

out at the waves for a long time. Then he started singing to himself. It was the first time I heard the old sea song that I was to hear so often:

“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest.

Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!”

The old sailor’s face was always dirty. His clothes were in rags. But he acted like a man who was used to giving orders. We called him The Captain.

The best chair in our parlor was right next to the fireplace. The Captain claimed that chair right away. Night after night he would sit there staring into the fire. But when other sailors came to the inn he stayed out of sight. He would hide behind the heavy curtain at the parlor door and spy on our new guests.

One day The Captain told me that he wanted me to keep an eye out for an old seafaring man with one leg. I had to promise to warn him if the one-legged man showed up. In return, he would give me a silver coin at the beginning of every month.

The thought of that one-legged stranger gave me nightmares. I used to dream about him on stormy

waves	גלים	curtain	וילון
chest	חזה	spy	לְבַגֵּל
rags	סמרטוטים	seafaring man	ימאי
parlor	סלון/חדר אורחים	coin	מטבע
claimed	תבע	nightmares	חלום בלהות
out of sight	מחוץ לטווח ראייה	stormy	סוערים

nights. In my dreams, he was horrible-looking. He would leap up out of nowhere and chase after me. I really earned that silver coin!

I was not afraid of The Captain himself, but a lot of people were. When he started drinking rum, he forgot his quiet ways. He would sing old sea songs in a loud voice and force the other guests at the inn to sing along. And the stories he told! They were all about storms at sea, and pirates, and men being forced to walk the plank.

But the frightening stories did not stop people from coming to the inn to hear them. The Captain brought excitement to our quiet English village. Some of the young men even admired him. They called him a “true sea dog” and a “real old salt.”

That winter my father fell ill. Dr. Livesey used to come from the village to take care of him. One night, when the doctor was at the inn, The Captain was drinking rum. He started to sing his favorite song:

“Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest . . .”

horrible	נורא	frightening	מפחיד
leap	לקפוץ	excitement	התרגשות
chase	רודף	old salt	ספן ותיק
force	הכריח		
walk the plank	ללכת על קורה		
	מעל המים עם עיניים עצומות		