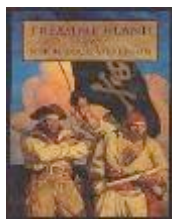


# TREASURE ISLAND



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## BOOK SIX – CAPTAIN SILVER

### CHAPTER 29.

#### THE BLACK SPOT AGAIN

The meeting of the buccaneers went for some time, before one of them came back into the log-house, and asked for a loan of the torch. Silver agreed, and he went back out and left us together in the dark.



"There's a breeze coming, Jim," said Silver, who by this time spoke in quite a friendly tone.

I turned to the gun hole nearest me and looked out. About half-way down the slope to the stockade, they were huddled in a group. One held the light, another was on his knees close by. I saw the blade of an open knife shine in his hand with varying colours in the moon and torch light.

The rest were all stooping, as though they were watching the man with the knife. I could just make out that he had a book as well as a knife in his hand. I was thinking how strange to have a book at this time, when the kneeling man rose to his feet and the whole group began to move towards the house.



"Here they come," I said as I went back to my place in case they found me watching them.

"Well, let 'em come, lad... let 'em come," said Silver cheerily. "I've still got a trick or two up my sleeve."

The door opened, and the five men, stood huddled together just inside. They pushed one man forward. At any other time it would have been funny to see him slowly put one foot in front of the other, holding his closed right hand in front of him.

"Step up, lad," cried Silver. "I won't eat you. Hand it over, lubber. I know the rules, I won't hurt the messenger."

The pirate stepped more quickly, and after passing something to Silver, stepped even more quickly back again to his mates.

Long John Silver looked at what had been given to him.



"The black spot! I thought so," he observed.

"Where might you have got the paper? Why, hello! Look here, now; this is not lucky! You've gone and cut this out of a bible. What fool's cut a bible?"

"Ah, there!" said Morgan. "There! What did I say? No good would come of it, I told you."

"Well, you've done it now, among you," continued Silver.

"You'll all swing by the neck now, I reckon. What dumb lubber had a bible?"

"It was Dick," said one.

"Dick, was it? Then Dick can start saying his prayers," said Silver. "He's seen his slice of luck, Dick has."

But here the long man with yellow eyes struck in.

"Hold that talk, John Silver," he said. "This crew has tipped you the black spot in public, as in duty bound. You just turn it over, as in duty bound, and see what's written there. Then you can talk."

"Thank you, George," replied the sea-cook. "You are always quick for business and know the rules by heart. Well, what is it, anyway? Ah! 'Deposed'... that's it, is it? Written in very pretty print, I swear. Your hand-writing, George? Why, you'll be Captain of this crew next! Pass me that torch again, will you?"

"Come on," said George, "you don't fool this crew any more. You think you're so funny, but you're finished now, and you can step down off your barrel and help vote."

"I thought you said you knew the rules," shot back Silver. "At least, if you don't... I do... I'm still your Captain, and until you state your issues and I reply, then, your black spot isn't worth a biscuit. After that, we'll see."

"Oh," replied George, "Well then; First, you've made a hash of this cruise...you'd be a bold man to say no to that. Second, you let the enemy out of this trap for nothing. Why they wanted out? I dunno, but it's pretty plain they wanted it. Third, you wouldn't let us attack them when they left. Then, the fourth, is this here boy."

"Is that all?" asked Silver quietly.

"It's enough, too," retorted George. "We're all hung out to sundry after your bungling."

"Alright, I'll answer those four points; I made a hash of this cruise, did I? Well now, you all know what I wanted to do. If it had been done, we'd be aboard the HISPANIOLA right now, every one of us alive, and the treasure below the deck! Well, who crossed me? Why, it was Anderson, and Hands, and you, George Merry! You're the only survivor of that same meddling crew. You..., sank the lot of us!"

Silver paused, and I could see by George's face that these words hit home.

"Go on, John," said Morgan. "What about the rest."

"Ah! " John said. "You say this cruise is bungled. We're so close to hanging that my neck's stiff with thinking of it. You've seen them, hanged in chains, birds flying about them. The seamen point them out as they go down with the tide. Well... that's about where every one of us are, thanks to him, Hands, Anderson, and all you fools. As for number four, and that boy. Why, shiver me timbers, isn't he a hostage? Are we going to waste a hostage? He might be our last chance. Kill that boy? Not me, mates! Oh yes and number three? Ah, well, maybe you don't think it is anything to have a real college Doctor to see you every day. But, when you are really sick, we'll see who'll be glad to have a hostage when it comes to needing the Doctor.

Now, number two, well, you came crawling on your knees to me to bargain for food and you would have starved too if I hadn't. So that's why!"

Then he threw on the floor, a piece of paper that I recognised instantly. The chart, with the three red crosses, that I had found in the oilcloth at the bottom of the chest back at the Old Benbow Inn. I had no idea why the Doctor had given it to him.

The mutineers leapt on to the chart like cats on a mouse. It went from hand to hand, each one tearing it from each other. They yelled and laughed all at the same time as though they had the actual gold treasure already.

"Mighty pretty," said George. "But how are we to get away with it, when we have no ship."

Silver suddenly sprang up, and supporting himself with a hand against the wall cried "Now I am warning you, George, you may be able to speak finely but after you lost my ship with your interference, I should burn you! You don't have the ideas of a cockroach."

"That's enough now," said the old man Morgan.

"You lost the ship and I found the treasure. Who's the better man? And now I resign, as Captain! Elect who you want to be your Captain now; I'm done with it" said the old sea cook.

"Silver!" they cried. "Barbecue forever! Barbecue for Captain!"

"So that's the vote, is it?" cried Silver. "George, I reckon you'll have to wait another time, my friend; and lucky for you I don't hold a grudge. Now, me shipmates... this black spot? It's not much good now, is it? Dick's broken his luck and spoiled his Bible, and that's about all."

"It'll do to swear on the book still, won't it?" growled Dick, who was feeling uneasy at the curse he had put on himself.

"A bible with a page cut out!" sneered Silver. "No way. It's not worth more than a song book now."

"Oh well!" cried Dick with a sort of joy. "Well, I reckon that's worth having too."

"Here, Jim a keepsake for you," said Silver, and he tossed me the paper.

One side was blank. It had been the last page and the other side contained a verse or two of the bible.

The printed side had been blackened with fire ash, which was already coming off on my fingers. On the blank side was written the word "Deposed." (I still have that keepsake but you can't see the writing now except for a single thumb-nail scratch.)

That was the end of the night's business. After, a drink all round, we lay down to sleep. Silver made George Merry take watch and threatened him with death if he was unfaithful.

I could barely sleep when I thought of how dangerous the afternoon had been for me. How Silver had been able to keep the mutineers together and make peace while saving his own miserable life. He slept peacefully and snored loudly, but my heart ached for him when I thought about the hanging gallows that must surely wait for him.