

(The PIRATES run off. BEN watches, to make sure they're gone; then he scampers down the tree and leads JIM out of hiding.)

BEN GUNN. We's outs the woods, we's outs the woods, except, except we's still in the woods, now ain't we? Hee, heeeeee!

JIM. ...Who are you?

BEN GUNN. Ben Gunn, says I. Poor Ben Gunn. And I ain't spoke with a Christian these three long years. Or is it four, says I. Can't tell. Mighty hard. Mighty hard.

JIM. Were you shipwrecked?

BEN GUNN. "Shipwrecked"?! Nay, not I. I was marooned.

JIM. "Marooned"?

BEN GUNN. Put ashore. Abandoned by a crew o' pirates. And I lives all these years on goats and berries and oysters, and I'll tell you a secret: I's plenty sick o' goats and berries and oysters. Hee, heeeeee! Have an oyster?

(He puts his handout, offering an oyster.)

JIM. No thank you.

BEN GUNN. What I really wants is a piece o' cheese. Has you got any on ya?!

JIM. No. I'm sorry.

BEN GUNN. That was my favorite, see? Cheese, cheese, a little roasted, toasted cheesie, like me mother used to make when I was all tucked up in me little bed at home. Ohh, she was a good soul, me mother. And she loved me, she did. And look at me now, says I. I've been a disappointment, ain't I? That I have. That I have. And all I wants is a piece of cheese.

(He starts to cry.)

JIM: I'm sorry for your hardship, sir. But there's plenty of cheese on the ship I came on. The one out there.

BEN GUNN. And you'd give me some?

JIM: Of course I would. I'd be happy to. If I ever get back to it.

BEN GUNN. Cheese, cheese, cheese! Ha, ha! I's rich! Ohh, you're a mighty good lad, says I. A fine lad. A magnificent lad! And what's your name?

JIM. Jim Hawkins.

BEN GUNN: ... Jim...Hawkins. (He looks Jim up and down) He heeeeeeeeeee! (He delighted about something.) How dee do, Jim Hawkins. Glad to make your acquaintance, lad. And I'll tell ya this. You'll bless your stars that it was you that found me first and was kind to me. Shall I tell ya why? Eh? Hm? Ha ha? Cause I's rich, lad. Rich as the Kings and Queens o' Europe ever dreamed of bein' amen and God be with ya! Hee, hee! And I's built me a little boat, ya see, a magnificent boat, fit for a king, and I keeps it under the white rock. Hee, hee! Richly riches on the billy goat's hill Pull ya to the ground if ya don't stand still! Wait! (A new thought) That ain't Flint's ship out there, is it?

JIM. No sir. Flint is dead, or so they say. But some of Flint's hands were on board with us, and they mutinied to get a treasure map. And now I and others loyal to the captain are on the run.

BEN GUNN. Aha. You're in a clove hitch, ain't ya? Well you just put your trust in old Ben Gunn. Ben Gunn's the man to save ya, says I. But tell me, Jim, do ya think your captain dear would help a poor maroon, if that maroon goes and helps the captain?

JIM. I would think it likely.

BEN GUNN. To the tune of a passage home ...?

JIM. Of course he would! I can promise you!

BEN GUNN. (Dancing around happily.) Hee, hee! Hee, hee! I's as good as free! We'll make for the sea and away from the tree, For a little fee, on me mother's knee! Hee, hee!!!!!! Now I'll tell you a story and I'll tell ya no more: I were on Flint's ship when the treasure was buried! Ya see he orders his first mate, Long John Silver, To do it and take six of us along With him to do the work; and he tells Silver, "You kill 'em afterwards, leavin' no witnesses who could point the way!" And Silver says, "Aye, aye, sir! Aye, aye!" says he, "I'll kill 'em."

JIM. But why does Silver need the map if he's the one who buried the treasure?

BEN GUNN. Because it's a jungle out there, ya silly goose! With vines and trees and holes and caverns and it All looks the same to every living soul In the world! Except to old Ben Gunn, hee hee. Except to Ben what only wants a piece of cheese. That's all. That's all I want. That's all I want.

(He weeps again. JIM is moved.)

JIM. I'm sorry.

(He touches BEN'S shoulder in sympathy — and BEN weeps all the harder at the touch of a human after all these years. Bang! A gunshot. Ben turns off the tears in an instant.)

BEN GUNN. What's that?! They're comin'! Gotta hide!