

NORTH X NORTHWEST

Chapter 3

“Now!”

After drawing their attention by clapping loudly, the crew, excited by the idea of sharing the spoils, became quiet. Lil climbed up the rear deck, which had been tattered by the battle a few days ago, and gave the instructions she'd prepared in advance.

“Is everything clear? Courant will bring the doctor immediately! Uhm, who's the doctor here again?”

Cesar, holding the wheel, answered.

“Doctor Pons, on Varese Street.”

Lil hit her forehead with the palm of her hand.

“Oh, yeah, it was Pons. Find Doctor Pons on Varese Street. If the old man refuses to come, tell him that I'll personally kick his ass. Hurry up!”

“Aye, Captain!”

“Also, some guys need to carry the supplies and loot. Jericho, you'll be responsible for assigning them.”

After giving a few more instructions, Lil smiled brightly as she looked down from the upper deck.

“Got it?”

“Aye!”

“We plan to stay for a month, so enjoy yourself!”

“Lil Schweiz! Lil Schweiz! Lil Schweiz!”

As a great captain, she waved her hands in reply to the loud chants.

Lil cleared out her ears with her finger, digging up some earwax and shooting it away, all the while listening to the chaotic start of a song about a black whale swallowing a boat. The sailors sang and danced excitedly as if they were at a festival.

Satisfied, Lil looked down at the innocent sight. After a while, she turned around and entered the captain’s room.

Cesar followed her into the room and stood behind her.

“Hmm...”

Lil let out a moan and tilted her head to give the exploring lips on her neck more room. An exciting feeling spread across her skin. She couldn’t handle the intensifying pleasure and flinched.

“Can I come in?”

“There are some things I need to work on right now... ha.”

Cesar loosened Lil’s shirt, pushed it back, and grabbed the necklace. The dull red light disappeared in his big hands. As he pulled it with some force, the knot came loose. When her shirt fell off, the only thing she was still wearing was a wide tunic.

The kiss was long and deep. Once their tongues got entangled, they devoured each other ravenously. Acting like hungry beasts who finally found prey after a long time, crushing and biting lips. The two were craving for more skin and ripped off each others’ clothes.

Soon a steaming heat filled the cabin.

Cesar undid himself off his shirt and left a trail of wet kisses on the lower abdomen of Lil, lying under him on the bed. Because of the tickling caresses, her faint laughter mixed with her hot breath.

Even though he had a lot more to explore, Cesar decided to cut the foreplay short, thereby keeping Lil's concerns in mind. While sucking on her breast, he grabbed her thighs. Lil lifted her legs and wrapped them around Cesar's waist, pulling him closer. She stroked his face before hugging his head...

– *Bang! Bang!* –

“Captain? Captain!”

“What!”

– *Bang! Bang!* –

Lil shouted reflexively and pushed Cesar away. Half-frightened by her thin voice and half-frightened that someone might have heard the noise coming from inside the cabin. She raised her upper body and whispered to Cesar.

“That's why we need to refrain from doing this in the cabin.”

“Captain! We need Cesar!”

Lil quickly picked up some pieces of clothing from the floor and put on her necklace. When the red jewel touched her skin, her voluptuous bosom disappeared and her voice dropped.

“Hold on, we were just checking the dividend. Give us a minute.”

“Yes, Alain's looking for him urgently!”

“Okay, I'll send him now.”

'Damn it!'

She looked back at Cesar, who was covering his body with his hair all messed up. Annoyance was clearly visible on his normally expressionless face. Lil

pointed at the door with her chin. After Cesar fastened his sleeve buttons, he left the captain's room.

Relieved, Lil let out a sigh.

Whenever Cesar rushes from the cabin, she's always nervous about who could hear or see him, making it impossible for her to really enjoy it.

'No matter how sensitive he claims his hearing is. How sharp can a man immersed in a love affair, be? This time, he didn't even hear anyone at the door. '

"Damn it."

Lil put an arm through the sleeve of her jacket. She was already at a loss about how to elevate Cesar's mood. When she walked back to the meeting table inside the captain's room, troubling thoughts occupied her head.

While making up her mind, the Bell Rock, disguised as a merchant ship, safely anchored off the coast of Amiaeng. Even though the name on the merchant permit shown by Cesar and the name written on the stern were different, they made it in without a problem. Officers coming on board often accepted heavy bribes, making the security and regulations in Amiaeng so poor, that even the pirates felt sorry.

In the past, a governor from the mainland of the empire was sent to try to control it properly. Unfortunately for them, this was the island where pirates unexpectedly united and even risked their lives to defend it. This happened because the coast was easy to access and it was the last stop before crossing over to the mainland or the west part of the continent.

The Amiaeng's pirates, belonging to the Southern league of pirates, issued a safety pass and forced all ships passing through the Amiaeng's coast to purchase it. Ships without a pass were robbed from their watchtower to their anchor, so merchant ships sailing to Amiaeng all had to buy the pass, all the

while crying and eating mustard*. The pirates of Amiaeng made a living with that money.

In other words, it's an independent territory.

The crew watched Lil as she went out on the deck and crossed the boardwalk. She enjoyed the thrill of taking her first steps on vast land without feeling the swaying of the ship. She wiggled her toes and even jumped on her two feet. Her bitter mood from earlier had already disappeared. It has been almost two months.

'Everybody's mood seems to be sky-rocketing. Well, it's understandable, we just finished splitting all the loot we obtained from screwing over the Garni merchants' association.'

Lil excitedly tugged Cesar's arm. He seemed to be the only one that's still annoyed.

"Relax. We have a lot of time tonight, right?"

Lil hated the awkward atmosphere and looked back seductively over her shoulder towards Cesar. Of course, at that moment she completely forgot that her current face is that of a man.

"It's not because of that."

"Then what?"

"The Admiral is coming."

Lil let go of his arm in surprise. Her spine froze despite the hot weather. It's not that she didn't hear it the first time. No, but she wanted to check it again.

"Who?"

Suddenly, Alain intervened between them and shouted.

"The Admiral of the Empire! That madman! Admiral Retiro!"

'No wonder it suddenly feels chilly.'

Lil swept her dried lips as her vision became blurry for a moment. Upon hearing the hideous news, she started sweating.

“Admiral Retiro... In Amiaeng? Why?”

“I don't know, I did hear he's coming down to the South with his fleet.”

“Shit. Who told you?”

“It doesn't matter who, it's already widely spread. We were the only ones who didn't know!”

Alain spat out his words with a flustered face. Lil finally looked around the dock and noticed the strange tensions at Amiaeng's Port. It'd turned into a southern pirates' den where people gathered in different alleys to whisper in secret while glancing at posters.

Lil grumbled with a thin face.

“Why is the Admiral such a big deal? Are you scared?”

“What? Seriously? Don't you know that the Admiral crushed the Anatole pirates from the West?”

“...”

“You didn't know that?”

It was an infamous name that Alain knew well enough without the need of mentioning it.

Edgar Retiro.

Admiral Retiro, marquess of the empire, was said to command the Western Anatole Sea from a naval base in Mondovi Peninsula.

'Rumour has it that the Anatole pirates were skinned alive.'

The atmosphere was ominous. As they left the port and entered the city area, they overheard two men talking while playing chess. Leaning against a nearby wall, they eavesdropped on the conversation.

“...The Admiral of the Empire?..”

“...That’s right, I told you so. You see those nobles from the Capital over there, huh? Haven’t they been asking the Emperor to wipe out the pirates? The Emperor grew tired of their wailing and sent that Admiral here...”

“...Hehe, you have the same temper as his Majesty...”

“You remember my son who’s about to be promoted to a noncommissioned officer? In his recent letter, he wrote that there were one or two more merchant ships robbed off the coast of Amiaeng. That’s why the aristocrats are so angry. Still, the Admiral insisted that he wouldn’t come. After, those high-ranking aristocrats finally gave up on their dignity, got a hold of the Admiral’s trousers, and stretched it out. I don’t know if it was a threat or a consolation, but it worked...”

“...Sheesh. The Admiral seems arrogant...”

“...I heard the rumours, so I know. That temper...”

The man made a hissing sound while moving his thumb along his neck.

“...There was no skin left on the heads of those who played with the protector of the West...”

“...I heard that he has a hobby of skinning people alive and even labelled everything?..”

“...Hey, don’t you understand, it’s so that it doesn’t get mixed up in his collection’s display case, he uses a hot iron rod to put the names on...”

“...Have you heard that he cuts his prisoners’ fingers and toes and gives them to the fish when he’s bored? I heard that he holds piranhas in a large aquarium...”

There was a moment of silence after the terrible topic. The two men looked at each other and laughed, pretending that they weren’t bothered by it.

“...Well, rumours are bound to be exaggerated. Anyway, it would be good for us. If the Admiral comes south, soon enough, all the pirates stationed in Amiaeng will be eradicated and disappear.”

‘Seeing them welcome the Admiral’s arrival to the South, they seemed to be small and ordinary merchants.’

There was nothing more to check, so Lil moved on.

**Footnote:*

crying while eating mustard: Korean proverb: Used when someone is forced to do something they rather not do but pretends to enjoy it, anyway.

Comparable with: Grin and bear it.

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