***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 29:***

# *The Black Spot Again*

***Brief Summary:***

* The pirate council outside takes a long time.
* Finally, the five pirates come back inside.
* The youngest one is holding something in his hand, which he gives fearfully to Long John Silver.
* It's the black spot (see Chapter 3), but it's been cut out of a Bible, which Long John Silver says is awful luck.
* It was Dick Johnson who cut the circle of paper out of the Bible. Long John Silver says he's doomed.
* George Merry (one of the remaining pirates) points to the reverse side of the spot, where it says, "Deposed" (29.17). (To be deposed is to be removed from office – so Long John Silver is no longer the official captain of the pirates.)
* Long John Silver says he's still captain until he hears the crew's problems with him and has a chance to answer.
* George answers that: 1) Long John Silver has messed up the whole plan; 2) he let their enemies leave their fort just because they wanted to; 3) he prevented the pirates from attacking their enemies as they were leaving the fort; and 4) he let Jim Hawkins live.
* George says they'll all be hanged thanks to Long John Silver and his mistakes.
* Long John Silver replies that it's not *him* who messed up the plan. *He* wanted to play everything more carefully. It was Job Anderson, Israel Hands, and George Merry who blundered into this mess.
* Why should they kill Jim when he's a readymade hostage?
* And the final point: Long John Silver let their enemies live and leave the fort because he's gotten the *treasure map* in exchange.
* The pirates are deeply impressed by this revelation. They're all immediately on Long John Silver's side again.
* Long John Silver says the only thing the black spot has done is spoiled Dick Johnson's Bible.
* Johnson asks if his Bible will still be good to pray with.
* Long John Silver says it's no more than a songbook now, but Dick Johnson seems to feel that even that's something.
* Long John Silver gives Jim the black spot to keep as a memento.
* They all go to bed, except for one guard. Jim has trouble falling asleep. He can't stop thinking about Long John Silver and the dangerous game he's playing.

***Synopsis:***

Jim and Silver await the end of the pirates’ council. One of the pirates hands Silver a black spot, the official pirate judgment, cut out of a page of the Bible. Silver casually reads the judgment, which announces that he has been deposed from his position as a punishment for bungling the mission. Furiously, Silver retorts that if his wishes had been followed, the men would already be in possession of the treasure. He claims the failure is the fault of the men, because they forced his hand as captain. Silver also tells the men that they are all very close to being hanged. He insists on the usefulness of having Jim as hostage and reminds the men that it was he, Silver, who arranged for Dr. Livesey to tend to them every day.

As a final gesture Silver flings down the treasure map Livesey has given him, and the men gather around his side again. Silver tosses Jim the black spot as a souvenir, and Jim reads the biblical quote, from the biblical Book of Revelation, that is on the paper. Jim goes to sleep thinking of the man he has killed that day and of Silver’s fate.

***Notes:***As Chapter 29 ("The Black Spot Again") opens, the pirates reenter the blockhouse and, with some trepidation, hand something to Silver — the "black spot," marked on a page young Dick has torn from his Bible (thus cursing himself with bad luck, Silver says). On the back, as Silver reads it, is the word "Deposed." Silver says that, according to the rules, they must list their grievances and he must have the chance to answer them. George Merry enumerates their complaints and Silver answers them strongly: First, it was they who decided to mutiny before the treasure was found; second, he bargained with the squire's group to gain the supplies in the stockade and, more importantly, the map; third, the reason he did not allow that group to be followed and killed was so that the doctor could visit the wounded man and Merry himself, who is sick with fever; and, finally, Silver will not allow them to kill Jim because they will need the boy for a hostage. The five men back down then and, when Silver says he resigns as captain, they re-elect him. Silver gives the black spot to Jim as a "curiosity," and they all go back to sleep.

***Summary:***When the pirates return to the house, they give Long John Silver "the black spot," a piece of paper they have taken from the Bible. Someone named George Merry tells Silver the rules that the pirates' and decided and instructs him to read the piece of paper that they have handed to him. George insists that Silver should step down and vote with the others to vote for a new captain. Silver, however, explain that the rules allow him to hear and reply to the men's grievances. The pirates have four major problems with Silver. First, he made a "hash of the cruise." Second, he let their enemies out of the stockade. Next, he refused to allow the pirates to attack the enemies when they left and finally, he is protecting [Jim Hawkins](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#jim-hawkins).

Long John Silver has replies to each of these complaints. First, he says that it was George Merry, Anderson, and Hands who ruined the cruise by upsetting Silver's original plan. Because of this mistake, Silver believes that they are all going to have to be hung when they return. In response to the claim that he is protecting Jim Hawkins, Silver claims that he is holding him prisoner. In reply to point three, he reminds the men that the doctor comes every day to help take care of them and that without him they would die. Additionally, someone will eventually come to the rescue of the squire and his crew and that is there only way off the island. Finally, Jim reminds the men that it was them who begged him to bargain with the enemy because they were starving. In conclusion, Silver brings forth the treasure map and the men become extremely agitated, fingering the map like it was gold itself. Silver resigns, but the men reelect him captain. Silver tosses the black spot to Jim who finds on one side the words "Without are dogs and murderers" and on the other side, simply "deposed."

Taking command once again, Silver instructs George Merry to be the watchmen and the rest of the men lie down to sleep. As Jim falls asleep, he realizes the perilous position that both he and Silver are in, trying to placate the pirates and save their own lives.

An extremely interesting part of the chapter is watching Long John Silver change from the tough pirate to the caring man who takes care of Jim and back again. In showing these two sides, he does not grow or develop between the two sides of his personality, rather he merely jumps between the two different characteristics. Also, this chapter contrast Silver's personality with the personality of the other pirates, who are weak and complaining (for example, it is telling that it was actually these men's fault they had to bargain with the enemy because they were hungry). Silver is extremely persuasive, powerful and confident in stark contrast to the timidity of the men that he commands.

Again, in this chapter the dialogue between the two pirates is incredible. Because of the way [Robert Louis Stevenson](https://www.gradesaver.com/author/robert-stevenson) has written the conversations between them, the reader can actually here them talking and arguing among themselves. Not only does it employ colorful word choice, but there is also an intrinsic amount of rhythm to the words. For example, Silver lashes out at the pirates: "Well, now, look here, I'll answer there four p'ints; one after another I'll answer em. I mad a has o' this cruise, did I? Well no, you all know what I wanted, and you all know if that had been done that we'd a been aboard the Hispaniola this night as ever was, every man of us alive, fit, and full of good plum-duff, and the treasure in the hold of her, by thunder! Well, who crossed me? Who forced my hand, as was the lawful cap'n? Who tipped me the black spot the day we landed and began this dance? Ah, it's a fine dane--I'm with you there --and looks mighty like a hornpipe in the rope's end at Execution Dock by London town, it does."

In this chapter, at one point, the narrator (the old Jim that is writing the book) intercedes and proceeds to say that he is looking at the black spot just as he is writing this book. This action on behalf of Robert Louis Stevenson adds realism to the story, just as the tale is beginning to be a little unbelievable, Stevenson makes us know that not only will the narrator be safe in the end, but also that this actually happened to the young Jim Hawkins.

***Critical Study:***The buccaneers conclude their council and return to the block-house. They hand [Long John Silver](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Long_John_Silver) a piece of paper marked with a black spot and the word *Deposed*. Silver reminds them of the rules in these matters and demands a chance to hear and reply to their grievances.

George Merry obliges, laying out four grievances. Silver coolly replies to all four points and then dramatically whips out the treasure map and throws it on the floor. Snatching up the chart, the buccaneers hungrily study it, their grievances forgotten. Silver hotly tells them he's resigning, but they unanimously cry, "Barbecue forever! Barbecue for cap'n!"

Upon receiving the black spot, Silver demonstrates cleverness and superior ability to win in a battle of wits. Silver is cool, calculating, and a good judge of men. His observation, "Well, you've about fixed it now, among you ... You'll all swing now," shifts the dire meaning of the black spot away from Silver and toward his men. In this, the wily Silver shows he is clearly most fit to be the leader.

The buccaneer version of duty ("dooty") is a prominent feature of the chapter. The pirates, as duty demands, hand Silver the black spot "in full council." They are also duty bound to state their complaints and allow Silver to answer them. As lawless as they are, the pirates have rules to follow when they choose. In this instance their fear of Silver may be at heart in their devotion to "dooty." If they prove their case for ousting him, perhaps he will go without violence. As for Silver, he uses the rules to outmaneuver his men with arguments and to retain his position.

At the end of the chapter, a touch of moral ambiguity is expressed by Jim. However, it is not self-serving. He expresses mixed feelings about [Long John Silver](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Long_John_Silver). On the one hand, he knows the man is wicked. On the other, he pities the future Silver likely faces—death by hanging.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After a long council, one of the pirates enters again and asks for the torch. [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) peers out, and sees a kneeling figure with a book and knife in his hand. Then they all march back towards the house, where one pirate slips something into [Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver)’s hand and then steps back. It’s the [black spot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/the-black-spot)—Silver declares that he’s not surprised, but they’ve cut the paper out of a Bible, which is deeply unlucky. He asks who had a bible, and one says that it was [Dick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters).

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jim’s observations initially remain obscure, but soon enough it becomes clear what the pirates were doing—preparing the black spot in order to depose Silver and replace him, now that they no longer trust him. Silver’s talk about luck may be earnest, or may be simply be a way for him to try to gain time for himself.

***Summary part 2:***

[Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) continues to taunt [Dick](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) and [George Merry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), the pirate who wrote “deposed” on the slip, but Merry sullenly tells him he’s no longer captain, and he now has to help vote. Silver says the rules are that he waits, still as captain, while the others air their grievances and then choose a new leader. Merry cries that Silver has ruined the voyage, has let the enemy slip away, and prevented the pirates from murdering them during the truce—besides, there’s the boy [Jim.](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) One by one, Silver answers the complaints, identifying [Anderson](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), [Hands](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and [Merry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) as the pirates who have made mischief and meddled from the start. He says that “tailors” is a better word for these men than “gentlemen of fortune.” Finally, he says it’s idiotic to kill Jim, a hostage, who might be their last chance, or to kill the [doctor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey), who has been taking care of the wounded. Finally, he throws the [treasure map](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/the-map-of-treasure) onto the ground. Jim still can’t imagine why the doctor gave it to Silver.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Even while his own safety becomes ever more precarious, Silver continues to act cheerfully and treat the others scornfully, refusing to show fear or anxiety. He also uses his familiarity with the pirates’ code skillfully, while Merry lets his emotions dictate how he responds to his frustrations with Silver. Silver’s responses to these emotional complaints are, once again, rational and cool-headed, and reflect his pragmatic attitude towards their situation, as well as his remarkable capacity to evade guilt or blame for himself. Still, it’s not entirely clear whether Silver really wants to save Jim and the doctor, or if he’s just using them as he’s used the pirates.

***Summary Part 3:***

But the pirates, with a cry, grab hold of the [map](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/the-map-of-treasure) and pass it from hand to hand. [Merry](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) wonders aloud how they’ll get the treasure out with no ship. It was Merry’s men who lost the ship and [Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver)’s who found the treasure, Silver reminds them, saying that he now resigns for anyone to replace him as captain. But now the pirates cry that they do want him: satisfied, Silver tells Merry that he’ll have to wait his turn a little longer. Silver tosses [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) the [black spot](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/the-black-spot) to examine: one side contains a verse from Revelations, including “Without are dogs and murderers,” while on the other side has been scrawled, “Depposed.”

***Analysis Part 3:***

The pirates, apart from Long John Silver, haven’t exactly thought very far ahead beyond getting their hands on the treasure. They’re also fickle and easily manipulated by Silver, who takes advantage of their frantic greed for the treasure to suggest that only he can lead them to it. Silver also returns to his role of educator and mentor to Jim, letting him look at the black spot and learn a little more about how the pirates’ traditions work.

***Summary Part 4:***[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) lies awake late that night, amazed by [Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver)’s careful game, keeping the pirates content even while desperately trying to save his own life. Jim knows Silver is wicked but still feels sorry for the “gibbet” (gallows) that awaits him.

***Analysis Part 4:***Jim’s feelings about Silver have shifted from admiration to hatred to confusion and ambivalence: he at once respects his intelligence and fears his double-sided nature.