

Treasure Island

5. Escape to the island and Ben Gunn

Narrator: Dawn breaks over Treasure Island. But the rising sun reveals no palm trees, no white sand - no blue sea. This is no magical, tropical place. It is dank and dark with dismal woods and wizened trees. Around it a leaden, thick sea rolls blankly onto jagged rocks. This is an island of death and despair.

Swaying on her anchor, just off Skeleton Point, is the *Hispaniola*, the skull and crossbones hanging limply from her mast. And pulling away from her in a small boat, oars grabbing at the water, are a handful of figures: Squire Trelawney, Doctor Livesey, Captain Smollett and three faithful crew-members.

Pirate: Come back here, you swabs!

Narrator: They're rowing for their lives - as behind them from the Pirate Ship *Hispaniola* there's the crack of muskets and the roar of cannon.

Squire: Pull, chaps! Pull! We'll see off these scurvy knaves yet, my boys!

Dr Livesey: Perhaps if you sat down and pulled on an oar yourself dear fellow, we might indeed have a chance.

Squire: What? What? Eh? Someone has to look after morale, Livesey! Pull, pull!

Smollett: Ach, any justice - the Squire'll catch one of they musket balls while he's up there...

Squire: Nearly out of range! Well done, men!

Dr Livesey: We were lucky to get away with our lives. Silver's a blackguard if ever I saw one.

Hunter: Here's the glass, sir.

Livesey: Good man, Hunter.

Squire: No sign of Jim then, I take it?

Dr Livesey: Not a scrap.

Treasure Island

- Hunter: Some of the pirates took a skiff and went round the headland - maybe he went with them?
- Squire: He knows what he's doing. He'll be all right, young Jim will.
- Narrator: If they could but see, as they settled back to row the last few hundred yards to the shore, they'd know that Jim is indeed all right up on the far hillside. Hiding in one of the small boats during the night, he let the pirates row him to safety, then slipped away when they weren't looking. Just as well - for with his own eyes he saw Long John Silver take a knife and slice the throat of one good sailor who wouldn't take the pirate's way. Slice the throat, wipe the blade, as if nothing had happened and then cut some bread and cheese... But now, head up, Jim's on dry land, on Treasure Island, exploring, climbing, surviving. He looks back at the men down in the boats scurrying like ants to safety in the bay.
- Jim: I'm safe. For now, anyhow...
- Narrator: And off he strides - only to stop dead in his tracks, and drop behind a rock. For there in the trees is a shape running. A bear? A man? A monkey? Cannibals? The shape disappears - and is suddenly there, behind him! A man, long beard, rags, bare feet, wild eyes, a wooden club...
- Jim: Who...who are you?
- Ben Gunn: I'm poor Ben Gunn I am. And you be the first fella I've spoken to in three years. Are you a pirate? Are ya?
- Jim: No.
- Ben: Thanks be to heaven.
- Narrator: Ben sinks to the ground and tells Jim his story. How once he sailed with Cap'n Flint and Long John Silver and the others. How he came here many years before with a great treasure hoard. And how Flint buried it - and killed every man who helped him. How he came back years later on another ship and promised the crew he'd find the treasure for them.
- Ben Gunn: But I couldn't find it. They lost heart. They sailed away. And left me here alone for punishment. Marooned, boy, marooned!
- Jim: That's terrible, Mister Gunn, terrible.



Ben Gunn: Terrible's the word. But it ain't been all bad. Fact, there's been one bright side to it -

Narrator: But before Ben Gunn can say more - there's the howl of a cannon ball and the crash as it lands. Gunn's gone in an instant - and at the same time Jim spies below him in the woods the ship's flag - the Union Jack - suddenly flying bravely! The others are alive - they've escaped from the pirates!

