

Northwest 19

Chapter 19

Cesar handed her the magnifying glass. Lil took another look at the map.

You see the vicinity below the Gulf of Gardel. Theres a mark.

Lil groaned and tried to figure out what was written. Strangely, despite her experience from Lebrun and having served in the navy, she was unfamiliar with naval codes.

Uh, I dont know.

There is no such terrain as whats depicted on this map.

Well? Uh, no?

You can see the text in detail.

She still snorted at the map.

No, I dont see it at all.

Its a code used by officers for their intended recipients.

Here? What is it? Whats written?

Cesar cast a silent glance down at her hair. When she tilted her head, as if she was pondering it over. He spoke quietly.

Visha.

Lils entire body seemed to come to a halt, then her upper body bounced up. Her gaze was immediately drawn to him.

What? Did you say Visha? Did I hear you right?

Yes.

She recalled their strategy.

What, two weeks?

She wont be able to sleep comfortably for a while, as they had to prepare for their departure.

Lil fixed her gaze on the cryptic mark that denoted Visha. Naturally, a name came to mind. Visha and that name were inextricably linked.

Admiral Retiro. The Empire only has two Admirals. One is the Admiral of the South, a prominent veteran whose promotion was gradual. The second one is the Admiral of the Peninsula, also known as the protector of the West. A young genius who climbed the ranks in record time. Although he was uninterested in the position of admiral, the leaders of Sesbron begged him to take it due to his abilities.

I know there is a big difference between hearing some rumours and encountering the man in person. However, seeing that the Admirals fleet is already so close, it might not only be a possibility but a certainty.

Lil swallowed dry saliva.

We will not engage in a battle against the Imperial Navy. The Bell Rock will surrender as soon as we come into contact. But there is no guarantee we will make it.

The prospect of seeing the navy's sails through her telescope terrified Lil.

Because of the shallow waters in the South, small boats were advantageous. The Bell Rock was built to travel to and from the southern parts, but if it was bombarded by the Mondovi fleet, it would sink without a trace. There is no one on our ship who can control the yellow-billed white-tailed birds, nor was there anyone who can call on the dolphins by making unusually high-pitched sounds. So, the Bell Rock has to face battle purely with the operation of the ship and crew. We're fortunate that we haven't encountered the Admirals' flag yet but once we do, the odds aren't in our favour.

The emperor granted permission for the Southern League of Pirates to operate in the past, but now that he dispatched an army. The unwritten approval has been revoked. It's naive to believe that the Navy will hesitate to launch a pre-emptive strike.

If even Amiaeng ends up in the hands of the Navy, where can I go?

Lil clenched her fists.

Ed sat down with a scowl on his face.

It's been five days since I secretly met with Cesar, but I still haven't gotten any more information.

He stared at his empty hand, completely clueless.

Amiaeng really deserves to be named the stronghold of the Southern League of Pirates. I initially thought that the rumours about their loyalty were exaggerated, but that was really a lack of judgement on my part.

I had sent a message to Cesar, and even though it was delivered in secret, without the sender revealing that it was from the Count's house, there was still no news. The locals know how to keep each other hidden. It's not like I'm after the pirates; I'm only looking for two people.

Oh, I'm going crazy.

His days were as productive as a windless sea. It was a disaster.

Ed stared blankly at the desk in front of him. The Count of Amiaeng sat beside him, eagerly signing the reports in his place. Ed's glum expression moved along his legs on top of the desk and ended on the documents protruding beneath them.

[The total amount of damage caused by Lil Schweiz to the Garni ships]

Damn it, I don't have time for a Lil who does this too!

Ed irritably shifted his gaze away from the reports beneath his calf. The Count dared to cast a sharp look at him. Infuriating Ed even more.

What?!

The Count quickly turned his head, pretending to wipe his sweaty forehead with a handkerchief.

Damn it. The problem is I moved in secret and not with the Visha. If it weren't for that, I wouldn't have been so tied up like this. I could've been bombarding or threatening pirate ships by now.

Ed sighed, it felt like the ground had given way. He was stuck in a situation he couldn't get out of.

Word got out that I'm in the Navy, so people on the street started looking differently at me. I even got involved in one or two fights recently, how tiresome.

If I could just meet Liloa once more, I'd be able to tell her everything. I am looking forward to see her reaction. From the beginning, I knew I was going to screw the Duke over, but now I'm thinking about involving Liloa as well. Cesar is by her side, so there's no reason for Liloa to return home.

Ed was determined to eventually let go of Liloa. Of course, after she heard him out.

Should I try my luck with the pirates?

He needed to try something new. The southern pirates were virtually untouchable, but he was determined to calm down his temper by investigating the situation in the South.

Ed reached for the report he had seen a moment ago.

[The total amount of damage caused by Lil Schweiz to the Garni ships]

He turned the first page, his eyes moving up and down. The chapter that followed was only a dense analysis. Ed, taken aback, peered at the astonishing thin paper. Half of its content didn't appear to be comprehensible. He humbly admitted his lack of knowledge of the southern pirates.

Count

What? What?

Who is Lil Schweiz exactly?

The count's expression showed that he was excited that the admiral had spoken to him.

Oh, here in the South, there's a famous pirate called the Black Whale, known primarily for his attacks on Garni merchant ships and his invention of the looting certificate.

Looting certificate? That's something I've never heard of, sounds like a bunch of nonsense.

Well, it's actually quite useful in proving the crew's innocence. When cargo on a merchant ship goes missing, the shipowner usually suspects the crew of stealing it. The crew can point towards the pirates, but owners can still be suspicious and judge the situation against them. As a result, stolen cargo will be treated as debt the crew has to the shipowner, so they have to pay it back by working on a boat their entire lives.

Oh yeah?

Yes, but since the southern pirates officially began issuing the certificates, such unfair cases don't occur anymore. Lil Schweiz is a rather polite looter

Ed frowned.

Why do you speak so highly of him? Did you get attached while eating together?

What?

Everyone knows you share meals with the pirates.

What?

How much did you get from the Black Whale? Geez just shut up.

You become too noisy.

Oh, but I didnt say anything

Get out.

Edgar didnt take his gaze away from the report. The count struggled to get himself out from between the chair and the desk. Before leaving, he took one last look at the admirals face. Meanwhile, Ed retrieved another document from the cluttered desk.

[Black Whale, Lil Schweiz Philip April 11th, year 26th]

It was the report brought by the count a few days ago.

[The damaged ship is a medium-sized merchant ship belonging to the Garni merchant association. The shipowner is Duke Ren Mireille. Felini August was hired by the Duke as Captain]

Ed sank back in his chair like a bored child.

[receiving the special order from His Majesty. To the Admiral of the Peninsula, an original copy of the looting certificate]

Ed shifted his gaze to the certificate. The paper was decorated with roses, the symbol of the duke.

Seeing the way its painted, its clearly meant as mockery.

[I, the Black Whale, Lil Schweiz, have pillaged Sir Augusts ship with grace and respect in accordance with Sesbron custom. Word of advice, next time we cross paths, please refrain from making a big fuss like you did today]

The horrible handwriting looked like it was written with feet. But Ed could admire the writing style.

Im liking this guy.

It was only then that he was willing to look at the most basic reports. He swept away the documents piled up like a mountain on the left and took out a bunch of papers from the bottom.

[Southern League of Pirates Black Whale, Lil Schweiz]

Ed snorted when he saw Southern League of Pirates written in the report to the admiral.

The League is a term that pirates used to describe themselves. This is because the purpose of the current generation of pirates is to fight against the empire and unite the islands of the South again, which had fallen apart after the expansion over sea began. Also, the Southern League of Pirates insists that the true pirate is the empire, so its very rare for this term to appear in official documents.

Its said that the Southern Navy has little interest in the pirates, it seems to be true.

He cocked his chin and quickly read the next line.

He is called the Black Whale because he swallows everything he comes across Ah, he has black hair with an uncharacteristically soft appearance presumably mixed blood.

He flipped to the next page.

He follows Sesbron customsWhat kind of bullshit is this, what do Sesbrons customs have to do with anything?

Ed glanced back at the original looting certificate he had placed next to him.

In accordance with the Sesbron custom, very polite and noble I dont understand why he keeps bringing up the Sesbron customs.

Ed laughed openly at the looting certificate because he wasnt fond of Sesbron himself. As he muttered a few more sentences, unknowingly, his boredom began to fade away.

I came all the way to Amiaeng yet I still keep hearing about Sesbron. Even Liloa mentioned Sesbron in her letter

Something that had hit like a light beam quickly faded away, leaving him with a sensation of deja vu.

Wait. What?