***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 22:***

# *How My Sea Adventure Began*

***Brief Summary:***

* The pirates don't attack again that day, so there's time for Doctor Livesey to tend to his patients: one of the pirates who got shot at the wall of the fort, Hunter, and Captain Smollett.
* Of those three, only Captain Smollett recovers – he's been badly injured, but he'll live. Even so, the captain is now out of the action. He's not allowed to move or talk more than he has to.
* Squire Trelawney, Doctor Livesey, and Captain Smollett discuss what to do next.
* Abraham Gray is totally astonished to see Doctor Livesey walking in the forest outside the fort.
* Jim guesses correctly that Doctor Livesey is going to see Ben Gunn.
* Jim feels more and more restless and cooped up. He decides to fill his pockets with biscuits, grab a couple pistols, and head out on his own.
* He wants to return to that odd white boulder to see if Ben Gunn's boat is tied up there.
* Jim knows he wouldn't be allowed to do this if he asked, so he decides to sneak out when no one is looking.
* Jim doesn't even think about the fact that he's leaving only two able-bodied men to guard the fort, Abraham Gray and Squire Trelawney. He makes up his mind and goes.
* Jim is enjoying his stroll down to the beach when, in the distance, he sees Long John Silver talking and laughing with a couple of crew members and holding his parrot, Captain Flint.
* The two crew members get into a rowboat and set off for the *Hispaniola*.
* The day is growing foggy and the sun is setting, so Jim creeps across to the white rock.
* Sure enough, he sees a little tent hidden near the rock with a tiny homemade goatskin boat next to it.
* Jim suddenly gets another bright idea: under the cover of night and fog, he decides to row quietly out to the *Hispaniola*, cut the rope attached to the anchor, and let it float off.
* He waits until the dead of night, picks up the tiny boat, and sets it on the ocean to row out to the *Hispaniola*.

***Synopsis:***

Seeing no further signs of attack by the mutineers, Captain Smollett and his men enjoy some leisure time in the stockade. Gray is startled to see Dr. Livesey go walking out into the trees, taking the map with him. Gray asks whether Livesey has gone mad, but Jim answers that Livesey is going to speak to Ben Gunn. Left inside to clean up the bloody mess of the earlier attack, Jim grows impatient, yearning to do something more heroic.

On another whim, Jim decides to go search for the boat that Ben had mentioned he had built. On the shore Jim glimpses Silver and his men talking and laughing, and hears the unearthly scream of Silver’s parrot Cap’n Flint. After a bit of a search Jim finds the small handmade boat, which is a coracle (a type of boat once sailed by the ancient Britons). Jim decides he will sail out to the Hispaniola and cut it adrift. When darkness falls, he hoists the coracle on his shoulders and heads for the water.

***Critical Study:***

Jim opens Chapter 22 ("How My Sea Adventure Began") by describing the casualties of the recent action. Five of the pirates are dead, a sixth so badly wounded that he dies despite Dr. Livesey's efforts to save him, and Hunter — with a fractured skull and broken ribs — will die that night without regaining consciousness. Captain Smollett is not fatally injured, but his wounds will keep him inactive for weeks. In the afternoon the doctor, heavily armed, sets out alone, and Jim tells Gray that he seems to be going to find Ben Gunn. Jim, cleaning the hot, bloody blockhouse, becomes disgusted and restless. Knowing he would never be given permission to go, he arms himself with two pistols and ammunition and leaves the stockade without asking. Avoiding the anchorage and the pirates' camp, he walks until he can see the Hispaniola, with her pirates' flag raised, still lying at anchor, and one of the gigs alongside. In the gig is Silver, talking with a couple of his men on shipboard. As the sun sets, Jim looks for and finds the rock Ben Gunn has mentioned, and near it Gunn's awkward boat, homemade of goatskins stretched over a wooden frame, with a double paddle to propel it. Jim has seen Silver head for shore in the gig (see the following Analysis) and, knowing the ship and the men on it now have no boat, he makes up his mind to cut the Hispaniola adrift. After dark, in a fog that allows him to see only the pirates' campfire ashore and the dim light from the ship's cabin, Jim takes the goatskin boat to the water and sets it down.***Significance:***

Luckily, the pirates do not return during that day and so the doctor is able to tend to those who are wounded while Jim and Trelawney cook dinner. While one pirate and Hunter die, [Captain Smollett](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#captain-smollett) is predicted to recover, but must not walk on his wounded leg.

After a private meeting with Livesey, Trelawney and Smollett, the doctor leaves the compound, with pistols, a cutlass and the treasure map. Jim guesses that he has gone to see [Ben Gunn](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#ben-gunn). Bored and scared of the blood and bodies, Jim decides to leave the compound to look for Gunn's boat, although the knows that it is against the wishes of his comrades. As he sneaks to the anchorage, he sees [Long John Silver](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#long-john-silver) in a smaller boat beside the larger Hispanolia, speaking to two pirates who are onboard. Suddenly, Silver departs and the two men on board go down to the cabin.

Jim finds the handmade boat under a tent and near a white rock. Interestingly, the boat is small and light, portable, and is a wood framework covered with goatskin - Jim calls the boat a coracle. Deciding that the pirates will soon take the anchor up and wanting to stop them, Jim decides to cut the Hispanolia loose and merely let it land anywhere the wind and current take it, thereby stopping the pirates. By this time, the night is dark and the only visible things on the horizon are the light in the ships cabin and a great fire in the swamp, where the pirates are drinking. In these conditions, Jim sets out in the coracle.

This chapter, following on the heels of the last chapter, show again how fast paced this novel is. Instead of having the characters reflect on the death or talk together on how things are going to proceed, [Robert Louis Stevenson](https://www.gradesaver.com/author/robert-stevenson) starts immediately on a new stage in the action, having Jim leave the compound and begin to get into danger again. By having him leave, however, the reader is able to glimpse the actions of the pirates and thus Stevenson is able to more effectively tell the story because the reader can realistically know at least a little of what is going on in both sides of the warring factions.

The most interesting development of character in this chapter is to see the rationalization of Jim, something that adds to the theme of Treasure Island as a novel concerning the maturing of the narrator. All the while that Jim is stealing away from the compound, about to seek out on his own and find the boat, he realizes that the course of actions that he is taking is wrong. This realization is, of course, of an adult character, thinking of the greater good of the people that he is with. He justifies his behavior, however, by telling himself that he is only a little boy and doesn't know better, even though he does. This, therefore, is a moment where Jim is both an adult and a child, stuck in the gray material half-way between the two stages of life.

Another interesting aspect of this chapter is the incredible detail of the wilderness that Robert Louis Stevenson provides his readers. Through Stevenson's words, the wildness and the violence of the sea majestically reach far from the pages of the book. For example, the narrator describes the "surf tumbling and tossing . . .I have never seen the sea quiet around Treasure Island . . these great rollers would be running along all the external coast, thundering and thundering by day and night." His use of similes and metaphors is what enable his description of nature to leap out of the pages.

***Notes:***

The pirates do not return to renew their attack. [Dr. Livesey](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Dr._Livesey) attends to the three wounded men; the first two die of their wounds, and [Captain Smollett](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Captain_Smollett)'s injuries remove him from all action in the near future. After the midday meal, Jim and Gray observe the doctor leaving the stockade, presumably to meet with Ben Gunn.

Overcome by restlessness, Jim decides to stuff his pockets with biscuits and "to take French leave." His objective is to find a small boat that Ben Gunn claims to have built and hidden. Not only does Jim slip away without permission, but he leaves only two well men to guard the house.

Jim makes his way to the shore and, for a time, spies on the doings of the pirates. Then when night comes, he crawls to where Gunn's boat is likely hidden. There, Jim finds a roundish, roughly made craft, barely big enough for a grown man and somewhat like an ancient coracle. However, it is light and portable, which gives Jim a fresh idea. If he slips out under the cover of night, he can get close to the *Hispaniola*, cut her loose from her anchor, and let her drift ashore, where she will get stuck.

Jim demonstrates a contradictory combination of childishness and maturity as events proceed. More and more he is demonstrating a tendency toward self-determination and is thinking for himself, though not always wisely. In contrast to the time when he followed orders without question, he now rebels when it suits him. The juvenile quality of this behavior contrasts with the more mature act of cutting loose the *Hispaniola*.

The term "French leave," stems from a mid-18th century French custom of leaving a formal gathering without bidding the host or hostess good-bye. When Jim slips away from the stockade, he opens the door to danger for himself and others. Yet, as he indicates, things somehow work out, suggesting that fate steps in again to turn his folly into good fortune.

Jim spends some time observing the goings-on in the pirates' camp. His description sharply contrasts what he sees to the portrayed activities at the stockade. At the stockade the men go about trying to clean up after the battle, save lives, have an orderly meal, and tend to business. The pirates, on the other hand, are drinking and carousing around a bonfire on the beach, and watchmen on the *Hispaniola* have been left stranded without a boat. This marked difference between civilized and brutish behavior suggests that the pirates don't stand a chance against their disciplined enemies.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

That night, both sides rest. One more of the pirates, who had been wounded, dies, leaving only eight left. [Captain Smollett](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/captain-smollett) is also wounded: his wounds are serious but not fatal, requiring weeks of rest. [Dr. Livesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey) patches up [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins)’s cut across the knuckles.

***Analysis Part 1:***

During this night of rest, both sides recover from battle, and the captain’s group realizes that Smollett will be unable to lead the party as directly as he once did.

***Summary part 2:***

After dinner [Dr. Livesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey) slips out and sets off through the trees. [Gray](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) is shocked and tells [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) he must be mad, but Jim suggests he’s going to see [Ben Gunn](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/ben-gunn). Jim begins to envy the doctor, who’s probably walking in the cool woods while he’s stuck in the sweltering log-house doing mindless errands.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jim has been able to sneak out and explore in the past, and now he resents having to perform the boring, day-to-day adult tasks that nonetheless have to be done, while the doctor has his own adventure.

***Summary Part 3:***

The older [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) narrating the tale acknowledges that his next moves are those of a foolish young boy: he plans to go find the white rock mentioned by [Ben Gunn](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/ben-gunn) and the boat hidden beside it—a worthy goal itself, but not worth slipping out in secrecy (since Jim worries he won’t be allowed if he asks permission). Still, he’s only a boy, though a clever one: he fills his pockets with biscuits to eat, and sneaks out the next afternoon while no one is looking.

***Analysis Part 3:***

This section reminds us that Jim is recording the tale of Treasure Island and looking back on the past, realizing all that this adventure made him learn—such that he’s able to recognize moments at which he still acted like a boy, not a man (even if the younger Jim does have a natural instinct for survival).

***Summary Part 4:***

[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) heads for the east coast of the island and finally reaches the sea, beginning to stroll beside the surf and enjoying the sea breeze. He catches sight of the Hispaniola with the Jolly Roger flag waving, and [Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) and some of his men prowling the decks. Suddenly he hears horrible screaming: he is frightened, thinking of [Flint](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/captain-flint), but then sees Silver’s parrot, who’s capable of mimicking anything.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Now Jim has followed the doctor, at least in spirit, and once again feels free and adventurous. He also uses this opportunity to learn more about what’s happened elsewhere on the island while they’ve been at battle: the pirates have taken control of the Hispaniola.

***Summary Part 5:***The sun begins to set, and [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) continues towards the white rock, crawling on all fours through the brush so as not to be seen. Almost at nightfall, he finds it, and discovers [Gunn](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/ben-gunn)’s homemade boat of wood and goat-skin. It’s so small that it looks like it would barely fit a grown man. Jim thinks of the coracle boats of ancient Britain, and thinks this is the worst version of the coracle he’s seen—though it is light and portable.

***Analysis Part 5:***

A coracle is a small, round wicker boat associated with Scotland, but here it is especially useful to Jim given that it seems almost to be made for a young boy rather than a man. Rickety and not exactly seaworthy, the boat still gives Jim a chance to explore further and with more independence.

***Summary Part 6:***Then it crosses [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins)’s mind to slip out at night and cut the Hispaniola adrift so that she runs ashore, preventing the pirates from escaping to sea after their defeat. He sits and waits for full darkness and eats his biscuits. Finally, when all is black, he gropes his way out of the hollow, catching sight of two points of light: one a fire on shore where the pirates are drinking and carousing, the other coming from the ship—Jim’s target.

***Analysis Part 6:***While the captain has, in the past, developed his own plans and given orders to the others, Jim now enjoys concocting his own plots, enabling him to potentially achieve glory while also being able to have an independent adventure. He paddles straight towards the danger, rather than away from it.