



### CHAPTER 3

## *The Black Spot*

**A**bout noon I brought the captain some cooling drinks and medicines. He was lying very much as we had left him.

“Jim,” he said, “you know I’ve been good to you. I’m pretty low, and deserted by all. You’ll bring me one noggin of rum, won’t you?”

“The doctor – ” I began.

But he broke in, cursing the doctor.  
“Doctors is all **swabs**,” he said. “What does he know about seafaring men? I been in places hot as pitch,

SWABS  
Useless persons.

and mates dropping with **Yellow Jack** and the land heaving like the sea with earthquakes – what do the doctor know of lands like that? I’ve lived on rum. It’s been meat and drink to me. If I’m not to have my rum now, my blood’ll be on you, Jim, and that doctor swab. Look how my fingers tremble,” he pleaded. “I can’t keep ‘em still. If I don’t have rum, I’ll have the horrors. If I get the horrors, I’ll raise Cain. Your doctor himself said one glass wouldn’t hurt me.”

YELLOW  
JACK  
Yellow fever.

He was growing more excited, and this alarmed me for my father, who needed quiet. Besides, I was assured by the doctor’s words, now quoted to me.

“I’ll get you one glass, and no more.” When I brought it, he seized it greedily, and drank it out.

“Ay, ay,” said he, “that’s better, sure enough. 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. The lubbers couldn’t keep what they got, and want mine.”

As he was speaking, he rose with great difficulty, holding my shoulder with a grip that almost made me cry out.

“That doctor’s done me,” he murmured. “My ears is singing.” And he fell back on the bed.

“Jim,” he said, at length, “you saw Black Dog? He’s a bad ‘un, but there’s worse that put him on. Now, if I can’t get away and they tip me the black spot, it’s my old sea chest they’re after. You get on a horse and go to that doctor and tell him to pipe all hands – magistrates and such – to the ‘Admiral Benbow’ – all Flint’s crew that’s left. I was Flint’s first mate, and I’m the only one knows the place. He gave it to me at Savannah, when he lay dying, like as if I was to now. But you won’t tell unless they get the black spot on me, or you see Black Dog again, or a seafaring man with one leg, Jim – him above all.”

“But what is the black spot, captain?” I asked.

“That’s a summons, mate. Keep your weather-eye open, Jim, and I’ll share with you equals, upon my honor.”

His voice grew weaker, and soon he fell into a heavy sleep. Probably I should have told the whole story to the doctor, but my poor father died quite suddenly that evening, which put aside all other matters. Our distress, the visits of the neighbors, the arranging of the

funeral, and all the work of the inn kept me so busy that I had scarcely time to think of the captain.

He got downstairs next morning and had his meals, though he ate little, and had more than his usual supply of rum. He helped himself, and no one dared to cross him. On the night before the funeral he was drunk, and it was shocking in that house of mourning to hear him singing away at his ugly old sea song. But, weak as he was, we were all in the fear of death for him.

He clambered up and down stairs, holding on to the walls, and breathing hard like a man on a steep mountain. His temper was worse than ever. When he was drunk he drew his cutlass and lay it on the table.

The day after the funeral, I was standing at the door full of sad thoughts about my father, when I saw a blind man coming slowly along the road. He tapped before him with a stick, and wore a green shade over his eyes and nose. He was hunched, as if from age or weakness, and wore a tattered sea cloak with a hood that made him appear deformed. Raising his voice in an odd sing-song, he addressed the air in front of him:

“Will anyone inform a poor blind man who has lost his sight in the defense of England – God bless King



THE CAPTAIN MADE A MOVEMENT TO RISE, BUT I DO NOT BELIEVE HE HAD ENOUGH FORCE LEFT IN HIS BODY.

George! – where he may now be?”

“You are at the ‘Admiral Benbow,’ Black Hill Cove,” said I.

“I hear a young voice,” said he. “Will you give me your hand and lead me in?”

I held out my hand, and the horrible creature gripped it like a vise. I struggled to withdraw, but the blind man pulled me close to him.

“Now, boy,” he said, “take me to the captain.”

“Sir, upon my word I dare not.”

“Take me in straight, or I’ll break your arm.” And he gave it a wrench that made me cry out.

“Sir, the captain sits with a drawn cutlass – ”

“March,” he interrupted, and I never heard a voice so cruel and cold as that blind man’s. I obeyed him at once, walking towards where our sick buccaneer was sitting, dazed with rum. The blind man clung to me, holding me in one iron fist. “Lead me straight to him, and when I’m in view, cry out, ‘Here’s a friend for you, Bill.’” As I opened the parlor door, I cried out the words in a trembling voice.

The captain made a movement to rise, but I do not believe he had enough force left in his body. Then I saw the blind man pass something into the captain’s palm, which closed upon it instantly.

“Now that’s done,” said the blind man. And with incredible accuracy and nimbleness, he skipped out of the parlor and into the road, where I could hear his stick tapping in the distance.

When we gathered our senses, the captain drew in his hand and looked into the palm.

“Ten o’clock!” he cried. “Six hours. We’ll do them

yet." And he sprang to his feet. Even as he did so, he reeled, put his hand to his throat, stood swaying for a moment, and then fell.

I ran to him at once, but haste was in vain. The captain was dead. As soon as I saw that he was dead, I burst into tears. It was the second death I had known, and the sorrow of the first was still fresh in my heart.