***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 25:***

# *I Strike the Jolly Roger*

***Brief Summary:***

* Jim nearly gets thrown off into the sea when the pole that is supposed to keep the sails open – the jib – flies out and almost hits him.
* Jim crawls up the bowsprit to the deck.
* There he sees the two pirate watchmen. One of them, the red-capped man (who we find out is named O'Brien), is lying stiff on his back. The other, Israel Hands, is hunched against the side of the boat. They are both surrounded by dark puddles of blood.
* In a still moment, Israel Hands straightens up a little bit and groans.
* Jim approaches him slowly.
* Israel asks for one thing: brandy.
* Jim goes quickly below deck. He sees that the captain's cabin is a total wreck, filled with empty bottles.
* Jim realizes that, since the mutiny began, not one of the sailors has been sober.
* He finds a bottle half full of brandy for Israel Hands and a bit of food for himself.
* Israel drinks a lot of brandy before he's ready to talk.
* He says that if Doctor Livesey were on board, he'd soon be healed of his wounds, but he doesn't have that kind of luck.
* Jim announces that he's now the captain of the Hispaniola.
* As the ship's new captain, he pulls down the Jolly Roger flag and throws it overboard.
* Israel Hands offers to help Jim sail the ship if Jim will bring him food, alcohol, and something to bandage his wound.
* Jim plans to sail to the North Inlet to beach the boat quietly; he doesn't want to go to Captain Kidd's anchorage, where the pirates are waiting. (A reminder – [**check out this map**](http://www.kellscraft.com/treasureislandmap.html) if you want to see where all these places are.)
* Israel Hands agrees. He knows he has no choice but to help Jim.
* Jim sets the boat sailing towards the north end of the island.
* Then he helps Israel Hands wrap up the stab wound on his thigh. After some more brandy, Israel Hands perks right up.
* Jim is happy to have captured the ship so easily. He is sure that his friends will forgive him for leaving the fort without permission.
* Still, Jim is a little unsettled: Israel Hands keeps watching him with a knowing, crafty smile.

***Synopsis:***

Climbing aboard the Hispaniola, Jim is surprised to see no one on deck. A bit later, however, he finds two watchmen—one is Israel Hands, who lies splashed with blood in a drunken stupor; the other is dead. Jim addresses Hands, who begs for a little brandy. Descending into the cellar, Jim finds that most of the ship’s store of alcohol has been consumed. He returns with a drink for Hands and asks that Hands consider him the captain, since Jim has taken possession of the ship. In a symbolic gesture, Jim throws the pirates’ flag, the Jolly Roger, overboard.

Hands offhandedly refers to the corpse next to him, insulting the dead man’s Irish nationality and noting that the dead man is unable to help navigate. Hands then asserts his own navigational expertise and strikes a deal with Jim: if Jim gives Hands food, drink, and medical help, Hands will assist Jim in sailing the ship. They steer the ship toward the North Inlet of the island, enjoying a favorable wind. Jim is delighted with his new position of command, though wary of Hands’s careful watch over him.

***Critical Study:***

Hanging from the jib, which is swinging wildly, Jim catches the ship's bowsprit, crawls along it, and then falls onto the deck (Chapter 25, "I Strike the Jolly Roger"). Recovering, he sees no one at first, but then, with a swing of the mainsail, he sights Hands and the other man lying on the deck. The second man is obviously dead, sliding around as the ship bucks and jumps. Both men are surrounded with bloodstains, and Jim thinks they are both dead, but then Hands comes to himself, sees Jim, and mutters, "Brandy." Jim gets brandy and some food for himself from the cabin, which has been plundered and wrecked. Hands is a little revived, and Jim, telling the erstwhile coxswain that he, Jim, is now in command, runs the pirate flag down and throws it overboard. Hands, wounded in the thigh, sees that he has no choice but to help Jim sail the ship to the North Inlet, for neither of them can do so on his own and Jim will not sail for the anchorage near which Silver is camped. They agree on this arrangement and set off. Jim is quite pleased with himself for all he has accomplished, but he notes that Hands is watching him strangely.***Significance:***

Although he is nearly tossed into the sea, Jim finally is able to get on the deck of the ship. As he initially looks around, he does not see anyone. Later, he spots two men, the man in the red-cap dead and [Israel Hands](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#israel-hands), unconscious. Both men are surrounded by blood. When Hand moans, Jim greets him and the pirate asks him to bring him some brandy. Jim heeds his request and goes below deck to retrieve the brandy, where he sees that the place is a complete disaster - there is mud on the floor, empty bottles rolling about, and the locks are broken, something that probably indicates the pirates' desperate search from the treasure map. Jim finally finds brandy for Hands, as well as biscuit, cheese, and fruit for himself. Returning to the deck, Jim drinks water and gives Hands the brandy. Jim tells Hands that he is taking possession of the ship and should be regarded as captain, and with that pronouncement, the boy pulls down the pirates' flag.

From this point, Israel and Hands make an agreement. Jim will give Hands food, drink and a handkerchief for a bandage, while Hands will tell Jim how to sail the ship. Both agree that they will sail to the North Inlet. Hands then proceeds to bind up the wound on his thigh with a silk handkerchief that used to be Jim's mothers'. From this point, the sail goes smoothly but Jim notices that Hands is watching him closely, with "treachery in his smile."

In this chapter, Israel Hands does not prove to be clearly evil, as he has been depicted earlier; instead, he is the classic Stevensonian composite of good and evil. Jim comments on the odd smile which appears continually on Hands' face: "It was a smile that had in it something both of pain and weakness - a haggard, old man's smile; but there was, besides that, a grain of derision, a shadow of treachery, in his expression as he craftily watched, and watched me at my work." Such adjectives such as pain,' weakness' and haggard' are calculated to arouse the reader's sympathy, but the juxtaposition of these terms with derision' and treachery' dilutes the force of that sympathy and the result is a deliberate ambivalence, exactly what Stevenson believed of human character.

In continuing the theme of surrogate fathers that exists within the pages of Treasure Island, in this chapter, Israel Hands serves again as a surrogate father to the young Jim during this chapter. His kind behavior, as well as his advice on where to land the ship and how to steer the ship, as well as his linkage with Jim's mother (through the handkerchief that Jim gives him to bind his leg) is symbolic of that of Jim's father, and although he will eventually betray him, for this chapter he serves in the same type of role as a father-figure.

The symbolic function of the mess in the cabin is also worth exploring. Through this mess, Stevenson shows the lack of discipline in the pirate's behavior and also indicates heavy drinking. The broken locks serve as evidence that the pirates are after one thing, the treasure map, and have turned the ship inside and out looking for the desired map that will lead them towards their goal.

***Critical Analysis:***

Jim crawls over the *Hispaniola*'s bowsprit to the safety of the deck. As the main boom swings to and fro, Jim catches sight of Israel Hands and the red-capped pirate sprawled on the deck; it appears that Hands is still alive. When Jim approaches, he begs for some brandy.

Quickly going below to the ship's cabin, Jim gathers some brandy for Hands and some provisions for himself, and returns topside. The brandy revives Hands somewhat; Jim announces that he is taking over the ship and Hands is to regard him as his captain until further notice. Then Jim takes down the pirates' black flag and tosses if overboard.

The influences of lingering childishness and growing maturity, as well as those of [Captain Smollett](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Captain_Smollett) and [Long John Silver](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Long_John_Silver), are apparent in Jim's actions and decisions in this chapter.

While Jim is wise enough to be cautious around Israel Hands, he is still naive enough to think he has the upper hand because Hands is injured and appears weak. In fact Jim seems to pity Hands somewhat. When Hands says, "I've tried my fling ... and I have lost, and it's you has the wind of me," he is selling Jim the notion that he has the advantage now. Jim is still inexperienced enough to buy it.

Jim is "greatly elated" with his new role as the *Hispaniola*'s captain. It's a childish, though innocent, vanity. There's a bit more maturity in Jim's hope that his "great conquest" will offset his disregard of duty in taking French leave from the stockade. He has a grownup desire to make up for his misdeed.

Jim has witnessed the patriotism of Captain Smollett, who defiantly raised and kept the Union Jack flying above the besieged stockade, and in imitation of him he cries "God save the King!" while tossing the Jolly Roger overboard.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) heaves himself onto the bowsprit, the spar jutting out from the deck, and crawls along it until tumbling onto the deck. He sees no one. The ship heaves to the side: suddenly Jim sees [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) and his mate sprawled on the after-deck. The ship bucks to and fro, causing foam to spray over the bulwark. Jim sees blood around them and is sure they’ve killed each other.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Once again, Jim is able to take advantage of the fact that the pirates are weakened by drink—and here, too, by the fight that has resulted from their drunkenness. At first, it seems that the combination has proved fatal to both of them.

***Summary part 2:***

Then [Israel Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) moans and shifts. [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) walks over and calls out to him: Hands, in great pain, asks for brandy. Jim slips downstairs, where the cabin is in a state of disarray, empty bottles clattering over the floor. In the cellar all the barrels are gone, as are most of the [rum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/rum) bottles. He finds one, however, as well as some biscuit, fruits, raisins, and cheese. Jim returns to deck and eats while Hands downs the brandy. Jim tells Hands that he’s come to take possession of the ship, and Hands can now consider him captain.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jim must balance his suspicions of Israel Hands with the knowledge that Hands might prove useful in navigating the ship into safety. Jim is faced, below deck, with concrete physical evidence of the pirates’ revelry, which makes Hands seem much less threatening, and emboldens Jim to take on the position of captain—truly assuming an adult leadership role.

***Summary Part 3:***

After eating, [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) cuts down the Jolly Roger and throws it overboard. [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) watches Jim slyly and quietly, then says he imagines Jim wants to get to shore. Hands nods towards his dead mate, [O’Brien](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and says now there’s no one to sail the ship. If Jim gives Hands food, drink, and a scarf to tie his wound, he’ll instruct Jim on how to sail it. Jim says he wants to go to North Inlet, not the anchorage from before. They strike a bargain, and soon Jim is steering the Hispaniola along the coast. He gives Hands one of his mother’s handkerchiefs, and after Hands binds it up he begins to perk up and sit up straighter.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Ever since seeing the Jolly Roger flying from the shore, part of Jim’s adventure has included the goal of getting rid of that flag, and thus reasserting the supremacy of the captain’s crew. Now Israel Hands and Jim are intent on mutually benefiting from each other as long as they can, even while they’re both aware that they’re enemies and ultimately working towards opposite ends.

***Summary Part 4:***[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) is delighted that the weather and wind are good, and is fascinated by the new views of the coast. He no longer feels as guilty for having crept out in secrecy, since he’s conquered the ship. Still, [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) continues to watch him about the deck, treachery in his eyes.

***Analysis Part 4:***Jim’s contentment at finally succeeding in having his own, independent adventure is beginning to be compromised by the deceit he now knows to recognize in pirates.