

## 48 Hours 201

### Chapter 201: Late Night Talk and Visitors

In the dead of night at Terrance' Mansion.

Malcolm kept a regular schedule of work and rest. It was his secret formula to maintain his energy and momentum, especially during the early days of the black-market alliance. A slew of unexpected events and situations had taken place, yet Malcolm was able to systematically solve each of them without showing any sign of fatigue. Even in his forties, his body behaved as if he was a twenty-year-old.

At this hour, he would usually be already in bed. Tonight, however, he decided to remain in his study, which was a rarity.

Malcolm plucked a book from the shelf and flipped through its pages.

The maids in the hallway hardly dared to breathe, knowing that Malcolm's mood was usually foul at this hour.

With an aloof and stern demeanor, he wore a face of austerity and rigidity from the old days. When he heard of the news about the incident on the beach, his expression grew even more solemn. Even from afar, one could instantly sense the formidable aura oozing out of him.

Once, during breakfast, one of the newly hired maids was so intimidated when she caught sight of him that she dropped the plate she was carrying. As a result, the chamberlain had someone drag her out of the house to be whipped. After that incident, every servant of Terrance' Mansion would do well to keep their heads down.

When they saw that Malcolm had been in the study for nearly an hour past his usual bedtime, nobody could muster enough courage to approach their master. At the same time, they were also afraid that they might be punished for not doing so.

The maids really didn't know what to do. Finally, they all turned to a petite maid named Leah, Malcolm's favorite of all the maids. He treated her differently and never punished her, even when she made the gravest of mistakes. Due to the preferential treatment, some of the other servants greatly ostracized her.

Leah said nothing, merely turning around and proceeded downstairs to the kitchen. When she returned, she held a glass of warm milk with her. As she was about to enter the study, she adjusted her uniform and knocked gingerly on the door.

Malcolm answered from inside, "Come in."

The maid pushed the door open. Malcolm, who was sitting on the velvet couch, didn't look up until Leah placed the glass on the table in front of him.

Malcolm snorted, "That's sweet. I'm waiting for a guest. I'll be sleeping a little later tonight."

"Yes, Mr. Malcolm." Leah smiled as she picked up the tray. Just before she was about to exit the room, Malcolm spoke again.

“Has anyone entered my study recently?”

Leah started to panic, thinking that Malcolm must have discovered that someone had rummaged through his letters. She had only taken one and made sure to return it the next day. How could Malcolm have noticed it?

Could her luck be really that bad, so much so that Malcolm decided to reexamine those old letters on the very day and notice that one had gone missing? But then again, there was a whole bunch of them. How could he have remembered each and every one of them? Right now, however, the most crucial question was: what would she do now?

Should she make up a story of a non-existent thief? She could divert Malcolm’s suspicions to the phantom so that he would focus on it instead of her. Or perhaps, she should put the blame on someone else?

A jumble of thoughts flashed across Leah’s mind, but it lasted only a moment. When she turned around, the expressions on her face displayed just the right amount of confusion. “Is something missing, sir? As per your instructions, Mr. Malcolm, I am the only person who comes in every day to clean the room.”

“Oh, I’m just asking. Things haven’t been peaceful recently. It’s always better to be extra careful.” Malcolm pointed to the chair in front of him and said, “Since you’re already here, don’t leave in a hurry. Stay for a while, and have a chat with me.”

Leah breathed a sigh of relief, knowing that she had made the right bet. Malcolm didn’t notice the missing letter. She gathered up her long dress and sat down with a smile. “What would you like to talk about, Mr. Malcolm?”

Malcolm put down the book in his hand. “Let’s talk about books. What have you been reading lately?”

“I’ve been reading the Bible because I noticed many reading it when I came here.”

“Well, the fastest way to integrate into a culture is to understand its religion. Have you read the book of Exodus? What are your thoughts about it? The Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians, and under the guidance of God, they escaped Egypt and followed their prophet, Moses. After a period of suffering, they finally reached a place they called the Promised Land, a land overflowing with milk and honey. Has this book enlightened you in any way?”

Leah’s smile faded a little, becoming a little less confident.

“Do you know what I like most about you? You rarely say anything that contradicts your conviction. If I were to ask the other servants, they would quickly tell me that they are pleased with their lives now and would never try to escape or leave.” Malcolm shifted in his seat to make himself more comfortable. “But the reality is that no one likes to be enslaved,” he continued.

Leah stayed silent for a long while before answering, “Will God end the suffering of my people then?”

“What do you think?” Malcolm retorted. “Thousands of years ago, the Israelites had faith in the Lord their God, so He liberated them from the evil rule of the pagans. But now, since you and I believe in the same creator, do you think he will liberate you from us?”

“Then where would our path lead us? Will our children and grandchildren continue to be enslaved like us?”

“That would have to depend on when you can truly integrate into our world.”

The maid opened her mouth to speak, but Malcolm raised a finger to stop her. “The integration I speak of doesn’t simply encapsulate the subjects of language, food, clothing, etiquette, or even religion—not just these kinds of things. Although they are all important, there is something more essential.” Malcolm pointed to his head. “You need to think like us. Only then will you really be accepted by our kind.”

“But when that day arrives, will we still be who we are?” Leah asked.

“Good question. Civilization is the cruelest thing the world has ever seen. It has only one main motive, and that is subjugation,” replied Malcolm. “Before it completes its destiny, it will never stop. If your kind refuses to assimilate with us, then the only way forward is complete destruction.”

As soon as Malcolm finished, there was a knock on the door, and the chamberlain’s voice could be heard from the other side.

“Mr. Malcolm. The guest has arrived.”

“Alright. Let’s end our little chat here for today. Go on ahead,” Malcolm shooed her off.

The maid bowed subserviently and left. Not long after, a man draped in a cloak came in from outside where a drizzle had started, carrying with him the scent of the outdoor humidity.

When the door to the study was shut again, the man uncloaked himself, revealing the face of Frazer.

## **Chapter 202: Opportunity**

“You gave me your assurance that there will be no more surprises this time,” Malcolm groaned.

Frazer hung his cloak on the coat rack and shrugged.

“If I remember correctly, we agreed to sink the ship, kill everyone on board, then leave quietly.”

“That is right.”

“Tell me then, what happened on the beach four days ago? Why did the Gentle Breeze and her crew return to Nassau? And why did that Wilton guy use the crew to threaten Carina?”

“I did as you asked and found the most brutal pirate outside the island. It seems that even I have underestimated his ruthlessness.” Frazer appeared frustrated. “Things got out of hand. Wilton was a lot greedier than expected. He took our deposit, but I suppose that wasn’t enough for him because he tried to milk more money by using the Gentle Breeze’s sailors. He flouted our agreement. I planned to see him the next day but, on that very morning, I found out about what happened after... look, the good news is that we don’t have to pay them the rest of the money,” said Frazer as he picked up the glass on the table.

Malcolm pointed at the brandy on the shelf. "So, after spending so much energy and effort, not only did we achieve the undesired result, we even gave her another cargo ship?! On top of that, the whole incident inadvertently helped the Jackdaw become ever more popular on the island. In fact, they are about to surpass the fame of Black Sam's Robin Hood of the Sea!"

Frazer walked to the shelf and poured himself a glass. "Although I'm considered his teacher, I've never really seen through him. He's different from Black Prince Sam, but they do have one thing in common—they both clearly know what they are doing. When I heard that the Jackdaw returned to port, I had a bad feeling. I should've warned Wilton ahead of time. I didn't think he would be so rash in his actions. But in retrospect, it was his best chance to make a move."

1The old pirate took a sip of brandy and continued, "In fact, I just received some bad news."

"Huh?"

"Black Prince Sam is making allies with several captains with parliamentary seats on the island. He intends to induct Zhang Heng into the parliament. With his influence and connections, he managed to get seven parliamentary members to support him, so the prospects of Zhang Heng joining the parliament is pretty much set in stone. I hate to admit it, but the Jackdaw's influence on the island is growing bigger and bigger. Are you still not planning to consider my proposal?"

Malcolm gave Frazer a cold look. "I am a businessman, Frazer, not Julius Caesar. I came to this island to make money. These few years, Nassau has undergone rapid development. The volume of goods we get is increasing every year, but the quality has been dropping. There are fewer top pirates, and since Blackbeard Teach attacked Charleston, he's disappeared. Now, Sam is the only top pirate left on the island. The Jackdaw might be the one to fill in this void. Carina is relying solely on one pirate ship to survive. This just shows how strong the earning power of the Jackdaw is."

"Only on the premise that he is willing to cooperate with the black-market alliance," Malcolm replied. "If we can cut off his channel for transporting the goods out of the island, he will be forced to turn around and work with us. If it hadn't been for that small error on your part, he would already be negotiating with us."

1Frazer sipped up the last drops of brandy in his glass. "What should we do now then? Should I find someone else to rob her cargo ship? Our spy has been exposed. They will be even more cautious now. It's not going to be easy to get our hands on their planned route again. Besides, they have two cargo ships now. If we sink one, there will still be another left. I heard that some captains are already meeting with Ms. Carina to explore the possibility of a long-term partnership. Opinions of her are also changing—more people are beginning to believe that she's no longer just a passerby in this place."

"Let's set the robbery idea aside first. Although this is the simplest and most effective method, it also brings many negative effects along with it. The black-market alliance is still young; I haven't been able to completely take control of it. There are still voices of dissent within it. This situation cannot be allowed to repeat itself. If we can't solve it in the shortest time possible, then we'll have to seek other ways."

Malcolm continued, "I met her not long ago. I thought that she was going to be exactly like her father—the basis of my previous arrangement. But I soon found out that there was an error in my judgment of

her. She is nothing like him. On the contrary, she is very much like me in my younger days, only more ambitious and radical. I can probably guess what she's thinking right now."

"Oh?"

"After she found out that Malone had been bought over by me, she must be filled with anger and resentment. These emotions, however, will quickly turn into hunger. She will yearn to beat me more than ever. This hunger will motivate her even more, but it will also make her more willing to take risks. So, I will give her a chance."

Frazer cocked his eyebrows. "What chance?"

"A chance to beat me," Malcolm answered.

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This time around, the Jackdaw's repair only took a short while, in the span of a little less than a week. Because the Gentle Breeze was robbed on its way out, they were unable to bring back new information from the port. However, Black Prince Sam came looking for Zhang Heng two days ago, inviting him to join a hunt.

"A Spanish treasure ship?" Billy repeated himself to make sure he heard the guy correctly. "Did you say a Spanish treasure ship? The type that has three decks full of cannons, and over 200 heavily armed sailors? Spanish galleons are usually accompanied by frigates. As far as I know, the only person who has ever successfully plundered a treasure ship and managed to transport its loot back to China is Peter Hein, and he had to deploy the entire navy fleet to do that!"

"Really? I don't know this story, but I heard that back when you were with Blackbeard Teach, you successfully took over the proud Scarborough with a little more than a hundred men against the Royal Navy's 700 sailors," Sam said.

"Whoever told you this certainly didn't mention that we were just simply at the right place and the right time. Orff's scheme worked, and it took a lot for us to get on the deck. Captain Teach alone fought against ten men, and everyone else gave everything they got. But even then, if it weren't for Zhang Heng's shots at the end, and their captain's fear of death, we would've fallen short of our goal."

"So, you don't wish to experience that same excitement again?" Black Prince Sam blinked.

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## **Chapter 203: Letter of Recommendation**

"Thanks, but no thanks. After that battle, I swore that I would never go through such an experience again," Billy said.

"Apart from us, I also intend to recruit another four experienced captains from the island. With the six of us working together, we have a good chance of a victory," said Black Prince Sam. "After it's done, we'll split the loot equally among us. It's a lot of money—enough money to pay everyone's wages for an entire year. This means that if you want to, you can take a year-long vacation after that."

"If the whole point is just to make money, you can probably find a more suitable prey, right? What draws you to this Spanish treasure ship anyway?" Zhang Heng asked.

It was undeniable that Spanish ships carried the most valuable treasures. Other than tobacco, they would also haul silk, silver, and most importantly, gold. When Black Sam said that it was enough to pay off a year's wages, he wasn't exaggerating. Even if the money were to be divided equally among the six pirate ships, they would definitely each get a handsome share.

However, the stakes were also very high. Unless the motive were revenge, like Blackbeard's battle, most avoided getting involved with military forces under normal circumstances.

What more, Spanish ships were notoriously tricky to plunder. Even the most valiant of pirates avoided robbing the Spaniards because they rarely surrendered. Many a time, when the Spaniards were at a disadvantage, they would rather go down with their ship than to suffer any financial loss. Robbing them not only meant having to face a fierce battle but also a good chance that they would simply return battered, bruised and empty-handed in the end.

"The main reason we should try is that it's a rare opportunity. Generally, Spanish treasure fleet travel in a convoy of at least a dozen ships, which make them practically impregnable. This is one rare occasion that a Spanish ship will be moving alone. Even with two naval frigates escorting her, it's still considered a golden opportunity," Black Prince Sam harrumphed with great enthusiasm. "I acquired the route they would take from a trusted intelligence dealer for a large sum of money. So? Are you interested in doing this together? If we succeed, we will be the first group of pirates to ever successfully rob a treasure ship!"

"That's all you really care about, right?"

Unsurprisingly, Black Prince Sam did not deny it. Instead, he flashed his signature smile at his companions. "We always need a little challenge in life. If Blackbeard Teach can take the Scarborough, then it makes no sense that so many of us cannot take on a Spanish treasure vessel."

Zhang Heng looked at Billy and asked, "What do you think?"

The Jackdaw's helmsman looked a little troubled. "I still prefer the safer route of robbing merchant ships, but we haven't had any tipoffs recently, and I know those bastards on our ship won't refuse an opportunity like this to make big money. Their ravenous appetite for wealth can never be satisfied, much like a bottomless pit. But since our target has only three ships and we have six, I think perhaps... perhaps we should give it a try."

"How's recruitment going? Can we set sail in two days?" Zhang Heng asked. When he received the prompt from the system earlier, the number of crew on the Jackdaw had reached 70, and they hadn't stopped recruiting since. Zhang Heng and Billy agreed that the goal was to reach 90 sailors this time.

Once they hit the number, sideboard battles would no longer be the Jackdaw's Achilles heel. Even though this meant that they were still far behind the larger pirate gangs, they would end up faring a lot better should someone attack them from below the waterline again.

"So far, we've recruited a total of 26 men. In our last battle, we lost four, and the two severely injured men left the ship after taking their severance pay. Now, we have 82 sailors on board. Our main problem

would be finding experienced gunners and carpenters. For now, though, our workforce is nearly enough," Billy answered. "Two days shouldn't be a problem. Replenishing supplies won't take long as well. I will arrange for a few people to haul our men out of the brothels and taverns."

"Sounds good to me. I'll need to inform a few more people. Let's meet up here again after two days," Black Sam said hurriedly. As he was about to leave, he suddenly stopped in his tracks and reached into his coat. "Oh, I almost forgot. This is for you."

"Huh?"

"A joint letter signed by seven influential people recommending you to be part of the parliament on the island. I must apologize—there was a delay in the process. Two of them were in dispute because of a problem in the distribution of a batch of loot. Each of them insisted that if the other signs the letter, they will not be a part of it. I could've simply found someone else to replace them, but the conflict between them wouldn't have been resolved through this matter."

"Thank you," replied Zhang Heng, who gratefully accepted the recommendation letter.

"You just have to hand this letter to Mr. Klay, the Speaker of the House. Then the parliament will organize a vote for its members. As long as the votes in favor of you exceed a third of them, you can join the parliament.

"Klay? Which Klay? Kim Klay, owner of the brothel?!"

"Urm... don't take it to heart. The position of the Speaker in the parliament is more of a formality. Anyway, everything has been going well the past two years, and the Speaker simply reviews the memberships. When it comes to huge decisions, however, everyone is involved. Klay's popularity in the parliament... well, you know, there is no one on the island dislikes him. On top of that, he's willing to give a 30% discount to all members of the parliament, so it's a challenge, to say the least, to not support his Speakership."

"Heh..." Zhang Heng chuckled.

After that, Zhang Heng did as Black Prince Sam instructed and went to the brothel. Before he even said a word, he was given a grand welcome when he arrived.

This was mainly thanks to the Jackdaw's sailors who had recently been the top whales at the brothel, spending an obscene amount of gold coins at the establishment. After remembering her employer's instructions, the bawd lit up the moment she saw Zhang Heng from a distance. She quickly gathered all her available girls and offered Zhang Heng with a complimentary service as an expression of gratitude for his contribution to their business. However, Zhang Heng turned down the proposal.

As they conversed, a scraggy elderly man hurried out of the building with a cigarette in one hand.

He was Kim Klay, the owner of the brothel who also happened one of the most well-informed lads on the island. Having ears everywhere, he had already heard of Zhang Heng's preparations to join the parliament.

The old man accepted the letter of recommendation with a smile and said, "Welcome to the Parliament. Even if you hadn't seen me, I would've come to you sometime later. Your name, Captain Zhang Heng, has recently become notorious on this small island. We sure need an outstanding man like yourself if we want to build up Nassau."

"You're too kind, Mr. Klay. Isn't it too early to welcome me? Doesn't the parliament need to vote on this?" Zhang Heng asked.

"Don't worry about the vote. The one-third ruling is simply a preventive measure to stop anyone from causing trouble. In fact, there are a handful of members there who didn't pass through the votes since the parliament was established," Klay said. "Above it all, no one would dare refuse a recommendation letter with the signature of Captain Sam on it."

### **Chapter 205: This Suggestion Is Perfect For Me, I Think**

"How did you get on this ship?" asked Anne.

Harry was in total shock when he was found in the cabin used to store wood. There was a piece of stale bread and a half-eaten sausage beside him. Other than that, there were two wooden buckets nearby him. One of them was used to store clean water and the other for his excrement.

Harry scratched his head, not knowing what to say in a situation like this.

"No wonder you kept begging me to bring you on the ship recently! You have been planning all along to sneak onboard, right?"

Anne grabbed Harry and lifted him by the collar.

"Not bad. You knew how to scout the place and make good use of me, huh? I can see that your guts are getting bigger and bigger," she growled.

Harry started trembling in fear as Anne confronted him.

"Calm down, boss. I have begged you so many times to let me set sail with you. You tell me each time that you'll ask Captain Zhang Heng about it. However, I know that you've never asked him even though you promised me again and again, which is why I had to find a way to get on board. It's always been my wish to work on this ship."

"You are only seven, kid! You need to know that you are not old enough to work on a ship!"

"Boss, I'm twelve. Look at my body. It's impossible that I look like a seven-year-old kid, right?"

"Is that right? Now, why do I feel that your brain stopped growing at seven? Captain, according to the rules on this ship, what do we normally do to intruders?" asked Anne while turning around to look at Zhang Heng, who was standing nearby.

"Oh. To save us from unnecessary trouble, we usually kill them."

"Well then, it seems that would be the only way to solve this problem."

While she spoke, Anne drew her saber from her waist with a sly smile.



"I think you know what happened to the Skeleton, right?"

Harry was bewildered by their rough treatment. When Anne placed her saber on his neck, Harry felt that he was a step closer to death. Finally, the last line of defense in his heart crumbled, and he broke down, starting to cry hysterically with streams of snot flowing out of his nose.

"Boss, save me, please! This is all my fault. I swear I'll never do something like this again."

"Hmm. If that's the case, then, what other ways can we punish him?"

Anne turned around and looked at Zhang Heng; saber still glued on Harry's throat. Harry was so terrified he couldn't move a single muscle on his body.

"We shall see how much he's worth. We can stow him as a prisoner first. After that, we can exchange him for something more valuable," smirked Zhang Heng, who was playing along with Anne.

"You heard that? Do you think you are valuable to us?" asked Anne while kicking Harry.

"No. I have no value at all! I'm currently staying with my aunt. She won't pay you guys a single dime even if you kill me in front of her!"

"Don't blame me for not giving you a chance to redeem yourself then."

"Hang on... hang on... actually, I'm valuable in my own way. I don't eat much, and I'm extremely agile. And I'm also hardworking. I will do whatever you ask me to do! I'm willing to clean the deck, climb the mast, and learn how to be a good helmsman. I can do all kinds of things you ask me to," said Harry while tapping his chest.

"Fine. You can stay on this ship."

Harry was elated the moment he heard that. After that, he saw Anne laughing at him.

"Isn't that what you wanted to hear the most? There is no punishment for you. Your wish has just come true."

Knowing he had been duped, Harry scratched his head in embarrassment.

"You will clean the toilet and help out in the kitchen. I will make sure you get off the ship when we are back in Nassau," Anne went on.

"Hey!!! That's not fair! I've always kept you company when you couldn't find a job. I have never abandoned you. Now, I..."

However, before he could continue, Harry saw Anne cracking her knuckles and instantly changed what he wanted to say.

"...I think your suggestion for me is perfect."

"....."

Once Harry kneeled to Anne's absolute dominance, the 'rat problem' on the ship was finally solved. After that, Anne brought Harry around the boat and introduced him to the other pirates. She emphasized to all that Harry was just a temporary sailor. Nevertheless, the crew was unhappy when they saw the boy. For the past two days, they had been searching high and low for the rat, and it had been a chaotic and tiring situation. It was a miracle that they did not bludgeon Harry up when they saw him.

Anne had no intention to side with him either. She wanted to let Harry experience the reality of life on a pirate ship. By doing that, she hoped to change his mind about staying on. Anne mentioned to Zhang Heng before about Harry wishing to work on Jackdaw, but after much consideration, he didn't agree to it. It was too A twelve-year-old boy was simply too young to work on a ship. If this was the modern world, Harry should have been attending primary school.

Despite all that, Zhang Heng didn't mind the extra stowaway on his ship. All of them were pirates after all and risked their lives every single day onboard. Once an attack against them commenced, the enemies would not care if Harry was still a kid or not. They would kill him, regardless. He wanted to make Harry wait for another two years or so before letting him join his ship. Unfortunately, Harry thought differently.

Anne returned to the deck after arranging for a cabin for Harry to sleep in. It was at that time that the Quidah raised her flag to signal all the other ships, a sign that summoned all five captains to gather together. Upon receiving the indication, Zhang Heng brought two pirates with him and rowed to the Quidah. Erik, the helmsman, was a good friend of his, and he automatically greeted Zhang Heng when he saw him.

"Captain Zhang Heng, how have you been? Sam is in the captain's quarters. Everyone else is already here. You are the last to arrive."

A young sailor led Zhang Heng to Quidah's captain quarters. Other than Sam, another four captains from four different ships surrounded the table, looking at a nautical chart. Zhang Heng closed the door upon entering the cabin.

"Let me explain the plan since everyone is here. For now, we know that two corvettes are protecting the Spanish ship. Each corvette should be armed with at least 50 cannons. Now, the Spanish ship is even more powerful than the corvettes. If we all attack all three at the same time, we can only last two rounds, give or take. We will lose a lot of people even if we win the battle.

"However, they have their weaknesses as well. Although their hull is tough enough to withstand our cannons and protect its cargo, it's challenging for them to maneuver their ship. If we can dodge attacks from their side cannons and instead, fire at their bow and stern, I think we should yield some good results."

"How are we supposed to do that?" asked the Warrior's captain.

"They are not nearly as agile as us, and the sea is vast. When they see us charging at them from afar, they still have enough time to change direction unless we split up and surround it from all directions. Still, don't forget the two corvettes guarding it. They could sink our ships one by one if we were to do that."

“Good insight. Parrot Island is only three days away. If I’m not mistaken, the galleon should cross it in about five days. We can ambush them from there,” said Sam while pointing to an island on the nautical chart.

## **Chapter 206: Draw Lots**

“How are we supposed to ambush them? For now, their planned route is the only information we have. We can all hide behind the island, but how are we supposed to know how far they are away from us? Anything more than half a nautical mile, and it would be impossible for us to ambush them,” said the bald captain.

Most of the captains nodded, echoing his concerns.

“That’s why we to bait them. We can’t all be hiding behind the island. One of us will need to initiate the attack and draw them toward the island,” Sam continued.

“What if the treasure ship doesn’t follow us, but the two corvettes follow us instead? You mentioned that two corvettes are escorting the treasure ship, right?” said the Warrior’s captain.

“We need to take out the corvettes first. Once we disable them, we will turn around to take out the treasure ship. I believe we can surround it easily without the interference of the two corvettes. For that, we will need two ships to bait it. If we use only one, there’s a high chance that only one corvette will come after us. Two pirate ships will force both corvettes to come after us at the same time. We need to make sure that everything goes according to plan. There’s a high chance that the treasure ship will follow the corvettes and attack us,” Said Sam.

None of the captains went against Sam’s idea. However, everyone became quiet when Sam mentioned about bait. Undeniably, this was the most dangerous part of this operation. The two pirate ships that were deployed would have to face the brunt of two heavily armed corvettes and the Spanish ship. Before they reach the ambush point, no one would be able to help them. In other words, they would have to brave the attacks alone.

“I wish that I can take part in this operation, but my Quidah’s only advantages are a tough hull and the naval ram. When it comes to speed, my ship falls far short of the others. Though the treasure ship is slow, the two corvettes around it are extremely agile. This is why we need two ships that can travel fast. At the same time, we also need experienced captains to lead this operation. Considering that our ships have to face various uncertainties and risks, I suggest changing the ratio of the loot. The two ships acting as bait will get 50% more loot than the other four ships. Everyone agree?”

After a short hesitation, all six captains, including Sam, raised their hands in agreement.

“Great. So, volunteers?”

“Count me in!”

A man with a bony face and sunken eyes spoke up. From the moment Zhang Heng entered the captain’s quarters, he remained there like a log. Other than speaking up during voting, he did not speak a single

word during the entire discussion. However, he wasn't surprised when the man volunteered to become bait.

He was known as Full Speed Brook, the fastest pirate in the entire Nassau. His ship, the Swordfish, was a heavily modified vessel. To become the fastest pirate ship in the whole Nassau, he had sacrificed some of his ship's firepower and armor. The one incident that made him famous was the time when he plundered four different merchant ships at four different locations on the same day.

That was how he got his name. Besides, he was extremely good at steering his vessel, on par with Hutcheson's talents. Amongst all the captains, he was best suited as bait. However, one pirate ship wasn't enough. There were only 31 nine-pound cannons on the Swordfish. Drawing the attention of two heavily armed corvettes was going to take a lot more than his streamlined speedster.

"We need one more volunteer. Anyone?" asked Sam.

No one said a word even after an entire minute. One thing was for sure, nobody in this room were cowards, but it didn't mean they would take unnecessary risks just to prove their bravery either. All these captains had led their pirates through countless battles on the high seas and had made a name for themselves. From the outside, they might look fearsome. However, they had the uncanny ability to remain absolutely calm and composed during critical moments like this. When Sam offered 50% more of the loot to whoever that volunteered to become bait, everyone in the room instantly started weighing the consequences and benefits if they were to participate.

To Brook, the gains outweighed the risks considering he had the fastest barque in the entire Caribbean. To the others, though, the extra 50% of loot wasn't worth the risk.

"Let's use the old way to decide who's will become the second bait."

Sam took out five silver coins from his coin bag.

"Let draw lots. I will mark one of these coins. The one that receives the coin with a mark on it will join Brook."

By utilizing this method, the chosen one might not have the fastest vessel in the fleet, but this was the fairest way to select the second bait since no one wanted to volunteer. Silver coins that were minted in this era looked almost the same when compared. However, due to limited technology in the minting process, each coin had minute defects and differences. Knowing this, Sam asked everyone to turn around when he marked one of the coins. He then tossed it into a bag, shook it, before inviting everyone to pick one. He would be the last one to choose.

Once everyone was done with picking a coin, Sam spoke again.

"Who got the coin with two scratches on it?"

Immediately, everyone checked the coins that they picked. At the same time, Sam picked the last one from the bag. Everyone looked at each other. However, Zhang Heng's face twitched as he tossed a coin with scratch marks on it back to Sam.

"The second bait is going to be the Jackdaw. Any other questions?"

"We will discuss the rest when we arrive on Parrot Island."

After finding out that the Jackdaw had become the second bait, the captains found no reason to stay on the Quidah anymore, leaving the ship soon after. However, Sam halted Zhang Heng after rolling up the nautical chart.

“What do you think? Is this going to be too hard for you?”

Zhang Heng shook his head. His Jackdaw was a corvette, a battleship intended to engage in war. Undoubtedly, it could sail faster than most of its counterparts, and his sailing skill had also reached LV2 recently. Besides Brook’s Swordfish, Zhang Heng’s ship was the second-best ship for the role of bait. Although he felt that the risk wasn’t worth an extra 50% of the loot, he didn’t say no since he had been basically chosen by fate.

If he rejected the task, his reputation would surely be diminished once he returned to Nassau. No one would ever work with him anymore.

“Great. See you there on Parrot Island.”

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Four days had passed, and Zhang Heng regrouped with the rest of the five captains on Parrot Island. There, they finalized the final plan for the operation. After that, Zhang Heng and Brook left the island with their crew and sailed to their designated spots. They were both separated by around half a mile. They then lowered their mainsails and waited for their prey to arrive.

## **Chapter 207: Battle Prelude**

Waiting for something to happen was always a dry and dull affair. Except for the watchers tasked with scanning the surroundings, there was nothing else the pirates on the ship could do. Some lay on hammocks, dreaming away, some chatted with their mates, and some cleaned their weapons. There were those who even sought to kill time with prayer.

Harry was known as the ‘little king’ on the street where he lived. On a normal day, he would lead a band of kids to fight with another group from the next street. That said, this was the very first time he faced a real battle. At first, Anne thought that Harry would have completely freaked out since he was always one to bully the weak. To her surprise, she noticed that Harry wasn’t actually nervous, but instead felt excited about the upcoming conflict.

While everyone was waiting for their target to show up, Harry started bothering the quartermaster, begging him for a weapon to defend himself.

“Mr. Dufresne. I can fight too! Captain Zhang Heng said that once a battle commences, there would be no escape for all those on board.”

“What kind of weapon do you want?”

“A gun would be nice. I don’t think I can handle hand-to-hand combat since I’m the smallest here. I think I should be able to aim and shoot at our enemies from a distance.”

“Have you shot out of a gun before?”

"No. As the saying goes, there's a first time for everyone. Even Captain Zhang Heng didn't shoot too well when he first started using a firearm."

"Actually, Captain Zhang Heng was quite the marksman when he fired a gun for the first time."

Dufresne paused before continuing.

"I don't think I will give you a gun. I don't want you to shoot my people in the heat of battle accidentally."

"Come on, man! Don't be such a miser. I promise I will not shoot our people by accident."

"I highly doubt that."

Harry wanted to continue convincing Dufresne to give him a gun, but when he saw Anne coming from a distance, he immediately tried to make a run for it, as if he had just encountered his arch-nemesis. Before he could make any headway, Anne stopped him.

"Mr. Dufresne, did Harry give you trouble again?"

"No. Quite the opposite actually. Our young Mr. Harry here helped me a lot this morning. He counted our weapons stockpile with me."

Harry's sour face started to brightly shine when he heard Dufresne's compliments.

"I see."

Seeing Anne's less than enthusiastic response, Harry was rendered speechless.

'What kind of tone is that? Are you disappointed by the fact that you can't find a good reason to beat me up?!'

Harry wished he could say that out loud, though, he would never dare speak to Anne like this. All he could do was to curse in his heart silently.

"Come with me," Anne continued.

At that, Harry followed Anne, and they both headed towards the galley. It was a familiar place for Harry, considering he had been tasked with peeling potatoes for hours on end each day.

"When the battle begins after this, I need you to stay here with Mr. Ramsay. Come out only after the battle is over."

"Huh?"

"Huh?"

"Before I say anything, I need to tell you that I'm happy with everything so far. Ever since I started working on the ship, I've been cleaning the toilet and peeling potatoes every single day. I have done everything you've asked of me. I think it's time for me to take up bigger responsibilities.

"It makes sense, I guess. When the battle starts, I'll need you to stay here and protect Mr. Ramsay," said Anne while passing her dagger to Harry.

"It's no different from what you asked me to do just now," Harry lamented.

"What kind of difference are you asking for?"

"For example... let me stay on the deck? This will be my first sea battle! I beg of you, Boss Anne. What am I supposed to tell the others when I return to Nassau? Am I supposed to tell them that I hid in the galley like a coward while the rest are busy fighting on the deck?"

Suddenly, Harry realized that he had overstepped the border. Immediately, he turned around and apologized to Ramsay.

"Don't worry about that. You're not the first, and you won't be the last to something like this to me."

"Battles between pirates are very different from your little street fights. I have no problem with you joining us, but you have to wait at least two years before I can allow you to do that."

.....

Zhang Heng was in the captain's quarters, fiddling with the seashell. He had been carrying it for three weeks, and up until now, nothing special happened to it. At first, he thought that it must have something to do with him being on land. Now that he was out at sea, Betty, the ancient god, still hadn't contacted him.

He had also instructed Anne to arrange for someone to keep an eye on Seth. As the first person on the ship that came in contact with Betty, Zhang Heng was worried that she would somehow affect him in some way. Many days passed, and Seth acted like how he typically behaved. He no longer acted suspiciously, seeming as if he was truly liberated from the supernatural incident.

Having said that, Zhang Heng was in no rush to study the seashell. For now, he knew that Betty would grant the power to summon storms to whoever that worshipped her. Hence, he suspected that Betty might have even more supernatural forces up her sleeve. In the end, he decided that the best time to study the shell was when he got his hands on the wooden box that was made of a Tule tree.

The next morning, the sun shone brightly, and the sea was calm. So far, nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. The Spanish treasure ship was still nowhere to be found. It wasn't until the afternoon before the watchers finally spotted something. At the same time, Zhang Heng extended his bronze monocular and gazed out to the ocean as well. At first, he saw three black dots approaching from afar. He could not identify what these dots were.

After a while, Zhang Heng finally saw a Spanish flag flying above the mast. The pirates on Parrot Island signaled Zhang Heng and Brook using a mirror, indicating that their targets were approaching them.

"Our targets have arrived! On the ready!" said Zhang Heng as he put away his monocular.

Billy quickly ordered the pirates to hurry back to their designated positions. At the same time, the Jackdaw raised her black flag. Suddenly, Zhang Heng and a couple of old pirates raised their heads after noticing a change in the wind direction. It was coming from the southeast but was now blowing from the southwest. In other words, they would need more time to approach the treasure ship. Naturally, Billy wasn't too happy about this. Now, fighting the enemy would take a longer time, exposing them to more damage.

Whether they wanted it or not, the Spanish convoy was already too close for them to make any adjustments. Zhang Heng stood at the bow of the Jackdaw with one hand holding a rope and a cutlass in the other.

“Adjust the mainsails! Let’s charge at the enemy; full speed ahead!”

After the briefing, everyone on board discovered that they were just bait in this battle, learning how they were supposed to lure the target to the rear of the island. The damage they could inflict did not matter in this operation. The most important thing here was to ensure the survival of their ship after being attacked by their enemies. Other than the helmsman, the next stressful position had to be the carpenters. They were already prepared, ready with all the planks and tools that they would need to fix the ship.

### **Chapter 208: Contest**

Both the Jackdaw and Swordfish raised their black flags at the same time, racing to the Spanish treasure ship as fast as their sails could carry them. Although the Jackdaw was closer to the Spanish ship, the Swordfish caught up to the Jackdaw in no time. The moment their ships were aligned, Brook slowed down and moved at the Jackdaw’s speed. He did this knowing that the enemies will focus their fire on the Swordfish if Brook overtook the Jackdaw.

There was a 200-meter gap between the Jackdaw and the Swordfish. Being this close to each other, they could quickly help the other if necessary. At the same time, they hadn’t gotten too close to the point where they would lose their agility as well.

The Spanish convoy finally saw their enemies. Immediately, they slowed down and maneuvered their ship so that their side cannons pointed at the enemies. They were at the ready to get into a battle with Zhang Heng and Brook.

On the other side of things, Billy and Anne were standing on the deck, having their eyes fixed on their prey. They couldn’t help but feel a little worried. The intel that Black Prince Sam acquired earlier was extremely accurate. However, as opposed to what he heard, things were different when he saw the vessel with his own eyes. This was Zhang Heng’s second encounter with such a massive ship, its size only slightly smaller in comparison with the pride of the Royal Navy and the king of the Caribbean Sea, the Scarborough.

Originally, the Jackdaw was a corvette. When put beside an ordinary merchant ship, the Jackdaw was large enough to terrify most of them. However, when compared to the Spanish treasure ship, the Jackdaw appeared to be on the losing side.

“Are we going to fight this monster later?” asked a newly recruited cannoneer.

“We are not going to fight them. All we need to do is to draw their attention. We’ll need to lure them to the back of Parrot Island. Once they get there, the other four pirate ships will fire at them simultaneously,” explained Dufresne.

Unfortunately, the explanation did little to calm the nerves of all the pirates on board. After looking at the tremendous number of cannons on the Spanish ship, they began second-guessing their own



capabilities. Thankfully, they were calmer in a situation like this when compared to the older pirates that participated in taking down the Scarborough. Fifteen minutes later, the Jackdaw had officially entered the shooting range of their enemies. Surprisingly, they weren't greeted by the enemy's cannons.

Zhang Heng and Billy had a bad feeling, anxious that things might not go according to plan. This could only mean one thing. This wasn't going to be an easy enemy. Usually, amateurs would attack the moment their enemies entered their range of fire, believing that they would be able to drop in a couple of rounds before their enemies got close. Sadly, they didn't consider the fact that the cannons would overheat from the continuous shooting. Once the cannons overheated, the crew would have to cool them down before they could use it again. This meant they would become sitting ducks.

During the initial rounds of shooting, it was usually tough to accurately land cannonballs on the enemies. Even if they did somehow manage to land a couple of lucky shots, the damage to their ship would be minimal. Truly experienced commanders would wait for the enemies to enter their effecting shooting range before firing their cannons at them. In other words, there was a greater chance of inflicting serious damage if they fired all their cannons on a target close enough.

"Are we going forward?" asked Billy.

Every step that the Jackdaw took would only increase their risk of being annihilated. A calculated approach was essential in this situation.

"Not yet. They can't damage us effectively with this distance. At the same time, it's going to be hard for us to create problems for them as well. Once they fire their cannons at us, it would be impossible for us to get close to them again. Now that they are allowing us to get closer to them, we should do that."

Brook shared the same thoughts with Zhang Heng and hence, didn't slow his vessel down. Seeing two pirate ships charging at them, the three Spanish boats still refused to fire their cannons. However, once the two pirate vessels were close enough to the point where the Spanish sailors could be seen with the naked eye, Zhang Heng and Brook quickly turned their ships in different directions and, at the same time, ordered their pirates to prepare for battle.

The commanders of the three Spanish ships were taken by surprise, frustrated by the fact that the two pirate ships did not get closer to them. Though both parties hadn't fired at each other yet, a competition of strategies had now commenced. The Spanish commander controlled his urge to fire at them, hoping to trick the two pirate ships into coming closer. His plan would be successful if they were just a hundred yards closer. The commander was also confident that he would be able to sink the Jackdaw and Swordfish with three consecutive attacks.

However, Zhang Heng and Brook sensed that something wasn't right. Hence, they instantly stopped their ships at a critical moment, causing the Spanish commander to miss the perfect window of attack. Seeing that the two pirate ships were in the process of turning to different directions again, he was done with playing games and ordered his sailors to fire at them.

"Fire all cannons!"

At the command, the three Spanish ships fired everything they had at the same time. The boom it produced was so deafening, it was as if thunder had struck that very spot. Some pirates were so terrified that they lost their balance and fell onto the deck.

“Incoming!!! Everyone! Brace yourselves!” shouted Zhang Heng.

The moment he gave the order, flying cannonballs rained down on them. At least a quarter landed on the Jackdaw and the Swordfish. Even without firing a test round to gauge the accuracy of their shots, they still managed to inflict considerable damage. This proved that the cannoneers on the Spanish ships were exceptionally skillful.

As compared to the sailors on Scarborough, the sailors on the three Spanish ships were more a lot more experienced. At least seven or eight cannonballs landed on the Jackdaw’s deck. It was not a pretty scene to behold, as the unlucky pirate acting as the helmsman had a piece of wood penetrating his neck and killing him instantly. Without the helmsman, the Jackdaw began free sailing and was now headed toward the Spanish ships. Luckily, Zhang Heng was right beside the dead helmsman. He quickly pushed the body away and attempted to turn the ship around.

The second round of attacks came right after the first ended. This time, the Jackdaw was hit by even more cannonballs. Not only was their deck severely damaged, but their hull began to suffer as well from the continuous onslaught. Immediately, the carpenters jumped into action, fixing the damage as fast and as best as they could. Zhang Heng swept the dust off himself, breathed a sigh, and continued to maneuver the ship. At the same time, he turned around to check the condition of the deck.

It appeared that the firepower of the Spanish vessels wasn’t as powerful as Zhang Heng thought it would be. The scary thing about them, however, was their pinpoint accuracy. If this went on, he might have to consider expediting their retreat. When the third round of attacks commenced, only a few cannonballs landed on the Jackdaw. This wasn’t the result that Billy and the rest of the pirates expected. Their accuracy couldn’t have dropped so dramatically after witnessing their first two rounds of sharp firing.

Nevertheless, their faces changed when they saw what had become of the Swordfish. The Spaniards were focusing their fire on them. Thanks to Brook’s excellent maneuvering skills, he managed to dodge several attacks. However, flying cannonballs from three ships were one too many to emerge unscathed. Besides, the Swordfish had been modified for optimum speed, significantly sacrificing their defensive abilities. When the third round of attack was over, two of their masts had fallen, and their bow was severely damaged.

## **Chapter 209: Paralysis**

The last volley of attacks severely damaged the Swordfish. However, it gave the Jackdaw an opportunity to change directions. This avoided the Swordfish from being attacked continuously.

The cannon’s shutters on one side of the Jackdaw were ajar. With their gunners in position, and upon Zhang Heng’s orders, they finally began returning fire.

After two successful looting trips, the Jackdaw shot to fame in Nassau after killing Wilton’s two hundred men in one night—an opportune moment for their recruitment drive.

If Zhang Heng wanted to, he could have quickly recruited two hundred men, the entire ship’s complement, in half a day. However, that wouldn’t have been too sensible a move. With each addition, the share of the loot that each person would receive would decrease. As opposed to the merits of the quantity he could amass, Zhang Heng cared more about the quality of the sailors they recruited.

For that reason, each time they returned to the island, the Jackdaw's recruitment threshold would be significantly higher than the last. The standard of the ship's gunners was now completely different from those of the first voyage. On top of that, the Jackdaw was one battleship with outstanding firepower. The moment they began firing, it instantly caught the attention of the three Spanish ships.

However, at this time, the Spanish fleet commander was still focused on the Swordfish. The latter's hull now wrecked, and it seemed like the fabulous time to sink them with one blow. It would be a real pity if the Spaniards chose to give up right now and let the Swordfish get away. Not only would that mean changing targets, but it also meant having to realign the sights of the heavy cannons.

Realizing the consequences of the aforementioned actions, all three Spanish vessels ignored the Jackdaw and concentrated their firepower on the Swordfish instead.

Upon realizing the enemy's tactical maneuvering, Brook decided to abandon the original plan. Although the Swordfish had its sideboard facing the Spanish treasure ship, she didn't fire but instead did a left full rudder, preparing to escape!

The Swordfish was severely battered during the attack, and the damage to its hull caused it to lose some mobility. Fortunately, their main mast was still intact, and Brook's well-timed reactions were enough for the Swordfish to complete the U-turn successfully. This allowed them to retreat before the next round of firing could begin.

Brook's excellent seamanship was on full display. The three Spanish vessels launched another two cannonball volleys, and despite their damage, the Swordfish dodged most of the shells effortlessly. Not to be outdone, the Spanish commander was just as quick to react! Realizing that his opponent was a crafty one, the Spanish quickly changed tactics and fired on them with all their cannons, all at the same time!

This time, even Brook's superior rudder skills were useless, as the Swordfish's stern was hit four times! Even then, the Swordfish stayed afloat. Instead, at the cost of the enemy, they were able to put a good distance between them and the three Spanish ships.

On the other side, the Jackdaw's attacks were growing fiercer. Zhang Heng had chosen to target a frigate. This time, he did not hold back. After being fired at for such a long time, the Jackdaw's gunners had enough. Fueled by anger, the gunners got into the action with a fury the moment they received their orders.

The main gunner took aim, then lit the fuse! As the cannonballs launched in a staggered staccato of blasts, the assistant gunners packed gunpowder into the barrel with rapid clockwork accuracy. In seconds, cannon smoke fogged the surface of the sea with a cloud of thick smog.

After two rounds of intense bombardment, the frigate's deck was a mess. Her hull, after being hit by gargantuan 24-pound shells, was perforated with large, gaping holes. Fortunately for them, they were all above the waterline. For now, they were not in danger of sinking, at least not yet.

However, the frigate wasn't holding up any longer, as the captain had already started sending desperate signals for help to the commander of their mothership.

The Spanish commander looked at the swaying Swordfish in the distance with a bitter look in his eyes. That ship was at the very end of her tether. Two more volleys and she would be done for. After that, they could go on and attack the other pirate ship, thus completely wiping out this gang of wicked robbers, once and for all.

There was nothing wrong with the plan itself, except that the Spanish commander did not expect the Jackdaw to be so potent. If this went on, and even if he exterminated the two pirate ships, it might just cost him an entire frigate, a price he wasn't willing to pay. In frustration, he signaled to the other two in his fleet, instructing them to switch targets. He would have them give up on the Swordfish and take it all out on the Jackdaw instead.

Despite everything, Zhang Heng's objective had been achieved, and he was already turning around to leave the battlefield. Then, out of the blue, at the very last minute, he decided to change direction abruptly. Now, they weren't heading to Parrot Island as initially planned!

"Captain?" asked a very puzzled Billy.

"Our opponent's commander is no slouch. We only have two ships, and yet, we had the nerve to attack them. If we head for Parrot Island, wouldn't he grow suspicious?"

"But what if they all decide to come after us?"

"The probability of that happening is minuscule. The Swordfish is practically in a critical condition, and with two of her masts gone, she's now very slow. If you were to be them, which ship would you choose to go after?"

As if confirmation of Zhang Heng's conjecture, all three Spanish ships gave up chasing the Jackdaw and turned around to pursue Swordfish again.

The Spanish commander, looking down with indignant disgruntlement. He had been in charge of this route for ten years, and through that period, never once had pirates dared provoke them. If he'd allow those infernal pirates to get away without paying a hefty price, it would be too good to be true for them.

The Swordfish was once the fastest three-masted vessel in all of the oceans. However, at the current state of her hull, she was half as fast as what she used to be. Moreover, they were still some distance away from Parrot Island. In the past, such a small distance would not have bothered Brook, but right now, every minute felt like an hour.

Seeing how close the three Spanish ships had come, and having no way getting rid of them, Brook's forehead broke out with streams of cold sweat. All too soon, the bow of a Spanish frigate was almost touching the stern of the crippled Swordfish! But then, the Jackdaw, well on her way to the other side, turned around again! With their chief gunner manning the ship's main cannon, they began harassing the warship dead ahead of the Swordfish, giving Brook and his battered ship a much-needed chance for a breather.

Brook had his men tried desperately to lighten their ailing boat, throwing away every heavy object they did not need. The weight-loss exercise helped it inch faster by half a knot. Nonetheless, it was this half a knot that saved the Swordfish in this pivotal moment.

The Spanish commander became inconsolably outraged by his opponent's constant outmaneuvering. Zhang Heng's earlier escape in the other direction had debilitated him. In the past, whenever he encountered islands or terrain that hindered his field of vision, he would instinctively be on high alert. Right now, though, he was overcome by a crazed urge. Seeing that he was so very close to sinking the Swordfish, he had lost all means to think clearly.

## **Chapter 210: The Decisive Battle and Finale**

Parrot Island stretched long and narrow across the ocean. North of the isles sat a natural U-shaped gulf. A broad ridge ran through it, tall enough to conceal what lay beyond, which was why Black Prince Sam and the others chose this place as the ambush site.

The Swordfish desperately tried to flee, having the three Spanish hot on her tail. No one noticed that the Jackdaw was gradually slowing down and keeping a distance from the three Spanish boats.

The Swordfish was in terrible shape, and water poured into the flooding ship through every gaping hole of the battered and tattered hull. There was no longer any point for the carpenters to fix anything now. Everything that could be thrown overboard had been gotten rid of. Not even the food and water was spared.

Brook couldn't care less about any of that, though, so long they could get out of this predicament alive. In any case, they could always get those things from other pirate ships.

The Spanish commander knew that the Swordfish was at an impasse and that they shouldn't be giving up the chase right now. So, when the experienced commander saw the Swordfish disappear behind the ridge, warning horns started blaring in his head. But there wasn't the time to think it over.

It was all too late, though. When the three Spanish ships came around the ridge, they came face to face with the four other pirate ships, armed to the teeth and ready for battle!

The second the target emerged, the cannons on all four pirate ships blew up to life! Sam went above and beyond, making all the necessary preparations. He had borrowed 25 twelve-pound guns and set them up on the shoreline for this exact moment.

The three Spanish ships were caught off-guard by this sudden attack, not expecting to be ambushed at such a close range. As they were so fixated on chasing the Swordfish, they paid no attention to keeping their own distance. Now, they were too close to each other to turn around.

As luck would have it, one of the frigates' luck was so bad, a shell came out of nowhere and hit its gunpowder storage!

The probability of something like that happening was very low, perhaps not even once in a hundred battles. When it did happen, however, the event would result in the complete annihilation of the ship. The violent explosion ruptured the keel of the frigate. The sailors closest to it were killed on the spot, while the rest were thrown into the water.

The Jackdaw had turned up from behind and joined the battle!

With all the pirate ships together and with assistance from the on-shore artillery, they fired their cannons with no mercy. Except for the severely damaged Swordfish, which was forced to throw all of its ammunition overboard, they instantly got the upper hand.

The tables turned, and of a sudden, things were going downhill for the remaining two Spanish ships.

When the Spanish commander arrived, he was still unaware that they had fallen into a trap. Either way, it was too late for them. They were at a disadvantage when it came to firepower, and the treasure ship wouldn't be able to outrun all the pirate ships.

So, the Spanish commander gave up trying to make a run for it and issued an order to the remaining two ships to turn around retaliate.

Even though they were enemies, Zhang Heng could not help but laud his opponent's courage. The position the Spaniards were in left them at a disadvantage. Choosing to face the battle basically meant that they had given up any hope of survival.

On the deck, Sam frowned at the sight. He had revealed the strength of his firepower, hoping to intimidate their opponent into thinking that there was no way they could win and that they would be forced to surrender anyhow. Right now, however, it looked like the Spaniards were not planning on doing that.

"These barmy, dogged Spaniards," the black helmsman muttered. He was standing on the deck without a shirt. A row of human teeth was fastened to a string around his neck, and he had a hideous mask on his face. This persona was his favorite incarnation when fighting in a battle.

This was especially true during one-on-one battles. The cannibal costume was so intimidating that more than once, the enemy would simply concede without putting up a fight. The truth was, the blood on the mask was, in fact, the sap of a particular fruit, and the human teeth had been purchased from a dentist on the island.

"If this battle continues, we'll have more casualties than them," said the helmsman.

"Take down the remaining frigate to give them a warning," said Sam. He had come for the precious cargo of the treasure ship, not to witness a massacre. Under such circumstances, however, it appeared he had no other choice.

Hence, five minutes later, the last remaining frigate sank, leaving only the Spanish treasure ship. On the pirates' side, one severely wrecked vessel also decided to withdraw.

The battle was getting fiery. One Spanish treasure ship was battling four other ships clearly put it at a disadvantage, but its thick, solid hull was able to endure one blow after weathering another. Though the Spanish ship might have taken a beating, the Spaniards simply refused to give in. In the meantime, Sam sent out a group of men, attempting to board the Spanish ship. But halfway to their destination, a shell sank one of the tiny landing crafts.

As the other boats were drawing near to the ship, the Spanish musketeers shot at them from behind the portholes, killing more than a dozen pirates. When those who survived finally made it to the hull, they were chased back into the water by the stubbornly unyielding Spaniards.

Owing to that, the pirates decided to resort to tougher measures. Due to their concerns about the cargo in the hold, they focused their attacks on the deck, hoping to destroy the enemy's masts and rudder. However, the Spanish didn't seem to mind that. Amid their rising number of casualties, their resolve only grew stronger. The remaining sailors gave up on saving the first deck, retreating down to the second deck to continue the fight.

Having no other options, Sam ordered for a full-on attack on the Spanish treasure ship.

Under the savage and unmerciful bombardment of four pirate ships, the Spanish treasure ship was soon riddled with holes. Yet again, their crew had no plans to surrender. The carpenters gave up trying to patch the holes, allowing the raging waters of the sea to gush into the cabins.

The cannons on the Spanish vessel were still thundering even until the very last of her breath. Sam thought about getting another group to board the ship again, but he knew that none of the boats were able to approach the target. In the end, the pirates could only watch as the Spanish treasure ship sank slowly to the bottom of the ocean.

When the battle was over, Zhang Heng received a notification that he had earned 20 game points.

After that, he docked the Jackdaw by the bay and brought his men to Parrot Island. Down by the beach, he looked for Sam, who was bandaging his arm.

Sam called out, "I received information about the cargo from some Spaniards that were thrown overboard by the blasts. It appears that there are 5,000 pounds of gold on the ship! Thank goodness they sank here, right in front of the gulf. I've already sent some men ahead to search for it."