***Treasure Island***

***Chapter 2:***

# *Black Dog Appears and Disappears*

***Brief Summary:***

* The winter is bitter cold, and Jim's father is dying.
* One January morning, the captain is sitting at the beach with his telescope on his arm.
* Jim is setting the breakfast table when a pale man missing two fingers on his left hand comes in.
* The man sits down, orders a rum, and asks Jim about a friend of his named Bill, who has a cut on his right cheek.
* Jim answers that they know a man like that, whom they call the captain.
* The man asks where the captain is and Jim says he'll be coming back to the inn soon.
* The man physically pushes Jim into another room and makes him hide behind a door.
* The man half draws his sword and stands waiting in silence for the captain.
* The captain walks in at last, strolling straight for the breakfast table.
* The man calls out, "Bill," and the captain whirls around, paling.
* The captain gasps out the man's name: "Black Dog!"
* Black Dog invites the captain to sit down and share some rum like proper shipmates.
* Jim clears out of the room, but soon he hears a few things: the captain says if anyone's going to hang, they should all hang.
* Then Jim hears the captain swearing a lot, and Black Dog comes running out with the captain hot on his heels. Their swords are both drawn, and Black Dog is bleeding.
* Black Dog is fast enough to run away, leaving the captain looking confused.
* The captain orders rum and collapses on the floor.
* Jim's mother is worried that the inn is going to be disgraced by this fight.
* Doctor Livesey has arrived at the inn to treat Jim's father. He realizes that the captain has had a stroke.
* Doctor Livesey bleeds the captain to try to improve his circulation.
* The captain wakes up and asks where Black Dog is.
* Doctor Livesey says there's no Black Dog there, and then warns the captain that he'll die if he keeps drinking so much rum.
* Doctor Livesey leaves after recommending that the captain stay in bed for a week.

***Brief Summary:***

On a cold January morning soon after, a tall pale man who is missing two fingers enters the inn. The man asks Jim if he has seen his mate Bill, or Billy Bones, as he is generally called, who is recognizable by a scar on one cheek. Jim knows the stranger is referring to the old seaman who is staying at the inn, and he tells the stranger that Bill will be back soon. Bill returns, and he gasps when he recognizes his former shipmate, whom he addresses as Black Dog. The two launch into a violent conversation that Jim cannot hear. The conversation ends as Billy Bones attempts to kill Black Dog with his sword, but he is cut short, as he suddenly succumbs to a stroke. Livesey cares for Billy in the inn and warns him to stay away from rum, which in his ill health would be lethal for him.

***Critical Study:***

In January, a few months after the first chapter concludes, a strange man, wearing a cutlass and missing two fingers, appears at the inn inquiring about a man with a cut on his check, someone he refers to as Bill. The narrator explains that Bill is on the bluffs and will likely return that evening. Making sure the boy cannot warn Bill of his presence, the stranger makes the boy hide until Bill appears. When Bill finally appears, he looks like he has seen a ghost when he sees the stranger, whom he identifies as [Black Dog](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#black-dog), one of his shipmates. After telling the boy to leave, the two talk together in low voices. The only thing that the boy overhears is the captain speaking about all "swinging," (meaning hanging), before there is a loud commotion. After the outcry, Black Dog, with a cut on his shoulder flees, the captain pursues him, both with drawn cutlasses. The captain aims at Black Dog but misses and hits the inn's signboard instead, leaving Black Dog to escape.

Afterwards, the captain orders rum but before Jim can deliver it to the captain, he hears a loud fall and finds the captain unconscious on the floor. Naturally, Jim assumes the problem stems from his recent fight with Black Dog but Dr. Livesy (whose abrupt arrival is attributed to a visit to check on Jim's father) diagnoses a stroke. In the examination of the patient, the doctor uncovers a tattoo of a man hanging from a gallows with the words "[Billy Bones](https://www.gradesaver.com/treasure-island/study-guide/character-list#billy-bones) his fancy." Assuming that the man's mane is Billy Bones, the doctor bleeds the captain. Finally, the man awakens seeking Black Dog. The doctor assures him that Black Dog has gone and warns him that if he drinks again, he will likely undergo another stroke and die. The man, however, denies that he is Billy Bones. Jim and the doctor carry the man upstairs, the doctor telling Jim that the man should be in bed for a week because of the bleeding.

One of the most important symbols of this chapter is the notch in the inn's signboard that occurs when Billy Bones (the stranger) is attempting to shoot his shipmate, Black Dog. The notch is symbolic, foreshadowing the tumultuousness that the arrival of Billy Bones brings to the inn and Jim's family. The shot is not on purpose, nor intended for the sign, but like the inn and Jim's family, the sign is an innocent bystander in the mysterious feud between the captain and his shipmates.

One of the driving forces in the plot of this novel is the use of coincidence of the characters being in "the right place, at the right time." In this chapter, the prime example of this literary tool is the arrival of the doctor after the fight but before the captain comes to consciousness. Critics have long thought that this, the use of coincidence, was the weakest element of Stevenson's novel.

Perhaps the technique that tells us the most about the types of people in the novel is Robert Louis Stevenson's superb use of dialogue. Particularly in this chapter, we learn much about Billy Bones and Black Dog, as well as the doctor, from the manner in which they speak. For example, comments such as "this'll be as good as drink to my mate," "bless his art, I say again," and "we have seen a sight of times," give the impression that Black Bones and Black Dog are from a certain social class because of both their dialect and their grammar. Likewise, the doctors use of language so precise as "come, now, make an effort," and "I clear my conscience" shows that he is a respectable gentlemen, used to being obeyed.

Robert Louis Stevenson, himself, claims that Treasure Island is merely a study in romance and adventure, and one should not analyze it very seriously. From the beginning, however, certain themes stand out. In this chapter, as in the book, we see an amoral world seen through the eyes of an innocent boy. By viewing the obviously corrupt men and the doctor through Jim's eyes, the reader more clearly sees the corruptness that surrounds the boy.

***Critical Analysis:***

One frosty January morning, while the captain is out for a stroll, a stranger comes to the inn looking for a man named Billy Bones. The stranger—"a pale, tallow creature," missing two fingers on his left hand—goes by the name Black Dog. He claims to be Billy's mate. Jim admits that the stranger's description of Billy fits the captain. Black Dog then forces Jim to hide with him in the parlour and wait for the captain's return.

The encounter between the two men quickly erupts into a fight, with cutlasses drawn. Billy gets the best of Black Dog, slashing his shoulder and sending him running from the inn. But moments later, the captain collapses from a stroke. He is saved by the timely arrival of [Dr. Livesey](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Dr._Livesey).

As the chapter begins, Jim hints heavily that Billy Bones will come to a bad end. Then the arrival of Black Dog makes it clear that the old seaman has more to fear than a mysterious one-legged man.

The description of Black Dog is another example of physical appearance reflecting the savagery of certain characters. Like scarred Billy Bones, Black Dog has suffered disfigurement, having lost two fingers. Jim further describes him as a "pale, tallow creature." Tallow is a solid, paste-colored fat rendered from animals—not an attractive quality in a person's complexion. Jim also uses the descriptive word *creature* instead of *man*. This relates to the animal motif that runs through the story. In the name Black Dog, two motifs are referenced: the animal motif and the color black. His name signals to the reader that whatever his business is with Billy, it's dark and uncivilized, and it could be deadly.

The theme of duty is explored when [Dr. Livesey](https://www.coursehero.com/lit/Treasure-Island/character-analysis/#Dr._Livesey) treats Billy Bones for stroke. The doctor has no liking or respect for the old seaman but helps him anyway, as duty demands. He warns Billy that rum will be the death of him, underscoring rum as a symbol of reckless and deadly self-indulgence.

***Summary and Analysis Part by Part:***

***Summary Part 1:***

One cold January morning, [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) is setting the breakfast table when the door opens and a pale man, two fingers on his left hand missing, enters. He beckons Jim over and asks if he’s setting the table for his mate, [Bill](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain). Jim says he only knows of “[the captain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain)” who will be eating there. The man asks a few more questions, then lingers on the threshold, telling Jim about his own son, until he sees the captain approach.

***Analysis Part 1:***

The captain’s life and history is growing even stranger, as this new mysterious figure enters. These scenes also remind us that already, before his adventure, Jim possesses a good deal of responsibility as he helps out at the inn, especially with his father’s illness.

***Summary part 2:***

The stranger makes [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) hide with him behind the door, which makes Jim uncomfortable, though he’s not sure what to do. When the [captain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) marches in, the man calls out, “Bill,” and he spins around as if he’s seen a ghost. The captain gasps, “[Black Dog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters)!” and Black Dog greets him jovially, referring to their past adventures. The two go into the bar alone.

***Analysis Part 2:***

Jim is witness to this scene of reunion, which seems to be much happier on Black Dog’s side than on the captain’s. It appears that the captain is troubled by more than an addiction to rum, though we still don’t know exactly what.

***Summary Part 3:***

Though [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) tries his best to eavesdrop, he can’t hear the two: finally he hears the [captain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) repeat “No!” followed by the crash of the chair and table. Then [Black Dog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) races out, bleeding, with the captain following him behind and trying to knife him again. But Black Dog escapes and the captain stops, staring after him.

***Analysis Part 3:***

Black Dog seems to have given the captain some kind of message or announcement that upsets him. Although the captain is more afraid of Black Dog, he can clearly be violent enough himself.

***Summary part 4:***

The [captain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) asks [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) for [rum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/rum), but soon falls to the floor, his face ashen. [Jim’s mother](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-s-mother) races downstairs and they try to treat him, but soon [Dr. Livesey](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey) arrives to treat [Jim’s father](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters), and says the captain has had a stroke just like he warned. He looks at the captain and sees the name “Billy Bones” tattooed on his arm, assuming that’s his name. After asking if Jim is afraid of blood, he has the boy help him drain a vein.

***Analysis Part 4:***

In the captain’s fit, it becomes clearer than ever that the rum addiction has only been a sign of a more profound anxiety or affliction with which the captain has been dealing. The doctor now treats Jim like someone much older than his years, and Jim has little choice but to acquiesce.

***Summary part 5:***

Finally the [captain](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/billy-bones-the-captain) opens his eyes and cries out asking where [Black Dog](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters) is. The [doctor](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/doctor-livesey) begins to lecture him about the dangers of drinking [rum](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/symbols/rum), and once they get the captain to bed, he tells [Jim](https://www.litcharts.com/lit/treasure-island/characters/jim-hawkins) that another stroke would kill the man.

***Analysis Part 5:***

Once again the doctor proves that he has little fear even of pirates, since he sees how their dangerous habits can cause them to harm themselves more than anyone else.