

Northwest 33

Chapter 33

He stopped in astonishment.

Did I just defend her? No way.

Ed snorted.

I only become emotionally invested when Im dealing with particular artwork. Its almost embarrassing how much Im affected by the image of a single woman, no worse a man, facing the wind.

But Still, I cant help but think about seeing her back and shoulders always standing in the direction of the wind. When she just looks at the sea without saying a word. With the wind messing up her low ponytail tied at the nape of her neck or her shirt a size larger than fitting her physique.

Ed struggled to keep his thoughts in line.

No! There is absolutely nothing impressive about that image. It only came to this because its been a while since I started thinking about her. Its only natural that when youre so immersed in a persons situation, the possibility might arise that you develop empathy for them. Even so, of course, I have to admit, its a very irrational experience.

Ed shook his head quickly.

Apart from leading the Visha or the Grignard, I havent enjoyed much of my time aboard any other ship. Because sailing without a battle is just tedious, the cabins assigned to doctors are too small, the supply of alcohol is limited, its difficult to find a single piece of paper, let alone a book, and crew members stubbornly sticking to me are the most irritating of all. So naturally, during this voyage my attention was drawn to Liloa, she was the one making me board the pirate ship in the first place, even when I clearly knew what kind of annoyances would await me.

This also explains my sympathy for a woman who seeks adventure from the moment she opens her eyes in the morning until she closes them at night. Despite the fact that I still cant figure her out by merely observing her, I find myself staring at her more often. That must be why I cant get that image out of my head.

How shameful.

Ed slapped himself half-heartedly.

However, when I think about it, Ive been fond of Liloa for a long time now. A long time dates all the way back to when she was still a cadet at the Lebrun academy. At that time, she was quite famous due to her attractive appearance, but she piqued my interest for a different reason. Thats why I travelled all the way to Amiaeng, to see if the Liloa from back then was still the same. If it hadnt been for that, I wouldnt have been so excited or followed her with such zeal.

Regarding this, Mireille and Cesar are both mistaken about my motives. That arrogant Duke foolishly thinks Im actually on his side and Cesar is wrong to believe I could harm Liloa without hesitation. I have no desire to hurt her, though I do cause as many misunderstandings as I want, without the intention of correcting them.

After acknowledging that, he felt a little strange.

Its been a while since I let my emotions cloud my judgment.

Ed continued walking with this odd feeling, until a person, strongly resembling the figure on his mind, suddenly appeared.

Hey!

With a blank expression, Ed raised his head.

Huh?

Huh? What Huh? You dare to talk down to me?

Involuntarily, Ed stretched out his hand to confirm the identity of the voices owner. Of course, before he could even touch Lil, his hand met her fist and bounced off.

Youre real

..?

Oh, Im sorry. I was lost in my thoughts.

Where were you coming from?

Ed wondered why Lil was so curious.

Youre on the run from the Navy and yet youre wandering around in public without a care in the world. Do you even know theres a naval outpost nearby?

I was just looking for the postal service and I made a wrong turn. But dont worry, I did think of disguising myself before going out.

You call wearing an eye patch, beard, and hat a disguise?

You yourself are wearing a moustache and a hat. Why are you doing this only to me? Is it because I was in the Navy?

Yeah. Now tell me, if you only had good intentions, why did you give Jericho the slip?

Ah, did the Captain order someone to follow me? So, it was Jericho? I thought I was being followed by someone. Judging from his sloppy way of walking, I actually thought he was a petty thief.

Ed only shrugged his shoulders as Lil mumbled some curses, still looking at him with eyes full of suspicion.

Damn it

I dont know who your acquaintance is, but dont you know that mail of deserters is being tracked?

Dont worry. I know that much. And Im especially careful when Im dealing with the Navy. You keep doubting me Captain, but theres a limit to my patience.

If you cant stand it, why dont you just run away again? However, assuming all of your stories are true, the only way to truly get away is death, isnt it?

Youre aware of what happens to Navy deserters, right? Theyre mostly sent to the western continent. Dont you think being a doctor on a pirate ship is better than being a galley slave in the West?

Ed looked down, seeing Lil snatching an apple from a nearby stand.

I want to ask if she thinks that the Bell Rock is the only pirate ship out there. But the moment I utter those words, I'd be immediately kicked out for sure.

In the end, Ed bowed his head like a gentle sheep.

Be well behaved from now on. Okay?

Yes, Captain.

Alright. And no more coming and going as you please.

Then do I have to be under this kind of surveillance all the time?

Aye.

Why? Because we're in Marchand? Why Marchand? Isn't it the Captain who allowed the Bell Rock to be piloted by some Navy officer from Marchand only a few hours ago?

What are we here for?

Is there any hidden treasure you've been eyeing here?

Nothing for you to know.

It was a voice coming through gritted teeth. Ed instantly realized what it meant.

I understand.

Good.

But, Captain, aren't you feeling a tickling sensation at the back of your head?

As her eyes began to widen, Ed continued.

I think you attracted some thieves.

Huh? Since when?

Ed didn't respond, instead, he snatched a piece of tropical fruit from a passing stand. The owner was busy putting a payment away and didn't notice the two in front of his stall. Ed smiled broadly and looked at Lil to show off his success. But her tense face showed no interest in his little banter. He smirked as he looked down at her knitted brows, but eventually furrowed his own brows when he realized he was smiling at his captain's face.

weren't you the one who attracted their attention? They weren't there until I met with you.

No way.

No, I really wasn't followed. Could they be from the Navy?

Ed shook his head. Lil tensed up, all her senses became on the edge.

Where are they exactly? I should check it out.

You can't do that. They are probably just thieves. Captain, look at the way you're dressed. Don't you think you're practically begging to be robbed?

You would think the security here wouldn't be as lousy as in Amiaeng. Anyway, how can you be so sure they're not with the Navy?

What, where are you slowing down for? And how many people are we talking about?

Well, that is

I can't exactly tell her that I lied about being chased by the Navy. I'll just keep quiet.

Shut up and just follow me. See that third yellow building on the left? We're going into the alley with the laundry hanging over it. And have your sword ready.

Aye, aye.

Now I understand why you're so fearless wandering about. You're the first doctor I've seen who carries a sword.

It's for self-defence.

Huh? Self-defence?

Ed shrugged his shoulders again.

Bullshit, I saw him wielding a sword in the Counts study, his skills are too good to be just for self-defence. Anyhow, I was dressed as a woman back there, so I have to pretend I don't know a thing.

Ed was rolling the fruit that he had snatched in his hand, when he felt her gaze and asked slyly.

Have you ever seen me use a sword?

Of course not.

Then just consider it for self-defence.

Okay?

They entered the alley, turned once more, and hid themselves. The reflection of the group following them was seen through the window of the opposite building.

One, two, three

Six people.

They don't look anything like the Navy.

Ed grabbed Lils arm as she was about to head out into the alley again, making her glance back at him.

What?

I might be mistaken, but it seems the Captain is planning to go back and confront them.

Lil brushed Ed off roughly.

Im just going to check if the Navy is chasing me because they recognize me as the Black Whale

Ed glanced at Lils side profile, who had stopped talking. It was a complicated expression that seems to appear every time the navy was mentioned.

It looks like she is terrified of the thought of getting caught.

Suddenly, Ed was reminded of a few days ago when he wrote down information about the Mondovi fleet to prove he was a messenger.

Since the Southern Navys primary goal is to develop new sea routes, they showed no interest in pirates so far. Their alliance might seem fragile, but if the League stays quiet, the Navy will not interfere. Furthermore, Admiral Retiro is a harsh and self-righteous person, I dont think he would have asked for support from the Legardon Fleet. Even so, its hard to believe that the Mondovi fleet has already come this far East, dont you think?

He met Lils eyes, clear distrust was showing in them. She was obviously figuring out whether he was making this up or not.

She never lets her guard down.

If you agree, Captain. We can rule out the possibility of the Admiral looking for the Black Whale, and besides, his target was Amiaeng, so he is probably busy with turning it upside down.

Stop saying Captain. Do you intend to keep addressing me as Lil Schweiz? If you have to call me, its Lil.

Fine. But it seems that our location is being exposed more and more

Yeah, right. What did I tell you earlier? Im going to check. After listening to you, Im more convinced that my hunch is right.

Ed leaned forward and glanced in the window with uneasy eyes.

You still think theyre from the Navy? It cant be.

Theres nothing wrong with being cautious. You do know what kind of ship the Bell Rock actually is, right?

Go out first.

Ed quickly pretended to be frightened and hesitated.

But what if theyre Navy? Then Im as good as dead?

For once, cant you just obey my orders?

The Captain values the League so much that he doesnt even hesitate to hand me over to the Navy.

Go out!

Out of nowhere, Lil kicked him on his shin.

Oh, God!

Ed tried to keep his balance and accidentally stumbled into the alley. He pretended to be hurt by rubbing his painful leg.

Oh, come on! That hurts!

In response, Lil mercilessly made a gesture of slicing her throat. Pouting, Ed stood upright. Meanwhile, the gang who was quickly approaching, stopped in front of the alley.

Who are you?

Can I help you?

All of them looked like they had the words I am a thief written on their foreheads.

Did I come all this way to clean up shit like this?

Annoyed, Ed took off his hat and eyepatch to get a better view. Six big guys led by a baldy with a sloppy tattoo. In addition to the swords hanging on their waist, each of them was carrying a blunt weapon, indicating that they were more likely the menacing neighbourhood gangsters.

Where did you hide that dandy from earlier?

Hes over here.

Ed pointed his finger at Lil who was still hiding behind the building.

Did you hear that? See I told you Its you who got their attention because of your fancy attire.

Just take care of them.

After hearing her voice, the bald man spat and chuckled

Oh, that guys voice is very charming.

It looks like hed make a fine dancer, hed definitely rake us some bucks

I would suggest you shut up those muzzles as soon as possible, Ed.

Ed stared at the crowd that began to draw their swords. All the blades were rough, flat and curved like a crescent moon

Suddenly, a memory struck his mind.

Wait, crescent moons?

The strong gust of wind hitting his sweaty forehead, flut the laundry that was hanging above his head. The white cloth descended slowly, exposing the alley to the broad daylight. With his broadened field of vision, Ed took a good look at his opponents face. When their gazes met, the bald man standing closest to him opened his eyes wide.

Ed hoped he was mistaken.

You You

The flat swords, reminiscent of the crescent moons

Re Re Retiro! The Admiral!