

Northwest 29

Chapter 29

Lil took a deep breath and looked up at the sky.

Sunlight. Small clouds. Waves of fluttering sails.

Her eyes, nose, and ears, all her senses were being used. The sound of the waves, the smell of the sea, and the feeling of the salty air on her skin. When she felt the vast nature, all her anguish became insignificant.

She took another deep breath.

Sticky sweat, the hot wind and frivolous conversation.

Lil breathed in again and looked at the man approaching her.

Cesar.

A straight posture that did not tilt ones head even to the brutal sunlight.

I cant handle the southern sun the way he does.

But today, that wasnt the only thing she noticed about him, the sloppy fastening of his buttons made her laugh. For some reason, she kind of liked it when he was so disorganised. Seeing this, Cesar also put a smile on his face.

You should go on deck and have the men lower the topsail of the mainmast.

Okay.

Ill go with you.

Oh? Theres no need for you to follow me. You can just go and do your work.

Thats okay.

Its headwind, youre probably extremely busy.

When Cesar didnt answer, Lil walked past him and patted his shoulder. Cesar was one of the busiest men on this voyage, he steered the ship himself. Most of the time he has even more work to do than the captain. Mainly because the captain was responsible for making important decisions and being in charge of administration, rather than giving detailed instructions on deck.

While walking up the stairs, Lil shouted some orders.

Lower the mainmasts topsail! You, the hooded guy struggling over there! You need to pull the other line!

Sailors who recognised Lils voice looked up.

The Captain is here!

Hello, Captain!

This was her first appearance on deck today as she didnt come out in the morning. Even the new sailors were disciplined and polite, always greeting her when she walks by.

Lil returned the greeting and made her way over the deck.

The wind is an oblique headwind.

She chased the direction of the wind towards the bow of the ship. From all angles crew members greeted her. As always, she reacted with a simple hand gesture. She rarely smiled.

Lil rested her arms on the railing of the foredeck, enjoying the wind.

Suddenly, a sad guitar sound was heard.

She turned her head left and right in search of the source and found Ed leaning against the mast. He was sitting leisurely with a strange instrument on his lap. His hand movements were quite lazy making it unclear if he was seriously playing or not. The green eyes focusing on the guitar seemed to have sensed her gaze and slowly looked up.

Good afternoon, Captain.

Lil observed his face. Even though it was messy due to the wind, it was strangely neat. His closed eyes amplified his sculpture-like appearance, which was appearing and disappearing between his fluttering hair and the collar of his shirt.

With a neutral gaze, she concluded.

No matter how I look at him, hes too noticeable to be a spy. Hes of no help or the navy is trying to dig up information by using his good looks. In addition, it sounds ludicrous to send a doctor, who had received formal education of course, it could be a lie as a spy. So maybe he isnt a spy, but as he said, a deserter. If thats the case, then all we have left to do is keep those trackers in mind.

You hit me so hard, I cant play the strings properly.

She stared at his right hand, which seemed fine.

You must be joking. That wasnt hard at all.

It was enough for the Captain to smile.

What are you even doing here, I told you to sign the contract. No, rather than that, I need you to go downstairs and get Alain some

Its all done, Captain.

Ed got up from his seat, dusted off his clothes and adjusted his hat. Lil was about to order him to go to the lower deck immediately, but she was speechless when she saw a hat folded on one side with a stylish curve. The wide leather brim, which the craftsman had folded very delicately, was just her taste.

It looks better than my feather hat. You dare to wear a hat much more colourful than the Captains?

After approaching her, he handed her the contract. Lil, still occupied with his hat, suddenly grabbed the piece of paper.

Now, I cant be hit, right?

Yeah.

Oh, I didnt see a penalty clause

Theres no need for corporal punishment and torture in a civilized society.

Thats an interesting thought.

What? Oh, well fine. Lil almost tried to refute more, but instead waved her hand, thinking the story would be too long.

Anyway, instead of sitting here, go down to the cabin deck and take a look at the old man.

It didnt seem like a serious injury. I can go and check it later.

How do you know that?

I heard the commotion. But I have a question. Whats this? 10 silts for an eye, 5 silts for an arm, 15 silts for a leg

Thats the compensation for injuries.

Are you serious?

Yeah, let me explain some things to you. Unlike the pirates of the West, the Southern League of Pirates gives better wages and has more reasonable rules than the Empires Navy. We take care of our men too, from the moment they set foot on our ship till they retire. The Empire just calls us pirates because we target their merchant ships. I thought you knew this already, seeing as you deserted the Navy.

I didnt know there was such an organised system.

Lil was visibly a little proud at the sound of the compliment. Ed put his instrument on the railing and leisurely caressed some strings on it.

The wind is nice.

Whats so nice about headwind? Cant you see the navigator struggling?

I did. Ive never seen a sailor whos better at tackling¹¹. His technique is very impressive.

Lil just shrugged her shoulders.

As a navigator with a superior manoeuvring ability, Cesar was treated second only to the Captain on the Bell Rock. Sailors have long recognized his skilful craftsmanship.

Now go and look after the boatswain. Or are you going to slack off on your first day?

Is it necessary to call the doctor after exchanging some friendly blows?

Alain is old.

Hes in his 50s. Thats hardly old.

Ed had a talent for enjoying his opponent with just a few words. Lil tried to stay calm, imagining that she never talked to him in the first place.

Thats it. Im not talking to you anymore, just leave.

Why am I the one to leave?

Cant you see what Im about to do? Get out of the way. If you are going to slack off, do it on the other side of the ship.

I cant see it. What are you going to do?

Instead of answering, Lil pulled out her telescope.

You were preparing to look at the coast.

Yeah, I mean, in a bit

But you cant see Marchand from here, can you? The Captain is the one who needs to go to the other side.

Ha

Actually, you dont care about the coast, do you? If you wanted to see Marchand, youd have gone to the other side of the ship.

Lil seriously thought about tearing up the contract right then and there.

I dont want to talk, but he keeps talking. It makes me want to hit him, but I cant hit him. As a Captain I need to give the right example to the crew. How frustrating.

There was no way out.

I know what the Captain enjoys. I mean, I know why he came to the port, where he cant see Marchand.

At that moment, her hair fluttered by a gust of wind. Ed looked down at the black locks that slapped her on the shoulder. Eventually, Lil tugged her hair behind her ear.

The wind.

Its because you enjoy the wind. Whether its morning or night, you always seem to stand where the wind is blowing. I knew if I waited long enough, youd make your way here.

Lil lowered the telescope.

What?

She wanted to ask, but Ed was already playing the strings like a smiling child. Music started to come out. Lil frowned in astonishment, the calm and soft rhythm didnt match his strange behaviour from only moments ago.

Why are you so interested in me?

Cant I?

Are you really into men?

No.

Still, Lil did not release her gaze full of suspicion. Ed responded with an expression showing something between embarrassment and injustice.

Sadly, the Captain I swore to serve is avoiding me. Im saying this to clear up any confusion between us and gain your favour.

What? Are you a teenager in desperate need of approval? It makes no difference what I think of you and how are you even going to achieve that?

Well, to start off, I know a story that the Captain would probably enjoy.

Lil kept quiet and merely scanned the horizon.

I noticed you like the wind, so I prepared a story about it.

Oh! Apologies, its more of a breeze right now.

Ed acted cheerful, despite his opponents obvious disregard for him. With both arms leaning on the railing, he turned his upper body to Lil.

You know the 12 forces of wind, right? The wind is so diverse, because it was a bit of a rascal.

It might be a silly thing to admit, but Lil liked the wind. So, without realising it, she paid attention to his story.

Now that I take a better look at it, I can see white foam. Just like Ed said, its indeed a breeze. But wind is just wind, how can it be a rascal?

Once upon a time, there was a being known as the wind. He is frequently referred to as a god and his name was Bock. In the shape of the wind, he was able to freely blow around the world. During his travels, he carried around female humans of exceptional beauty. As a result, many winds were born from his relationship with those women. Although the winds father was the same, their mothers were different, as were their hometowns and birth dates. Even though they were all brothers, their quite distinctive personalities kept them from getting along. For example, there was a nasty wind that became violent and ripped entire mountains. One that belongs to the windless class, a wind so lazy, that he rather stayed motionless. One that loved flowers and made it his long life duty to carry around their pollen. And of course, as most children looked after their parents, there was also a wind resembling his father, desperate to lift a womans skirt. Winds were incredibly powerful beings, however, they were unable to escape the ending of the world, as they were connected to the human race. Thats why, to this day, they roam the world in various forms.

Lil lied.

How boring.

It appears that the Captain enjoys the one that slaps his cheek. The kind of wind that blows through your hair when you ride a horse.

It is known that the wind is drawn to fast-moving beings like itself. So, when we ride horses or run fast, the wind clings to our bodies and tickles us. The Captain appears to be the type of person that the wind adores.

Its good to see that its not an unrequited love, as the Captain is always looking for the wind.

Ed laughed. He struck the strings of his guitar all at once as if to resume playing. Only it didnt really feel like a performance.

Lil was about to complain, as she had no interest in listening to the same sad song again. She stopped herself when a different melody was heard. It wasnt a depressing sound like before, but rather a light rhythm fluttering in the breeze.

They say when the wind falls in love with a beautiful song, it steals it and blows it far away.

I doubt any wind would want to steal anything youre playing.

After the sarcastic sneer, she walked a little further towards the railing. She leaned her elbows on the edge and rested her chin on her folded hands. With closed eyes, she concentrated on the soft breeze, similar to the one that tickles her cheek when she rides a horse. Absent-mindedly, she rubbed her cheek with her thumb, mimicking the sensation. Then she rotated her hand, letting the wind hit her palm. Trying to grip the wind, she curled her fingers, but it escaped before she could clench it in her fist.

She busted into a low chuckle, seeing her empty hand.
