fever the doctor had predicted was getting worse.

At last we reached the tall tree. The men ran ahead, shouting. Then they stopped.

Before us was a large pit. Old boards and broken tools lay around it. One board had the name WALRUS burned into it—Flint's ship.

The treasure was gone.

The pirates stared in shock.

Silver whispered to me, "Stand ready." He gave me a pistol and moved away from the others.

The men jumped into the pit and dug with their hands. Morgan found a single gold coin.

"Two guineas!" shouted Merry. "That's your treasure?"

Silver said calmly, "Keep digging. You might find roots."

The men turned on him angrily.

"There are two of them," said Merry, pointing at Silver and me. "Let's take them."

Just then three gunshots rang out.

Merry fell dead into the pit. Another pirate spun and collapsed. The other three ran.

Silver fired at Merry. "I think I finished you," he said.

The doctor, Gray, and Ben Gunn appeared with smoking guns.

"Run for the boats!" cried the doctor.

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We chased the remaining pirates but soon saw they were already fleeing toward the hills. We sat down to breathe.

Silver said, "Thank you, doctor. You saved us."

The doctor explained everything. Ben Gunn had found the treasure months earlier and moved it to his cave. The map Silver carried was useless.

"If not for Jim," said Silver, "you'd have let me die."

"Not a thought," said the doctor cheerfully.

We destroyed one boat and took the other around the island to North Inlet. We found the Hispaniola floating safely.

We reached Ben Gunn's cave, where Captain Smollett lay by the fire and the treasure was piled high.

"You're a good boy, Jim," said the captain. "But you're too adventurous for me."

Silver said, "I've come back to my duty, sir."

The next days we carried the gold to the ship. I stayed in the cave, sorting coins from all over the world.

At night we heard singing from the three mutineers still on the island.

"We must leave them," said the doctor. "We'll give them supplies."

We sailed away, leaving food, tools, and medicine behind.

As we passed, the three pirates begged us not to leave them. One fired a shot after us.

At last Treasure Island disappeared into the sea.

We sailed to the nearest port and then home to England.

Silver escaped with some of the treasure. We never saw him again.

Everyone took their share. Some used it wisely, some foolishly.

Ben Gunn spent his money in three weeks and ended up poor again.

The treasure is safe now, but I will never return to that island. I still dream of the waves and hear the parrot crying, "Pieces of eight!"