

Northwest 35

Chapter 35

Trying to sustain Eds attention the duke continued to emphasise its rarity, but contrary to his expectations, Ed only clenched his chin sullenly.

That same old story, again. Obviously, the Duke heard the rumours, portraying me as a fanatic for rarity. Rare races, rare diseases and now even rare human beings. Funny that the truth is far from that.

Ed pondered whether to start denying those rumours to avoid annoying flies in the future.

You got it all wrong, Duke. I dont care how unique or rare people are and I certainly dont want to get involved with your disgusting slave trade.

The normally composted face of Mireille hardened and a growling voice came out.

Youre being rude.

Ed added nonchalantly.

Its just filthy.

Ed was well aware of the dukes work.

The slave trading business is widely spread throughout the Empire and the Duke here backs them. No actually, if I remember correctly, he even owns the Garni Merchant Association. And seeing him so agitated by my remark, he clearly doesnt care about its particularly heinous reputation, how shameless. I heard theyre making unrivalled profits by selling slaves at rousing auctions. Knowing this, I assume that the beast woman hes referring to, most likely belongs to one of the slave races.

The duke, whod been grumbling for quite some time, quickly found his composure and put on a convincing smile. Ed closely observed the dukes change in behaviour.

He keeps talking to himself and seems to be in a hurry.

Even the slight trembling of his lips didnt escape Eds attention when he was handed a piece of paper coming from the dukes bosom. Ed accepted it with two fingers and spread it out in the air. The content was an image of a simple necklace.

A necklace?

Allow me to correct your misunderstandings. The woman is no slave and the jewel Im talking about isnt just a necklace its in fact an artefact.

An artefact?

Dont play dumb, Sir Edgar. Im well aware youre chasing ancient magical treasures. People believe you to be an art aficionado. But we both know its magical artefacts youre after.

You seem proud of yourself for discovering that, Duke. Congratulations.

Ed slowly clapped his hands in a mocking way. Once again, Mireille had to put up with the rudeness.

Despite knowing the existence of this relic, he didnt report it to the Emperor nor did he sell it for personal gain. That either means Mireille doesnt know what kind of magic the relic is capable of or it possesses magic more value than money can buy.

Until today, Im still uncertain what kind of mysterious abilities it has. But the necklace is considered a family heirloom that had been passed down within this family for generations Youre so impatient, arent you?

Ed figured that even if it was a relic containing magic, it would be quite an insignificant one if its power had not yet been revealed.

If His Majesty finds out that the Duke of Mireille has been hiding such a great secret, the old man might be gravely disappointed. Be careful, Duke. For His Majesty is of poor health.

Ha haha! Dont forget, Sir Edgar, your situations no different from mine.

Mireille laughed. It was an all-knowing smile, one that was convinced that Ed already owned at least one artefact himself.

Who on earth is the woman Im looking for in exchange for this information?

Shes

- End flashback -

Slowly, the words cluttered and lost shape as the noise eroded. Ed waited patiently, focusing his senses on his surroundings. The movement was familiar, feeling the flow of the waves he assumed he was on a boat. Thankfully, he felt fine. The most important thing to him was always his own well-being. No matter where he was, or what situation he was in, hell be fine as long as his head was uninjured. He rummaged through his brain to examine the extent of the damage.

Philosophy, religion, language, medicine, art, literature, history Endia Morians Navigation, Kobe Dorjas New Book All kinds of subjects crossed his mind in a relatively slow manner. Slow compared to his usual speed, that is.

Still, it didnt seem like he had messed up his head too much, but his body was a different story. He wasnt even sure if all his limbs were attached properly.

The last time I felt this kind of helplessness was years ago, when I lost consciousness in that jungle.

Ed tried to follow the same routine as back then.

What can I do to move my arm?

But that damned arm seems only to respond in his hazy mind. After he tried a couple more times, he finally gave up. Instead, he decided to focus on turning his head.

How did I even end up in this state? Its ridiculous to think this is due to that apple thrown at the back of my head.

Ed was immediately reminded of that everlasting ringing pain inside his head. He tried to come up with a plausible explanation, when a voice woke him from his thoughts.

Its probably a heatstroke.

Immediately, his eyes opened wide. As his face was bowed towards the floor, it was dark in front of him. He slowly raised his neck, thick bars were the first thing to catch his eye. Behind it, he could make out the shape of a dying torch hanging from the wall.

Its a jail.

Lils voice came from his side. Surprisingly, he could hear her voice clearly, meaning that his sensory functions were coming back. Ed cast a glance towards the right side of his cell, a silhouette resembling a person was visible behind the bars. He uttered in a dry voice.

How did you know I was awake?

The sound of your chains gave it away.

So, you mean my arms are tied?

Yeah.

Both?

What?

Of course. Both of them.

Anyway Did you hear me? You suffered from heatstroke, the sun in the South is no joke. I almost fainted a few times, too.

But no matter how bad it is. Its kind of funny you actually fainted.

Its obvious that that last sentence was meant to mock me. But more importantly, for some strange reason, I get the feeling shes comparing me to Cesar. Given that our physique, age, background, and heritage are quite similar.

That thought turned Eds stomach and before he knew it, he was coming up with a ridiculous excuse.

Im from the Northern Continent. Im born and raised in the cold, a cold that cant even be compared to the winters in Sesbron.

Im from the North.

Nice try, Im northern, too.

If you didnt hit me with that apple, I wouldnt have become like this.

You were already pretty close to collapsing in the first place.

Is that what youre telling a guy who knocked out six men on his own?

One of them was just a joke.

Objectively speaking youre correct, but still, he should be counted.

How childish.

What?

Who are you blaming for being so weak? Youve been sweating ever since I saw you and your face was flustered all the time.

You must be kidding, I dont believe it was that bad.

Did you look in the mirror? You looked so ridiculous.

If I looked that ridiculous, you would have said something.

I didnt tell you because it was fun to watch.

And youre calling me childish? You have such a nasty temper.

What did you just say to me?

You heard me perfectly fine, didnt you?

Ive been captured because of you, so its natural for me to be nasty!

Why did you throw the apple?

Why am I trapped in such a crappy pirate ship with you? Ive never even heard of these bastards before!

No. No, the fundamental fault is with you

Its because of you, you! YOU! I knew this would happen. Your uselessness is going to be the death of me someday!

If you already knew, why didnt you escape?

Think about it! What if they found your body, the body of a deserter? Wouldnt the Navy investigate how you crawled your way into Marchand? Someone must have already seen you with us, whether its the old man at the port or anyone else at the pier. What would you think would happen to the Bell Rock then?

So, youre blaming me? If theres anything to blame here, its your poor swordsmanship. I had already knocked out more than half of those guys, but you couldnt handle the rest?

What? Its nothing like that? Those bastards were trying to cut the Navys throat, so I tried to stop them. Who do you think I am?

Oh, you went to him instead of me? How thoughtful.

You two were both unconscious. After you hit the ground, they left you alone and went for that other guy. Also, I was way closer to him than I was to you. Tell me, what should I have done?

So, you were caught when you tried to help? Where did this chivalry suddenly come from?

Shut up! Im still tired because I got hit with some sort of weird blue powder! Not long after they threw that in my face, I also collapsed. Thats the reason why we got caught.

Ed hesitated for a moment.

Wait, blue powder? Did it smell musty, like dust?

Yeah, I think so. Do you recognise it?

Its a sleeping anaesthetic made by grounding blue-spotted worms on the western continent. It used to be distributed on the Anatole Sea.

So, its some kind of drug?

You can call it that.

Damn, those bastards.

But wheres that non-commissioned officer whom you defended?

Huh? Ah, uhm. That kid woke up when I was caught and fled after making a bit of a fuss. I advised him to run away, so he did.

Good for him.

Yeah, good for him. Now Im the one freezing to death here. But who was he anyway? He seems to know you. And dont give me any crap like he was mistaken.

Hes someone I used to know.

Lils loud voice suddenly quiets down.

Then were you finally found out?

He wont talk.

How can you tell?

If I get caught, there are a few people that wont be safe either.

Was he involved in your escape? The South belongs to the Legardon Navy, right?

He helped me before he was transferred to Legardon. No, at that time he was on the verge of being transferred.

Seeing how our confrontation played out, they probably think Im dead. So thats a good thing. And, Captain, think about it. If I were a spy for the fleet, would the Navy have followed me in broad daylight? They would have been smart enough to know that that would have made you suspicious of me, dont you think?