Treasure Island

A HI-LO RETELLING

Retold from the novel by Robert Louis Stevenson



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CHAPTER 1

The Old Sea Dog



My name is Jim Hawkins. When I was a boy, my mother and father ran an inn by the sea. An inn is a place where travelers stop to eat and sleep. Ours was called the Admiral Benbow, and it stood alone on a cliff above a cold gray bay.

This is the story of a map, a ship and a band of pirates. It is the story of Treasure Island, and it all began on the day the old sailor came.

He came walking up the road one cold morning, tall and strong, with a brown face. A white scar ran across one cheek. Behind him, a man pushed a cart with a big sea chest on it. The old sailor sang as he walked.

"Fifteen men on the dead man's chest - yo-ho-ho!"

His voice was high and cracked, like a rope about to snap. When he got to our door, he banged on it with his stick.

"This is a fine spot," he said, looking around. "Not many people come by here, I bet, so I will stay a while." He threw some gold coins on the table. "You can call me Captain," he said.

The captain spent his days out on the cliffs with a brass spyglass. A spyglass is a long tube with glass at each end that makes far things look close. He used it to watch the sea, hour after hour.

One day he took me aside. "Jim," he said, "keep your eyes open for a sailor with one leg. Tell me the moment you see him, and I will pay you a silver coin each month."

I said I would. But at night I dreamed of the one-legged man chasing me over hedges and ditches.

The captain was a grumpy old sea dog. He drank too much, and he shouted at our guests. When he sang, everyone had to sing with him. When he told stories, no one dared to leave the room. His stories were about storms and pirates and men who walked the plank. People were scared of him, but I think they liked the thrill.

All this time, my father was very ill, and he grew weaker every day. The captain never paid for his room again after that first day. My father was too sick and too scared to ask him for the money.

Then, one frosty morning, a stranger came in. His face was pale, and two fingers were missing from his left hand. "Is my old mate Bill here?" he asked me.

"I don't know any Bill," I said.

"Ah, but he has a scar on his cheek," the man said with a smile. "We will wait for him, you and I."

When the captain came in, the stranger stepped out to meet him. "Hello, Bill," he said softly.

The captain turned white. "Black Dog!" he cried.

The two men sat down and talked in low voices. Then the voices grew loud and angry, and all at once they both pulled out their swords. Black Dog ran for the door with the captain right behind him. The captain swung his sword and hit the sign above our door. Black Dog got away down the road.

The captain stumbled back in and held on to the wall. "Jim," he gasped. Then he crashed to the floor.

Think about it

1. What did the captain use to watch the sea?
2. Who came to the inn asking for his mate Bill?
3. Why do you think the captain wanted Jim to watch for a sailor with one leg?