

Treasure Island

7. A fight and the *Hispaniola* captured

Narrator: Night falls on the blood-soaked pirate island. But Jim Hawkins cannot sleep. In the distance on the beach the pirates are drinking and singing round their fire. In the stockade all is quiet, aside from the heavy breathing of poor, wounded Captain Smollett. Jim decides something needs to be done. He doesn't know what - but he's a boy who acts on impulse and thinks later.

So out of the stockade and into the night he slips. He heads down to the sea - and now he knows what he's up to. He remembers that Ben Gunn talked of a boat that he'd made, hidden in a cave. If he can find it...Jim does find it - and soon he's rowing out to the *Hispaniola*, which rocks on the tide.

The pirates have left just a skeleton crew - O'Brien and Hands - two of the nastiest. As Jim approaches he can hear them arguing, then drunkenly fighting. He ties his little boat to the *Hispaniola* - then cuts through the ship's anchor rope. Suddenly the ship's drifting, and he's drifting with it. There's nothing he can do, but lie back in the little boat and sleep.

When he wakes in the morning, the ship is lying still in a small bay at the far end of the island. There's not a sound on board. He pulls the little boat close, and hauls himself up on deck. A terrible sight awaits him. O'Brien lies dead: a spike driven through him. And Hands sits, mortally wounded, leaning against the mast. Last night's argument has gone badly for both of them. Jim approaches:

Jim: Permission to come aboard, Mr Hands?

Narrator: Hands wakes; mutters...

Hands: Drink, get me drink.

Narrator: ...and falls back. Jim smiles to himself: he's in command of his first ship! And he's seen enough to know that with a bit of luck he might just be able to sail the *Hispaniola* back toward the stockade and save the others.

He doesn't waste any time. Soon he's raised enough sail to catch the wind, he's lashed the tiller and the *Hispaniola*'s heading in - roughly - the right direction. It's all Jim can do to steer a course towards Treasure Island. Hands watches him constantly.



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Hands: Drink! Get me drink! Wine - I need wine!

Narrator: This time Jim decides to get him some.

Jim: Red or white, sir?

Hands: Hrumph.

Narrator: Jim heads below and finds some wine, then hearing movement on deck he slips through the galley and peers through a grating: what he sees is chilling. Hands has found a knife - and is slipping it inside his shirt. He's not as wounded as he makes out. Jim grabs a pair of pistols and stows them in his belt, then heads back up on deck where Hands continues his pretence. But there's nothing Jim can do - he has to sail the ship to the shore and pray Hands won't try anything.

He nearly makes it - but just as they reach shallow water, Hands jumps him. Jim dives out of the way, pulls a pistol and fires - but the powder's damp and the gun doesn't go off! Hands laughs and rushes him - Jim races away across the deck. Now the two chase each other until Jim reaches a dead end - Hands raises the knife to throw it just as the ship runs aground. The ship leans over - the knife misses. Jim climbs the mast to get away. Hands recovers and follows. Jim climbs as high as he can go - Hands closes on him, knife between his teeth. There's nowhere else to run. Jim raises his second pistol.

Jim: One more step, Mister Hands, and I'll blow your brains out. Dead men don't bite, you know.

Narrator: Hands stops and assesses the situation. Then, like lightning, he draws the knife from his mouth and hurls it straight at Jim. It strikes, tears into Jim's arm, impaling him on the mast. Jim's finger pulls on the trigger and the pistol fires. Hands is hit - he falls back away from the mast, crashing into the water below. Jim's killed him!

