

Chapter 4

The Sea Chest

I lost no time, of course, in telling my mother all that I knew about the captain and his strange visitors. Some of the dead man's money—if he had any—was certainly due us. I could not ride away to the doctor's, as the captain had asked me to do, since it would leave my mother unprotected and alone. Both of us were too frightened to stay in the house. The dead body on the parlor floor and the thought of that blind man hovering near and ready to return filled us with all sorts of fears. So the two of us ran out into the frosty evening to get help from some of the villagers.

When we reached the village, I felt relieved to see the yellow lights in doors and windows. But to our disappointment, no one would return with us to the inn. After I told my story, everyone turned away in fear. The name of Captain Flint was well known to some of the people there. Several of the men had heard tales of cruelty about him and his infamous crew.

After everyone declined to return with us, my mother stood up and with great courage declared that she would not lose the money that rightfully belonged to her fatherless son.

"If none of the rest of you dare," she said, "Jim and I will go back. Small thanks to you big, hulking, chicken-hearted men. We'll open that chest, if we have to die doing it."

Of course I went with my mother, but my heart was thumping with fear as we set out in the cold night. We slipped along the hedges

silently and swiftly. But we did not see or hear anything to increase our terrors, and soon we were safely back inside the inn.

I slipped the bolt at once, and we stood and panted for a moment in the dark. We were alone with the dead captain's body. Then my mother lit a candle, and holding each other's hands, we advanced into the parlor. He lay as we had left him—on his back, with his eyes open and one arm stretched out.

"Draw the blinds, Jim," whispered my mother. "We have to get the key off his body. It must be there somewhere."

I went down on my knees at once. On the floor close to his hand there was a little piece of paper. It was blackened on one side. This must have been the black spot. On the other side was written this short message:

YOU HAVE TILL TEN TONIGHT.

I looked up at the clock. It was almost six. We still had four hours.

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I felt in the dead man's pockets, but all I found were some coins and bits of tobacco.

"Perhaps it's around his neck," suggested my mother.

I closed my eyes as I tore open his shirt. Sure enough, hanging on a bit of string was a small silver key. I cut the string and we hurried upstairs to open the chest.

It was like any other seaman's chest on the outside. The initial "B" was burned on the top with a hot iron, and the corners were smashed and broken. We unlocked the lid and opened the chest.

A strong smell of tobacco rose from inside. We unpacked the contents layer by layer. There were some clothes, pistols, a Spanish watch, a compass and many trinkets. But at the very bottom we found a bundle of papers tied up in an oilcloth sack and a purse filled with gold coins.

"I'll show these rascals that I'm an honest

woman," said my mother. "I'll only take what he owed us and not a penny more."

She began to count out the amount from the captain's debt. It was a difficult task, since the coins came from so many different countries, and neither of us knew their exact worth. When we were about halfway through, I suddenly heard a sound. It was the tap-tapping of the blind man's stick upon the frozen road. I urged my mother to take the money and make a fast escape. But my mother, frightened as she was, was unwilling to take a cent more or a cent less than was rightfully due us. But when she heard the sound of approaching footsteps, she decided to take what she had already counted. I kept the papers in the oilcloth sack, and we left by the back door.

We had only reached the outside of the inn when we could hear a group of men knocking at the front door. My mother and I began to run.

"My dear," she said, "take the money and the papers and run on ahead. I am going to faint." But I wouldn't leave her.

This was certainly the end for both of us, I thought. Somehow, we made it to the little wooden bridge and I helped her across. As soon as we reached the other side, she collapsed in a dead faint. I managed to drag her to a spot where we could not be seen, but where we could hear everything that was going on inside the inn.

Chapter 5

The Last of the Blind Man

My curiosity was greater than my fear, and I crept even closer to the inn, so that I could see and hear what was happening.

There were seven or eight men pounding at the heavy oak door. Even through the mist, I could see the blind man. I heard his voice as he shouted to break down the door. The men obeyed him, and in a flash the door was ripped from its hinges.

Once they were inside, I heard one of the men shout in surprise that Bill was dead.

“Search him and find the chest!” cried the blind man.

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A few seconds later, the window of the captain's room was thrown open, and a man leaned out and shouted that someone had already gotten to the chest.

"The money is still here," shouted one of the men.

"Curse the money!" shouted the blind man. "Is Flint's packet still there?"

Obviously the blind man was not interested in the money in Bill's trunk. He wanted the packet of papers that I now held close to my beating heart.

After the men shouted down that the papers were nowhere to be seen, the blind man ordered them to find my mother and me. He knew that we must have taken what he wanted. But the men had had enough. They were satisfied with the gold coins and were unwilling to obey the harsh orders of the blind man.

—Soon a quarrel began. The men all threatened each other and then the blind man.

This quarrel saved us. While it was still raging, another sound came from the top of the hill—the sound of approaching horses. The next sound I heard was a pistol shot, which was a warning of danger. As soon as they heard the shot, the men scattered in all directions. Only the blind man remained, tapping up and down the road in a frenzy and calling for his mates.

He took a wrong turn and began walking straight towards the approaching horses. He immediately realized his error and turned with a scream. He ran straight for a ditch, fell, and then got up again. But it was too late, for one horse was already upon him. He went down with a cry that rang high into the night. The four hooves trampled him to death.

I leaped to my feet and hailed the riders. They were men who had heard of our trouble

and had decided to come to help us. They quickly revived my mother, but the blind man was stone dead.

We all went back to the inn, which had been ransacked and almost destroyed by the men who had searched it. I knew at once that the packet of papers I held must be very valuable. I asked the men if they would ride with me to Dr. Livesey's house right away. They seemed to understand my urgency and we set out at once.

Chapter 6

The Captain's Papers

We rode as fast as we could until we finally reached Dr. Livesey's home. The house was dark, but I knocked several times at the door.

A servant answered and led me in to see the doctor. At once I told him what had happened. The doctor showed pride in my mother's great courage and praised me for my quick thinking. His friend, Squire Trelawney, also praised me. They asked the servant to bring me some warm food and drink.

After I had finished my meal, the doctor asked me if I still had the packet of papers.

I assured him that I did and handed him the oilcloth package.

“And now, squire,” said the doctor to his friend, “you have heard of this man Flint, I suppose?”

“Heard of him!” cried the squire. “Heard of him, you say! He was the bloodthirstiest buccaneer that ever sailed. Blackbeard was a child compared to Flint!”

“Well, I’ve heard of him myself,” said the doctor. “But the point is, did he have any money?”

“Money!” shouted the squire. “Why, what else would those villains be after but money?”

The doctor soon figured out that the packet contained some clue to Captain Flint’s treasure. He asked me if I would allow him and the squire to open the packet. I of course agreed, since I was now even more eager than they were to see its contents.

Inside the packet was a ledger which re-

corded the exploits and the various amounts of money and jewels Captain Flint had collected in one way or another. But there was also a paper, which was sealed in several places with wax.

The doctor opened the seals with great care, and out fell the map of an island. It included all the particulars that would be needed to bring a ship safely to its shores. The island was about nine miles long and five miles across, and shaped like a fat dragon. It had a hill in the center marked the "Spy-glass." There were three crosses made with red ink, under which were written: BULK OF TREASURE HERE. On the back of the map there were written directions on how to find the exact location of the treasure.

Dr. Livesey and the squire were filled with excitement.

"Livesey," said the squire, "you will give up your practice at once. Tomorrow I start for

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Bristol. In less than three weeks we will have the best ship and the best crew in all England. Hawkins will come as cabin boy. You will be the ship's doctor and I will be admiral. We'll take our loyal friends, Redruth, Joyce and Hunter. We'll set sail, find the treasure, and be rich for the rest of our lives!"

The doctor agreed at once, but he warned Squire Trelawney to keep all that he knew a deep secret. He knew that the men who had attacked the inn would not disappear, and if they got wind of our secret, we would pay with our lives. The squire nodded his head in agreement and went up to his room to prepare for his journey to Bristol.

Chapter 7

I Go to Bristol

It took longer than we expected until we were finally ready to go to sea. During that time, I lived at the doctor's house and was under the charge of Redruth, the doctor's friend and gamekeeper. After several weeks, we finally received a letter from the squire.

His letter glowed with excitement. He had found a ship named the *Hispaniola*, which he claimed was most seaworthy. Then he explained that, quite by accident, he met an old sailor with one leg. The sailor had been a ship's cook and wanted to return to the sea.

He promised the squire that he could find him the best crew in England.

Trelawney was very taken with this man, whose name was Long John Silver. He assured us that the fellow was honest, hard working, and quite clever. He also owned a tavern in the town and had a decent-sized bank account.

The letter filled me with excitement and expectation. We were to leave for Bristol the very next day. I hurriedly ran to say goodbye to my mother, who was managing the inn quite well.

That night I could hardly sleep, I was so filled with dreams of exciting adventures at sea.