

## **Northwest 41**

### *Chapter 41*

Ed struggled against the impulse to inhale, but it was as painful as dying. He knew that one of the first reactions to air deprivation was the head losing consciousness. For now, his empty airways started to burn and he desperately covered his nose and mouth. His internal organs felt like they were reduced to ashes and were about to fly away.

*But I can never open my mouth. The incoming water will only clog up my lungs. Even a single sip could be fatal.*

However, this was not a problem that could be overcome with mere mental strength, as Ed started to lose consciousness. Even amid this, the thought that if he inhaled seawater like this he would die, dominated his mind. But in the end, regardless of his strong will, his body started to squeeze in unconsciously

Desperately searching for air

In an instant, seawater rushed in to fill his lungs

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Lil had taken all his air and escaped from him.

*That crazy guy can hold his breath a bit longer if he's really from the Navy.*

She went down a little further, enjoying the freshly supplied air with luxury, leaving Ed behind venting for himself.

*Of course, I don't intend to kill him. I don't want to get rid of a person in such a lowly way. To suddenly suck on his perverted mouth, take his breath and leave him to drown. Killed by betrayal would be such a dishonourable way to die even if he did harass me first. In addition, thinking rationally, that pervert is still useful, so it's right to postpone his punishment till a later time. I was already quickly running out of breath, so it truly was an opportunity right in front of me, shining like the lights of heaven. I couldn't help but borrow his air for a while. Anyway, he's trained by the Imperial Navy, he can last for a few more seconds.*

With that in mind, Lil let go of the rope and swam towards the reefs with full-body breaststrokes. A coral colony that swayed peacefully in the waves caused by her, hid their flowers one after another as her outstretched hands quickly gripped the reef pile. Lil, who was almost swept away by the current, desperately grabbed the hairs of a wavy anemone. The sticky and creepy touch felt disgusting and caused chills all over her body.

*Damn it.*

She brushed off its eerie tentacles and gripped the coral that grew straight like a flute. Meanwhile, the current between the reefs was much stronger than before, so Lil struggled on the reef like a true rock climber. Eventually, she managed to step on a pile of clams sticking together, climbed up, and reached the side.

As she rummaged through the loose seaweed mass, the white shell that had been hiding there lit up. It was a mysterious colour that looked like a shellfish shell turned inside out. With tight lips, Lil lowered her upper body to a crouching position.

*One, two, three*

In an instant, she put as much strength on her legs as she could and threw herself sideways. The shell of the air conch was glistening brightly right in front of her outstretched hand. However, her body that was subjected to all kinds of resistance was only moving dull and heavy. The sound of bubbling water droplets enveloping her entire body resounded through her pressured eardrums. Lil went against the waves by kicking her feet like crazy. Just when she thought she would never reach it, some ragged surface brushed against her palm.

Lil grabbed it as if it were a lifeline, and quickly pulled out the air conch, which had been caught in a crevice of the rock. She brought it to her lips and breathed in without hesitation. Finally, fresh, sweet air filled her chest. Lil, whose vitality suddenly got a boost, turned around vigorously.

Even though her view was hazy due to the sand mixed water, she could see Ed rising from the rope. Seeing that his feet moved desperately, she knew he wasn't dead yet. Lil swam towards him, chewing on the uneasy feeling of guilt. As she was riding the tide this time, her body moved much faster. Ed, who seemed rather calm for a person who can't breathe, just floated upwards.

*I think he inhaled water because of his frequent coughing, but he's not breathing heavily yet. It's incredible that his reason and instincts remained intact in this situation.*

With no time to hesitate, she diligently swam to him.

Lil caught up with Ed. She rose from behind his body, which gradually stopped moving altogether, and wrapped her arms around his neck. She didn't like the way she had to press his head against her body, but she had no choice as her wrists were still tied. She placed the conch she was holding on his mouth and pinched his cheek with her other hand.

*Calm down, come to your senses, breathe through your mouth Damn it, it's not working. How can I get him to breathe in? We're still underwater, so beating him is useless*

She twisted her hand that was pinching him and drove her fingernails into his skin.

Just as she was starting to wonder about the lack of response, his arm, which had been moving slightly, drooped. It floated with the current like a plant's leaf without any strength.

*Is it too late?*

Lil bit his ear as she hesitated to give him the air with her mouth.

*Damn it. I'd rather let him die, but I can't help it. I'll just close my eyes and do it once*

The moment she thought that, she heard the sound of him sucking in the air with a desperate sigh. If there was any sound a body would make when it woke up, it would be this. Lil let go of him and immediately looked for a way back to the ship. She swam past Ed and climbed. Ed finally came to his senses and followed her, constantly coughing behind her. Lil turned towards the railing she fell from, but as it seemed that the pirates were still flocking around it, she headed towards the poop deck<sup>4</sup>

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When they reached the stern, the two quietly rose to the surface. As their view was accustomed to the dim sea, the dazzling sunlight stung their water-soaked eyes. Lil swept the hair that stuck to her face out of the way and looked disapprovingly at Ed, who had started to cough his guts up.

Well get caught. Hey, shut up.

Khaak, Cap Captain. Khoff, I almost

Ed stumbled over his words as water constantly drained from his nostrils and mouth.

G got killed Khak Khak

With her hands shaking with anger, Lil wiped the water from Eds face.

You rotten bastard. Really dirty.

I Khakk almost died

Hey! You did that on purpose, didnt you? Huh?!

But no matter how much she pressured him to answer, the only thing that came back was the sound of him out spitting water. Lil saw that Ed had been close to dying and spared him from further questioning. Instead, she paid attention to the uneven wood joints and the unique decorations of the stern. It wasnt long before she concluded that they could climb their way back up the ship using those. Lil shouted at Ed, who was still blowing his nose.

Hey! Come here!

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Lil was holding her breath on her way up and eventually collapsed on her back.

Oh, Im going to die.

Ed, who climbed to the stern window first and had to pull Lil up as her hands and feet were still tied, was also on the verge of death. In addition to the dehydration, his body was still coughing up the seawater he inhaled. Ed wanted to protest to Lil badly because she almost killed him, but the sudden embarrassment of his own behaviour and the fact that he was the one that had created the situation in the first place kept him from opening his mouth. Ed caressed his ears, which were burning red because of the unbearable shame he felt.

*Even if I meant to share some of my air with Liloa, I cant accept that I almost lost my soul because I got too enchanted with her. No, the deep dive probably had a negative effect on my mind as they say bad air can get in your lungs Unless, of course, Im already going crazy*

Hey.

Ed avoided looking at Lil and contemplated whether to answer or not. He was sure she was going to kill him, but to his surprise, she didnt say anything about his past actions yet. And after hearing a voice that sounded too calm for her to be angry, Ed inadvertently looked her way, but immediately turned his head in shock. Underneath her shirts thin fabric, her wet, naked body was moving up and down as she was catching her breath. It was clear that she wasnt wearing any undergarments

*Damn it is that woman conscious or not?*

Ed hurriedly looked around him.

*I would have lent her the shirt I was wearing, but my torso is just bare as my shirt was torn by that bald head and I lost the rest of it after diving into the water.*

Ed looked down at his own exposed body and felt even more uncomfortable. He wouldn't have minded his own state if he hadn't noticed Lils, but when he realised they both appeared naked, he was hopelessly confused.

The key?

Ed groaned inwardly.

*The key can wait, find your necklace first!*

Hey!

Ed needed a moment to calm himself and pulled the axe off his waist, before lifting it over his head. He just pointed at the axe as he wasn't confident disguising his voice yet.

It had become a complete mess after the Captain fell in the water. So, how am I supposed to know where the guard holding the keys is?

Lil was lamenting at the back of Ed's head with irritated eyes, when she suddenly remembered her fall.

*At that time, I'm sure the necklace*

She became aware of the damp shirt clinging to her stiff spine. She lowered her eyes and checked underneath her, realising the contour of her bulging chest was clear.