

Northwest 40

Chapter 40

flashback

Last night.

Ed didnt understand what Lil was talking about, so he asked back confused.

What? A what conch?

Vigare Deaire. If I have to translate it roughly, itd be an air conch.

He frowned as if he couldnt imagine it at all.

I have never heard of such a thing.

Of course, only Southerners No, to be more specific only the natives know. So, Im very grateful that those stupid western pirates anchored their ship here.

If only the natives know, how do you know? You said youre from the North, too.

Lil stared at Ed with a bored expression.

I dont understand what makes you so curious all the time, but just for once, Ill explain it. Id appreciate it if you could listen to me without interrupting, it could save your life

The Vigare Deaire lives in mild temperatures like this where warm and cold currents meet. In addition, theyre usually found in shallow waters on top of pure white sand beaches. On bright days theyre visible from the surface, so if you see an emerald colour reflecting in the water, chances are you ll find them. We ll know for sure, if you check the sea at dawn Anyway, its an empty shell without the conch, the inside is actually filled with a thin membrane full of air.

Huh, how is that possible?

I told you to listen without interrupting, didnt I? Whats wrong with you? Whats so hard about accepting it as one of the secrets of the world? Its simple enough, its just like that story about your Admiral, that he somehow is the only one who can cross the Monferrand Strait. Apparently, the mother of all things only opens the way for him. This is comparable to that, so just accept it as it is already.

Ed raised his eyebrows slightly.

Thats not a mystery at all, its reality.

Do you know how to use it?

If you purse your lips, like when you spit and blow in some air, the membrane ll open. Then the person holding it can get the air. But remember, you should never breathe through your nose, you should only breathe through your mouth. Itd be better to practise in advance.

Have you ever tried it before?

Yes.

When?

Ed was still not convinced.

Of course, Lil wouldnt say that she was with Cesar at that time.

A few years ago, at the height of the good times, we came to see the corals in this area. It was the day he taught me how to dive. I still remember the bright sun and clear water. It was so beautiful. For someone like me who never had a connection with the sea, it was truly a sight to behold Multi-coloured and bizarrely stretched out corals, wide-open shells the size of my torso, swarms of yellow fish glistening like fireflies, unfamiliar creatures attached to the surrounding reefs fluttering with the current I ll never forget the moment I saw that beautiful scene Wed such a good time Really

Captain?

Lil woke up from her thoughts and realised that she was smiling.

I dont know what youre thinking about, but I guess it brought back a pretty good memory?

Bullshit.

Lil dismissed his suggestion with a snort, but Ed narrowed his eyes. As he figured that Cesar must have been a part of those memories, he was immediately tempted to push her buttons.

Anyway, how can you guarantee that there are conches down there? What if you recklessly dive in and theres none? Once you rise to the surface, those pirates ll be shooting at you.

Lil sighed with a weary face. Halfway through the night, Ed started to attack each and every plan she came up with. Always finding something at fault with them.

Then what else is there? What do you suggest we do? And please dont just push for stupid tactics.

A smile flashed across Eds face.

How about the possibility of the Bell Rock coming to rescue you?

What kind of bullshit is that?

Why? This ship only took half a day to come here. If the Bell Rock would set sail immediately after they find out their Captain is missing, they could arrive at dawn.

And who ll be moving the ship?

The navigator.

Cesar? Why would he do that?

Because the Captain is gone?

Why do you think that?

Edgar shrugged his shoulders.

Because he and the Captain seem to share a strong bond?

Is that all?

Doesnt that bond mean you live and die together? Fighting side by side something like that? if so, it wouldnt be so strange if he came to rescue his Captain as a loyal

Are you writing a novel or something?

I dont know how things went in your Navy days, but do you really think one could just come for whoever they want? I havent noticed this before, but you have a strangely nave side. How foolish.

Why are you so blunt? I didnt expect you to doubt his loyalty.

Lil laughed.

Of course, Cesar would have noticed by now that Im gone as its far past dinner time. However, by what means could Cesar track down our whereabouts and move the Bell Rocks crew? No, even before that, I wish Cesar wouldnt rescue me. I dont want him to feel sorry or burden him anymore Whats reassuring in that aspect is that the crew has no reason to come after me. There is a bank in Marchand, so its plausible for them to think their Captain ran away after collecting their severance pay.

Lil replied with a funny expression.

Im not questioning his loyalty Okay, lets just assume what you said is true, lets say that the love the crew has for me is overflowing and they ll come to rescue us. Are we going to wait for that? Even when you just told me were going to die tomorrow? Are you saying it doesnt matter if we live or die as long as our bodies get home? Is that why youre talking about waiting for their rescue?

No, I mean, cant you imagine them coming before our execution? That navigator looked quite competent

You idiot. I thought my head was spinning, but now its just its you whos giving me a headache. I feel like everything I hear from you is something crazy. No way. You just follow my orders.

Why dont you trust him

Lil, who became sensitive to the continuous questions about Cesar, shouted.

Shut up!

Im done, stop this nonsense!

As if those words were a signal, the last torch that had been burning pitifully died soon after. Their cells sank into complete darkness and a heavy silence that fell upon them lasted for a long time. Ed finally shut up, but Lil still glared at him in the darkness, ready to kill. Then, the words shed been chewing and swallowing from the moment she opened her eyes, escaped with much venom.

I cant die here

She cant die here.

Ed pondered over what Lil said. It was a sentence filled with her tenacity and strength. After that, Ed didnt provoke her anymore. No, it was more accurate to say he couldnt. He didnt feel good when he realised hed disrespected Lil.

end of flashback

Why was that?

Normally, Ed whatever he wanted to say no matter how his opponent felt. He didnt care or even notice. So, he couldnt understand why his heart became heavy when she got angry.

However, his confused thoughts disappeared upon seeing Lil. Just when it started to become increasingly difficult to withstand the current, Ed finally discovered the location of Lil.

She made it further down than I expected, seeing that her hands and feet are still tied.

But suddenly, Ed noticed that Lil was barely moving. It seemed that her legs had lost the strength to propel.

She must be running out of breath.

Ed swam as fast as he could, pulling the rope of the anchor to gain some speed.

There are no coral reefs around, let alone that air conch she talked about. At this rate, well die here for real

Then he covered her lips.

Lil, who kept still for a moment, moved frantically, completely forgetting they were underwater. With her mouth shut, a silent scream rang out. The hand holding Lil grew stronger and stronger. Then, the chain tied to her feet patted Ed's leg gently, if it hadn't been for the water-resistance a similar kick would have brought him to tears.

This woman really!

Ed shoved his tongue between her closed lips. Her struggle, which seemed like a person who had given up on living, suddenly stopped.

It seems she's come to her senses now.

It wasn't very pleasant for Ed either, so he felt a little bit of gratitude when she stopped rebelling. Eventually, he thought it was enough, so he tried to take his lips off her. But instinctively, he couldn't

It was because of what she did next. Lil suddenly overlapped his tongue and brought their bodies closer together.

I can't move.

Ed could feel her closer than ever. Because she's a woman now, the sudden touching of their bodies was unbearably sensual. His whole body burned with an unfamiliar sensation. The heat did not cool down even though they were deep under water, instead it only increased when Lil licked his lips. His sanity seems to evaporate. The touch that penetrates his hazy nerves was breathtakingly vivid

and sweet. Ed didnt know what was going on, but he unconsciously obeyed Lil, who was sucking him in.

But in the next moment, a chill poured into his arms.

Like a lie, Lil slipped out. Ed, who had closed his eyes, didnt even see it. When Ed opened his eyes, he saw that Lil was already swimming farther and farther away. He reached out in an instant and tried to grab her, but it was in vain. His hand gestures only made a cold wave, grabbing nothing.

Damn that woman!