

48 Hours 131

Chapter 131: Revenge Trip

Zhang Heng stood on the deck, watching the fire burning on the sea. Though he had been through wars, he still found it hard to watch someone commit a massacre. Using cannons to execute a group of surrendered navy personnel and killing them amid battle were two completely different things.

Considering that this vessel was under the leadership of Orff and Teach and that this matter had everything to do with everyone's money, Zhang Heng knew that he was powerless to change anything even if he voiced out his opinion.

When he was in Finland, Simone was there to keep him company. Right now, all he had was Marvin. This time, Marvin did not panic as he used to. On the contrary, he was glad that every single enemy was dead.

"It's pointless for you even though they are all dead. You do realize that your pictures are all over the harbor, right? Everyone knows you're a pirate."

"I'm so done. I heard there is a similar punishment for every pirate in every country except for Nassau. The crime is punishable by death once they confirm that you are a pirate. I won't be able to inherit my father's farm if I'm dead! Am I destined to be the chef on a pirate ship forever and ever?" exclaimed an upset Marvin.

Be that as it may, he was all cheery again after a while.

"Luckily, I still have Kidd's treasure. As long as I can get my hands on it, I could have a good life in Nassau, even though I can't return to the civilized part of the world. I don't have to risk my life at sea ever again! Perhaps I could even marry a couple of beautiful wives too."

Zhang Heng did not want to shatter his dream, saying nothing after that. Looking at the sunken ship, Zhang Heng slowly figured out an answer to one of his questions. He realized that Kidd's treasure might simply be a tool that Orff used to manipulate the pirates. He had his own agenda. What Zhang Heng still could not figure out was the reason behind Orff convincing the pirates to go against the navy. He would not benefit from such a reckless venture.

The story of Orff slaughtering 400 navy sailors might be for the purpose of building confidence in his abilities. Zhang Heng could see Vengeance in Orff's gaze when he pulled the trigger. He finally understood that Orff and the captain's target had always been the navy. Under normal circumstances, pirates stayed away from the navy, where none would be stupid enough to take on such a risky endeavor.

The six separate pieces of treasure map had become the trojan horse that Orff used in convincing the pirates to attack whichever enemy he desired. Unfortunately, no one on board realized that the captain and helmsman were not bringing them for a treasure hunt, but rather, a trip of vengeance and personal vendetta.

Nevertheless, these were all deductions. For now, Zhang Heng could not find substantial evidence to support his stand. Everyone Queen Anne's Revenge was like Marvin; they were excited about getting a share of the treasure that they were about to find. Considering they had sacrificed a lot to get to where they were today, nothing could move them even if they suspected something was off. One had to say that Orff was really good at what he did.

As for now, everything was under his control. He was so close to completing his agenda.

He was on the victory lap, and his senses were on high alert right now. At this crucial point, he would never allow anyone to spoil his plan. When the smoke and flames finally cleared, the sun had disappeared below the horizon as well. Standing beside the gunwale, Zhang Heng could feel something coming. He then turned around and looked at the boatswain standing beside the mast. Both of them exchanged glances, with Orff nodding to them as well.

"A storm is coming. Can you please check the mainsail?"

"Alright."

Zhang Heng agreed without any hesitation. Swiftly, he passed all the weapons in his possession to Marvin. As Orff stared at him, he climbed up the mast. Within minutes, Zhang Heng had already reached the top.

"Everything is fine," said Zhang Heng to the boatswain.

Initially, Orff thought Zhang Heng knew his secret, which explained why he was cautious about him. Since Zhang Heng was in charge of maneuvering the mainsail, it was easy for Orff to make his death seem like an accident. He just needed to mess around with the ropes on top of the mast, and Zhang Heng would surely fall to his death.

However, Orff did not know that Zhang Heng had Shadow Moment. Zhang Heng figured that if he could enter his shadow state the moment he fell, he should be able to be spared from injuries.

With that in mind, he was not worried that Orff might kill him as he ascended the tall structure. When Orff dealt with Goodwin, Zhang Heng noticed that he would always create a high-stress environment to observe the reaction of his target. Zhang Heng could also confirm that his response managed to baffle Orff.

"Thank you for your hard work. I'm pretty sure Rothko is proud of you."

Orff did not notice anything out of the ordinary with Zhang Heng. So, he thanked him and went to check other places. As for Marvin, he saw that there was nothing wrong with the two of them.

Zhang Heng did not rush down from the mast. At first, he wanted to learn to control the mainsail from Rothko because he predicted it would be an essential skill as a captain. After a while, though, he learned how to like this job. When he was at the top of the mast, he would enjoy the spectacular view mother nature presented in front of him.

It had been 11 months now since Zhang Heng entered this world. Apart from the game points he earned and the new skills he learned, his skin was now a bronze tan due to the constant exposure under

the sun. His palms had grown calluses, having to climb up the rough wooden mast every day using a rope. Most importantly, he had gotten used to this lifestyle.

He noticed that the ocean in the 18th century was way more mysterious and magnificent when compared to the ones in the modern world. New adventures and impossible challenges awaited Zhang Heng in this world, although it lacked in many areas. Right now, he was ready to become a captain. Before that, he had to stay at the Queen Anne's Revenge for at least another month.

And indeed, this month was not going to be peaceful and calm.

Orff's revenge plan was coming to its final stage. On the other hand, Frazer still did nothing about it. That did not mean people on this ship had forgotten about him, as Zhang Heng knew that there was more than one eye on this ship besides Kent the carpenter.

In the end, they would cross paths at Charleston to end the whole thing. In times like these, it was dangerous for Zhang Heng to be stuck in the middle. On the bright side, it could be a golden opportunity for him.

Chapter 132: Burial at Sea

On the second morning, every pirate was asked to gather on the deck. Those who were injured and tasked with assignments were exceptions. That included the captain, Edward Teach, and the helmsman, Orff. A solemn expression adorned the faces of all present. In total, 47 pirates had been killed in battle, with 29 suffering severe injuries, and seven died last night. There was a good chance the remaining 22 wouldn't it till tomorrow.

All the pirates on deck knew too well that the path that they chose would be smothered by blood and flesh. Though they were well prepared, they still grieved for their mates who left them. Marvin's eyes welled with tears as well. They were not shed for the dead pirates but he was simply sad that someday, he too might end up like them. The wind traversing the ocean battered the mainsail with distinct flaps. Everyone on deck remained silent.

"Let's begin," proclaimed Edward Teach as he nodded his head.

Four pirates moved the dead who were covered in white cloth to the gunwale. Orff then started to spell out the names of the dead pirates. Once a name was spoken, their body would be tossed into the ocean. The dead spent years out at sea, and naturally, their final resting place would be the ocean. When the last body was committed to the sea, Orff closed the name list.

"I pray that Thetis, Goddess of Ocean, would guide your souls forever. Farewell, my brave friends."

After that, Orff tossed a bag of salt into the ocean to complete the ritual, with Edward Teach returning to the captain's quarters once the bag sank down. The moment the captain was gone, the pirates on the deck finally let out a sigh of relief.

Most pirates had mixed feelings towards the captain. No doubt, he was fearless when he was in battle, the worst nightmare for his enemies. On the other hand, they also felt tremendous pressure each time they were in the same room with him. They were afraid of him but respected him a great deal at the

same time. Luckily, he didn't usually join them. Most of the time, he hunkered down in his own quarters, away from the crew. Orff was the one who relayed his messages to the pirates.

"We have lost countless of our own during the last battle. Some positions on the ship are now vacant. I'm sorry for what happened to our old Michael. We need a leader for the boatswain position. Since we are all here now, let's vote!"

"Zhang Heng! Zhang Heng! Zhang Heng!"

Before Orff could even finish his sentence, the pirates started to shout the name out loud.

"It appears we all agree that Zhang Heng is best suited for this position."

Orff then nodded at Zhang Heng and said, "Congratulations, you are now the leader of the boatswains on this ship. Lead us to the treasure! Next, we need some frontliners! 20 positions are available..."

Zhang Heng wasn't surprised by the outcome as well. The previous boatswain's leader had worked only two months before a bullet hit him. Zhang Heng's vote count came only second to Michael, and he had performed exceptionally well during the previous battle as well. Naturally, the pirates on board would vote for him again. Though combat power had nothing to do with the boatswain's leader, that was just the way pirates thought. Usually, there were two types who could win over their votes. The first kind got voted because they truly deserved it. As for the second type, they voted for them because they wanted to. Most of the time, the second scenario would win the person more votes.

If they could think logically, none of them would abandon their life to become a pirate. Besides, Zhang Heng was Rothko's only disciple, and he was good at what he did. All things considered, Zhang Heng truly deserved the vote.

After he was appointed the boatswain's leader, the system awarded him with another five game-points, though he had no idea if this was a good or bad thing. He would be leaving the ship in a month and didn't mind if he didn't become a leader of any position. Noticing that the election went so smoothly, it proved that he had quite an influence on the vessel. Sadly, this could have been the very reason why Orff saw him as a significant threat on this ship.

To Zhang Heng's surprise, another person had looked for him before Orff. During lunchtime, a limp old pirate sat right opposite him.

"Are you a man of faith?"

"What do you mean by that?"

"Don't misunderstand my intention. I'm just trying to give you a good reminder. Under the leadership of Teach and Orff, whatever happened this morning will continue to happen. Eventually, we will all die on this ship. I'm right, am I not? The residents of Nassau would usually use the Thetis ritual to send away the dead. They believe that their souls would travel the deeper parts of the ocean. If you have someplace you wish to go, I think you should tell Frazer. After all, all these things have something to do with personal freedom. Of course, that includes the freedom of religion."

"There had been only one exception since I joined this ship. That kid was an Alava from Saint Vincent. According to the culture of their tribe, they would usually devour their dead. Alava believes that the

ritual allows them to stay with their loved ones forever and ever. We feared that he would die someday. Unfortunately, his right leg was shot during one of the raids, leading to its amputation. In the end, he did not survive the surgery. So, we are all voting to break his tradition. We chose not to devour him. Oh, right. Let me introduce myself to you. I'm Kent, cannoneer of this ship."

"Cannoneer?"

"I know that everyone prefers to call me the carpenter. I would use a saw to slice an enemy into half during a battle. That's how I got this nickname."

Suddenly, Kent lowered his voice and looked around cautiously.

"This is not a good place to talk. Orff is watching us. We need to talk. Come look for in the carpenter's quarters on the second floor."

Zhang Heng did not say a single word after that.

"Did you know, a lot of pirates on this ship are related to Frazer? Why is Orff so cautious of you? Frazer will never simply get a debt collector without a good reason. Throughout the many years, Frazer had only two debt collectors working for him. You and the only other being our captain. In other words, both of you are his disciples."

"Edward Teach used to collect debts for Frazer?!"

"Yes. Frazer groomed him to become captain, hoping that he would take his place someday. Unfortunately, Teach conspired with Orff to betray him in the end. Right now, you are in grave danger, and I'm the only one who can help you!"

Chapter 133: I Have a Question

"What did he say?"

Orff poured a glass of rum for the old pirate sitting in front of the wooden table.

"He told me that he's pretty satisfied with the current situation. He also said that he did not sense any danger," said the old pirate as he stared at the tall figure standing in front of him.

"Does he know that you work for Frazer?"

"Before we set sail, Frazer did come and look for me. He told me about Zhang Heng, and he said that Zhang Heng would talk to me on the ship. Considering that we've left the harbor for some time now, he still hasn't looked for me yet. So, I did what you asked me to do. I looked for him and talked to him instead. It seems like... he doesn't care about a single thing in this world."

"How about the others?"

"Billy and Klay are unhappy with how you treat Goodwin. Clifton and a few other pirates are disappointed that the captain went back on his word and killing all the captured prisoners. All of them do no work for Frazer."

“Don’t worry. I won’t harm them in any way. I just want to have a better understanding of the ship’s current situation. You did a good job. Keep it up, and don’t ever allow Frazer to grow suspicious of you.”

Once the old pirate left, the person sitting in the shadows finally spoke.

“What makes you think that Frazer has another disciple?”

“I got to know him really well after working as a helmsman under his leadership for a long time. Undeniably, he is getting older and older, so he wouldn’t have the courage even if he wants his revenge. He also knows that I have been keeping my eye on him all these years. He’s running out of options. That’s why he was compelled to place his hopes on someone else.”

“Are you talking about the young man named Zhang Heng?”

“I can see the younger you in him. Even if things don’t go his way, he remains resolute and courageous. It seems like Frazer has put in a lot of effort into grooming him. Judging by Frazer’s personality, I’m pretty sure he will not make any pointless investments. I can tell you that he is the key person in Frazer’s plan. Right now, I still can’t figure out his role in it. At our current speed, I believe we should reach Charleston in around two weeks. There is not much time left for us...”

“Orff, you are the best helmsman in the entire Caribbean, but you have a terrible habit. You tend to overthink. Right now, this ship is under our control. You don’t need to figure out Frazer’s plan. If someone causes problems for you on this ship, write down their names. We will deal with them before we reach Charleston.”

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Zhang Heng was getting two pirates to fix the broken mainsail. It had been more than ten days since Kent talked to him in secret. Everything sailed smoothly so far. Orff and Frazer had not done anything out of the ordinary yet. The most recent incident of interest on the ship was a pirate trying to have sex with a goat. In the end, he was caught red-handed by the patrol team and was given a whipping as punishment. This incident had become the talk of the vessel of late.

Still, the one thing that everyone cared about was Kidd’s treasure. Soon, Charleston and Queen Anne’s Revenge drew closer, and so did the 5th and 6th piece of the treasure map. Tomorrow’s operation had most of the pirates in an excited frenzy. Considering that they had only robbed merchant ships before, this was their very first time leading an entire battleship to a trade port and looting the whole colony. The 90 cannons on the Queen Anne’s Revenge was their trump card in a raid like that.

That evening, Orff gathered everyone together and announced the plan for tomorrow.

“First, we will disguise as Scarborough to enter the trading port. After that, I will send someone to sneak into the town. Regarding this matter, I think Elmer, the one currently in prison, is more than happy to help us. After that, I will bring 30 men with me to head to the governor general’s house. That’s where the wedding will take place. Our target, Bellomonte, will be waiting for us over there. The rest of the 20 people will follow Owen to the prison in town. The others will stay on board and await further instructions.

“We will all attack together at eight tomorrow. First, we deal with the cannons mounted on the city wall. After that, we will aim at the city center. During that time, Owen will lead his people to the prison.

He will then release all the prisoners to create chaos. This will distract the guards, and they will try to deal with it. Lastly, the captain will lead the attack on the governor general's house. Once we capture Bellomonte, we will need to return to the ship immediately. All clear? Any questions?

"I have a question. Two nights ago, I saw Billy returning, and he looked extremely nervous. During that time, I was lying on my bed, so I believe he didn't notice me. I saw him hiding something under the wooden floor," reported one of the pirates.

Zhang Heng knew that the drama he had awaited was about to unfold in front of him. At first, they did not pay too much attention to it, thinking Billy simply stole some food and hid them under the wooden floor. Though thievery was strictly prohibited on the ship, many pirates would often raid the kitchen in search of a late-night snack. That was why they laughed it off when it came to him.

Soon, they noticed that Billy was up to no good. So, Owen brought a few pirates with him to unveil the stuff he was hiding. It was a piece of paper with some words written on it.

"Yes. That paper belongs to me. We suspect that the captain and helmsman are trying to use the treasure as an excuse to convince us to help them to achieve their agenda. So..."

Billy seemed to struggle at first, but in the end, he decided to tell them everything.

"Is that why you looked for Elmer when everyone was asleep? You wanted to let him go in exchange for immunity, right," scoffed Orff.

"What? What the hell are you talking about? That paper contains the questions that we want to ask you face to face!"

"This means either one of us is lying here."

Orff then passed the paper to Owen.

"Tell me, am I reading those words wrong?"

"...I, Elmer Anderson, am the captain of the Scarborough. We came across a group of savage pirates on the sea, and they took over our battleship. Luckily, I was helped by someone on the ship. I'm willing to use my family's influence to provide immunity..."

Everyone was left in shock after hearing what was on the paper. Treason was something that no pirate would forgive. Billy was shaking in fear. At that moment, he realized that he'd been led into a snare. The worst part was that he admitted that the paper belonged to him. Though he tried his best to defend himself, it was too late. After that, Owen placed the paper beside him to let everyone take a look. Most had no idea how to read, and of course, they would rather believe Owen than Billy.

Suddenly, Zhang Heng heard someone mentioning his name. He had to keep calm in moments like this. He had done everything he could in such a situation. It was time for him to put on a good show. If everything went smoothly, this would turn out to be his most fruitful journey ever.

Chapter 134: Massive Fire

There were a total of seven names on the list. Other than Zhang Heng, the rest of them were the old pirates that used to complain to Kent about the captain and helmsman.

All of them used to work under Frazer. There were basically two parties on the ship when Oven announced their names. While one party wanted them executed, the other said that they should be exiled. Amid the argument, Billy insisted that the paper had been swapped out by someone. Unfortunately, the war was nigh, and they had no time to investigate the case. In the end, Orff decided to lock them up in the ship's brig. An investigation would be carried out tomorrow when the war was over.

When Oven mentioned the name, Zhang Heng, Marvin started to move away from Zhang Heng slowly. Zhang Heng, however, was not angry knowing that this was who he is. At the moment, a total of 17 pirates were being held in the ship's brig.

On the afternoon of the second day, all the pirates on the ship changed into the navy's uniform. Elmer, the original captain of the Scarborough, was brought out of solitary confinement. After being locked away all alone in the dark for a month, Elmer had deteriorated, and had clearly become frail and thin. His beard was unkempt, and his uniform torn and dirty. He could not help but squint when he caught a glimpse of the sunlight.

"Do you remember everything that I taught you?" asked Orff.

"I'm the captain of the Scarborough. My name is Elmer Anderson. Our vessel braved a mighty storm a month after we left the port. So, I decided to return here for repairs. I've also heard that the daughter of the general governor of New York, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire is going to have her wedding here. So, I bought my people along to celebrate the happy event."

After a short pause, Elmer added, "You know, listening to me will save you a lot of trouble. In the New World, everyone knows the Scarborough. No one dares question us. Plus, I have known Bellomonte for a long time."

"I know the two of you have known each other for a long time. Don't worry. You can be with him soon."

Elmer thought that Orff was trying to tell him that they would capture Bellomonte and put the two of them together. It turned into a rather awkward moment. After all, Elmer was about to betray Bellomonte. Friendship became nothing when his life was at stake. Besides, Orff did promise him that he would let him go if he was willing to cooperate.

"Bring him down and shower him. I want him in a new and clean uniform. After all, he is the captain of the Scarborough.

"It's time."

Orff opened the door of the captain's quarters and looked at the man behind the table. Teach looked completely different now. A black tricorne was on his head. He also wore a red jacket, a leather belt, and he had even shaved away his signature black beard. A terrifying pirate had now turned into a respectable navy captain.

"How many years has it been? I thought I would never get to see you wear this uniform."

“It’s all in the name of forgetting bad things,” said Edward Teach while grabbing his sword and gun.

“Until now, I’m still doubtful whether we are doing the right thing or not. If he is still alive, I don’t think he wants to see what you have become.”

“You better reminisce now if you want to. I’m about to clear all the old debts.”

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50 pirates gathered at the deck. Owen was shocked when he saw Teach exiting the captain’s quarters.

“I have chosen the right people for the task. These are our best men!”

Teach lifted his gaze to the sun that was setting below the horizon. Turning to Elmer, he said, “Let’s go.”

Orff stood at the dock and watched the 50 pirates disembark the ship. Just like what Elmer said, nobody was inspecting them when they came off the Scarborough. Soon, they managed to slip into town without raising suspicion.

When they were finally gone, Orff left the deck. He knew that the war had now officially begun, and it was time for him to play his role well.

It was in the late of night. Orff was in the captain’s quarters alone, looking at the clock in front of him. There was still half an hour to go before he would do what was needed to be done. As usual, he meticulously replayed the plan in his mind over and over again to ensure nothing would go wrong later. Still, there was an unsettling feeling rumbling within his chest.

Seconds later, he could see a massive fire burning in Charleston. Orff was terrified, instantly realizing that something had gone wrong. The fire was not supposed to happen now. According to the plan, he should have first fired the Queen Anne’s cannons at the center of the town to create panic and chaos. Had something forced them to act thirty minutes early? The pirates standing on the deck saw the raging fires as well.

“Mr. Orff. What should we do now? Should we open fire to support them?”

Orff was trying to figure out what to do as well. If this fire had nothing to do with them, firing the cannons right now would cause the 50 pirates a lot of unnecessary trouble.

“Everyone. Await my orders!”

Suddenly, an observant pirate saw a few navy personnel running towards the boats docked at the port. They then started to row towards the Queen Anne’s Revenge as fast as their arms could swing the oars.

“They are with us!”

When they saw the signal given out by them, some pirates immediately dropped the ladder for them to board the ship. Owen was leading the group of returning pirates. There were only 12 left, and they were covered in blood. Owen’s stomach was wrapped in bandages as well.

“We have failed! Elder has somehow communicated with the garrison troops in the city! We were ambushed! That’s why we had to disperse and run for our lives.”

“Where is the captain?”

“The captain... he is the first who noticed something had gone wrong. He shot Elder to death, but he was hit by six bullets after that. I’m sorry I failed to retrieve his body,” said Owen, his voice filled with melancholy.

All 11 pirates behind him instantly became somber as they were reminded of what had just taken place.

“Mr. Off, I think you should take charge since the captain is not here. We can’t drag this on any longer. The garrison troops in the city know that we have the Scarborough. They will fire their cannons on us mighty soon. Capturing Bellomonta has become a big failure. There’s no reason for us to fight with them. We should flee now!”

Chapter 135: I’d Like to Hear the Details.

In the darkness of the night, a wave of uncertainty bathed over Orff. This was not how he imagined it to be.

He had been plotting revenge for fourteen years. After all the sacrifices he made... for it to end so abruptly like this... it was like a cruel joke. If Teach was still around, he might even consider abandoning this expedition and simply wait for the next opportunity.

Now that he was the only one left, Orff was uncertain if he was still able to continue down this road. He was way past his prime and getting older every day. His skills were deteriorating, and while time brought with it experience and wisdom, it could not make up for his lost youth. These days, every night, his back and legs would ache in his sleep. Every fight of his was getting more and more strenuous, and his wounds took a much longer time to heal as well.

He did not know if or when he would be presented with a chance like this ever again – tonight was as best of an opportunity as he could get.

Although Teach had lost, the battle was not over yet. He still had the Queen Anne’s Revenge, loaded to the brim with 90 cannons and a complement of nearly 70 sailors. If managed well, they might still have a chance.

The problem was that once the news about what happened on the shore spread throughout the ship, the pirates on board would surely unanimously demand that they set sail immediately.

Fortunately, the only ones who knew about the matter were Owen and the eleven men he brought back. As per Orff’s instructions, most of the pirates were on the ready by the cannons on the second deck. The few pirates on the first deck were some of Orff’s most trusted men.

The helmsman was silent for some time. Then he said to one of the pirates, “Go and tell the people down there that everything is as usual, and tell them to get prepared as per the original plan, and then, to wait patiently.”

Owen, who was still pressing a hand against his abdomen, looked to be startled. “Mr. Orff, as the boatswain of this ship, I cannot turn a blind eye to you trying to deceive the crew.”

Orff looked around at the others and said, "Will you give us a minute?" He then turned to Owen, reached out, and said, "How are you doing? Can you get up? Let's go talk in the captain's cabin. I need to know the details of what happened before we can make a final decision."

Owen hesitated for a second but eventually got to his feet with the help of the old helmsman.

The two men arrived at the captain's cabin. Orff closed the door and moved a chair over for Owen to sit. Once they were both settled down, he said, "When and where were you attacked?"

"What's the point of discussing this now?" Owen smiled bitterly, but he answered the old helmsman's question. "The battle started about twenty minutes ago. We were only a street away from the governor general's House Inn. We were basically retreating as we fought. To escape, we even set a guest house on fire!"

"You said that Elmer was killed instantly, which meant no one else knew what your actual purpose was," Orff muttered as he was deep in thought. "The wedding ceremony will surely be postponed because of this, and Bellomonte wouldn't have escaped. The garrison will attack us soon enough. We should fight back first, give them a taste of something sweet, and once we have the attention of all the defending troops, we'll send twenty men—no, fifteen should be enough—to the city to search for Bellomonte."

"I'm afraid you're a little irrational right now. We've already lost. We don't have enough manpower on this ship to carry out that plan. Also, even if, under the premise that we're able to attract the defending troops, and if we can gather 15 people, there's still no one suitable to lead them," said Owen as he shook his head.

"I'll do it."

"What?"

"I said that I'll lead them," declared Orff with confidence. "Why? You think I'm too old to get back on the battlefield?"

"I hope that you will be as wise as you were, and not act out of impulse and adrenaline, lest you might drag the ship into more dangerous situations," Owen said. "What we need to do now is to accept defeat and leave this place, not continue to raise our stakes in a hopeless situation."

"Interesting," Orff suddenly commented. "This is the third time in five minutes that you're saying we have lost."

The boatswain's brows furrowed. "Isn't that typical? If you didn't keep throwing caution to the wind, pestering me to go along with your crazy plan, I wouldn't keep repeating that."

Orff ignored the remark and continued, "From the moment you set foot inside the room, you've glanced at the clock at least four times. Why? Are you in a hurry?"

Owen answered feebly, "I can understand how you're feeling after tonight's failure. I saw the captain being shot with my own eyes. Right now, I am just as grief-stricken as you are, but suspicion is not going to help us get through the difficulties we're facing. The sooner we leave this place, the smaller the loss we'll suffer."

“Perhaps you’ll allow me to guess why you’re in such a hurry,” Orff answered squarely. “Could it be that if we wait a little longer, we’ll find out that there are actually no troops chasing you? Or should I say that you’re worried that the captain might come back soon and expose your deceitfulness?”

The helpless smile on Owen’s lips faded away. This time, he said nothing.

“I’ve known you for so long, but this is the first time I’m noticing your excellent acting skills,” Orff jibed. “I have to admit—I nearly fell for it. Would you like to know how you gave yourself away?”

Owen raised an eyebrow. “Sure, let’s hear it.”

“I’ve seen that name list that you compiled for the advance team. You said you were with Teach when the battle started, but the eleven men you came back with were all from your own team. None of them were from Teach’s team. That’s just too much of a coincidence.”

Orff paused for a moment to let it sink in before continuing, “Your plan for tonight is almost perfect. When the advance team arrived on the shore, they were completely disconnected from the ship. After your team and Teach’s split up, you immediately faked evidence of a battle, killed the men who didn’t belong to your group, then come back covered in blood with the sad-sob story about how our mission has failed. Most people would believe you without question. You knew how the crew would react if they heard this—they would choose to leave this place. That way, you can easily get rid of the ship’s biggest threat, like blowing off a cloud of dust.”

“But with Teach gone, you are the most popular candidate for captain. Why would I go through all that effort so that you can replace Teach as Captain? That’s not very worth my while, isn’t it?” retorted Owen.

“Me? No, no. I’ve never been a threat to you. The failure of tonight’s mission will lead to a series of events. With so many casualties, someone must be held responsible. If you’re not stupid, you will use this to challenge me. When that happens, I won’t even become a helmsman, let alone become the captain.”

Chapter 136: Working together

“No wonder Frazer kept saying that you’re the most difficult person to deal with on the ship,” Owen growled. “But you still lost this one.” He suddenly straightened his body, no longer in the injured state he so desperately played. “What a pity. If it were not for the situation deteriorating to such a new low... you must know, I did not intend to use this approach.”

Owen stomped his feet, and immediately, noises of people fighting could be heard outside the captain’s cabin.

The boatswain grinned. “You really thought that I didn’t have a backup plan, huh? Edward Teach is not here right now. When he left the boat, he brought with him the majority of the people who pledged their loyalty to the two of you. Even though there are only a few men left on the boat, the only ones willing to obey your orders unconditionally are the five men on the deck. I have eleven men. After we’ve gotten rid of them, we’ll kill you too. My story will still work. It just needs a little tweaking here and there, and I will need to add an ending. What do you think about this version: Orff wanted to keep the

bad news about what happened on the shore to protect his position, so he tried to kill us but was tragically killed instead?”

The fighting outside ended sooner than expected, fizzling out while the two were talking.

As soon as Owen had spoken, the door to the captain’s cabin swung open. His two men were standing at the doorway, but there was not a trace of triumph on their faces. Instead, a mixture of fear and disbelief were clearly displayed.

That was thanks to the two blunderbusses pointed at the back of their heads.

This time, it was Owen’s face that showed a tint of despair. He knew the combat abilities of his men very well. It was eleven against five, and it all happened all of a sudden. There was no way they could lose.

It was Orff’s turn to speak up this time. “You are brilliant... one of the smartest I’ve seen in this lifetime of mine. All these years on the ship, you’ve never once let it slip. In fact, you even studied the strengths and weaknesses of our close associates. You waited until Teach left the ship, and only acted when we were at our weakest. You almost won. Unfortunately, you forgot someone.”

Zhang Heng stepped through the door and replaced the saber at his waist. The men who came in with him were the group of sailors that were the prisoners of the ship. Together, they detained Owen and eleven of his men.

“It’s you! How is this possible?!” gasped Owen in disbelief. “You guys are Orff’s people? Wait, everything that happened last night—was that all just an act? There was really no note?”

“No, but there was actually a piece of paper that drew us together,” replied Zhang Heng replied.

“Billy and the others were anxious about Orff’s and Teach’s leadership on this ship—that includes the handling of Goodwin, all the casualties, and the extreme obsession over Kidd’s treasure. They wrote down every question they wanted to ask Orff on a note and signed their names on it. They were getting ready to confront the captain and the helmsman, but before they could do anything, someone betrayed them. Kent, one of the organizers, is very close to Frazer but had, in fact, sided with Orff.

“On the surface, Kent followed Frazer’s instructions and united all who opposed Orff and Teach. He encouraged them to challenge the authority of the captain and the helmsman. But behind the scenes, Kent reported all the activities of Billy’s group to Orff. After I discovered the role that Kent has been playing, I understood the conundrum that had been bugging me. Back in Nassau, Frazer came to visit me and gave me Kent’s name. That was when I knew that Kent was not one his people...”

Owen’s eyebrows rose. “Oh?”

“Frazer wanted to expose Orff. The truth is, it was not only Orff who didn’t realize my role in this matter. In the beginning, even I myself couldn’t guess what Frazer had planned for me. He invested a lot in me but had never asked for anything in return. It made me really curious. If I didn’t play according to his script, wouldn’t that be a waste of all his resources? However, I figured it out later on that Frazer did not care how I played his game. He simply needed someone to catch Orff’s attention.”

“In a way, Billy and the others, and I serve the same purpose—to divert attention, lower Orff’s guard, and create an opportunity for you. The only thing was, my relationship with Frazer was more conspicuous. So, to take Orff and Teach down, Frazer took in another student. Too bad that person was you, not me.”

Zhang Heng took in a deep breath before continuing. “Let’s talk about the note. That actually happened three days ago. Under Kent’s persuasion, Bill and the others wrote that note. When Orff found out about it, he made Elmer write that thank-you letter that you read to frame Billy and the others. If things had gone accordingly, this should’ve spilled over three days ago.”

“Why didn’t it then?”

“Because I stopped it,” Zhang Heng answered without hesitation. “To tell you the truth, I really didn’t want any part of this enmity between you, and Orff and Teach. But Frazer crossed the line. Not only did he use me, but he even made me the scapegoat! I had no choice but set a trap for him.”

“So, you decided to join forces with Orff at that time?”

“Taking into account the distrust between us, it was not an easy task, but we still made an effort to have an open and honest discourse. Although the process was somewhat difficult, we were still able to reach a consensus in the end.”

“What do you want, eh? Maybe I can give it to you too.” Owen had not given up yet and was trying to extend an olive branch.

Zhang Heng shook his head. My request is very simple. Since Billy and the others are so disappointed with this ship, and Orff is not comfortable with them on board, why not just get them off the boat?”

“I still don’t understand. Why did Orff trust you and allow you to move freely tonight? Isn’t he worried that you are a student of Frazer’s?”

Orff who had been standing aside chipped in. “Because of that note. Last night was not just a show for you. That note is a stain on them. The only way out for them is to leave the ship. Unless they kill all of the remaining sixty-over men on the ship, there’s no way they would be able to cause a mutiny. We have an agreement between us—after tonight, I will redress them and restore their reputation.”

Billy snorted as he pushed Owen’s men out to the corridor. “Remember your promise. From today onward, we don’t owe each other anything.” Then, he turned to Zhang Heng, saying, “Captain, we’ll be waiting for you in the boat.”

Zhang Heng nodded. “Thank you.”

Everyone vacated the room, leaving only Orff, Owen, and Zhang Heng. When they had all left, Owen broke into a smile. “Captain? Incredible. You’re the biggest winner tonight, it would seem. I knew that you planned to leave the ship after one year, but I never expected you to have a team on the ready. Bill and the others are some of the most experienced sailors on this ship. Now that you’ve rescued them from Orff, they will follow you to the ends of the earth, I’m sure.”

Chapter 137: We Finally Meet

Tonight, Charleston was not destined to be peaceful. Half an hour ago, an inn caught fire all of a sudden. The residents staying around the place had to work together to put out the fire. Before they could celebrate, though, they heard the thunderous boom of cannons being fired.

A cannonball flew past the wall and landed on one of the houses. And that was just a start. Seconds after that, more and more cannonballs were launched toward the city, leaving all its residents running around and screaming in a frenzied panic. They assumed that French battleships were attacking them. What they did not know was that the pride of the navy, the Scarborough was still docked at port.

Why did the enemy attack the cannons on the wall instead of the Scarborough, which posed a more significant threat? They would indeed have to pay a hefty price for doing that. Not too long after that, the residents of the city received the shocking news. The party that attacked them was not the French but it was the Scarborough at the port.

It was at that moment that the pirates disguised as navy officers revealed their true colors. Without any warning whatsoever, they destroyed the cannons that were mounted on the city wall. During the first attack, half of them were wiped out. The garrison troops quickly realized that their city had been infiltrated by enemies. Immediately, they gathered and planned a retaliation. Before they could do that, however, the second wave was launched, and the garrison troops were once again defeated.

Foreign enemies had never attacked Charleston before. Usually, the garrison troops would alert everyone in the city once they spotted enemy ships. In turn, the people of the town would have sufficient time to retreat to a safe place. The current attack was so sudden that it messed up the strategy of the garrison troops. Even the commander could not figure out why the Scarborough went rogue and attacked its own allies.

The firing of the cannons managed to light up the sky with bright flashes. After five rounds of relentless shelling, a third of the city's wall located in the southeast of Charleston had collapsed. Unfortunately, the cannons protecting the city didn't have enough range to land a hit on the Queen Anne's Revenge. Every cannonball that was launched at them fell short of their target, flying straight into the ocean instead.

After that, the Queen Anne's Revenge stopped for a moment to cool their cannons. At that time, Charleston's line of defense was shattered beyond repair. They were no longer a threat to the pirates. Ten minutes later, the pirates followed the plan and started to attack the city.

One of the cannonballs flew past the destroyed walls and landed on a street. Immediately, the residents in that area dispersed and ran for their lives.

As there was some distance between the governor general's house and the coastline, they were safe from the attack for now. Many nobles and merchants were unhappy with the happenings in Charleston. They were considered highly reputable individuals of the New World and were shocked that the town could come under attack while they were here to attend a wedding ceremony.

20 minutes went by. Still, no one could figure out why the Scarborough attacked Charleston. The guests were worried about their mansions and shops around the town. Of course, they yearned to head back and ensure that their properties were fine but reckoned it was still too dangerous at the moment. Right

now, the town was left in utter chaos. The governor general's mansion had around 40 guards protecting it and was considered the safest place in the city right now.

Watt, the governor-general, was directing the defensive effort on the second floor of his command center. He just received the news that all the defensive cannons on the wall had been entirely destroyed. Strangely though, the enemies did not muster up and invade the city. Perhaps they lacked the personnel for that. However, Watt knew that it would be a huge mistake if he underestimated his enemies right now.

He could care less about the guests downstairs, knowing that his family and Bellomonte were upstairs right now. If something terrible happened to them at his place, Whitehall would definitely not let him off the hook that easily. Exercising the utmost precaution, he contacted the garrison troops and requested another 20 troopers to protect his place.

Knowing that he had done everything he could do for now, he finally let out a sigh of relief.

"Don't worry. Some of the biggest orchard owners from this place are my friends. They have a large number of armed personnel. I have just sent someone to search for them. I believe they can lend us at least 200 hundred people to help us to overcome this sticky situation," said Bellomonte calmly.

"That's great! I have just moved to the New World not too long ago. There are still many things that I'm unfamiliar with. I might need your help again in the future. I heard that Boston is enjoying rapid growth under your care; especially when it comes to the piracy menace, your methods of dealing with them have gained high praise from the military. When I left London, your glorious moment was the talk of the town."

Bellomonte smiled as he held a cup of tea. Indeed, it was something that he was really proud of. However, just before the Watt could say something about it, a trooper knocked on the door.

"Governor-general, the reinforcements that you've asked for have arrived. They are now waiting downstairs. That was fast. Let me go take a look."

He went downstairs and saw 20 troopers standing there with an unfamiliar officer leading them.

"What is your name? Who is your commanding officer? Why have I never seen you before?" asked Watt, his tone reeking with suspicion.

"I think you should hear of the name of our commanding officer. His name is Edward Teach, but most prefer to call him Blackbeard," said the army officer.

He then pulled out a gun and fired at Watt point-blank. The deafening ring of the gunshot startled everyone in the main hall. When one of the female guests saw the body of the governor-general lying on the staircase, she couldn't hold herself back and screamed out loud.

Considering they were here to attend a wedding ceremony, none of the male guests carried weapons. They could only feel fear and panic paralyze them as they saw the armed pirates standing before them.

Concurrently, the real calvary that Watt summoned was finally here. Noticing the situation, they instantly drew arms and clashed with the fake troopers! While they fired at each other with gusto, the

doors to the second-floor study room were pushed open. Two fake navy officers walked in and talked to Bellomonte.

“According to the governor-general’s investigation, we can confirm that pirates have hijacked the Scarborough! They are dressed in navy uniforms and were the ones who attacked Charleston. You are their main target.”

“Me?!”

Bellomonte was surprised that the target was him.

“The situation is getting worse now. The enemies are downstairs, but anytime now, they’ll be up here to capture you. The governor-general has ordered us to escort you to a safe place.”

After that, the two fake navy officers approached Bellomonte and clutched his arms.

“Hold on. My daughter!”

“The sooner you leave, the sooner the people here would feel safer. There’s a horse cart waiting for you. We have to leave through the backdoor.”

Subsequently, they quickly dragged Bellomonte downstairs. When he saw the broken horse cart, he quickly realized that something was amiss. He broke into a struggle, but it was too late. The two pirates employed their brute force and stuffed him into the horse cart.

Bellomonte instantly knew that his life was in danger. So, he attempted to jump out of the cart. Before he could do so, however, a sharp sword touched the skin of his neck.

“Mr. Bellomonte, we finally meet.”

Chapter 138: The Truth

Bellomonte did not expect to meet someone familiar here. The ex-captain of the Scarborough, Elmer, was sitting right beside him. An awkward situation arose when their eyes met. They both wanted to say something, but the words were somehow stuck in their throats. A man in a set of clean and neat formal navy attire sat in front of them.

“Who are you people? Why did you kidnap me?” asked Bellomonte while trying to keep himself as calm as possible.

“My name is Edward Teach. I’m sure you’ve heard my name before.”

Bellomonte’s face changed when he got to know his name. Everyone from the New World heard about the horrific things that Captain ‘Blackbeard’ Teach had done. Bellomonte had been trying to eliminate piracy for a long time and, of course, knew the name of the most notorious pirate of the Caribbean. Bellomonte had tried several times to eliminate Blackbeard’s crew, but sadly, none of those attempts bore fruit. Not only did he fail to capture them, but he had inadvertently made Blackbeard more famous than before.

He had always dreamed of capturing Edward Teach. Right now, although he was just sitting right across him, he was not happy at all. Bellomonte had been through a lot, and a situation like this did not make him flinch. There was a shocked look on his face, but less than two seconds later, he managed to compose himself. Elmer looked guilty when Bellomonte turned and looked at him.

“Mr. Teach, I have been looking forward to meeting you. Finally, I get to see you in person.”

“Unfortunately, this is not the first time we’ve met.”

“Have we met before? When was that?”

“I think we were in the navy academy when we first met. I can still remember that day as clear as daylight. You and him, walking to class together.”

“Him?”

“It appears you have a poor memory. My earl, let me give you a hint. Does 1695 remind you of anything?”

“Who the hell are you?!”

This time, Bellomonte lost all composure.

“He was the hero of the navy. He was the most reputable adventurer in the whole of Scotland. He even got the queen’s compliments. At that time, you had just gotten your job as governor-general. Your first task was to figure out a way to end the piracy and restore peace to the trade port. To deal with the two most notorious pirates, Henry Every and Thomas Tew, you asked for his help. At first, he did not agree because he was tired of going to war. But, you did not give up. You kept convincing him that you did it for the prosperity of the New World. In the end, he was bought by your sincerity. Also, as your friend, he had decided to take on the task. It was at that time that I was assigned as the quartermaster on his ship.

“That was literally my happiest day. Being able to go on a sail with my idol is like a dream. When I was told that I’m doing this for a bigger cause, I was elated. I wanted to do my best to build a better New World. However, things weren’t smooth from the very beginning. Before we could leave the port, we were stopped by the navy. They told us the war in Spain had gotten really intense. So, they wanted us to recruit a new batch of sailors. Left with no other options, we went ahead and hired all the sailors that we needed in the shortest time possible. After that, we spent six months at sea. Still, we failed to track Henry Every and Thomas Tew down.

“It was then that the atmosphere on the ship was really intense. The batch of sailors we recruited were mostly thugs and gangsters, where their main goal was to always search for more money. Since we did not manage to capture the two most wanted pirates, they didn’t mind resorting to other options.

“There were only three people on the ship who went to navy school before—me, him, and the chief mate. The three of us were not powerful enough to control the situation on the ship. I was tied up when I tried to console the others. They beat me up and tossed me in a goat ranch. They threatened to kill me in three days! To save my own life, I had to comply with the requests of those thugs.

“That was the darkest moment in my life. I didn’t know what I did wrong. Why would God allow something like this to happen to me? He was the one who consoled me and gave me confidence. He

made me believe that we would be able to clear our names once we got back to civilization. I want to live, to live and tell the truth to the whole world! That was my motivation to stay alive. However, I never thought that it would take aeons before I could achieve that. Four years later, we crossed paths with another group of pirates. Our sailors decided to join them and they set us free. In the end, 13 of us, including me, traveled back to the colony.”

“We decided that we would dock in New York and contact the navy. We wanted to tell the whole world about it. During that time, you made a name for yourself by eliminating a lot of pirates. You were a famous governor-general, and you didn’t want to relate to us, worried that we might affect your reputation. So, you looked for someone to talk to us. You told us that you sympathized with everything that we had been through, and you are more than willing to help us to clear our name.”

“I did remind him about it, but he insisted that he wanted to trust you. Without any hesitation, we handed you everything that those thugs robbed and documents to prove that we left the port. We trusted that you would go to your allies in White Hall to help us. You know exactly what kind of person he is, right? He was always a positive one. He believed that kindness still existed in this world.”

Bellomonte got more and more nervous after hearing what Teach had to say.

“You betrayed him. You tricked him to Boston, and the authorities arrested him once he touched down. You burned all the documents that he gave you and sold off all the dirty stuff from us. And our Mr. Elmer here was the one who escorted him to London’s court! To ensure that he would not badmouth you while they were on their way there, you told Elmer to take ‘good care’ of him while he was on the road.”

“I heard that he lost his mind before he got to London’s courthouse. Your people hung him to death at River Thames. His body hung there for two years! They called him the most notorious pirate of the New World. Again, you were praised by White Hall for eliminating him.”

Elmer was now trembling in fear. He did not know that this incident was related to him.

“I... I didn’t know what was going on. I was just a man following orders. I couldn’t say no to Mr. Bellomonte.

Before he could finish, Edward Teach took out his gun, and in a swift second, shot him at point-blank. He would never expect to meet his death in this way.

Edward Teach ignored the dead body and looked at Bellomonte.

“I told the pirates that I’m here for Kidd’s treasure. But, I know better than anyone that there’s no such thing as Kidd’s treasure. I’m here for revenge.”

Bellomonte was shuddering in terror, sitting in a fetal position, and curled up like a ball.

“What do you want?! I can give you everything! I can give you immunity! I can give you boundless wealth that will never run out!”

“Save the trouble. I will get them myself if that’s what I want.”

Edward Teach uttered his final sentence and lifted his sword. All the anger on his face was all gone, replaced by sadness and grief.

Chapter 139: Jackdaw

Zhang Heng could hear the thunderous boom of cannons after he left the Queen Anne's Revenge. Charleston was bathed in bright flames.

When he saw that, Zhang Heng knew that Orff's and Teach's plan for revenge had begun. Everything that happened after that had nothing to do with him. His life on the Queen Anne's Revenge was finally over. After tonight, Teach, and the Queen Anne's Revenge would disappear for some time. Zhang Heng would only meet them again four years later, but that's a story for another time.

All 16 people on the ship made use of what little time that they had and picked a helmsman.

"I just took scanned our surroundings just now. Around twenty boats are docked by the harbor right now. Between them, there are twelve small boats, eight medium boats, and two big boats. They are basically empty right now. It should be an easy task for us to snatch them."

Charleston and Nassau were at least hundreds of kilometers apart. It would be impossible for them to sail all the way to Nassau with the tiny vessels that they were on right now. Besides, a golden opportunity had presented itself right before them. While the Queen Anne's Revenge was drawing the attention of the enemies, it would be the best time for them to hijack those boats.

"You guys should have made your choices by now, right?"

Zhang Heng took a look around and knew that the group of people with him would become his crew later on. Owen was right. It was a fact that these were the most experienced group of pirates the Queen Anne's Revenge had seen.

They were extremely skillful and had years of experience between them. Most importantly, they had a squeaky clean background. They neither belonged to Orff nor Frazer. If Zhang Heng did not step in, they would have indeed met a horrible ending since the powerful people on the ship were trying to fight for the throne.

Billy and the rest of the old pirates took a look around. There was excitement in the air.

"The Royal Navy has a corvette here. It's a medium-sized vessel equipped with around 30 cannons. Although this corvette is similar to the Sea Lion, it's definitely more powerful. She should sail a lot faster, as well. Right now, we are powerful enough to take her and sail back to Nassau. We just need to recruit more people from Nassau, and we should be good to set sail," said Billy.

"Actually the Queen Anne's Revenge is not suitable for raiding other boats. She's too big, and will surely be slower than the others. Besides, she would need a huge crew of pirates to manage her. Of course, if they only targeted merchant ships, they would not need all that crazy firepower. Everyone would eventually receive a minimal amount of loot each time since there are so many pirates on board. And it's not exactly easy to hide this massive battleship as well," lamented an old pirate.

"Let's not wait anymore. Let's do it," said Zhang Heng.

Fifteen minutes later, 17 of them climbed up the corvette using a rope. Since the ship wasn't assigned anywhere, only a total of 10 navy officers guarded the ship. Zhang Heng ambushed them, tied them up, and stowed them into one of the tiny boats that they were in before.

After that, all started to work in unison to release the mainsail and to cast-off the anchor. Suddenly, they saw two boats filled with navy personnel rowing towards them as fast they could.

However, it was all too late.

As the wind began catching the sails, the corvette started to budge slowly. Zhang Heng stood on the bow of the vessel, leading his people. He had no intention to interfere with the Queen Anne's Revenge's battle. Soon, Zhang Heng was already leading the corvette far away from the enemies. The moment the corvette left the harbor, everyone on board erupted into a mighty cheer.

"I just did a quick check. The food and water on board are more than enough for us. At this speed, I think we should be able to reach Nassau sooner than expected. Captain, the only thing you need to do right now is to name the ship," said Billy.

Without him realizing it, it had been a year since Zhang Heng entered this world. Throughout this period, Zhang Heng had tried his best to blend into his surroundings. He ate, slept, and fought alongside pirates the entire time and even invested a lot of effort to learn different skills from them. Still, he did not forget his origins.

"I shall christen her the Jackdaw!"

None of them understood the meaning behind the name, thinking that Zhang Heng must have chosen it because it sounded catchy. Hence, no one was against it.

Zhang Heng gazed to the stars glittering in the sky above him, and said, "Now, let's go home."

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Anne was now in a dormant state. When Zhang Heng was in the house, she could at least talk to him about her life. Once he was gone, she had no one to talk to. Before she met him, she would go around the island, roughing up those who offended her. Ever since he promised her that he would let her join his crew, Anne pledged that she would learn how to control her anger. Undeniably, she had plenty of flaws, but breaking promises was not one of them. When Zhang Heng was not home, she tried to stay indoors as much as possible. Still, trouble came looking for her.

One day, while Anne lay on the bench enjoying the morning sunlight, someone she loathed came looking for her.

"So, have you thought about it? We can go to Massachusetts. I have an uncle over there, and he is in the tobacco farming business. He can help us to settle down. He promised me that he would grant me a stable job. The money I earn should be enough for us to live a comfortable life in the New World. We do not have to worry about food and shelter anymore."

Anne merely stared at him with no response.

“You need to accept reality, Anne. You have been here for more than a year, and no ships would take you in. Being a pirate is no joke. You should be grateful that I wasn’t mad at you for what happened last time. My promise is still valid. Just marry me, and I will forget everything that you’ve done to me.”

“James, just save it. From Ireland to Nassau, whose money did you use, huh? We sold all our silverware just to fund our journey. I didn’t expect that you would kick me away like a ball the moment we arrived in Nassau. Since you want to settle the score, let’s count from the beginning then!”

Seeing that Anne started responding to him, James was elated.

“We did agree that we would settle the score once we got off the ship. Don’t forget that you’ve agreed to it as well. I even let you stay and eat at no cost for half a year. You promised me that you would return me the money once you become a pirate. It seems like that won’t come to pass now.”

Anne became extremely agitated. It wasn’t the first time they had this conversation. If not for Anne being stronger than James, he would have sexually assaulted her a long time ago. Just when Anne was considering breaking the rules and beating him up, a kid shouted at her from afar.

“Boss Anne! Boss Anne! There is a new pirate ship approaching Nassau. It’s a navy battleship! Our fortress defender and the cannoneer, Honig was shocked when he saw it. Luckily, the battleship raised their black flag right before we attacked them!”

“Huh? Another battleship? These new pirates are getting bolder and bolder!”

Anne recognized the kid. After defeating him a few times, he was determined to address her as his boss. He was running barefooted with a forehead dripping with sweat, and appeared to be in a great rush.

“Their captain asks me to inform the crew to gather at the dock.”

“Go ahead then. Why are you here?”

“I was freaked out by it too, but there’s only one Anne with red hair on this island.”

“Huh?”

Chapter 140: Boatswain

Anne was baffled. Ever since she came to this island, nothing had gone her way. She had been turned down from so many jobs that even the kids on the streets knew about it.

A while ago, she came across Harry and his other bratty friends betting on her getting a job before Nassau was destroyed. In a rage, she pinned him to the ground and began to hit him, not stopping until the boy cried out for his parents. Walking away, she kept thinking about it, making her even angrier. So, she turned around, stormed back, and gave Harry another round of beating.

That was how Harry came to be the first person in Nassau who got bashed twice in three minutes. Since then though, he had become utterly enlightened—he finally recognized whose fist was bigger and who

was wearing the pants. Beaten to submission, he threw himself at Anne's feet and became her first disciple.

Anne suspected that this could be another game from some bored idiot to amuse her. She was already in a fit, thanks to Jamie, and now that she was going to explode, the promise she made was the last thing on her mind. Anne started to storm towards the pier, rolling up her sleeves as she went along, but suddenly stopped in her tracks as if she thought of something.

James, having clearly never heard of Harry's tragic story, followed closely behind the red-haired maiden to see what was going on. But the next thing he knew, he received a heavy blow to his lower abdomen as Harry watched on sympathetically. Anne's flying kick sent him tumbling down into the field. It hurt so bad that he curled up into a ball, rocking back and forth.

Anne withdrew her leg, with all the weight of depression falling off her shoulders. Now, she felt better and more alive. She stretched her wrists and ankles before telling Harry who had been watching with awe, "Lead the way!"

The two of them rushed to the pier, and from afar, Anne could see the naval frigate that Harry had just told her about. Since it docked, it garnered the interest of a curious many who came to the pier to steal a glance.

Anne had to admit that the ship looked quite handsome. She must have only been recently completed by the Royal Navy. Having spent only a short time afloat, she was already stolen. The ship had a very elegant and streamlined hull, and the vital parts were wrapped in metal plates providing it with extra protection during combat. Of course, the most eye-catching feature of the frigate were the rows of cannons lining its sides.

Although Nassau was known for its wealthy pirates, most had outdated equipment, like the famous Edward Teach for example. His Sea Lion was just a modified merchant ship that had been armed with 9 and 12-pounder artillery. By comparison, this warship before her eyes was equipped with 24-pound artillery!

Harry, who was just as awestruck, wiped the drool off the corners of his lips. "This is so cool... it's every man's fantasy!"

Anne was about to agree with him but instantly changed her tune when she thought about how the captain of this ship might take too much pleasure in the compliment. "Hmph, if I could go out to sea, I could easily steal a ship that's even greater than this."

"No way."

For the first time, Harry did not succumb to the possibility of him getting beaten up. He simply shook his head and said, "She's simply too perfect. It would so awesome if I could be on her too. I don't mind even if I have to scrub her down everyday. It's enough for me to brag for the rest of my life."

Unlike Anne, this was not his first time seeing the ship, but he still found himself mesmerized by it. "How did these guys manage to do it? There's not a single scratch on her. It's weird. This is a naval frigate! Maybe the entire crew died from a plague or something."

This time, Anne did not answer. This frigate may be great, but it had nothing to do with her. After kicking James, she was now ready to beat others up. She had been holding herself back for so many days; she urgently needed to vent her ongoing anger. Anne looked at Harry and asked, "Where are they?"

Harry came along, excited to see Anne beating the pirates up. Now, he had second thoughts. "Boss Anne, just forget it. It's all just a huge joke. If they managed to steal this ship, they are probably not people we want to offend."

Anne replied, "Then, all the more for us to show them that they shouldn't mess with the islanders!" She paused for a moment and said earnestly to her companion, "Harry, you must remember that bullying the weak and fearing the strong is the classic behavior of the genuinely weak. Only those who constantly challenge the strong can be considered as truly strong!"

"That sounds remarkably reasonable," Harry said admiringly. After a while, he asked her again, almost in a whisper this time, "Boss Anne, then what about hitting me, somebody whose only twelve years old?"

"Oh, that. I hit you purely because you need a good beating. That has nothing to do with you being strong or weak."

"..."

As Anne patiently answered Harry's questions, she also found her target. Not far away on the beach, were a group of people standing in a circle. Although it was not as crowded as when the Sea Lion was recruiting, it was still bustling and teeming with people. It would appear that this group of people were busy hiring for help.

It looked like good news. That meant they were shorthanded.

Anne licked her lips, a cunning smile playing on her lips. She turned to Harry and said, "Wait here. I'll go teach them a lesson they will never forget!"

Harry never planned to go there anyway, having already found himself a place to hide. Before he could even answer her, he saw a hand rest on the top of her red hair. Harry groaned silently, thinking that surely, it was over for that person. Last time, he was only just making bets on her for three pieces of copper and she gave him two consecutive beatings. It was so brutal that just thinking about him sent shivers down his spine.

The person who had just touched her was going to be dead meat.

Unsurprisingly, Anne blew a fuse, raising her arm in anticipation for a fight. But when she turned around, her first stopped dead midair. "Ah, it's you. When did you get back?! Why didn't you tell me?"

"I told the kid to go find you once I've docked. Why? Didn't you two meet?" asked Zhang Heng.

Harry's mouth hung wide open. He recognized the man now. He was the one who sent him to get Anne. What he did not understand was Anne's reaction. She suddenly appeared flushed and panicked, much like the times when he had done wrong and his parents caught him.

Zhang Heng asked her, "If you didn't meet the person I sent to find you, why are you here then?"

"I... I was just going for a walk..." she said, her voice thick with guilt.

"Then why are your sleeves rolled up like that?" Zhang Heng asked. Thank goodness he did not dwell on it. "Anyway, it's good that you're here so I won't have to look for you. Come onboard the ship and meet the others."

"Ship... others?" Anne looked puzzled.

"Yeah, aren't you the Jackdaw's boatswain? We can't have you not knowing anyone, can we?"