

Treasure Island

Robert Louis Stevenson



TREASURE ISLAND

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Simplified by Michael West

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1800 word vocabulary

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"Both my pistols went off" (SEE PAGE 123)

One

THE OLD SEA-DOG AT THE "BENBOW" INN

MR. TRELAWNEY, Dr. Livesey, and the rest of these gentlemen have asked me to write down the whole story of Treasure Island, from the beginning to the end, keeping nothing back. I therefore take up my pen in the year 1760, and go back to the time when my father kept the "Benbow" inn, and the brown old seaman, with the sword-cut, first took up his lodging under our roof.

I remember him as if it were yesterday, as he came to the inn door, his sea-chest following behind him in a hand-cart; a tall, strong, heavy, brown man; his knot of hair falling over the shoulders of his soiled blue coat; his hands hard and torn, with black, broken nails; and the sword-cut across one cheek, a dirty, blue-white mark. I remember him looking round the bay and whistling to himself as he did so, and then breaking out in that old sea-song that he sang so often afterward:

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!"

in the high, old shaking voice. Then he knocked on the door with a bit of stick, and, when my father appeared, called roughly for a glass of *rum*¹. He drank the rum slowly, dwelling upon the taste of it, and still looking about him at the cliffs and up at our sign-board.

"This is a nice bay," said he at last; "and a pleasantly placed inn. Do you have much company?"

My father told him no—very little company, the more was the pity.

"Well, then," said he, "this is the place for me. Here

¹ *Rum* — a very strong drink.

you, young fellow," he cried to the man who pushed the hand-cart, "come over here and help up my chest. I'll stay here a bit. What may you call me? You may call me 'captain.' Oh, I see what you're at—there!" and he threw down three or four gold pieces on the floor. "You can tell me when I've worked through that," said he, looking very fierce.

He was a very silent man by custom. All day he walked round the bay or upon the cliffs, with a brass spy-glass; all the evening he sat in a corner of the sitting-room next the fire, and drank rum and water very strong. Mostly he would not speak when spoken to; only look up sudden and fierce, and blow through his nose like a horn; and we and the people who came about our house soon learned to let him be. Every day, when he came back from his walk, he would ask if any seaman had gone by along the road. At first we thought it was the lack of company of his own kind that made him ask this question, but at last we began to see he did not desire to meet them. When a seaman stayed at the "Benbow," he would look in at him through the curtained door before he entered the sitting-room; and he was always sure to be as silent as a mouse when any such was present. For me, at least, there was no secret about the matter; for I was, in a way, a sharer in his alarms. He had taken me to one side one day, and promised me a silver fourpenny piece on the first day of every month if I would only keep my "weather-eye open for a seaman with one leg," and let him know the moment he appeared.

How that person—the seaman with one leg—came into my dreams, I need scarcely tell you. But of the captain himself, I was far less frightened than anybody else. There he would sit at nights drinking rum, and singing his bad old wild sea-songs, caring for nobody. Sometimes he would order me to serve glasses of rum to all the persons present, and he would force all the company to listen to his stories or to join in with his singing. Often I have heard the house shaking with "Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum"; all the neighbours joining in for dear life, with the fear of death upon them, and each singing louder than the other, lest he should be noticed.

His stories were what frightened people worst of all. Dreadful stories they were; about hanging, and murder, and storms at sea, and wild deeds. My father was always saying the inn would be ruined, for people would soon cease coming there; but I really believe his presence did us good. People were frightened at the time, but on looking back they rather liked it, it was a fine excitement in a quiet country life.

In one way, indeed, it did seem that he might ruin us; for he kept on staying week after week, and at last month after month, so that all the money had been long used up; and still my father never had the courage to demand more.

All the time he lived with us the captain made no change in his dress. He never wrote or received a letter, and he never spoke with any but the neighbours, and with these, for the most part, only when he had drunk more rum than was good for him. The great sea-chest none of us had ever seen open.

He was only once disobeyed, and that was towards the end, when my poor father was far gone in the illness which ended in his death. Dr. Livesey came late one afternoon to see my father, took a bit of dinner from my mother, and went into the sitting-room to smoke a pipe until his horse should come down from the village. I followed him in, and I remember observing the great difference in appearance between the doctor with his powdered hair as white as snow, and his bright black eyes, and pleasant manners, and the rough country folk—and above all, with that dirty, heavy, red-eyed *pirate*¹ of ours, sitting far gone in rum, with his arms on the table.

Suddenly the captain began his usual song:

“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!”

At first I had supposed “the dead man’s chest” to be that big box of his upstairs in the front room. But by this time we had all long ceased to pay any particular notice

¹ *Pirate* — a sailor who attacks and robs others on the sea.

to the song; it was new, that night, to nobody but Dr. Livesey, and on him I observed it did not produce a pleasant effect, for he looked up for a moment quite angrily before he went on with his talk to old Taylor, the gardener. The captain looked at him for a time, knocked on the table for silence, looked still harder, and at last broke out with a foul word: "Silence, there, you . . . !"

"Were you addressing me, sir?" said the doctor; and when the fellow had told him, with another foul word, that this was so, "I have only one thing to say to you, sir," replied the doctor, "—that, if you keep on drinking rum, the world will soon be free of a very dirty and base fellow! "

The old fellow's anger was terrible. He sprang to his feet, drew and opened a great knife, and laying it open on his hand, looked as if he would pin the doctor to the wall.

The doctor never so much as moved. He spoke to him, as before, over his shoulder, and in the same voice; rather high, so that all the room might hear, but perfectly calm and steady:

"If you do not put that knife this instant in your pocket, I promise, upon my honour, you shall hang at a very early date."

Then followed a battle of looks between them; but the captain soon yielded, put up his weapon, and sat down again making low noises in his throat, like a beaten dog.

"And now, sir," continued the doctor, "since I now know there's such a fellow in my part of the country, you may be sure I'll have an eye upon you day and night. I'm not a doctor only; I'm an officer of the law; and if I catch a breath of complaint against you, if it's only for a piece of rudeness like to-night's, I'll have you hunted down and driven out of this."

Soon after this Dr. Livesey's horse came to the door, and he rode away; but the captain was silent that evening, and for many evenings to come.



The old fellow drew a great knife

Two

BLACK DOG APPEARS AND DISAPPEARS

It was not very long after this that there happened the first of the strange events that set us free at last of the captain—though not, as you will see, of his business. It was a very cold winter, with long, hard frosts and heavy storms; and it was plain from the first that my poor father would not see the spring. He grew daily weaker, and my mother and I had all the work of the inn to do, and were kept busy enough, without attending much to our unpleasant guest.

It was one January morning, very early; a cold, frosty morning. The captain had risen earlier than usual, and set out down the beach, his short sword swinging under the broad skirts of the old blue coat, his brass spy-glass under his arm, his hat on the back of his head. I remember his breath hanging like smoke in the air behind him as he marched off, and the last sound I heard of him, as he passed the big rock, was his blowing loudly through his nose, as though his mind was still running upon Dr. Livesey.

Well, mother was upstairs with father; and I was laying the breakfast-table against the captain's return, when the door opened, and a man stepped in on whom I had never set my eyes before. He was a yellow-faced creature, wanting two fingers of the left hand; and, though he wore a sword, he did not look much like a fighter. I had always my eye open for seamen, with one leg or two, and I remember that this one surprised me. He was not like a sailor, and yet he had some taste of the sea about him.

I asked him what he required, and he said he would take rum; but, as I was going out of the room to fetch it, he sat down upon a table and made sign to me to draw near. I paused where I was, with a cloth in my hand.

"Come here, boy," said he. "Come nearer here."

I took a step nearer.

"Is this table for my friend Bill?" he asked, with a nasty look.

I told him I did not know his friend Bill; and this was for a person who stayed in our house, whom we called the captain.

"Well," said he, "my friend Bill would be called the captain." He has a cut on one cheek, and a very pleasant way with him, particularly in drink. We'll suppose that your captain has a cut on one cheek—and we'll suppose, if you like, that that cheek's the right one. Ah, well! I told you. Now, is my friend Bill in this house?"

I told him that he was out walking.

"Which way, boy? Which way is he gone?"

I pointed out the rock and told him by which way the captain would return, and how soon, and answered a few other questions. "Ah," said he, "this'll be as good as drink to my friend Bill."

The stranger kept waiting about just inside the inn door. At last he saw the captain coming along the road. Then, "Sure enough," he said, "here's my friend Bill, with a spy-glass under his arm, bless his old heart, to be sure. You and me'll just go back into the room, my son, and get behind the door, and we'll give Bill a little surprise—bless his heart, I say again."

So saying, the stranger went with me into the sitting-room, and put me behind him in the corner so that we were both hidden by the open door. I was very much alarmed, as you may fancy, and it rather added to my fears to observe that the stranger was certainly frightened himself. He loosened the blade of his sword; and all the time we were waiting there, he kept swallowing, as if there were something in his throat.

At last in came the captain, shut the door behind him, without looking to the right or left, and marched straight across the room to where his breakfast lay ready for him.

"Bill," said the stranger, in a voice that I thought he had tried to make bold and big.

The captain turned quickly round on his heel; all the brown had gone out of his face, and even his nose was blue; he had the look of a man who sees the Evil One; and, indeed, I felt sorry to see him, all in a moment, turn so old and sick.

"Come, Bill, you know me; you know your old friend, Bill, surely," said the stranger.

The captain made a sound in his throat.

"Black Dog!" said he.

"And who else?" replied the other, now more sure of himself. "Black Dog, come to see his old friend Billy, at the Benbow Inn. Ah, Bill, Bill, we have seen a lot of things, we two, since I lost those two fingers," holding up his damaged hand.

"Now, look here," said the captain; "you've hunted me down; here I am; well, then, speak up: what is it?"

"That's you, Bill," returned Black Dog; "you're in the right, Billy. I'll have a glass of rum from this dear child here, and we'll sit down, if you please, and talk, like old friends."

When I returned with the rum, they were already seated on either side of the captain's breakfast-table, Black Dog next to the door, and sitting on the side of his chair, so as to have one eye on his old friend, and one, as I thought, on his way of escape.

He ordered me to go, and leave the door wide open. "None of your key-holes for me, boy," he said; and I left them together and went into the next room.

For a long time, though I certainly did my best to listen, I could hear nothing but a low murmuring; but at last the voice began to grow higher, and I could pick up a word or two, mostly foul ones, from the captain.

"No, no, no; and an end of it!" he cried once. And again, "If it comes to hanging, hang all, say I."

Then all of a sudden there was a fearful burst of foul words and other noises. The chair and table went over. The sound of fighting followed; and then a cry of pain, and the next instant I saw Black Dog running away, and the captain hotly pursuing, both with drawn swords, and blood

was streaming from Black Dog's left shoulder. Just at the door, the captain aimed one last fearful blow at the fellow, which would certainly have cut him in half, had it not been caught by our big sign-board. You may see the mark on the lower side of the board to this day.

That blow was the last of the battle. Once out upon the road, Black Dog, in spite of his wound, showed a wonderful speed, and disappeared over the edge of the hill in half a minute. The captain stood gazing at the sign-board as if he did not know where he was. Then he passed his hand over his eyes several times, and at last turned back into the house.

"Jim," said he, "rum"; and as he spoke, he nearly fell, but caught himself with one hand against the wall.

"Are you hurt?" cried I.

"Rum," he repeated. "I must get away from here. Rum! rum!"

I ran to fetch it; but I was quite unsteadied by all that had happened, and I broke a glass, and while I was pouring out the rum again, I heard a loud fall in the sitting-room. Running in, I beheld the captain lying full length upon the floor. At the same instant my mother, alarmed by the cries and fighting, came running downstairs to help me. Between us we raised his head. He was breathing very loud and hard; but his eyes were closed, and his face a dreadful colour.

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" cried my mother, "what a shame upon the house! And your poor father sick!"

We had no idea what to do to help the captain, nor any other thought but that he had got his death-hurt in the struggle with the stranger. I got the rum, to be sure, and tried to put it down his throat; but his teeth were tightly shut. We were very glad when the door opened and Dr. Livesey came in, on his visit to my father.

"Oh, doctor," we cried, "what shall we do? Where is he wounded?"

"Wounded? Don't be silly!" said the doctor. "No more wounded than you or I. He is ill, seriously ill, as I warned him that he would be, if he went on drinking rum. Now, Mrs. Hawkins, just you run upstairs to your husband,

and tell him, if possible, nothing about it. For my part, I must do my best to save this fellow's entirely worthless life; and Jim here will get me a large cup."

When I got back with the cup, the doctor had already cut open the captain's coat, and laid bare his great strong arm. Strange pictures and words had been pricked into the skin in several places. "*Here's good fortune,*" "*A fair wind,*" and "*Billy Bones his fancy*" were very neatly and clearly drawn on the lower part of the arm; and up near the shoulder there was a picture of a man being hanged.

"A true sign of the future," said the doctor, touching this picture with his finger. "And now, Master Billy Bones, if that be your name, we'll have a look at the colour of your blood. Jim," he said, "are you afraid of blood?"

"No, sir," said I.

"Well, then," said he, "you hold the cup"; and with that he took his knife.

A great deal of blood was taken before the captain opened his eyes and looked about him. First he recognized the doctor with an angry look; then his eyes fell upon me, and he looked happier. But suddenly his colour changed, and he tried to raise himself, crying:

"Where's Black Dog?"

"There is no Black Dog here," said the doctor. "You have been drinking rum; and exactly what I warned you of has happened; and I have just, very much against my own will, dragged you out of the grave. Now. Mr. Bones——"

"That's not my name," he said angrily.

"Much I care," replied the doctor. "It's the name of a pirate whom I knew once; and I call you by it for short, and what I have to say to you is this: one glass of rum won't kill you, but if you take one, you'll take another and another; and I tell you that, if you don't stop drinking, you'll die. Do you understand that? Come, now, try your best. I'll help you to your bed for once."

Between us, with much trouble, we got him upstairs, and laid him on his bed, where his head fell back, as if he were almost fainting.

"Now, remember," said the doctor, "the name of rum for you is death."

And with that he went off to see my father, taking me with him by the arm.

"This is nothing," he said, as soon as he had closed the door. "I have drawn blood enough to keep him quiet for a time; he should lie for a week where he is; that is the best thing for him and you; but the next attack will finish him."

Three

THE BLACK SPOT

ABOUT noon I stopped at the captain's door with some cooling drinks. He was lying very much as we had left him, only a little higher, and he seemed both weak and excited.

"Jim," he said, "you're the only one here that's worth anything; and you know I've been always good to you. Never a month but I've given you a silver fourpenny for yourself. And now, you see, I'm pretty low, and deserted by all; and Jim, you'll bring me one little glass of rum, now, won't you, boy?"

"But the doctor——" I began.

"Doctors are all useless. That doctor is a fool, I tell you. If I don't have a drop of rum, Jim, I shall go mad. I shall begin seeing things. I've seen Flint in that corner there as plain as print. I'll give you a golden pound for one glass, Jim."

"I want none of your money," said I, "but what you owe my father. I'll get you one glass, and no more."

When I brought it to him, he seized it hastily, and drank it off.

"Yes," said he, "that's better. And now, boy, did that doctor say how long I was to lie here?"

"A week at least," said I.

"Thunder!" he cried. "A week! I can't do that: they'd have the black spot on me by then. They are going about planning things against me. Fools, who couldn't keep what they got and want to steal what's another's. Is that the way for seamen to behave? But I'm a saving fellow: I never wasted good money, nor lost it. But I'll trick 'em again. I'm not afraid of them."

As he was thus speaking, he had risen from the bed with great difficulty, holding on to my shoulder so tight that it almost made me cry out. Then he paused.

"That doctor's done me," he murmured. "My ears are singing. Lay me back."

Before I could do much to help him, he had fallen back again to his former place, where he lay for a time silent.

"Jim," he said at last, "you saw that seaman to-day?"

"Black Dog?" I asked.

"Ah! Black Dog," said he. "He's a bad one; but there are worse that sent him. Now, if I can't get away, anyhow, and they hand me the black spot, remember this. It's my old sea-chest they're after. You get on a horse and go to that cursed doctor, and tell him to bring all his men and he'll catch them, catch all old Flint's crew at the Benbow Inn, man and boy, all of them that are left. I was old Flint's first officer, and I'm the only one that knows the place. He gave it me at Savannah, when he lay dying. But you won't tell anyone unless they get the black spot on me, or unless you see that Black Dog again, or a seaman with one leg, Jim—him above all."

"But what is the black spot, Captain?" I asked.

"That's a call. I'll tell you if they get that. But you keep your weather-eye open, Jim, and I'll go equal shares with you, I will."

He talked a little longer, his voice growing weaker; but soon after I had given him the powder which the doctor had sent, he fell into a heavy sleep, and I left him.

My poor father died quite suddenly that evening, which