

The brave man turned his back on Silver and began to walk back to the beach. With a shout, Silver threw his crutch through the air. It hit poor Tom between the shoulders, and he fell to the ground with a cry. Silver, as quick as a monkey, was on top of him in a moment. Twice he dug his knife into that poor body.

As I watched, the whole world seemed to swim away before me in a mist – Silver, the birds above, the tall Spyglass hill. When I was myself again, Silver was standing with his crutch under his arm, cleaning the blood from his knife with some grass.

As silently as I could, I began to move away, and as soon as I was clear of the trees, began to run as I had never run before.

9

The man of the island

But almost immediately I ran into a new danger. As I ran, I heard some small stones falling from the side of a steep hill. I stopped to look round, and saw a figure jump quickly behind a tree. Frightened, I turned back towards the boats, but the figure appeared again and moved with the speed of an animal. But it was a man, I knew that now.

I remembered I had a pistol if I needed it, and turned back towards this man of the island. He was hiding

behind another tree but stepped out to meet me.

‘Who are you?’ I asked, staring at him.

‘Ben Gunn,’ he answered, and his voice sounded rough and strange. His skin was burnt nearly black by the sun and his clothes were made from pieces of a ship’s sail. ‘Poor Ben Gunn,’ he went on. ‘Alone for three years.’



‘Who are you?’ I asked, staring at him.

‘Were you shipwrecked?’ I asked.

‘No, my friend,’ he said. ‘Marooned.’

I had heard the word before, and knew it meant a cruel punishment often used by pirates – leaving a man alone on some distant, empty island.