



For a while the ship kept bucking and rolling like an upset horse with everything groaning under the strain. At every roll of the ship, the red scarf pirate slid to and fro. While Israel Hands seemed to slide down further, so that his whole face was now buried in his chest. Around both of them, I could see splashes of dark blood and felt sure that they had killed each other in their drunken state.

Then Israel Hands half turned and with a low moan, moved himself back the way I had first seen him. His moan told me he was weak and in pain. I walked past until I reached the main mast.

"Come aboard, Mr. Hands," I said as a joke.

He rolled his eyes around, but he was too far gone to be surprised. All he could do was to mumble one word, "Brandy."

Suddenly I thought there was no time to lose.

I slipped down the stairs into the cabin. What a mess! All the locked places had been broken open in an effort to find the chart. The floor was thick with mud where they had sat down to drink after wading in the mud at their camp. Dozens of empty bottles clinked together in the corners and one of the Doctor's medical books lay open on the table. I went into the cellar and all the barrels were gone.

Searching about, I found a bottle with some brandy, for Hands and for myself I found some biscuits, a great big bunch of raisins and a piece of cheese. I took it all up on deck.

I put my own stock well out of Mr. Hands's reach before I went to the water barrel and finally had a good deep drink of water. Then I gave Hands the brandy. He tipped it up and drank most of it before he took the bottle out of his mouth.



"Aye," he said, "by thunder, I wanted some of that!"

I had already sat down in my own corner to eat.

"Hurt much?" I asked him. He grunted.

"If that Doctor was aboard, I'd be alright in a few days but no such luck," he said.

"As for him, he is as good as dead, he is," pointing to the man with the red scarf. "He was no seaman anyway... where did you come from?"

"Well," I said, "I have come aboard to take over this ship, Mr. Hands. I am now your Captain until further notice."

He looked at me sourly but said nothing.

"By the way," I continued, "I can't have these colours flying, Mr. Hands. Better none than these."

I ran to the flag line and took down their cursed black flag, and chucked it overboard.

"God save the king!" I said, waving my cap. "And an end to Captain Silver!"

He watched me closely and slyly, all the while his chin bent down to his chest.



"I reckon, Captain Hawkins, you will want to get ashore now. We should talk," he said at last.

"Why, yes," I said, "with all my heart, Mr. Hands. Please go on," and kept on eating.

"This man," he began, pointing weakly at the body. "O'Brien was his name, me and him got the sails up so we could sail her back home. Well, he's dead now, so I don't see who is to sail this ship, because as far as I can see... you are not able to. But, if you give me food and drink and an old scarf or handkerchief to tie up my wound, I will tell you how to sail her."

"I will tell you one thing," I say, "I'm not going back to Captain Kidd's anchorage. I plan to get into North Inlet and run her quietly into the beach there."

"Well I can see, I have tried my luck and lost," he cried. "You have the better of me and I can see I have no choice.

I will even help you sail her to Execution Dock, by thunder! I will."

This seemed to make sense to me. We struck our deal on the spot. In three minutes, I had the HISPANIOLA sailing easily before the wind along the coast of Treasure Island. We had a good chance of making the North Inlet before high tide. We would be able to take her into the beach safely then wait until the tide went out for us to be able to go ashore.

I tied a rope on the ship's wheel to keep her on course while I went below to my own chest. I got my mother's soft silk handkerchief and with my help, Israel Hands wrapped his great bleeding stab wound in his thigh.



I was very happy with my new command and what I had done. I now had plenty of water and good things to eat. I did not desire anything else, except to get rid of Israel Hand's eyes following me, and the odd smile that was on his face.

It was a smile that showed pain but also, a shadow of treachery and cunning, as he watched... and watched... and watched me do my work.