***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 8:***

# *At the Sign of the Spy-glass*

***Brief Summary:***

* After Jim has breakfast, Squire Trelawney gives him a job: he is to deliver a note to Long John Silver at the Spy-glass inn. (A spy-glass is a telescope, by the way.)
* Jim finds the inn easily. He feels shy about going inside, though: it's noisy and filled with sailors.
* Soon Jim sees a man coming out of the side room: a friendly-looking fellow with one leg cut off close to the hip, moving around skillfully on a crutch.
* Jim had been afraid that Long John Silver might be the one-legged man his captain was so afraid of back at the Admiral Benbow Inn. But once Jim sees this nice, open-looking fellow, he's sure the man can't be a pirate. After all, he's an innkeeper – how piratical can he be?
* He goes up to the one-legged man and asks if he is "Mr. Silver."
* It is, indeed, Long John Silver.
* When Long John Silver sees Squire Trelawney's seal on Jim's note, he realizes he must be the Squire's new cabin boy.
* Long John Silver shakes Jim's hand.
* Just then a customer hurries out the side door. It's Black Dog, the man missing two figures who came to harass the captain along with Blind Pew.
* Jim tells Long John Silver that the man, Black Dog, is a pirate; Long John Silver agrees that he hasn't paid his bill.
* So Long John Silver sends a couple of guys after Black Dog to track him down.
* Long John Silver asks Tom Morgan, Black Dog's drinking buddy, if he had ever seen Black Dog before.
* Tom Morgan swears that he didn't even know his name.
* Long John Silver asks what Black Dog had been talking about.
* "Keel-hauling" is the answer.
* Keel-hauling is a truly awful punishment supposedly popular among pirates – actually, it was much more popular among the Dutch and British navies way back in the day. The keel is the central beam that provides the spine of a ship. If you're unlucky enough to get keel-hauled, what happens is this: someone (possibly pirates) will attach you to a long rope that runs underneath the ship. Then you'll get tossed overboard. The rope will carry you quickly to the bottom of the boat. Because ships spend so much time at sea, they often collect barnacles and other sharp-shelled fish around the hull (the body of a ship). So as you sink under the hull, you'll get all cut up on the shellfish. Worst of all, if you're not pulled back up again quickly, you'll drown. The reason it's called keel-hauling is because you're literally going under the keel – the beam that anchors the two sides of the ship's hull together. ([**link**](http://www.wisegeek.com/what-is-keelhauling.htm))
* Long John Silver tells Tom Morgan keel-hauling is a proper topic of conversation for such as him, and sends Morgan away.
* Long John Silver claims that he has seen this Black Dog before – with a blind man.
* Jim chimes in that this is Pew.
* Long John Silver agrees that Pew is his name. He promises to run down Black Dog and keel-haul him himself.
* Long John Silver decides to go tell Squire Trelawney all of this business himself.
* Hearing the story of the appearance of Black Dog, Doctor Livesey and Squire Trelawney both agree that there is nothing else Long John Silver could have done.
* They agree to set sail at four that afternoon.
* After Long John Silver leaves, Doctor Livesey agrees that he seems like an honest man.

***Synopsis:***

Trelawney gives Jim a note to pass on to Long John Silver at the Spy-glass, a tavern in the town. Jim sets off happily to find the sailor. Silver is more clean-cut than Jim expects, but Jim recognizes him and introduces himself. Just then, another customer in the bar suddenly gets up to leave, attracting Jim’s attention. Jim recognizes the man as Black Dog and informs Silver. Jim is pleased to learn that Silver shares his negative view of Black Dog and Pew. Silver wins over Jim’s trust, and they stroll by the docks as Silver tells Jim about ships and sea life. Silver is introduced to Dr. Livesey and treats him with respect. Likewise, Livesey is quite pleased to have Silver as the ship’s new cook.

***Critical Study:***

The squire sends Jim (in Chapter 8, "At the Sign of the 'Spy-Glass'") to take a letter to Long John Silver at the tavern he owns, and there — after Silver has announced loudly that this is their new cabin boy — a man whom Jim recognizes as Black Dog runs out the door. Jim is at first suspicious of the one-legged Silver, and especially so upon seeing Black Dog, whom he knows to be a pirate. But he is soon convinced, by Silver's cleanliness, his courtesy, and in general his overall charisma, that Silver is an honest man. Silver sends two men out to run after Black Dog, but they return saying they have lost him in the crowd. Apologizing for his failure to have apprehended the pirate, Silver returns with Jim to the inn where Trelawney and Livesey are waiting and tells the story to them, impressing the doctor, too, with his apparent honest worthiness. Then he goes back to his tavern and the others set off to see the ship.

After breakfast [Squire Trelawney](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Squire_Trelawney) sends Jim to the Spy-glass tavern. He is to deliver a note to the landlord, [Long John Silver](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Long_John_Silver). As Jim hands over the squire's note, Silver loudly identifies him as "our new cabin-boy." Instantly, a customer across the room exits the nearest door—but not before Jim recognizes him as Black Dog. Silver tells Jim that he knows Black Dog only as an occasional customer who keeps company with a blind beggar. Passionately he swears that such a man should be keel-hauled, meaning roped and dragged through the water, under the keel of a ship.

Silver's performance is convincing, confiding to Jim that he is afraid Black Dog's presence could shake the squire's confidence in him. He decides that he and Jim should go right away to report the affair to "Cap'n Trelawney." They find the squire with [Dr. Livesey](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Dr._Livesey) and make their report, and it is agreed that nothing more can be done.

Jim's first encounter with [Long John Silver](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Long_John_Silver) shifts constantly between suspicion and trust. It's an early indication that Silver is not what he appears to be.

Jim knows Billy Bones feared a one-legged seafaring man. Also, he knows Silver lost a leg while serving in the Royal Navy, and yet, Jim's first sunny impression of Silver reassures him that this could not be the monster of his nightmares. When Black Dog appears in the tavern, Silver clears himself of any cloud of doubt before it appears by himself suggesting they tell the squire about it before he hears it elsewhere.

At this point Silver is an enigma. He seems sincere when he denounces Black Dog. But he knows more than he should about the pirate, such as the man's frequent companion, Pew. This raises several questions: Is Silver trying to protect his new job and reputation with Squire Trelawney? Or is he up to something more sinister?

***Critical Analysis:***

At the beginning of this chapter, the squire sends Jim to the "spy-glass" to deliver a note to the new captain of the ship, Long John Silver. In stark contrast to the inn, Jim notices the cleanliness and brightness of the tavern. The new captain of the ship is also the landlord, a tall, strong cheerful man whose left leg is missing and consequently the man moves with a crutch. Jim harbors suspicions that the man he is sent to look for might be the one-legged man that Billy Bones was wary of, but upon meeting him, he is assured by his calm, cheerful manner that this is not the same man. Suddenly, out of the corner of his eye, Jim sees [Black Dog](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#black-dog) run out of the tavern. Again, his suspicions that Long John Silver is the same pirate that Billy Bones was so terrified of resurface. Long John Silver, however, surprises Jim by being angry and upset over the sudden flight of Black Dog. He sends someone to catch him and then sets off to see Livesey and the squire, promising to report the incident to them.

As Long John Silver and Jim proceed to meet the other two, Silver "made himself the most interesting companion," talking about the sea and various other things. By the end of the chapter, Jim was convinced that he was the "best of possible shipmates." When they get to the inn where the squire and Dr. Livesey reside, Long John tells the story and the two gentlemen regretted that Black Dog escaped but agreed there was nothing to be done. As the three go to board the ship, Dr. Livesey admits to being very impressed with John Silver.

In this chapter, the reader gains his first introduction to Long John Silver, a famous passage in literature. Silver is initially presented with considerable economy of words "His left leg was cut off close by the hip, and under the left shoulder he carried a crutch . . he was very tall and strong with a face as big as a ham - plain and pale, but intelligent and smiling. Indeed, he seemed in the most cheerful spirits, whistling as he moved about among the tables, with a merry word or a slap on the shoulder for the more favored of his guests." Not only is Silver himself drawn with real conviction, but the ambiguity which is inseparable from his character is present from the moment that we meet him. Notice, even from his personal description, he is both "plain and pale" and "intelligent and smiling," two contradictory sets of descriptions.

Through Jim's eyes, initially, we see only one side of his dual personality. Silver appears to be physically weak because of the loss of one of his legs, but notice in his description that Jim never describes him as weak or incapable of movement, instead he describes Long John Silver as a hero, through a boy's eyes, someone ho is capable, competent, engaging, and extremely nice to the young boy. Long John Silver, in this chapter, begins to develop a bond with Jim that is again akin to a father-son relationship. At first, as demonstrated in this chapter, Jim is naïve about the glory of Long John Silver but soon this attitude will change.

Again, Stevenson makes good use of the notion of foreshadowing in this chapter. With Jim's original suspicions that Long John Silver is associated with Black Dog and is the one-legged pirate that Billy Bones feared, it places a certain amount of doubt in the reader's head as well. As Jim dismisses this notion, the reader dismisses, but does not forget, as well.

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

***Summary Part 1:***

After breakfast, the [squire](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/squire-trelawney) gives [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) a note addressed to [Long John Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) and sends him to the tavern, which is full of loud, chatting sailors. Since receiving the squire’s letter, Jim has been anxious that the one-legged man would be the one that [Billy Bones](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) so feared, but when he sees this clean, pleasant seaman, he thinks he couldn’t possibly be a pirate.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The pirates Jim has seen so far are ragged, drunken, unmannered men, so he believes he can identify them when he sees them. Long John Silver doesn’t seem to fall into this category at all: he’s more like the squire or doctor, men (and father-figures) Jim trusts.

***Summary part 2:***

As [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) approaches, [Long John Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) sees the letter, gives a slight start, and then loudly greets him as the new cabin-boy. Just then a customer rises and hurries outside: Jim catches sight of him and realizes that it’s [Black Dog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and cries out that someone should catch him. Silver says that name means nothing to him, but that someone should catch him to make him pay his bill. Another sailor runs out and fails to capture him: Silver sternly asks the man, [Morgan](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), if he knows the name of Black Dog, and Morgan says he doesn’t.

***Analysis Part 2:***

While Jim is willing to grant Long John Silver the benefit of the doubt, there are several clues that something more is going on here: Silver seems to want to alert someone else of Jim’s presence as the cabin-boy, and immediately afterward Black Dog runs away. Still, Silver acts entirely ignorant of Black Dog, and it’s difficult to know how much to trust him yet.

***Summary Part 3:***

[Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) tells [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) that the man used to come to his tavern with a blind beggar: Jim says he knows this man, [Pew](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and Silver remembers that was his name. Jim remains suspicious, but soon enough Silver’s cheerful attitude, laughing, and joking convince Jim of his innocence.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Clearly, Long John Silver’s strange behavior hasn’t escaped Jim, but Jim is also still influenced by how different this man is from the pirates Jim has come to recognize.

***Summary Part 4:***

[Silver](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/long-john-silver) declares that he and [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) will get along well. They walk through the quays together, and Silver explains the ins and outs of seafaring to Jim. When they arrive to the [squire](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/squire-trelawney)’s inn, Silver tells the story about [Black Dog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and they all agree that there’s nothing more to be done.

***Analysis Part 4:***

Silver has taken Jim under his wing, introducing him to the new world around him—which makes Jim trust him even more. The squire’s trust in Silver also makes the latter seem all the more benevolent.

***Quotations:***

***Quotation 1:***

Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—  
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!  
Drink and the devil had done for the rest—  
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!

***Explanation 1:***

This pirate’s ditty, first sung in Chapter I and recalled many times afterward, remains one of the best-known legacies of Treasure Island. The poem encapsulates drink, death, and wickedness, which are inextricably linked to the pirates, and which give them an aura of wild glamour. The “bottle of rum” recalls the almost constant state of drunkenness of Silver’s ragged brigade. This reference to alcohol is also connected to idea of the “dead man,” as the pirates’ drunkenness results in mishaps, losses, and deaths, and is perhaps responsible for their ultimate failure.

The “dead man’s chest” symbolically refers to both Billy Bones’s sea chest and Flint’s hidden treasure. The pirates’ song associates the treasure chest with a dead man rather than a living one, suggesting that the pirates are unconsciously aware that their mission will end in death and failure. In a sense, they are singing of their own downfall, almost displaying a death drive. The image of the dead man’s chest also refers to the way in which greed leads to a man’s loss of soul and also recalls the ultimate futility of finding material treasure, as all humans eventually die in the end.

***Quotation 2:***

All the time he was jerking out these phrases he was stumping up and down the tavern on his crutch, slapping tables with his hand, and giving such a show of excitement as would have convinced an Old Bailey judge or a Bow Street runner. My suspicions had been thoroughly reawakened on finding Black Dog at the Spy-glass, and I watched [Long John Silver] narrowly. But he was too deep, and too ready, and too clever for me, and by the time the two men had come back out of breath and confessed that they had lost the track in a crowd, and been scolded like thieves, I would have gone bail for the innocence of Long John Silver. (8.32)

***Explanation 2:***

Ah, Long John Silver, what a master conman he is. When Jim observes known pirate Black Dog in Long John Silver's establishment, he immediately assumes LJS is also a pirate. But LJS is so skilled at pretending to be a gentleman that Jim is taken in immediately. Do you think Long John Silver would really be able to retire into an ordinary gentleman's life, as he claims to want to do after pulling this job? Can you imagine him settling down as the owner of a bar somewhere, just hanging out and pouring other people rum?

***Quotation 3:***

Now, to tell you the truth, from the very first mention of Long John in Squire Trelawney's letter I had taken a fear in my mind that he might prove to be the very one-legged sailor whom I had watched for so long at the old Benbow. But one look at the man before me was enough. I had seen the captain, and Black Dog, and the blind man, Pew, and I thought I knew what a buccaneer was like--a very different creature, according to me, from this clean and pleasant-tempered landlord. (8.5)

***Explanation 3:***

"I thought I knew what a buccaneer was like": famous last words. There is some irony to the fact that we get our modern image of pirates precisely from this "clean and pleasant-tempered landlord," Long John Silver. What does this description suggest about the appearance of the other pirates like Black Dog? How do they differ from Long John Silver?