

## Northwest 51

### Chapter 51

As soon as those words left her mouth, Lils crew opened fire.

*Pang! Pang!-*

Screams transcended the sound of gunfire. Lil, who tried to get herself closer to the mast, was hugged by Ed as he bowed his head.

*Because of the long reload time, hand-to-hand battle is next*

Lil shook off Eds arms that were tightly wrapped around her body and peered carefully behind the mast. The sailors who came down from the nets were indeed preparing their hooks.

Deck masters from both ships shouted simultaneously.

Throw the hooks!

*-Tung! Tung!-*

The sound of metal thrown into the air and hitting the railing could be heard from all directions. Lil watched with anguish as some of the Bell Rocks sailors, who were cutting the lines with their axes, were shot by the Western pirates. From both sides, sailors throwing hooks, sailors crossing the ships by hanging from the rigging and sailors cutting the lines, they were all shot and fell into the sea in vain.

We have to move quickly.

However, the upper deck was a complete mess, so moving quickly was going to be hard. There were no gaps as the fight was in full swing. Lil searched for the path that looked the fastest. The stern, where at first glance only corpses were piled up, seemed quiet for now.

Im heading to the stern.

What?

Cover my back.

Before even hearing Eds answer, Lil was about to jump up

Uh-huh, where do you think youre going?

A sharp blade touched Lils nape. She was still half-seated when she lifted her eyes upwards to identify the swords owner. His face was barely visible, but it was clear he was one of the remaining officers. Ed was also spotted and a gun was being pointed at his back. When the enraged officer applied force to the tip of the sword, a stinging pain pierced her flesh.

Youre the cause of this mess, arent you? Huh?

*Pang!*

A bullet answered instead of Lil.

With a single shot of gunfire, the officers body went down. Lil stared at his bloodied stomach as soon as he collapsed.

Are you okay?

It was a familiar and clear voice amidst the chaos. Before Lil even checked his face, she nodded unconsciously. Cesar lifted her up and immediately pulled her in a tight embrace.

Are you headed toward the stern?

Yes.

Lil, suddenly aware of Ed, pushed Cesar off a little.

*What would he think when he sees two men hugging each other?*

Well run along the railing on the left. Ill take care of the front, Cesar on the right, and Ed at the back.

Lil quickly grabbed the gun that was aimed at Ed only moments ago. After she also picked up the sword, she ran at full speed toward the stern.

Lil had to shoot a big guy rushing in front of them and jumped over the fallen body. Meanwhile, Ed slashed down a few pirates and even dealt with one that clung to Cesar. Suddenly, a familiar voice pierced her ear, Lil gasped shallowly and glanced around.

Theyre coming to the stern!..

The toothless bastard blocked the stairs to the stern. Judging from his inability to move, he seemed to have broken his leg by the fall earlier.

Theyre on the stern!..

*The guy who has my necklace!*

Hey!

Thinking it would be the last chance to deal with him, Lil began to speed up. At the same time, large men who heard the voice also looked around the stern.

*If they reach this side, it will prolong the fight.*

There was nothing but a corpse left between her and him. As Cesar and Ed were both engaged in their own battles, they couldnt help her. After some hesitation, Lil threw away her worries and ran toward the stairs.

Toward the stern! Theyre coming to the stern!..

Her opponent was dragging himself up the stairs by his elbows, all the while giggling at Lil. The strange cracking sound of his laughter mixed with the battle cries. Lil quickly closed the distance with the ugly-faced man. Five more steps. Her right arm that was holding her sword, was already raised high. The guy, who was still laughing with his mouth open, lifted a flute-like thing to his lips. It was a thin and short flute that shed never seen before

Captain!

*Hwik!*

Her blade, whose trajectory was changed due to someones interference, cut diagonally across the mans abdomen. As a result, a variety of jewels spewed out of the ruptured front pocket. Among the

brightly coloured stones, only one stood out. Lil reached out toward the red jewel that soared through the air.

*I cant miss it!*

After catching it, the mans face became visible behind her clenched fist and the strange flute was directed towards her. Suddenly, the sharp end sprayed some powder. Rooted on her spot, Lil could only look at the blue powder that explodes like fireworks in front of her nose. However, her vision gradually tilted. She didnt know what had happened but she started to fall sideways. Lil glanced at Ed, who had appeared out of nowhere and had pushed her aside. Because of this, her body was now out of the blue powders range. The last thing she saw before banging her head on the deck was the dust blasting into Eds face.

*Thud!*

Lil, who had no time to break her fall, lifted her head in pain.

Hey!

But Ed didnt answer. Facing the sun, Lil held her hand in front of her forehead and looked up. Standing tall in front of her, Eds back and shoulders staggered as he began coughing. He tried to shake off the dust by waving his hand, but it didnt seem to help. Lil got up on her knees and tried to support Ed who was struggling to even stand upright at this point, but the moment he turned

*Pang!*

Eds body shook in shock and Lils vision was obscured by his back. Without knowing the reason, she could only watch as the shirt she was holding slowly dyed red. Because she had not yet figured out the situation, Lil let out a futile sound.

What

Eds body, which couldnt support itself anymore, fell towards her and his brown hair brushed her nose. Behind Eds collapsed body, she could see a man pointing a still smoking gun. The guy chuckled as Lil received Ed in her arms and let out a shrill cry.

Ed!

Lil barely managed to catch Ed without falling back. Seeing his trembling eyes, Lil spits out a curse.

You crazy bastard!

Captain The blue powder Didnt you recognize it?.. Its their drug tool

Lil glanced at Ed, who was muttering useless words while the man who shot Ed was busy reloading his gun. Lil immediately got back to her senses and rummaged around her waist for her dagger. In the meantime, a short gust of wind blew past her ear and she reflexively turned her head to the side.

*Huh? Is it already in front of me?*

Cesar was crossing her view. He jumped up the stairs in an instant and stabbed the man in the chest without hesitation. The trembling body, which was stabbed at a vital point, was unable to counterattack and soon drooped.

Cesar!

Lil wrapped her left arm around Eds back to lift him up.

Captain You wont be able to carry me

Ed, who sounded like he could collapse any moment, grabbed Lils hand and brought it to his side. Lil noticed that his hand, that was covering hers, was shaking.

*Its because hes bleeding out.*

Lils hand began to soak in Eds blood as she let herself be guided in the right direction, before pressing hard on the gunshot wound.

Please stop the bleeding

Lil muttered something unconsciously.

Arent you supposed to have passed out by now?..

I Ive been shot often

You idiot, you dont have to answer that.

Cesar, who put his sword back in the sheath, took Eds right arm and wrapped it around his neck.

On the count of three. One, two, three.

Ed leaned almost completely onto Cesar. Because her height didnt fit Eds shoulder, pressing the wound hard to prevent further bleeding was the only thing Lil could do. Lil stepped over the corpse, climbed the stairs and called out to the helmsman on the stern of the Bell Rock.

Joe! Come on, get the plank!

Surprised by the sudden call, Joe turned to them and quickly brought back a longboard. Lil tapped on the crossing between the ship and the Bell Rock as if she was testing it, before she sent Cesar on it first and gave Ed a warning.

Hey, its a crossing board. If you miss a step, youll fall. Keep your feet together.

AlAlright.

Eds hot breath brushed past her ears.

*Its truly a miracle hes still conscious. When I was struck by that blue powder back in Marchand, I immediately blacked out Which was the start of all this*

Lil crossed the board anxiously, listening to his weakening breath.

My cabin

Were going there. Joe! Take over his right arm. Cesar, take over the front and clear a passage.

Quickly I think Im about to pass out

Chapter 52

*Headnote: Warning for gore.*

Ed struggled to lift his eyelids. Lil and Joe carefully descended the steps of the stern and carried Ed along the path Cesar opened. The deck was in complete chaos as the battles were still in full swing. It was so bad, that Lil herself had to block and dodged some of the blades coming in her direction.

Joe, guard your side.

Joe, who had been breathing hard instead of answering, suddenly shouted.

Who will take care of us when our doctor dies?

Thats why were trying to save him.

Oh, dont die, good man Youve healed my broken finger. No way

Im not going to die.

*Ed must have made quite the impression on the sailors with his medical skills.*

Lil had also heard the stories about Ed treating the sailors with small injuries, mostly caused by them falling from the bow or rigging. Whenever that happened, they simply went down to the doctors cabin for some treatment. Because of that, she had no choice but to keep listening to Joe mumbling prayers as they got down to the cabin.

Dont die, dont die

Lil opened the lid of the medicine cabinet while Joe laid Ed on the bed.

Joe, tell Jericho to take charge and look after the wounded.

Joe nodded hastily and disappeared from the cabin. Cesar, who had arrived there first, came to her side and lifted Eds shirt. A squishy sound was heard when the blood-soaked fabric came loose from Eds skin. Lil watched the blood spread around the bullet hole, but soon turned her attention toward the medicine cabinet. The cabinet was only filled with small bottles and because there were no names written on them, Lil had no idea what they were. But despite that, she rolled up her sleeves. She felt responsible for what happened to Ed as he blocked her from inhaling the blue powder.

How do I get the bullet out?

The back exit wound

I checked it on deck earlier. There is no exit wound.

It wasnt a through and through? Then it must be taken out?

Ed, who was struggling to keep up with the conversation, squeezed out his words.

The top row left, second red bottle

I found it! Anaesthesia?

Adrenaline stimulant

What?

I Ill do it.

What?!

Lil was about to scream, but shut up after Ed frowned.

In words Ill guide This damn powder, my mind all over the place

Seeing Eds determination Lil repeated the same sentence under her breath more than a dozen times.

Is he crazy?

He needs to stay awake, feed him the medicine quickly

Cesar, how can I? Whats wrong with this guy? He must be going crazy.

We dont know how to do it ourselves

CaptainPlease

How much?

All of it

It felt like a lot to consume at once, but Ed kept repeating that he needed all of it. Lil poured the red potion into his mouth, unable to imagine what would happen next. As she was observing his half-conscious state and unfocused eyes, something powerless suddenly tapped her arm. When Lil looked down, she saw Ed holding his leather pouch.

In my mouth

Lil hastily took it over and placed the leather between his teeth. Just as she was trying to check whether his teeth had bitten it properly, she heard its content crumbling. Startled, Lil bit the inside of her cheek. A painful groan escaped between his teeth along with the sound of leather being crushed. Lil hesitated and shifted her gaze to Eds face. His eyes, which had been blurry moments ago, were now bloodshot. His face, engulfed by the pain, turned red as if it was about to explode. Without realising it, Lil clenched her fists and tried to turn her face away.

The pain, awakened by the stimulant, instantly ran through Eds nerves and throbbed violently throughout his body. What started with a small spark in his brain, soon spread to every fingertip, cutting through all the senses it passed. Ed, tormented by the pain, was unable to scream when the sensation tore through his veins. His knuckles turned white as he grabbed the bed sheet tightly enough to rip it. Without a pause, the endless pain knocked frantically on his temples.

As the pain finally started to fade, he gagged and spit out the pouch. A voice, sounding like metals scratching his vocal cords, came out.

Disinfectant

As Lil poured the disinfectant she was holding on to the affected area, Ed clenched his teeth again. His face, which had to endure a new source of pain, was red and sweaty. Lil raised her arm, wiping Eds forehead. He closed his eyes for a moment, before turning towards Cesar. Meanwhile, Cesar, holding two long surgical instruments, nodded his head. Lil sprayed the disinfectant on the tools as well.

Tweezers Cesar wound put it in youll feel it there

Completely out of breath, Ed suddenly added some extra information as he remembered the direction of the bullet.

right about ten degrees

Cesar carefully adjusted the angle and lowered his hand.

When you feel the end the bullet

Lil saw the tip of the tweezers getting closer to the wound and quickly put the pouch in Eds mouth again. His teeth bit the leather with a force strong enough to tear it. As for Lil, she stared blankly at the gunshot wound and was surprised at how much deeper it was than she had expected. When she realised the depth was already over half a finger, her stomach turned and her legs felt weak. Lil impatiently waited for it all to be over, but the ordeal seemed endless. Her head ran painfully. She held her breath when she noticed the slight pause in Cesars descending hand. After swallowing his dried saliva, Cesar slowly lifted the tweezers. When Lil saw the dark red sphere hanging between the sharp ends, she let out a short breath of joy and relief.

Ed must have seen it too as a low groan came from him.

Captain in this pouch

The pouch?

Ed glanced weakly at the pouch that he had bitten as a gag. Hurriedly, Lil opened it and found several bullets wrapped in a rag.

*Where did he even get this? He clearly wasnt carrying a gun?*

The damage

Ill need to check for any damages? Alright.

Lil washed the bullet she had taken from Cesar with the disinfectant. It was spherical shaped and when she compared it with the other unused bullets, the shape seemed completely intact. There were no dents or chipped-off parts.

Me too let me see it too

Lil held the two bullets in front of him as he struggled to lift his head. Ed blinked over and over again, trying to focus his blurry vision. Eventually, he closed his eyes and laid his head back on the pillow.

We need to get the piece of cloth out.

*Cloth?*

Lil, stunned, turned around and checked the shirt Cesar was holding. There was a round hole. At that moment, she felt her heart break, like she had been shot herself. The depth of her guilt wasnt light.

*It all makes sense now as to why Ed said he wouldnt wear anything but silk. Silk is tough and, unlike other fibres that end up in the body, only tears when shot. Thats also the reason why officers always wear shirts made of silk And it was me who insisted that he put on the shirt I randomly found somewhere*

If left alone, it could be fatal.

In a gesture of asking for consent, Cesar looked over Lils shoulder towards Ed. When Lil saw Ed nodding his head hesitantly without making eye contact, she backed away, chewing on her wretched feelings.

*The only thing I can hope for, is for Cesar to find the piece of fabric in one try.*

However, her earnestness gradually faded away. Even after two or three tries, Cesar failed. Lil wiped Cesar's sweat away several times. The bed linen was already soaked in blood, when Cesar was about to stir Ed's wound for the fourth time. Lil grunted and stared blankly at the blood pouring out.

Ed seemed to start losing his mind as he had to endure the pain over and over again.

Hands use yours

Out of the blue, Ed snatched Lil's hand. Lil looked down at Ed, confused by where this remaining energy came from. His dilated pupils, almost completely black, stared at her like a true maniac.

Captain

Me? You want me to do it with my hands?

Touch feel it you can find it

Why? Why me?..

Hands yours are small

Lil looked at him, his eyes beginning to roll up and his dark green irises fighting to push the white down. She hesitated for a moment, but by the time she came to her senses, she was already spraying her hands with the disinfectant.

Lil then nodded faintly to Cesar, who looked at her worriedly. She swapped seats with him and searched for the darkest part, amidst the bloodstains. As she leaned closer, a rush of Ed's body heat shot up under her chin. Lil held her breath and slowly inserted her index finger into the wound. The terrible sensation, which was comparable to pushing a finger into a tomato, made a shiver go down her spine. Not only was his wound filled with the hot red liquid, but she could also feel soft solid shapes and small, floating lumps. The creepy and raw feeling revolved around her finger that was stuck in the middle of a man's abdomen.

Her fingertip, which had been wandering for a while, accidentally poked a wavy mass and slipped

Chapter 53

*Headnote: Warning for gore.*

She almost inserted her finger to the knuckle. Cesar took hold of her wrist and steadied her. Lil couldn't even look back at him as her mind went blank.

*I don't know how I can find that piece of fabric*

Lil hopelessly moved her trembling finger from side to side, before desperately turning her gaze towards Ed for advice.

But his face, distorted by the pain, seemed to be incapable of answering.

She murmured in frustration.

I I don't know how

Where the bleeding is on the side

You want me to find where the blood comes out from?



However, Lil couldn't feel the direction of the bleeding, it was as if she had fallen into a swamp she couldn't get out of, and instead she only went deeper and deeper. She struggled and as she couldn't catch anything, it felt like her struggle was all in vain. The more she stirred, the more she messed up. She popped out one side and dented the other.

*At this rate, I'd better stay still.*

She cried and choked up. She could hardly breathe as she was sinking her finger deeper into the bottomless pit

Suddenly, she touched something rough. Lil, exhausted, exclaimed softly.

I think I got it.

Cesar handed over the tweezers without delay.

Use the tweezers.

Lil inserted the tweezers and slowly guided them along her finger. Despite being as careful as possible, she still made some mistakes and Ed's body twitched and convulsed when the sharp points touched something soft. Whenever that happened, she released the strength in her hands and paused.

At this point, Lil had clenched her teeth and her body was tensing up all the way to the tip of her fingers. Eventually, her fingertip felt the tweezers slender, metallic edge. Again, she released some strength, before pressing on it and slowly pulled out the piece of cloth. Her finger, which seemed to melt away from Ed's rising body temperature, finally felt the cold air. A sigh slipped out as Lil pulled out the rest of her finger, neither fast nor slow. Soon, the tip of her finger appeared with a faint tremble.

Cesar, who was waiting, took over the tweezers and checked the round piece of cloth.

Ed no longer had the energy to confirm it with his own eyes, but did his best to utter a comprehensible sentence.

Medicine lid three dots

You want the medicine with three dots on the lid?

Ed rested his head again.

Body temperature

It heightens the body temperature. It's needed because he bled so much.

Okay

Ed's eyes once again started rolling up as if he was about to lose consciousness. At first, Lil watched the scene in relief, but suddenly screamed upon remembering that Ed's wound was still unsutured. And because of the many attempts she and Cesar had needed to pull out the bullet and cloth, Ed's gunshot wound had become larger than its original size.

The sutures!

Ed!

Lil slapped his cheek hard in haste. As if he had regained a bit of consciousness, his dark eyes appeared under his eyelids.

Dont slap brain damage

What about the stitches?! Should we cauterise it with fire?

Shouldnt burn skin cause necrosis\*.

Then what?!

Lil tugged at his cheek.

*If only I could keep his green irises from rolling upwards*

Ed grimaced slightly due to the pain and murmured.

Loria Dellorian

What?!

No matter how many times she asked, Ed only mentioned a random womans name. Lil wiggled his cheeks this time, but it looked like Ed had finally lost consciousness. She quickly turned to Cesar, but he shook his head.

Eds unfocused pupils completely disappeared into his eyelids. Lil stood helplessly with her bloody hands in the air, looking dejected at the round hole in Eds abdomen, which was spitting out dark red blood

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*The casualties have been established. The Bell Rock suffered unprecedented damage. There are dozens of fatalities and more than half of the crew is injured. In addition, the death toll will only increase as time goes on as our only doctor is knocking on deaths door himself*

Lil buried her face in her hands. After Eds treatment, she helped the rest of the wounded crew to the best of her ability and in the process, her clothes got stained with blood. It was only now that she finally smelled the fishy scent and noticed that she had dried blood on her palms.

*No, is it still flowing?*

Lil was startled by the feeling of warm liquid running down her face and took her hands off. The flakes that had hardened between her fingers slowly flowed out. It became watery, similar to melted snow. She traced the bright red lines that seeped down to her wrists. It felt as if the disgusting sticky liquid was alive. Lil took a deep breath. Her hands started to tremble at the unbelievable sight. As a stream of blood threatened to run down her forearm, she gasped and wiped her palms on the fabric of her pants. At the same time, she rolled her eyes around, scanning the room for the black figure always waiting in the darkness.

*Youre wiping that for what?*

The dreary voice was as misty as fog. Lil, who almost jumped up out of surprise, looked at a corner of the captains room. The windowless wall on the opposite side was dark as only the lights near the bed were on. She called a name with a voice full of fear.

Mortu?

The name thrown into the darkness scattered without a trace.

*Thats right, my regular customer, its me. I knew Id find you again sooner or later*

Lil hurriedly turned her eyes away and looked down at her own body. Like a tree that weathered over time, the skin on her arm dried up. With widened eyes, she watched the horrific scene unfold. Her left forearm, which suddenly lost its support from her elbow, bent downward in an unnatural way and hung helplessly. Her skin cracked, revealing her white bones through the torn flesh.

Ah ahhh!

As if he couldnt care less about the terrified Lil, the god of death leisurely looked around the cabin.

*It wasnt a bad idea to come here in advance*

Then, a stream that flowed out of the darkness touched the tip of her toe. It was a thin, black and viscous substance. When she looked up, she could hear a dripping sound coming from somewhere. Lil instantly knew it was blood falling from Mortus sword. Like how rainwater becomes a river, the drops of blood from Mortus blade gathered to form a stream and made its way toward her. Lil moved her feet away from the puddle that stained her feet dark red.

*You need to give me something soon, so Im here to borrow it in advance. Didnt you mention your toes last time?*

Lil answered with resignation.

If thats what you want

*Oh, no, no. Dont look sad like you have to give them all away, my dear regular customer. You sometimes bring me what isnt yours*

*I know its been a long day and everything is a mess right now, I understand it can be confusing for you*

*Oh, hes already here*

*Screech*

The sound of the hinges turning was particularly loud. For a moment, Lil was startled and confused to see Cesar. She quickly raised her arm and looked at her body again.

Captain

Apart from some minor wounds here and there, her body was as smooth as usual without any major injuries. Lil was relieved when the delusion she just had seen, already receded.

Yes?

Cesar stepped inside and carefully closed the door. After locking all the latches, he approached her and set down two buckets full of water and a towel.

It rained for a while, so we were able to save a lot of water.

Cesar had already washed and changed his clothes, so his shirt was clean. Lil, who had her necklace off, watched Cesar from afar, as he carried the bathtub and toiletries from the corner of the cabin.

You look tired, Liloa.

Do I?

Hearing those words, the pain that she had forgotten about hit her whole body in a dull way. Looking back at it, she did fall a couple of times. The thought of living with a bruised body for a week made her brow wrinkle.

Yeah, now that you mention it, I do feel exhausted.

Cesar took off her vest. It was a stiff kind of leather that seemed too thick for this type of weather. And since the vest itself was quite large for Lils petite frame, the collar reached the upper part of her neck. Without a second thought, Cesar pulled it back over her shoulders and removed it.

His complexion that had been smiling softly changed drastically.

What happened?

What do you mean?

It was then that Lil felt Cesars gaze staring somewhere at her neck. As she didnt understand, she tilted her head. When she looked back at him, Lil saw rage slowly take over his face.

Whats the matter?

Your neck

Hm?

Lil placed her hand on her neck, only to immediately lift her hand in shock.

Ack! It hurts!

Her neck was stinging and throbbing as if she had been injured. As she touched that part of her body a few more times, she continued to vomit brief screams.

Why is it so painful?

Dont you know?

Huh?

Lil frowned and asked irritably.

What dont I know?

Did he do this?

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Lil didnt understand what Cesar was going on about.

*Who is he and what did he do?*

Im asking you if he did this to you.

Who the hell is he?..

In the middle of her sentence, Lil suddenly realised who it was and Cesars behaviour started to make sense.

As she looked down, she saw her torn shirt and her chest that was half exposed through the sack tied around her body. From what she could see, no wounds were visible, but after remembering what had happened, she hesitantly asked.

Oh, um is it that bad?

How did your shirt become like this?

Cesar stopped talking and instead gritted his teeth. Not long after, a sigh indicating he was holding himself back, was heard by Lil. It wasn't hard to guess that he was furious, so she swallowed her dried saliva and began to take off her clothes on her own.

*Lets pretend its nothing. Its nothing*

Its true that Ed did it. While we were fighting, he couldn't breathe, so he bit me.

It doesn't look like just a bite mark

Really? I don't remember exactly. My shirt wasn't ripped at that time, and I wasn't only wearing the shirt, I also wrapped myself in a blanket.

With all her clothes off, Lil stepped into the bathtub and lifted a bucket. Cesar's eyes followed her persistently, but Lil had nothing more to say.

*So, well, Cesar of all people should know I have a sensitive neck. I even made a weird sound Oh, so annoying. How can I share that?*

I was too preoccupied with the fight, I really wanted to kill him at that time.

Why did you want to kill him?

That's because

*He rubbed his lips against mine.*

She paused as she was about to dig her own grave and eventually shut her mouth.

Because they found out that Ed belongs to the Navy and that discovery was the reason why I got dragged into that mess. It was all because of the Navy.

As Lil was pouring lukewarm water over her body, Cesar stared intently at her, with eyes that seemed to know that it wasn't the truth. Facing each other like this, she was starting to feel uneasy. Not because she wasn't wearing a single piece of clothing, but because there was much more information to unpack. To turn the uncomfortable mood around, Lil tugged his sleeve and held out the soap bar to him, which she had used to rub her arms and lather herself up.

Wash me.

Cesar was easily seduced by her body wrapped in foam. As he couldn't resist her dizzying offer, he slowly lowered himself and accepted what Lil offered him. The contrast between the two was immense. The wet Lil, with water droplets on her eyelashes and lips, glanced up at Cesar who was looking smooth and tidy. Before she knew it, she was held in his arms. Cesar bowed his head and licked the sweet drops of water

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At dawn, Cesar left the captains room and entered Eds cabin. He was greeted by Eds afflicted, grey face. As Ed had lost a lot of blood yesterday and his body temperature dropped considerably. Cesar stared at Eds blue lips that were trembling unconsciously and was reminded of the cruel words that those same lips once uttered.

*{Im going to kill her.}*

*It was a great performance.*

*{I just wont kill her. I will kill her very horribly.}*

*It doesnt matter if it all turned out to be an act, at that time it never for a moment crossed my mind that he could be bluffing. How could Ive been so blind? No matter how eccentric Edgar may be, he has the same desires as any other man and facing a beautiful woman like Liloa will definitely awaken those. Liloa is a woman who never stopped having suitors, even when she was already engaged. Her charm is so self-evident But does this mean Edgar has abandoned his first goal? Did being close to her made him change his mind?*

Back on the enemy ship, Lil probably didnt recognise it, but Cesar who was in the rear with Ed, saw it clearly. He also knew what a drug flute was, so he noticed the danger Lil almost faced at about the same time as Ed did. In close combat fights where everyone was focused on their own battles, it was common for the Western pirates to put a knife or bullet in the body of their opponent, who was losing their mind over the blue powder. It was mainly used as an expedient for dealing with officers possessing superior combat skills. It was only natural that Lil, who had no experience in naval warfare in the West, didnt know this.

*But instead of Liloa, Edgar took the hit. He could have done it in a more self-preserved way by throwing a dagger or shooting the pirate. But Ed also knew that wouldnt have guaranteed Liloas safety, as the probability and the speed would have been too low. In the end, he chooses to run toward her He must have anticipated what the western pirate would do to him as he has fought countless battles. The blue powder is a drug that has an immediate effect upon contact no matter how strong someone is. Despite knowing this, Edgar ran toward Liloa in the midst of his own fight, he didnt even draw his sword, so he wouldnt lose pace. Thanks to that, he succeeded in pushing Liloa away just in time. Ed was truly as desperate as I was But the difference is, he has no reason to be desperate for Liloa, unless he had already fallen in love with her*

Cesars mind flooded with questions.

*Have I been fooled by the Admirals acting? Did I not recognize the real reason he approached her? Was it because of some secretly deep affection? So, did the Admiral travel all the way to Amiaeng just to get Liloa, rather than because the Duke had commissioned him to? Was it love that piqued his interest?.. No, he must have changed his mind after meeting her in Amiaeng.*

All Cesar could do for now is speculate, but he didnt want to overlook a possible answer; love.

When he yanked at the medicine cabinet that Lil had closed tightly, the clasp opened with a clatter.

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## **Side story 1 Cesars Chapter: Gust of Wind**

One summer day.

It was a coincidence but not a big deal. They were both cadets of LeBrun, so nothing was surprising about their encounter.

She stroked her horses mane. Cesar unconsciously turned towards her. At first glance, the scene before him felt just ordinary. But that was only for a brief moment, with the passing of time, Cesar saw no reason to look away from Liloa.

When she noticed his gaze, the woman asked him.

How are you?

The summer sun right after spring, was strong and warm, and Cesar noticed that her eyes became pale blue under such bright light. Liloa gathered her voluminous hair in one hand and tied it high, revealing the rounded shape of her ears with her fine hair fluttering around them. His gaze stayed there. The back of her ear, which was shining smoothly in the sunlight, seemed to be soft and warm to the touch.

Hello. Officer Liloa.

Although he realised it belatedly, he didnt make the mistake of addressing her as my lady. At his greeting, Liloa smiled softly and gently rolled her eyes down.

Officer Cesar.

Cesar wondered whether to express surprise or pleasure that Liloa knew him. But overshadowing his short dilemma, Liloa quickly added an explanation.

Is a well-known name. And Ive seen you from afar at the Navys shooting range.

Is that so?

Seeing you also know my name, have you by chance seen me at the Sesbrons Ball?

I dont think so.

In Nazaro or Pontenbach then?

Cesar gave her a shallow shake of his head as she spilt her words. The Battles of Nazaro and Pontenbach were both battles respectively fought by the Navy and the Army. In addition, due to the nature of the Navy, it wasnt easy to reside in Sesbron as one would spend several years in Mondovi or on the fleet.

I heard that you were outstanding at Pontenbach.

Liloa opened her eyes wide as if she had heard something unexpected. Contrary to himself, Liloa revealed a wide variety of emotions. Cesar stood there calmly watching her face change in many ways. In the end, Liloa decided to smile brightly.

Thats an overstatement

Thanks to that, you will be commissioned soon. Congratulations.

I dont think anyone shares the same sentiments as you.

A servant brought his horse out of the stable. Cesar watched for a moment as some of his entourage went through the process of raising the saddle. Liloa, who was tending to her horse, also paid attention to his horse. Her plump lips formed a smile.

Its a black horse from Obernyu.

Her horse was of the same breed.

Yes.

Do you like fast horses?

I mainly ride it when I need to go back and forth between our estate and Lebrun.

Ah.

You?

I do like fast horses. Are you going to your estate now?

Thats right.

Then, I wish you a comfortable trip. Ill excuse myself first.

Liloe suddenly bowed her head, pulled the reins and called out her horse that was grazing.

Koud bhan!

Her horse, being busy eating grass, only wiggled its tail.

Koud bhan!

At that moment, Koud bhan, who neighed a bit, looked at its owner.

*If someone was simply passing by, they would probably think the owner of the name was really ambitious.*

Liloe slid into the saddle and nodded at the young officer.

See you again, Officer Cesar.

See you soon.

With a loud shout, Koud bhan kicked the ground vigorously. As it ran swiftly, a short, rough wind blew over Cesar and his companions.

It was then that he thought that the name that meant Swift wind suited the dignified black horse very well.

Chapter 55

### **Side story 1 Cesars Chapter: Gust of Wind**

After that, Cesar saw Liloe more frequently. Perhaps because his first impression of her was so strong, but her presence on him was becoming more and more apparent. And even though there had been no further meetings since that day, Cesars curious mind was able to spot her among the army cadets he occasionally encountered. Despite that, Cesar found it too hasty to say that his heart grew excited to see Liloe, so he repeatedly told himself that he had no rational feelings for her.

Liloe was unparalleled at Sesbrons Court. Cesar could easily find her from afar, he just had to look for a woman surrounded by suitors.

*Obviously, Liloe is special.*



However, for Cesar, it was not just her gaze or appearance that lingered in his mind since their first meeting, but also her character. Even after some time passed, he still believed that his interest in Liloa was due to her eccentricity and not a symptom of affection. That's why he was neither displeased nor concerned by this sight of Liloa. And why he didn't experience the sorrow of seeking a woman out of his reach as the second son of a family who is unable to inherit the family title. The remarkable thing about Liloa was that even with her enormous dowry, consisting of numerous estates and her beauty, she was never greedy for status. Which was a characteristic that transcended it all.

*Or was it a denial of pride?*

Cesar shook his head.

However, she continued to stand out to him. Her appearance of running around the wide lands of Lebrun with Koud bhan, looked lively. It was also an unusual sight to see a 16-year-old aristocratic woman shooting a gun while riding a horse. Liloa, a member of the Karabinae Unit<sup>6</sup>, was a fresh presence around the academy. She joined the army as the navy had no female officers due to the nature of the fleet, but in the long history of the army, female officers have continued to exist. Despite this, no woman with such a high aristocratic rank as hers ever volunteered to become an officer. Only women who took over their family set foot on the battlefield due to their obligations as the family head. But Liloa has an older brother, so that wasn't applicable.

Some admired such an unconventional move, while others dismissed it as useless bravery. Cesar wondered if those who adhered to the latter, had ever seen her.

*Before those people judged her so narrowly, did they even take a look at Liloa? Can't they see the expression on her face when she climbed onto Koud Bhan? It was the joy of the person who achieved what she desperately wanted. Is there anyone who can't see such a clear light? It's a beam of light that fills everyone who sees it with joy.*

He'd never seen such a bright smile before. Smiling is something you do when you're happy, but Liloa's smile contained a far broader range of happiness. It was the smile you wore when you had the whole world. For the first time, Cesar saw something in Liloa he never imagined before.

*What's the harm in doing what you love? It's ridiculous. No one has the right to criticise her choice. Even if it isn't unfounded that she has a completely different type of thinking than anybody else.*

Of course, Cesar admitted that he, who is far more conservative, finds Liloa particularly innovative. He was well aware of the reason how he could handle her so well. This is because he has known someone similar to Liloa since he was a child. It was because of this person's contribution that he is now more tolerant of her than others and can dismiss them as petty.

Carl Lemoine\*.

Cesar might have been just as blinded in front of Liloa if it hadn't been for him, the eldest son of Count Lemoine and Cesar's older brother. The fact that he had been watching Carl his entire life, formed him that way. This helped him to put Liloa at ease whenever he ran into her. Only in front of Cesar, Liloa, who usually reacted sharply to conversational partners showing her subtle contempt, was blunt. It was because he took precautions to avoid behaving like that. They didn't see each other very often, but they seemed special in terms of accepting each other's different attitudes. As a result, Liloa had a preference for Cesar and they occasionally danced at the Sesbron Court ball.

Count Lemoine, who had served the Navy for a long time, named his second son and a promising soldier, as his successor. Rather than the sick eldest son, who was confined to his territory and devoted himself to strange experiments.

Cesar has been displeased with this choice ever since he was a child. The principle of inheritance in the Empire was the firstborn, but the successor could be changed if the emperor approved it. The emperor had said that Cesar could gain honour by building achievements in the navy. This statement made clear that the presence of Carl, who had not become the heir even though he was the firstborn, would be ignored for the rest of his life. Carl had a weak body and a bleak personality, but he was bright and intelligent. He was far more capable of leading a family than Cesar. It was also Carl who was in charge of the household when the current Count Lemoine went on an expedition. Meanwhile, Cesar lived a life similar to his fathers, so even if he inherited the estate, it would be Carls responsibility to care for the family. In addition, his constitution began to stabilise after he married a wise wife. Therefore, everyone thought that the present Carl made for an excellent heir, everyone except for Count Lemoine that is.

However, if Carl succeeds in Sesbron, Count Lemoine will have no other choice but to acknowledge him. And Cesar intends to help his brother both physically and mentally during this landing\*\*.

\*\*\*

Cesar stepped into the garden to greet Carl, who was about to arrive. The Lemoine family owned two large private residences and several other smaller villas within their county. As a means to oversee the estate, Carl lived in their territory while Cesar and Count Lemoine, who both had to stay close to Lebrun due to their responsibilities to the Navy, stayed in Sesbron. Currently, Cesar lived alone at the Sesbron residence because their father was away on an extended business trip.

As he watched Carls carriage rise up the hill beyond the main gate, Cesar thought it was fortunate that his father had left the house. This visit wouldnt be possible if the count had been present. Cesar had never forgotten the persecution he had witnessed. The count tried every means possible to train Carl into having a stronger body and mind. From closing down his library, burning all his books, and destroying all the tools in his lab to recklessly teaching him swordsmanship and shooting in the dead of winter. There were even more aggressive methods, such as pushing him backwards into a pond with broken ice or letting animals chase him as he fled. Young Cesar was also mobilised and humiliated by being tied to a tree with a target placed over his head. Fortunately for the siblings, the landing period for naval officers commissioned to the western continent was short and the intervals between landings were long. Even so, only ruins remained where the count had swept through.

On the surface, Carl seemed weak, but Cesar knew his strength better than anyone else. Because, even in the face of the fiery wrathful father, Carls will never broke. He may have fallen down, fainted, cried or begged due to his injuries, but he never surrendered. Cesar has only seen sharp passion and persistence in Carls eyes beyond his hazy glasses.

Carl got off the wagon and approached with some noisiness.

Cesar!

Brother.

Cesar, who was a span taller than his older brother, bent his legs and returned the hug. Carl cared for his younger brother, who had supported him all his life, and he expressed that fact without hesitation. There wasnt much he could do with his body, but he would give his life for his younger brother in the blink of an eye. On the contrary, it was Cesar who beat down the wildcats and fighting dogs that pursued him as a child, it was Cesar who looked after him day and night as he seemed to be dying of motion sickness when he was forcibly taken on a boat, and it was Cesar who secretly hid his favourite books in his room, out of their fathers sight.

Without Cesar, Carl could not have dreamed of the present.

Wow, you look taller!

With his arms outstretched, Carl tapped Cesar on the shoulder. It took some effort, but Cesar only noticed that Carl was hitting his shoulder after hearing the sound of the fabric flaking.

Good morning, young master.

After that, a beautiful woman, Maribella Lemoine, came down from the carriage and greeted him. In Maribellas arms, a boy less than a year old, was asleep. Cesars gaze met the peacefully sleeping face. Seeing this, Maribella offered him the small child.

Dylan barely fell asleep. Would you like to hold him?

Its fine, sister-in-law. But Amelia and Ellen

Uncle, uncle!

As soon as they were found, the two little ladies rushed out from behind their mothers skirt and ran toward him. Cesar knew they had been hiding poorly, but he pretended to be surprised and lifted the sisters up in a flash. He found it hard to be a funny uncle, but he could be a handsome and caring one. Facing each other in his arms, the sound of laughter from the sisters came and went underneath his chin.

I like my uncle.

I like him, too.

I like him more!

No, Amelia, we talked about this last time, Im the one who likes him more!

Carl, who looked tearfully touched at first, noticed his two daughters started to fight over their uncle. He blew his nose with a handkerchief and spoke up.

Hey, girls Dads

Nevertheless, the distinctive voices were only interested in Cesar.

Chapter 56

### **Side story 1 Cesars Chapter: Gust of Wind**

Uncle, how can you be so handsome?

Uncle, the other day, Laurie bragged that her cousin was the best and most handsome man in Sesbron. Heh! Im sure hes not even at par with your toes. Its even clearer today! Uncle! Youre getting more and more handsome!

You shine brighter than the last time I saw you, Uncle.

The sisters hugged him tightly. At the same time, Maribella had to comfort her husband who became gloomy after realising his daughters had traded him in so easily for their uncle. Cesar looked perplexed at Carls droopy shoulders.

The laughing and crying continued as they went into the mansion for a cozy luncheon. Right after, the children, who had a hard time travelling by carriage, quickly fell asleep. The remaining three adults decided to enjoy some leisurely tea time to unwind.

Carl was completely neglected by his daughters throughout the luncheon, finally exclaimed in anger.

I dont understand how a guy who is so popular with the ladies, isnt married yet

Instead of answering, Cesar turned his head away and quietly drank his tea. Seeing his laid-back reaction, Carl continued with his nagging.

I already told your sister-in-law. During this landing, you must get engaged

Brother. Its fine

No, young master. I met a lady with a really nice personality and beautiful appearance. If you meet her, you will surely change your mind.

What happened to lady Grier, whom you talked about last time?

Oh, dont be like that, young master. Why dont you invite the person Im talking about? The garden is full of roses these days. I think itd be a wonderful idea to have lunch there.

Cesar shook his head at Maribellas persuasion. In fact, he wasnt just postponing it, Cesar had no intention in getting married in the first place. This is because he wanted to make his brother, who was already married and had children, look like a much more stable successor than himself.

Contrary to his older brother, Cesar didnt have a wife or children and being enrolled in the navy meant he could die at any moment. Carl wasnt aware of this, so he always nagged and tried to persuade Cesar into marriage. But Cesar wasnt planning on changing his mind, at least until the Count recognized Carl as the heir.

After a week of persistent persuasion, Cesar was sent out again.

He learned of Carls great success during his campaign. Carl developed technology that made it possible to extract gold and silver using mercury and thereby made a revolutionary contribution to the empires mining business. As a result, he was able to revive many of the mines that were already deemed exhausted, which of course overjoyed the emperor. Soon more good news followed, thanks to the emperors praises and siding with Carl, Count Lemoine finally recognized him. And after fiery negotiations, Carl was given the title of Viscount Vallech, which belongs to the heir of the Lemoine family.

Not long after his appointment, the Count suddenly passed away. Cesar, still in the fleet, was not able to reach his fathers deathbed in time as he received the news too late. Nevertheless, he had to return. Carls business was expanding and the family was in a mess because there was no active head. Cesar postponed the boarding for a while and decided to help Carl, who was already

extremely busy and the succession had yet to take place. With the Counts death, there was no longer a reason to leave Sesbron with the pretext of battle, so Cesar enjoyed an extended landing period.

At that time, Cesar was one of Sesbrons most prominent bachelors. Despite being the second son, he was very popular due to the assets and territories bestowed by Carl, as well as the almost guaranteed position of naval general. Furthermore, his outward beauty was one-of-a-kind, so it was not uncommon for women armed with large dowries to approach him. Cesar gradually met several women while staying at Sesbron as he contemplated marriage.

Of course, he did not neglect his responsibilities in Sesbron pertaining to the business with Carl. His role was primarily to ease the burden of his brothers travels to and from the capital. The contracts in Sesbron were made through Cesar, acting as the representative of Count Lemoine. In addition to the imperial mines spread over the vast empire, there were countless mines privately owned by nobles. If those nobles wanted to hire a group of Lemoine engineers for their mines, Cesar was in charge of the negotiations.

Then one day, Duke Mireille sent him an invitation to visit his home. The purpose was to have dinner and discuss some of the possibilities regarding the technology. He stated that he was in the process of expanding his southern commercial activities and that he appeared to be in need of funds. The Duke treated him with the utmost respect and Cesar accepted the request without much thought as he did with any other business deal.

When he read through the report the Duke had sent, he had an epiphany.

*Duke of Mireille I might even run into Liloa during this visit.*

It was customary for the entire family to attend dinners where distinguished guests were entertained. Cesar hadnt heard about Liloa as its been a while since he graduated from Lebrun and he hasnt set foot in Sesbron in a long time. He also hadnt seen her in court. Years had passed since he last saw her face. It was then that he became intrigued by Liloa again.

*Is her light still the same?*

Cesar was certain that would be the case. Her temperament was nothing compared to Carls. She was an honourable winner who sprinted and grabbed a goal with zeal and intensity, whatever the times assessment was. It was an unrivalled quality that no one could possess and a noble tendency that no one could defeat.

The carriage stopped in front of Mireilles mansion. As his anticipation began to rise, he grabbed the doorknob and pushed it slowly.

Most of the family members, including Duke Mireille, were gathered in the hall for dinner. Since the number of people residing in the dukes residence was immeasurable as it operated a huge estate, the dinner was reminiscent of a banquet. Which can be considered excessive as Cesars status wasnt higher than the Dukes, but Mireille generously favoured the people involved in profitable business. According to the report, Mireille wanted to bring in a large number of engineers run by the Lemoine family, so this kind of hospitality was not unreasonable.

Eventually, his eyes fell on Liloa. Cesar did not recognize her at first, probably anyone who knew her wouldnt have noticed her easily.

Feeling sick, he returned to his mansion without being able to properly eat the luxurious dinner the duke prepared. Facing a woman who remained in a bizarre state with only the outer shell remaining, he found it hard to swallow the sweet liquor and juices. Especially when the shell moved its limbs on its own and spoke with proper etiquette.

*Who the hell was moving it?*

Cesar felt uncomfortable when he saw the soulless doll putting red meat in her open mouth as if it was moved by strings. He'd been away from Sesbron for so long that he had no idea what had happened to her.

*What has caused such a bright person to fall apart? I thought she'd been commissioned years ago, but she doesn't seem to have even received the assignment.*

The more Cesar learned about her situation, the harder it became to contain his growing anger. Someone stole Liloa's accomplishments for their own gain and the commission was cancelled due to the resistance of her own family.

Cesar wanted to talk to her badly.

The Duke of Mireille had set his eye on a big project, so the negotiations took place in the Duke's mansion on a regular basis. Cesar had a reason for wanting to work at the Duke's, even though he usually works from the Lemoine family's home. The large-scale development of the Lemoine garden, which also occurred at that time, gave a suitable excuse.

For the first round of negotiations, Cesar came to the estate a little earlier than scheduled. Mireille, who was greeting other guests, apologised repeatedly and led him to the drawing-room, where Cesar sat down and waited. Not long after, Liloa came in with a tray of refreshments. She put the tray down on the low table beside the sofa and sat at Cesar's feet. Confused by her action, Cesar froze for a moment as he did not know what Liloa was trying to do. Eventually, Cesar leapt up from his seat in astonishment when she tried to lift his leg and place it on the footrest.

Officer Liloa!

You're mistaken for calling me that, Sir.

Her voice was hollow, as if it was coming from somewhere other than her vocal cords.

You didn't like what I did?

Liloa, sitting on the floor, was about to look up at him, but stopped her gaze halfway and rolled her eyes down again. Cesar stood at a distance from her, unable to even raise her.

Please stop.

Why are you doing this? What the hell do you not have to do this.

However, Liloa stood up and started to prepare the refreshments as if she didn't hear him. Her wrists, which seemed to crumble like leaves stuck under a shoe when stepped on, poured the tea. She placed the teacup in front of him, stepped back and then brought her hands together in a submissive way.

Please sit down.

It's fine.

Cesar covered his mouth and turned away from Liloa. The Duke of Mireille said shed been forced to perform ridiculous duties due to her outrageous nature, accusing her of lacking the virtue of obedience. Some of them included having to serve guests personally. According to the aristocratic hierarchy, only members of the imperial family could ask Liloa to take care of them, so it was unimaginably humiliating for a woman of such a high position to attend a group of merchants who entered and exited the estate on a daily basis. Nevertheless, the duke, the head of the family, was able to wield authority over members of his family. And clearly no one cared about her misfortune.

Women are regarded to be accessories since they depend on the men of their families, such as their fathers, husbands, and sons. There was, however, respect among them because even men were born from a womans womb, and ladies born from the same belly grew up with a womans belly that also produced offspring. Unfortunately, there were exceptions and Liloa was a clear example of one of those who suffer this fate.

Dont look at me like that.

Im still determined. Your gaze makes me feel like Im a pitiful being. Itd be easier for me to ignore you if you have greedy eyes just like everyone else.

Lilo

Sorry to keep you waiting, Sir Cesar.

Chapter 57

### **Side story 1 Cesars Chapter: Gust of Wind**

The door opened wide and Mireille barged in, he stopped in his tracks when he saw Cesar standing in front of his seat and clicked his tongue.

Is her hospitality that bad? Did she perhaps offend you in any way?

Its not like that.

Mireille gestured using his chin and Liloa hurriedly walked out the door without saying a word.

Just a minute.

Then, the Duke who was supposed to come in disappeared behind the closing door.

Cesar could hear the conversation through the door even if he didnt try to eavesdrop.

What did you do?..

I didnt do anything

Then why isnt it the scene I wanted?..

Answer me

Will Sir Cesar come more often?..

Why, dont you like him?..

Ha! Look at thisLook at this! Why dont you just get over it and do your job? If you insist on being a little more comfortable and have some authority in this house, you need to make yourself useful

So, what is with this attitude? A woman can earn money too, right?..

Whats the reason you wont? You could make a fortune by smiling sweetly and selling your body  
But thats exactly why you let me earn it, right?..

Dont forget, youre here to entertain the men and put your smooth face to good use. Thats how you  
get your allowance

This necklace, this is what I gave you as your share last time, dont you remember?..

As Mireilles voice got louder and louder, Liloa stepped in.

Quiet down, Sir Cesar will hear

The door between us is as thick as a wall, who could hear us? Besides, I know everyone in Sesbron,  
so what are you worried about now?..

Hearing that, it seemed that Liloas last string of patience broke.

Is it satisfying to subdue people with contempt and ridicule? Does your body shiver with pleasure  
every time you see my expression after enduring those unbearable insults? Dont you have any  
dignity left that you must go through such a petty process of facing someone who already bowed  
their head? Am I right?..

This bitch!

Then came the noise of the attendants stopping him. Cesar could tell what had happened without  
looking.

*He must have tried to slap her. Its not surprising that a narrow-minded human like Mireille doesnt  
know any different ways to crush others. However, his easily chosen violence wont subdue someone  
like Liloa. So, I guess thats why he uses some other means to make her miserable*

Cesar was lost in agony when he returned to his mansion.

*Liloa was so cold. This must be going on for a while, how else could such a lively person wither  
like a dying flower? Her bright smile feels as distant as the remnants of ancient times*

When he relived an old memory, he saw her riding on Koud Bhan. After replaying that scene in his  
head numerous times, he suddenly thought that he would like to see it in real life again. It was an  
unexpected thought, but the more severe it grew, the more it eroded his mind. The desire, he never  
felt before, was boiling over and he couldnt stop it.

*What should I do? Unfortunately, since Ren Mireille is the head of Mireille, all rights including the  
residence of Liloa belonged to the Duke. Soon he will have full control over Liloa.*

Then there was only one possible way. Cesar was in conflict. He had a lot to bear, and he would  
have to bear a lot more to save her alone.

There was a second round of negotiations.

For some reason, all of it seemed insignificant compared to her smile.

Then, came the third round of negotiations.

*Many other young people show talent in the Navy. Sir Edgar of Roahn, for example. Except for his  
eccentric personality, his skills are one of a kind. In addition, there are plenty of people who could*



*take over my part in the family business. In fact, when I went to war, the family had run smoothly without any problems*

Before Cesar knew it, his position felt very insignificant. When he was younger, his frail older brother relied heavily on him, but now his brother was a count with authority and popularity. He has vassals, a wife and children who look up to him with respect. There was no longer the former Count who considered Cesar as his whole world and as the only successor. Cesar did have some lovers, but if it wasn't for him, they'd find a decent husband and gradually forget about him. Besides, none of the women looked at him with the same intensity as Liloa did.

The fourth round of negotiations.

Cesar wanted to throw all the meaningless things surrounding him away. The dreadful emptiness he had lived with by clinging to such pointless things grabbed hold of him. He wouldn't even think about this if it gave him a chance to revive Liloa.

The fifth round. He remembered what Liloa had once said.

*{ Why Koud Bhan, you ask? A literal blast. I like the wind on my cheeks when I ride. I feel a great, endless freedom. The kind of freedom that runs through my body. Do you know that feeling that is too hard to let go? Running on my own two feet just isn't enough. So, I have to ride a blast. To embrace a blast. }*

In the last round of negotiations, Cesar whispered to Liloa.

Would you like to come with me? I will give you a blast again

### **End of side story 1 Cesars Chapter: Gust of Wind**

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Ed opened his eyes.

*Im alive?*

As soon as he realised that fact, his throat felt a little itchy because of the joy that had sprung up. While the dull muscles of his mouth began to twitch, Ed, with the instinct of a doctor, traced his wound by poking it with his weak finger. He wanted to check it up close, but he couldn't.

*It doesn't seem to be infected because I have no fever.*

It was somewhere between dawn and dusk as he barely managed to turn his head and the rising sun caught his eye. Through the window, shadows of palm trees and tents of a marketplace were visible.

*So, we landed on an island.*

Ed tried to figure out the date.

*How many days have I been lying in bed?*

But he had no sense of time.

He carefully moved his toes. At first, it didn't go as easily as he wanted, but he still did his best. It was necessary because he needed to start walking as soon as possible. Simultaneously with his little exercise, Ed began to roll his brain which seemed to slowly come to its senses.

*To be honest, I never planned to get shot instead of Liloa. I just followed her, without knowing what would happen, because she ran off to a place where she wasn't supposed to go. And because she froze and didn't answer my call, I pushed her out of the way. Never for a moment did I think she could be shot or stabbed soon, so I should take the hit instead. It just happened somehow. But how did it happen?*

Ed chewed on his bizarre remark. There was no word that didn't match him as much as somehow. Some may dismiss his style as acting without thinking, but he has always been a man that meticulously planned his next step. He has lived his whole life under the burden of being exposed to high risks due to the nature of his job and hobbies. However, he had no intention of dying, so he had made every effort to prevent death. This was also the reason why he had studied medicine.

*Then why?*

He wanted to hold his complicated head, but unfortunately, he couldn't do that, too. His arms weren't strong enough to reach his head yet. Instead, Ed closed his eyes tightly, feeling the need to change his priorities. There were other things more urgent than questions that could not be answered correctly. First, his plan had to be revised completely.

*I don't know about Liloa, but Cesar was behind me, so he must have seen it. I probably looked like someone who was about to throw his life away for Liloa. I was able to embark because I threatened to kill Liloa, but that threat I used on Cesar is no longer guaranteed to work. He probably wants to get out of it.*

Ed contemplated what to use for his next threat. In fact, there were many other considerable resources besides Lil. He rummaged through the potential possibilities like a wealthy man looking at his affluent safe.

Then, it suddenly crossed his mind that if Lil reveals her true identity, he won't have to undergo all these troublesome processes. He was reminded of the mistakes he made when he didn't know that Liloa was Lil Schweiz. If he had kept his mouth shut, he would have been able to come up with the perfect script.

Ed sighed.

*Anyway, at the time, I didn't associate Liloa with piracy, so I made too many remarks that would now be suspicious when I think about it. It would be perfect if I could wash away all of Liloa's doubts with my dedication alone. Hm, could it work? Liloa is the Captain. Besides, even if she doesn't say it, she cares for her crew more than I thought. She didn't want her people to fight the close-range and hand-to-hand battles, so she was dead serious when she thought about jumping into the sea. This ridiculous act of piracy is not just a play for Liloa, but a part of her life. That's also why Liloa wasn't able to easily tolerate my existence, I was not only a threat to her, but to the Bell Rock as well.*

*I guess that's why she wanted to get rid of me at first. She needed to take measures to end the tracking from the Navy or to prevent the possibility of being tracked in the future. Naturally, she would have tried to eliminate me the moment I boarded the Bell Rock. But with Cesar on my side, that couldn't happen. Killing me is out of the question. Liloa may not know that I'm the Admiral, but Cesar knows it very well. As a former Navy Captain, Cesar could guess the kind of backlash they would be swept away in if they were caught. Besides, now that I've saved Liloa's life, taking me out*

*will only add to her guilt. Considering this, I dont think Liloa has any plans to kill me. If so, what exactly are they planning?*

Without difficulty, an alternative crossed his mind and Ed felt the blood in his face draining away.

*No way!*

## Chapter 58

Ed struggled to raise his body and lowered his numb legs to the floor, they felt as if they were someone elses.

His sword was obliquely leaning against the bedside table. He grabbed it with his trembling hand, shifted his weight on it and got up. With his other hand, he leaned against furniture and the wall as he moved step for step. When he barely made it to the door, he slammed it open. There was not a single mouse in the corridor of the inn. While Ed hastily looked around him, he found a staircase leading up to the rooftop.

Climbing the stairs in this state was complete madness. So, Ed decided to climb the stair seated instead of overusing his legs and let himself fall backwards on the steps. His wound, that had not yet healed, throbbed with shock. He clenched his teeth and endured the pain.

Ed crawled up the stairs and pushed the roof door with his sword. The old wooden door opened with difficulty. Sweating profusely, he grabbed the door frame to raise his body. He once again used his sword as a cane and crossed the roof, then grabbed the railing to support him as he lost his balance.

*Its not here.*

Ed double-checked the shore beyond the marketplace. There was no port and the shallow water was not suitable to dock a ship like the Bell Rock. They had to drop an anchor in the middle of the sea and then go back and forth on a boat. However, no ship was seen anywhere near the shore, let alone the Bell Rock. His cold sweat evaporated.

Ed recalled the conclusion he reached moments ago.

*If she cant kill me, shell leave me behind*

A warm wind blew and messed up his hair. The unpleasant lukewarm temperature wrapped around him and Ed shook his head in annoyance. The empty coast came into sight through the cracks in the hair that pierced his eyes. The clear and calm sea had a beautiful light green colour as if it was pressed from green grapes. He couldnt believe his eyes.

*Did she really leave me? After I almost died for her?*

Damn it!

His fist hit the railing hard.

*Liloa is sensitive when it comes to her secret Normally, in order to block the leaking of information, its the most ideal to eliminate the informed, but if that isnt possible, abandoning them and thereby cutting off the trail was the second best option. From a rational point of view, its reasonable to get rid of what had split to ensure the future. So, its only natural that she chooses the second option, when she wasnt able to go through with the first. And as a result, Im abandoned*

Fuck!

*How do I find her now? And how many opportunities like this would I get? I should have shattered the iron-walled doubts she had about me, but I didnt. How dare she leave me like this? She was within my reach but disappeared when I tried to grab hold of her*

He clenched his jaw and gritted his teeth in anger.

*Mireilles useless search log didnt help at all.*

Ed, who had studied everything from the first to the last chapter, resumed the search from scratch. It took him about two months. From Sesbron through Malus, the Gulf of Gardel, Carducho, the Ingres Sea and various southern islands to Amiaeng. It was not a complete coincidence that Ed met Liloa in Amiaeng. As he pursued her activities with a basis close to conviction, it was only a matter of time for him to find her. If it wasnt Amiaeng it would have probably been anywhere close by. He may have met her in unexpected clothes at an unexpected time, but Liloa was bound to get caught in the net woven by all her traces.

*But how could I lose her again like this?*

In the past, when the sculptures Ed had been painstakingly collecting were stolen, the West Anatole Sea went into chaos. They searched countless pirate ships to only end up finding three pieces of wood the size of a palm. The resulting oceanic peace was only a by-product. Ed was always very obsessive about his interest and he had his reasons. For him, those were both significant and invaluable. Consequently, the anger and deprivation he felt when he was robbed of his interest or when it slipped through his fingers transcended that of ordinary people. And his out-of-control rage always produced extraordinary results.

Ed was a man who couldnt bear loss, especially if he had to sacrifice himself or if it threatened his survival to get it. In addition, this had been a sacrifice without a guaranteed outcome as Ed had yet to make his judgement concerning Lil. Because of Mireille, he got the opportunity to see a glimpse of her past, but there were still too many pieces missing to complete the puzzle. Making his actions even more incomprehensible.

Out of nowhere, the part of the clay railing Ed was holding crumbled into pieces. He had no idea how this happened, but his hand was suddenly full of crushed sand. Agitated by the feeling of loose sand slipping through his fingers, Ed picked up a lump of dirt and threw it away.

*How dare you try to slip out of my hand*

Still, the tickling sensation between his fingers remained. Displeased, Ed roughly shook his hand.

*Ill turn the southern seas over to find her, if thats what it takes*

*Fortunately, the fleet is already in the South and it can move at any time. My pigeon would have arrived in Carducho two or three days after I sent it out. After receiving it, they would have set sail towards Marchand. So, if it had been more than a week since I lost consciousness, the Visha would have arrived at its destination by now*

Who did this? This crazy bastard!

Something like an argument could be heard from below the building, snapping Ed back to reality. He looked up and saw that the sky was already getting brighter.

*The morning is the time for people to wake up.*

Considering his location close to the market, he thought that this street would become noisy soon. Ed, who was not happy with the upcoming disorderly commotions, thought about going back to his room. But someone was running up the stairs leading to the roof. The stomping feet came closer at a tremendous speed. Ed was ready to give up the roof to anyone who so desperately wanted to occupy it, so he prepared to take a small step back.

The roof door opened with a bang.

You crazy..!

The door, woven from the branches of an old tree, opened with such a great force that it fell off the hinges. Normally, Ed would have refuted first, but he couldn't effort to waste his energy with the current state of his body. So, he quietly took a step with his sword raised.

Was it you?!

A loud, anger-filled breath could be heard as Ed turned his head slightly. Lil was standing at the entrance looking like she had been hit in the head by a lump of dirt.

What kind of crazy thoughts did you have as soon as you woke up? You threw this on my head, didn't you?

After she closed their distance, Lil grabbed Ed by the collar. She dragged his face close to hers and began to shake out her hair.

Huh?

There was no way he could avoid it and was hit by the sand falling from various directions. To make matters worse, he was also struck by her sharp hair. Whip-like sounds were heard in front of his nose.

Uh, Captain, you're killing me!

Im really gonna kill you!

Lil almost lost her balance but continued to empty her hair over his head. A lump of dirt tangled in her hair shattered into sand and slapped on his face. Ed, who couldn't even open his eyes properly, coughed constantly, stuffed his nose and flounced his arms.

I heard that some crazy guy has been throwing dirt from the roof since dawn! It was you! You bastard!

Uck! Ugh!

Did you purposely throw it? Huh? Otherwise, it wouldn't be this accurate! Die!

Cap Captain! Captain?

When the sand that had been pouring like a fountain finally ran out, Ed spit out a handful of dirt from his mouth and opened his eyes.

Captain Cough! Captain?

I can't even beat you up in this state, argh.

Bewildered, Ed looked up at Lil, who was beating the air instead of him. Since tears were rolling down his face, his vision was blurry, but he could still recognize her. He stared blankly, as if he was seeing an illusion. At the same time, Lil was venting her anger by kicking the air, but stopped dead in her tracks when she noticed stare and asked.

What are you doing?

Her temper, which had been fluctuating like a furnace, calmed down without a trace. Ed was about to say something but ended up giving a big sneeze.

Achoo!

Ugh, gross.

When something resembling saliva splattered, Lil frowned and creased her forehead. Ed shouted sullenly, wiping his face, which had been covered with his tears and runny nose.

I thought you had left me!

What?

Didnt you try to throw me away?

Thats true.

What?

Lil scratched the back of her head and gave a very annoyed but regretful expression. She then shrugged her shoulders at Eds displeased glance.

I was going to leave you behind, but we couldnt sail because we didnt have enough sailors. Its sad, I know.

Why is that? My contract hasnt ended yet, so why are you gonna leave me? Besides, my wages!

Did you read the contract carefully? Your contract lasted until this voyage. Besides, even if you had good intentions, when half of the crew was injured, you didnt work but just lay there. Consider yourself lucky I didnt sell your sword.

You should be thankful that we were able to move you here in good condition without the help of another doctor.

Then why didnt you kill me?

What kind of stench is it to kill a human that saved your life by allowing himself to be shot to death? I think this is really regrettable, so it would be better not to get impulsive.

## Chapter 59

It wasnt a lie. Lil had contemplated countless times between Eds life and the Bell Rock. Even when they were aboard the ship of the western pirates, she thought about getting rid of him because she couldnt take uncertain risks in uncertain circumstances. But the guy did something useless. He got shot instead of her. That was when the guilt slipped in and as she was starting to carry such a burden, the intention of killing him wavered. Besides, she couldnt shake those vivid memories of his stomach spurting blood from his ruptured blood vessels and the feeling of his hot but soft

organs. Even his rising fever as he battled the infection was felt around her finger. With every heartbeat, blood flowed past the tip and gushed out his wound. All those sensations intensified when she inserted her bare finger. As a result, it was now difficult to let go of the life of someone whose pain she experienced up close.

There was a risk in throwing you away. The risk of you leaking whatever you'd seen, whether you were a deserter or a spy. But seeing you back then, enduring so much pain without anaesthesia hell you even took a stimulant told me you probably won't open your mouth easily to torture. It's a comforting idea. Thinking like this has helped my mental health even marginally. Of course, it's a relief that will disappear without a trace if you turn out to be a spy, but that's inevitable. Whether I wanted it or not and even if it was a favour I was forced upon, I'm able to walk around in one piece thanks to you. I could never kill you. On the contrary, I even saved you with my own hands

That's a very touching story.

Lil looked down at Ed, who seemed sarcastic. But Lil's annoyance instantly eased when Ed wiped his face like a child using his sleeve.

Actually, I tried it a few times and failed each time.

That's very reassuring.

But now, won't a doctor start to care about a patient he operated on to save their life?

Hm, well

At least his first, right?

Whatever you say.

Anyway, it was an experience I hope I never have to go through again, but I guess I can now somewhat relate to it.

Lil's answer wasn't completely honest as she in fact had consulted Cesar. But Cesar followed a similar thought process as her, leading to the logical conclusion that Ed would be innocent and he didn't deserve to die this way. Of course, Cesar didn't feel the same burden as she did. In the end, they didn't do anything about Ed and let him recover on his own. Though she never thought they would be reunited like this again, not only was Ed able to open his eyes, but he was already walking around.

How long has it been?

One week

Have I been lying in bed for a week?

Yeah. The doctor here told us that you weren't in good shape even before you were shot.

Ed was startled by the fact he was checked by a southern doctor. To his knowledge, they were the ones who got drunk first and then proceeded to cure diseases by amputating their patients' limbs.

Don't tell me he did something to my body or prescribed any bizarre medication.

I just asked him to look at your condition, so don't worry. Ugh, really.

In disbelief, Ed looked over his body with an anxious expression. Lil found his reaction ridiculous and pretended to kick him. However, at the same time, Ed was about to rise using his sword but slipped again as he was startled by the incoming foot. The patient, who had collapsed to the side and clutched his stomach, looked pitifully up at Lil.

Help me, Captain.

Huh?

I didnt throw the dirt. The building is so old that it broke off on its own.

Im not buying that.

Think about it. Why would I be testing my luck, Captain, I am a man who knows the importance of life. Also, look at the door over there, the Captain didnt put much effort into it, but it was destroyed anyway.

But the dirt that fell on my head had some power behind it. Like it was forcefully dumped on my head.

Was it really?

Ed stretched out his hand. Perhaps because he was seriously overdoing it, but sweat was forming on his forehead and blood started to drain from his lips. Annoyed, Lil lifted Ed, wrapping his raised arm around the nape of her neck. He was taller and broader than her, so he was quite heavy even though he was conscious. Lil barely managed to hold back a groan as they walked towards the door.

I never thought Id live long enough to be supported like this by the Captain.

Shut up.

Captain, why dont you go down too and join me for breakfast?

I dont want to.

I think the reason why I cant walk is that Im hungry. Ive been starving for a while now.

Then you can eat alone.

My arms dont move well either.

Ugh!

Ed cracked a smile behind her.

*Even now, she still feels responsible for my injury. Otherwise, she wouldnt have cared if I died on the roof or not.*

Ed leaned more on Lil and murmured.

Oh, Im going to die

At the same time, Lil also muttered.

Thank you

Ed looked down at Lil whose shoulders were so low that it looked like theyd been sewn into his armpit. He tried to read her expression, but Lil was just indifferent.



What?

Thank you. Even though I still think youre crazy, I thank you because Im grateful.

Lil felt his gaze and looked up at Ed who smiled broadly. As their eyes met, she turned her head again. Ed tilted his face a little more and the tip of his hair touched her cheek.

After crossing the roof door, they soon reached the stairs which was the hardest part. Lil pondered for a moment, then went down one step at a time and supported Ed as she waited for him. Lil, who was one step ahead again, realised her patient suddenly stopped following and turned her head suspiciously.

Then Captain.

What?

Ed looked into Lils eyes and declared.

Lets make a long-term deal.

No.

Dont leave me behind

Lil muttered inwardly as if she felt bothered to answer, then stretched out her left hand toward his shoulder. Ed clasped her wrist mid-air. For a moment, his clear green eyes flashed with a maddening light. Confused, Lil slowly lifted her head. In an instant, his eyes returned to their original state and met hers.

Ed gave a warning, portraying the wriggle he felt in his stomach.

I dont know what Id do if you really did

Lil twisted her wrist out of his grasp and laughed at his threat.

It would be great if you did something to me because then I would be able to stab you without hesitation.

After her sarcastic reply, Lil clenched her fist and pretended to punch him somewhere in his stomach. Ed, who reflexively withdrew his body, felt some pain and frowned.

Oh, it hurts!

Were you that scared?

She laughed, clearly liking his reaction and Ed could only blankly stare at her.

*Liloes doesnt seem to understand what I meant at all. Shes just downplaying my words*

As if Lil didnt bother anymore, she unwrapped Eds arm and instead grabbed him just below his armpit. As Ed was taller, he had no choice but to be dragged down. He didnt know what kind of shock his body, which was in need of absolute stability, would be exposed to if he kept spouting more nonsense. So, he quietly followed her to the hall. When they arrived, Lil threw him on a table chair and shouted while looking at the kitchen.

Amanda! Are you still sleeping? Amanda!

When she knocked on the table, the door in the corner of the hall creaked open. Through the gap, a voice that seemed more asleep than awake shouted back loudly.

Who would call people at the crack of dawn?!

Our sick man finally woke up!

Moments later, Amanda appeared from the kitchen door and looked at the sick man with puffy eyes. After rubbing her eyes several times, she put on her apron and disappeared into her kitchen again. Ed, who was trying to look as pitiful as possible, raised his half-slumped body when Amanda walked away. In the meantime, Lil rotated her shoulders wide and loosened her muscles, Eds weight had been a lot for her body to bear. In addition, she couldnt sleep for the past few days, making stamina low and her eyes quite dark.

Ed asked, looking at her tired face.

But why is the Captain up at this hour of the morning?

Lil rubbed the inside corners of her eyes with her thumb and index finger and gave an unexpectedly genuine answer.

I couldnt sleep.

Why? Does it have anything to do with the failure to set sail?

I dont know.

Where are we, anyway?

No idea.

Ed sighed.

*Ill eventually find out once Im out on the market.*

Why cant I see the Bell Rock?

Why are you so secretive? After all, if I spend about half a day on this small island, Ill know everything.

Dont bother wandering around. Knowing less will save your life.

Chapter 60

*Judging from her reaction, it seems that something secret is hidden here. It might be an island that serves as a hideout for the Federation. Its the same with the ship*

Ed made a guess, seeing Lils stubborn attitude.

Amanda left a simple meal in front of Ed. Her eyes were stuffy as if she had been stung by a bee. To show his gratitude, Ed whispered to her.

Im sorry

He rinsed his mouth with water several times before scooping the soup. Nevertheless, the sand stuck between his molars gave off a rough presence. Ed, who was chewing the hard kernel, thought about whether to complain to Lil or not but closed his mouth after seeing the remaining sand on Lils forehead.

What happened when I lost consciousness?

Just as you said, the tide quickly turned and the Westerners surrendered. The officers who resisted were imprisoned by their own. We took away their weapons and they were scattered so they couldn't regroup.

How about our casualties?

About 30 sailors died and more than half were wounded. If you came to your senses, go do your job. There are still many left that need treatment.

Okay. But, didn't you say that the Bell Rock would take another shot? Why did we lose so many men?

They said they couldn't aim because I was on the mast.

Ah. Too bad, the Bell Rock was loaded.

Ed took a peek at Lil, who had become visibly sunken after his previous question. A sigh, clearly stifled by the weight of her guilt, escaped.

Do you think the Bell Rock shouldn't have come?

That's right.

Then we might have died?

Yes.

And you said you couldn't die there?

Yes.

What did you want then?

Ed frowned like an adult facing a fickle-minded child. Lil waved her hand in her annoyance, signalling him to just eat his food. Fortunately, Ed's silence allowed Lil to immerse herself in her thoughts.

*Ed is right, so I have nothing to say. I shouldn't be angry about how the crew got dragged into this, who had nothing to do with the mess. I don't know the reason why the hell they would risk their lives to rescue a single individual, but I might have died if they hadn't come. Someone whose life is saved should be grateful to the person who did the saving*

Whether she wanted it or not, Lil couldn't say anything.

On that day, when the battle was over and the death toll was determined, Cesar hugged Lil's body and desperately whispered in her ear. Those words were now hovering around her head.

{ Liloa, I was so scared I thought I lost you }

From the moment he overheard the conversation of the Marchand navy, Cesar had meticulously planned Lil's rescue. However, sacrificing the majority for the sake of one life was unheard of in the South. It wasn't due to a lack of loyalty. But no matter how great a captain is, he is merely an ordinary human in the arms of the mother of all things. In the end, all lives were equal and valuable whether it belonged to a captain or a sailor.

*Whose idea was it that a Captain is worth the lives of a hundred sailors? In the absence of a Captain, the Bell Rock could always have elected a new one by vote. No matter how virtuous and good-natured a Captain was, rescue is a completely different matter, and in most cases, a rescue was impossible*

However, Cesar successfully led the Bell Rock to Lil. Along with the huge rewards, he convinced the sailors with the promise of free contract termination. Now, right before the Admiral is about to turn the southern seas over, its a very appealing suggestion that the sailors could retire after one last hit. As a result, many men signed up for their severance pay and left. Most of them were well-experienced sailors and thereby high-quality personnel with long contracts. But now, less than half of the Bell Rocks people remain.

A pirate ship required significantly more personnel than a regular merchant ship. This is due to the fact that merchant ships overwork their crews, whereas pirate ships do not. To properly share the work, a crew of three or four times the minimum number of heads was required. Because, when the workload becomes too high, the likelihood of rebellion and thereby the mortality rate increases dramatically. A ship was an independent organisation that was basically its own society, to maintain stability and balance, it was necessary to have its own rules. Lil had no desire to die in vain after a captains vote or rebellion onboard, so she took measures to ensure high safety for her crew and herself. Therefore, the Bell Rock couldnt depart until the proper number of people was reached.

Lil felt it after being stagnant on this island for a week. No, she could clearly see it. Her own little society had crumbled in half. Although she thought it was firmly built, by spraying it with water and tapping it with her hands dozens of times, in the end, it was nothing more than a sand castle. Easily destroyed by wind and waves. No matter how disallowed torture and punishment were on her ship, they still left

*For practical reasons or whatever. Now I dont know why I didnt rule with a whip. Perhaps they didnt even realise what it meant*

Lil shook her head bitterly.

Youd better find a new job, too.

Didnt I sign a long-term contract with the Captain?

I said no. I will tell the Bell Rocks crew that your injury is so severe that you need to recuperate for a long time and you wont be healed before the next voyage.

Are you really going this far because you feel sorry for one person?

Yeah. I dont want to drag you further into this mess or have a headache because of it.

For what reason do you want to continue sailing?

Interesting question.

Is there any grand purpose from the league?

The purpose is to make a living

Captain!..

A young voice crossed the hall. At the same time, Lil and Ed turned their heads towards the entrance. Lil, who had been shaking her head at Ed during their conversation earlier, only then

realised that rotating her head was accompanied by muscle aches. She probably sprained her neck due to the heavy lifting.

Courant.

Taking off his hat, Courant gave Lil a brief greeting. The agile and quick-footed Courant served as a messenger for the Bell Rock, so Lil raised her eyebrows to ask if something happened this morning.

Is something going on?

Oh, no. Im here for breakfast with my sister.

Sister? Well, Mel Was it Mellie?

Yes, Captain.

The girl, who had been standing behind Courant, poked her head out of her brothers side. She was dressed as a common girl from the neighbourhood, wearing clothes that were a bit worn out but still clean and was holding a bunny doll with similar clothes. The little child, who hesitated because she couldnt overcome her brothers height, greeted shyly.

Oh, hello. Black Whale.

Hello, Mellie. Amanda, please bring two more breakfast plates.

Courant dragged the hesitant Mellie towards them. Lil opened the childs hand, which was holding the bunny she used to hide her face behind and gave her two silver coins.

Th thank you.

Would you like to sit with me?

Lil pointed to the seat next to Ed. But Courant looked at Ed with displeased eyes, implying he didnt like Lils offer and then took Mellie across the hall. Meanwhile, Ed was getting up to give them the chair but gleefully sat down again.

He seemed to dislike me?

He hates you because you were in the Navy.

Why?

Courant is from Marchand and the Southern Navy killed his parents in front of him. Mellie, who was also present, screamed and had her ear cut off. She must have been less than ten years old at the time. Naturally, they wouldnt like you.

Ed kept his mouth shut.

You dont think it was a unanimous decision to save you too, right? There are many sharpening their knives onboard, especially the sailors from Marchand. There are only a few as there werent many survivors. But those survivors are still haunted by their traumas. Like Courant, whose parents died after being caught and tortured, there are always those whose anger could randomly come out. So, if you dont want to fall off the railing without knowing whether it was a mouse or a bird that pushed you, youd better look elsewhere.

Ed knew how the Empire acquired Marchand. Conquering Marchand itself was actually close to a regular battle, but the problem was that it ended in a massacre. As an island surrounded by the vast sea on all sides, it was a terrain that crept the instinctive fear of invasion into its inhabitants. Out of fear of the southerners attacking from the east, west, north or south, the people of the Empire who resided in Marchand set a cruel precedent. Serving as a gruesome example to prevent rebellion in the future, Marchand became a sacrificial land. The southerners were different from the imperial people in appearance. They had tanned skin and their average body shape was small but solid, distinguishing them from the mainlanders. As a result, the navy was able to carry out the massacre relatively easily. And because of their difference in appearance, they were considered inferior and treated like they weren't even human.