

Excerpt from “Treasure Island” by Robert Louis Stevenson ~Black Spot~



He was plainly blind, for he tapped before him with a stick, and wore a great green shade over his eyes and nose; and he was hunched, as if with age or weakness, and wore a huge old tattered sea-cloak with a hood, that made him appear positively deformed. I never saw in my life a more dreadful-looking figure. He stopped a little from the inn, and, raising his voice in an odd sing-song, addressed the air in front of him: –

“Will any kind friend inform a poor blind man, who has lost the precious sight of his eyes in the gracious defence of his native country, England, and God bless King George! – where or in what part of this country he may now be?”

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

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

I held out my hand, and the horrible, soft-spoken, eyeless creature gripped it in a moment like a vice. I was so much startled that I struggled to withdraw; but the blind man pulled me close up to him with a single action of his arm.

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

“Sir,” said I, “upon my word I dare not.”

“Oh,” he sneered, “that’s it! Take me in straight, or I’ll break your arm.”

And he gave it, as he spoke, a wrench that made me cry out.

“Sir,” said I, “it is for yourself I mean. The captain is not what he used to be. He sits with a drawn cutlass. Another gentleman – ”

“Come, now, march,” interrupted he; and I never heard a voice so cruel, and cold, and ugly as that blind man’s. It cowed me more than the pain; and I began to obey him at once, walking straight in at the door and towards the parlour, where our sick old buccaneer was sitting, dazed with rum. The blind man clung close to me, holding me in one iron fist, and leaning almost more of his weight on me than I could carry.

“Lead me straight up to him, and when I’m in view, cry out, ‘Here’s a friend for you, Bill.’ If you don’t, I’ll do this;” and with that he gave me a twitch that I thought would have made me faint. Between this and that, I was so utterly terrified of the blind beggar that I forgot my terror of the captain, and as I opened the parlour door, cried out the words he had ordered in a trembling voice.

The poor captain raised his eyes, and at one look the rum went out of him, and left him staring sober. The expression of his face was not so much of terror as of mortal sickness. He made a movement to rise, but I do not believe he had enough force left in his body.

“Now, Bill, sit where you are,” said the beggar. “If I can’t see, I can hear a finger stirring. Business is business. Hold out your right hand. Boy, take his right hand by the wrist, and bring it near to my right.”

We both obeyed him to the letter, and I saw him pass something from the hollow of the hand that held his stick into the palm of the captain’s, which closed upon it instantly.

“And now that’s done,” said the blind man; and at the words he suddenly left hold of me, and, with incredible accuracy and nimbleness, skipped out of the parlour and into the road, where, as I still stood motionless, I could hear his stick go tap-tap-tapping into the distance.

It was some time before either I or the captain seemed to gather our senses; but at length, and about at the same moment, I released his wrist, which I was still holding, and he drew in his hand and looked sharply 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, with a peculiar sound, fell from his whole height face foremost to the floor.

I ran to him at once, calling to my mother. But haste was all in vain. The captain had been struck dead by thundering apoplexy.