

Northwest 38

Chapter 38

It was sunrise.

Ed, who had dozed off, was the first one to wake up. The sunlight that shot through the cracks in the ragged planks, allowed him to finally take a good look at Lil. Beyond the bars, she was as slumped as he was, still deep asleep. It was clear that the pirates had robbed her of everything. Everything, except the most precious thing shes wearing.

He stretched his legs and back. He only fell asleep after they discussed various strategies till deep in the night, so he was actually positively surprised by the state of his body. Ed relaxed his muscles. His throat felt dry.

I dont think I have been unconscious for hours because I was exhausted from the heat. Just as Lil, Im suspecting heatstroke. If thats really it, I dont know how long my body can hold out after not having a single sip of fluid since I fainted. Whatever strategy well use, its best to end it quickly and get out of here

He let out a deep sigh. Last night, Ed came up with dozens of strategies. But Lil was so meticulous that every plan he came up with was shot down with complaints. She criticised him for his impulsiveness and insisted that they should have a strategy rather than a tactic.

He puffed out his nose.

She behaved completely different than I anticipated. Judging from the two of them always sticking together, I assumed she would be relying on Cesar for a lot of things, but even though her life is in danger, she hasnt mentioned him even once. Its great and all but also a little disappointing as I had secretly hoped to see her weakening faith.

Or is she just acting strong in front of me? Isnt it normal for her to say something like Im sure hell come to rescue me? I think it was like that last time. But Liloa maintained a much stronger attitude than what I expected. Such guts arent something one could enquire with just a few years of living outside. Shes born with it.

Its fun though. I was expecting some disappointment at this point, but theres no room for that. I always admire those who surpass my expectations, thats why I decided to follow her plan. I also know it feels good to be treated like a real captain. Im now even more amazed about how she was able to live in that family and suppress her true nature. Well, in the end, that clearly didnt work out, seeing she ended up here.

Lil tossed and turned before she finally woke up. Ed blurted out the first thing that came to mind.

Do I really have to be the bait?

Lil raised her right hand to rub her eyes, but stopped when she felt her left hand coming along.

Oh right, Im tied up.

Eventually, she rubbed her eyes with both her hands.

Do I have to be the bait?

Yes, of course.

Why?

Because Im the Captain and youre not.

What if the guard is closer to me?

Lil widened her half-closed eyes.

You have a lot to say all of a sudden. Okay. Then we switch. Do I actually have to say that? Were supposed to be flexible. Flexible!

Ed nodded contentedly and asked another question as he had suddenly remembered something.

Did you see who took my sword?

No.

Cant we go find my sword first?

Huh?

Its something I cherish.

Buy a new one.

Its expensive.

Then forget about it.

Its not only a sword, its a piece of art

Shut up.

Ed quickly put on a sullen expression.

Look outside. Describe the island you couldnt see yesterday.

Ed rubbed his mouth and put his eye against the wall.

Two long islands with several small rocky ones around them. I think theyre about 20 morts* away.

As I expected, its the Majel Islands.

Ed recalled the chart he had seen at the naval office in Marchand.

She only did a rough calculation, but I think shes right.

Have we been travelling that slowly?

They must have made a detour from Marchand to avoid being spotted by the Navy.

Aha.

We must be near the reef just south of the Majel islands.

Then are we sticking with the plan?

Lil nodded.

Yes, lets go with that.

Lil rotated her neck back and forth, trying to clear her thoughts and get her act together. Ed wanted to know what was going on inside her head, so he called out for her.

Captain.

What?

Arent you nervous?

I am, why?

You dont seem that scared.

What kind of bullshit is that? Of course, Im scared, we might die.

Ed broke out in loud laughter at Lils simple reply.

Squeak

The sound of an old iron door opening echoed from the back.

Ed immediately stopped laughing and mumbled lowly.

Someones coming

Both of them tensed up.

It will be for the best if I can overpower the guard here. The sooner our hands and feet are released, the more advantageous it is for us. Then we may avoid going to the deck where theyre all gathered.

Ed looked up to see who was coming down. The footsteps sounded heavy.

Is it just one person?

Oi! Let me see his face!

I heard theres a pretty one, too

A crowd poured in, rendering his plan useless. The shouting men came down and surrounded the outside of their cells. They came crashing down like a wave and left no gaps to escape to. Lil looked at the men who were reaching through the iron bars, trying to grab the prisoners. Their distorted faces pressed on the grates made for a bizarre sight.

Heh heh, look at this one, glaring at us with those hostile eyes

Let me see! It seems like his insides will be very juicy

Lil was mainly harassed, and Ed, who was branded as navy, was devoured by all sorts of double insults.

Things didnt turn out as they hoped. A guard full of crude tattoos opened the door and pointed his sword at them.

Get up.

Lil and Ed got out of their cells without resisting and climbed the stairs. They were welcomed by crazed pirates who were pouring insults left and right as they walked by. Lil clenched her teeth, enduring the slap on the back of her head and the kick on her body. But not long after, she felt a

breath being blown into her ear and someone rubbing her buttocks. This time she was unable to hold back her anger and looked back. Black teeth with missing incisors were smiling at her. It was a sailor who only picked out the dirtiest words as he followed them onto the deck, staring intensely at her face.

It was the first time Lil could check the ships location. The Majel Islands seemed indeed to be about 20 morts away. When she looked around the upper deck, she found that bald pirate they fought with in the middle of the crowd.

There are dozens of scums surrounding him. Their armament is great, too. It feels like Im witnessing every single weapon Ive ever seen in my life. There are endless rows of metal weapons designed to tear people apart in the most effective ways. How could I ever think the Western pirates were sane.

As the bald beckoned, the waiting guard kicked Eds calf to get him to his knees. A thumping sound was heard when his knees hit the deck. Another man ran over and grabbed Eds head. The bald man approached, clearly happy with this situation and began to beat Ed. Swept by the fierce fists, Eds head was bent left and right without a pause.

I saw this bastard on the Admirals fleet! I remember his face! Remember this face!

Ptuh!

Spit from the bald man ran slowly down Eds straight forehead. The guy squatted in front of Ed, who hadnt let out a single groan. When they were face to face, he slapped Eds cheek a few times in a mocking manner. Eds green eyes, soaked in blood from the beating, were overflowing with hostility. The expression on his face, which seemed to be extremely pissed, scared even Lil.

Come on! Lets have a look!

Unexpectedly, the bald man tugged Eds sleeve. The grip was so strong that the fabric was torn and roughly pulled down at once, exposing the upper arm that was engraved with an undeniable navy tattoo.

Navy! Its the Navy!

Kill him!

The furious men raised their swords in unison. The bald man, who was spitting and laughing in front of Eds nose, pulled out a dagger and poked his tattoo. When he pushed the handle of the knife and turned it, the skin tore apart and thick blood streamed down the forearm.

The cracking shouts and the stamping feet of the exciting pirates felt enough to sink the ship. The swords that were aimed at Ed and Lil became more threatening as they narrowed the distance. Shortly after, there was a loud shout amid the cheering.

Check if that short bastard is from the Navy, too!..

What?

The bald man answered bluntly.

Could it be?

At once dozens of eyes turned to Lil.

Strip off his sleeves, too!..

Yes! Yes!..

Lil looked at them with panicked eyes as they grew more and more riled up. Her whole body rushed with adrenaline and her blood ran cold. She hurriedly shook her head.

If my shirt is torn, the necklace will be discovered And of course, they will try to take it away. If that happens

Heh, Navy with the sassy face

The bald head chuckled and closed their distance. His big hand reached out and approached. Her collar was caught. In an instant, Lil stepped back and turned around swiftly. The fast movement caused her collar to be torn a little. She used the momentum of her turn to her advantage and swung her clasped hands from down low up to slam someone under the chin, all before the crowd around her came to their senses. The sound of a crack could be heard as her targets jawbone got crushed. Lil grabbed the falling mans sword and swung it wide to clear the space, staggering to keep her position. Since her feet were tied, she would fall over if she made a mistake.

Whats this crazy guy?

Isnt he also from the Navy?

Its the Navy! Kill him!