

(Admiral Benbow inn. Billy Bones is waiting to be served. BILLY searches the room. JIM enters, startling BILLY)

BILLY: You've a habit of sneaking up on people, don't you? You can lose a limb like that.

JIM: I'm sorry, sir.

BILLY: Pour me another glass, would you? It's OK, lad, I don't mean to scare ya. I'm just a little landlocked. Ya understand that, don't you? How many years before the mast have you had?

JIM: I've not been to sea yet, sir.

BILLY: You haven't? Don't lie to me now, boy.

JIM: Truly, sir.

BILLY: Well, I'll be keelhauled and drug deeper, you've got the mark of a sea-going lad all over ya. A whaler at first, I thought. You've never been to sea?

JIM: No, sir. I run the inn with my ma.

BILLY: Well, don't you worry; you'll be to sea soon enough. I can smell the salt in your blood from here. A man's not a man till he's gone toe to toe with a cape-scraped squall and spit her back out with a laugh and a song. Don't you agree, lad?

JIM: Aye, sir. Captain!

BILLY: Aye, you didn't fool me. Pretending you was a bar-keep boy. You'll have to be a shade sharper than that to fool this old Billy Bones. (Confidentially) Come here, boy. You know these parts pretty well now, don't cha? You see the comin's and goin's and the people that do 'em, am I right?

JIM: Yes, sir.

BILLY: Captain.

JIM: Yes, Captain.

BILLY: And you can keep as sharp a lookout as any sailor? And as close a secret?

JIM: Aye.

BILLY: I thought so. I can read you like the water. (Taking out a coin) You see this? It's yours. And another every day if you but keep your weather eye open for a seafaring man with one leg.

JIM: One leg?

BILLY: Aye, clapped off clean at the knee. You let me know the moment you scare up a sight of him, yes?

JIM: I will, Captain.

BILLY: There's a good lad.