***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 5:***

# *The Last of the Blind Man*

***Brief Summary:***

* Jim sneaks up to the riverbank next to the road that leads to the inn's door.
* He sees seven or eight guys running towards the inn.
* Three of them break down the door.
* The blind man seems to be the leader.
* One of them reports to the blind man that the captain is dead.
* The blind man orders them to search his body.
* They find the chest empty; whatever they were looking for isn't there.
* The blind man yells that it must have been Jim who took it.
* The men start to search the house.
* Another low whistle comes from the hillside, warning the men that someone is coming.
* The blind man refuses to let his men leave, since he thinks the whistler ("Dirk") is a coward.
* The men start to fight with the blind man: they've gotten some gold from the captain's chest and they don't want to hang around waiting for the police.
* The blind man is furious and starts hitting the men with his cane.
* The noise of their fighting distracts them from the sound of approaching horses.
* A pistol shot sounds as a final warning of danger, and all of the pirates manage to get away.
* The only one who can't escape is the blind man, who runs out onto the road calling after his comrades: "Johnny, Black Dog, Dirk" (5.29) and others.
* In the confusion, the blind man runs straight under the hooves of the riders. They try to stop, but they can't in time. The blind man is killed instantly.
* Jim's mother is fainting. The riders bring her into the house and she soon regains consciousness.
* It turns out the riders are revenue officers – also known as tax collectors – whom the guy who rode out to find Doctor Livesey brought back with him.
* The supervisor of these officers, Mr. Dance, rides on to try to find the rest of the pirates, but he can't.
* The inn is ruined: everything is smashed and broken, and Jim can see that he and his mother are out of business.
* Everyone is confused about what the pirates could have been looking for.
* Jim thinks he has it: the packet of papers he put in his breast pocket while he and his mother were searching the chest.
* Mr. Dance offers to take it.
* Jim wants to give it to Doctor Livesey.
* Mr. Dance immediately agrees (since Doctor Livesey is a local judge, after all), and offers to bring Jim with him when he reports the incident to Doctor Livesey and the squire, who is a local leader in the system of England's landed gentry. ("Gentry" means people of high birth and social class.)
* So Jim and Mr. Dance set out to Doctor Livesey's house.

***Synopsis:***

 Chapter 5 ("The Last of the Blind Man") opens. He hears several men run into the inn, where they discover the captain is dead and the sea chest has been opened. Whatever they are looking for is gone. As a signal from their watchman sounds, most of the pirates want to run, but the blind man, Pew, insists they stay to search for Jim and his mother. They have reluctantly begun to do so when horsemen approach. The pirates scatter — all but Pew, who blunders down the road, deserted by his comrades, and is run down and killed by a man on horseback.

The boy who rode for Dr. Livesey has returned with a company of revenue men (tax collectors), whom Jim recognizes and hails. They find that the inn has been ransacked and robbed. The revenue officer, Mr. Dance, hearing Jim's story, says he must go report to the magistrate, Livesey, and will take Jim with him.

Terrified but curious, Jim looks out from his hiding place. He sees seven or eight men running toward the inn, among them the blind man who had visited before. The eight men are surprised to find the inn door open and Billy dead. They are concerned about the chest and seem disappointed that it contains only Billy’s money: clearly they are more interested in something else that belonged to Flint. The blind man, whom the others address as Pew, orders the men to scatter and find the fugitives. He reminds them that they could be as rich as kings if they find the missing object.

Enraged, Pew starts screaming at his men, and they all begin to quarrel violently. Hearing a pistol shot, however, the men panic and flee, leaving the blind Pew alone on the road. Pew is accidentally run down and killed by men on horseback who have come to investigate. Returning home, Jim finds the inn ruined. He realizes that the oilcloth-wrapped papers in his pocket may be what the pirates sought, but he is reluctant to hand them over to the officer, Dance, who tries to take charge of the situation. Jim says he would prefer to show the papers to Dr. Livesey, and he sets off with Dance’s party for Livesey’s house.

***Critical Study:***

As the men with the lantern and loud voices approach, overcome with curiosity, Jim peaks out behind his hiding place. Eight men, including the blind man identified as Pew, arrive at the inn door and are surprised to find it wide open. Realizing that this means someone has been there, Pew rapidly orders the men inside to search for both Bill and his chest. The men, of course, find Bill dead, and he and his chest already searched. They report, however, that they've found most of the money but not "Flint's fist." With Pew guiding the group, the men destroy the inn searching for either Jim or his mother. Angrily, Pew demands that the group search the surrounding area for the two but the men are oblivious to his command. Pew continues to scream at them, reminding them that they could be filthy rich and even strikes them with a stick, something that provokes an argument.

Suddenly, everyone hears horses galloping and a pistol-shot, a clear sign of danger. Frightened, the men flee abandoning Pew. When the horses approach, confused, Pew falls under a horse's hoof and is trampled to death by people who have heard of the plight of Jim and his mother and are coming to give assistance. They carry Jim's mother back to the inn and in short time, she regains her consciousness. The inn, however, has been torn to pieces. Jim tells the men that he has a packet, something that he believes that the pirates were searching for, the oilcloth packet of papers, and that he wants to give it to Dr. Livesy for safekeeping. Supervisor Dance, the leader of the men, take Jim up on the horse of one of the riders to accompany them to Livesey's.

Chapter V is full of foreshadowing of the future theme of the novel: it is a preliminary skirmish between the forces of good and evil - presented as "our side" (or Jim's side) versus the others, another true aspect of the adventure story style. This drama serves to heighten the already excited atmosphere and to foreshadow the future. The aura of romance is added to the incident to make it seem like more than a mere brawl, for example "the window of the captain's room was thrown open with a slam and a jingle of broken glass; and a man leaned out into the moonlight, head and shoulders, and addressed the blind beggar on the road below him." The words and description of this event make it seem much more like a romantic adventure than a mere looting of an innocent inn.

The role of the blind man Pew in the plot is also interesting to consider. Along with Billy Bones, in the previous chapter, the pair of pirates introduces the two apparently contradictory aspects of personality combined in [Long John Silver](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#long-john-silver), whom we meet later in the novel. The blind man Pew is the nightmare of every child - a deformed stranger, apparently harmless, who offers friendship and innocently request help, but suddenly demonstrates remarkable cruelness and strength. When his narrative purpose is over in this chapter, he too succumbs to death, again rapidly advancing the plot. While Stevenson could have let Billy Bones and Pew wander off somewhere and simply disappear, one of the brilliant parts of this book is the lack of unanswered questions at the end of the novel. Their death is also appropriate because they prelude the pirate Long John Silver but die before his entrance into the novel.

Jim's character is further advanced in this chapter, as he begins to become more courageous and take control of his actions. With his taking care of his mother and then his decision to personally deliver the papers (which he knows to be extremely dangerous) to Dr. Livesy, he begins to exhibit characteristics of a hero of an adventure novel. No longer are events merely happening to him, but he is trying to take a part in the action as well.

***Critical Analysis:***

Guided by the blind beggar, the pirates descend on the Admiral Benbow. As Jim watches from a safe distance, the men search the inn from top to bottom. At last the men report to the blind beggar—whose name is Pew—that the dead captain's gold is there, but "Flint's fist" is missing. Sure that Jim has found and taken it, Pew orders the men to spread out and look for Jim and his mother. Content with the gold, they hesitate. Pew curses them for their cowardice and takes to beating them with his stick.

The sound of galloping horses breaks up the fight, and a warning pistol shot from the watchman sends the pirates scattering. Frantically, Pew tries to avoid the coming horsemen but takes a wrong turn and is killed. The riders are revenue officers led by Supervisor Dance, investigating the crisis at the Admiral Benbow.

Jim reveals to Mr. Dance that he has an oilskin-wrapped packet that the pirates were really after. They agree that Jim should take it directly to [Dr. Livesey](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Dr._Livesey), as he is a magistrate.

Different aspects of courage come into play in this chapter. Raw courage has placed Pew in the role of leader over the pirates who ransack the inn. For the blind beggar, physical disadvantages are no drawback to his courage. This was demonstrated previously, when he fearlessly faced Billy Bones after the more physically capable Black Dog failed and ran. Through force of will and use of his stick, Pew nearly drives the pirates to hunt for the oilskin packet when they were satisfied with Billy's gold doubloons.

Pew's courage is motivated largely by greed, and greed becomes fatal for the blind beggar. While his mates are content with the gold, Pew wants the oilskin packet at all costs. He ignores the lookout's warnings until it's too late, and he becomes a victim of his own greed.

Curiosity is behind Jim's show of courage when he crawls up the bank to watch the goings-on at the inn. "Curiosity," he states, "was stronger than my fear." However, it takes him only a limited way. His courage will be tested more fully later on.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

Curious even while afraid, [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) peers out from the bank to see seven or eight men racing towards the Admiral Benbow: half of them break down the door while the others wait outside. From inside one shouts that [Bill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) is dead, and then that someone has reached the chest before themselves, though the money’s still there. Someone cries that it’s the innkeeper’s family, and they should turn the place out to find them.

***Analysis Part 1:***

Jim and his mother have left the Admiral Benbow just in time, as they’re soon replaced by a group of what must be pirates, who are similarly in pursuit of the sea chest about which the captain (Billy Bones) confided to Jim. Now it’s Jim and his mother who have become their targets.

***Summary part 2:***

The men tear the inn apart, but then another whistle sounds, and one man says they must leave, though the [blind man, Pew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), still says it doesn’t matter that they’ve found gold—there’s still something that they’re lacking. Pew begins to fight with another man: meanwhile, the sound of galloping horses comes from over the hill, and the buccaneers race off, abandoning Pew. Several riders gallop down and one of them accidentally runs over Pew, who is in the road.

***Analysis Part 2:***

The mysterious “something” that is absent from the sea chest seems to be the secret around which the entire plot has turned thus far. Dying in a horrendous accident, Pew is a reminder of the general rule throughout the book that some people simply suffer worse luck, bleaker fortunes, than others.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) springs up and goes to the riders, who have halted, realizing [Pew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) is dead. They carry Jim’s mother to the hamlet and revive her. One of the riders, a tax collector named [Mr. Dance](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), accompanies Jim back to the inn, which is in a state of total disarray. Jim tells Dance that he believes the men were after the very packet he has. Together they ride to [Dr. Livesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey)’s house to discuss the contents of the bag.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Jim has luckily now been able to find a group of temporary caretakers who can help him look after his mother as well as help him understand the significance of the small packet that he has been clutching all the while, and that the pirates seem to have been after themselves.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

"You'd be as rich as kings if you could find it, and you know it's here, and you stand there skulking. There wasn't one of you dared face Bill, and I did it--a blind man! And I'm to lose my chance for you! I'm to be a poor, crawling beggar, sponging for rum, when I might be rolling in a coach! If you had the pluck of a weevil in a biscuit you would catch them still." (5.25)

***Explanation 1:***

This amazing outburst of hatred for his fellow pirates emerges from Pew, the blind man who comes looking for Billy Bones after Bones chased off Black Dog with his sword. The "it" Pew is talking about is, of course, Flint's treasure. We can see what's wrong with pirate society in the way Pew addresses his fellow pirates: it's all about personal gain rather than teamwork. Pew is filled with loathing for the other pirates, who lack "the pluck of a weevil in a biscuit." He cares only about "[his] chance" to be "rolling in a coach" and has no patience for any man who stands in the way of his personal ambition.