

Northwest 37

Chapter 37

Cesar didnt realise Lil was gone until late in the afternoon.

Before dinner, he stopped by the bank and their storehouse. Even though the storehouse was empty, he didnt think much about it.

Is she already on the Bell Rock?

He was starting to get hungry, so he gave his last instructions to the guards and proceeded toward the ship. While crossing the short dock, he was hit by a sudden realisation.

Im still in awe every time I go see her. At first, I was drawn by her beauty

I heard about her through the rumours surrounding her, she was a noblewoman who volunteered for the army. I still remember the mixed reactions people had about Liloa. Some praised her, while others mocked her decision. In both cases, the majority of them ended up with a story that was solely about her appearance. It was a little disappointing that she was always perceived as a woman rather than a soldier in those stories, but that really was as far as my involvement went. Eventually, I got accustomed to the rumours and I paid no mind to them or Liloa

Till that one summer day.

It felt like a coincidence but looking back, it was not completely unexpected. We were both Lebruns cadets, so it wasnt surprising we bumped into each other. I had completely forgotten about Liloas existence, at that time she was nothing more than an unknown woman I crossed paths with.

A woman petting the manes of a horse. As I walked by, my gaze drifted aimlessly towards her, even if it was such a simple scene. After a while, I couldnt even take my eyes off her anymore. Now that I think about it, it was probably because of her laugh. It was a smile Id never seen before, as if it wasnt something belonging to this world. A blinding light

Cesar walked across the boardwalk and onto the Bell Rock, then opened the door to the captains quarters. The dark and empty room had lost all of its warmth.

It doesnt appear that she came back, everything seems to be as it was when she left in the morning.

To be completely sure he stepped inside.

It doesnt look like she took anything with her, the room is just the same as ever.

Cesar turned around and walked away.

Its possible that she went to the lowest deck, the storage room or any other cabin on the ship for that matter.

With a lantern in his hand, Cesar took the stairs down to the barrel deck.

Captain?

Unsurprisingly, the ship was quiet as it was their first day on land again. After passing through a small corridor, Cesar headed down to the storage department.

No matter how long I think about it, I cant come up with a reason for her sudden disappearance.

Captain?

The silent space was only filled with sacks of grain. There wasnt any sign of Lil.

I know shes always excited about her outings, but this is the first time she went alone without leaving a message.

Cesar looked around and went back upstairs. As he was deep in thought, he absentmindedly clenched the railing.

What can be the reason for this

Unconsciously, his feet brought him to a specific cabin. It was the room given to the ships doctor. Without hesitation, Cesar grabbed the doorknob. It was locked, so he saw no other way than to kick it in.

The doctors cabin was a spacious room with a bed and a desk.

Though, the size of this room is probably too small for Edgars liking. Well whatever, he didnt ask for more convenience than allowing him onboard the ship in the first place.

Nothing inside the cabin seemed out of the ordinary; a neatly made-up bed, two bags with luggage brought in by Ed, and the medicine box left by their former doctor.

It will almost be impossible for Edgar to hide anything in here but given the circumstances, I cant just leave it be.

So, Cesar browsed through the notebooks on the desk. In it were only a few idle thoughts of Ed, nothing special.

After checking the empty drawer, Cesars gaze moved towards a half-opened suitcase. He hesitated for a moment, but eventually failed to overcome his curiosity and began to rummage through it. It appeared to be mostly filled with clothes, the pile even contained some ridiculously colourful clothes. Cesar had no idea on which occasion Ed was planning to wear them.

It appears that Edgar was so excited to join us, that he failed to only select clothes fitting for a pirate ship.

Cesar moved on to the second bag, packed with miscellaneous goods.

Why does that guy need so many hats?

Apart from that, he found telescopes, compasses, some strange items he guessed belonged to some primitive tribal collections, and a small aid kit that Ed brought along with him.

Next, he inspected the inside of the medicine cabinet. Basic surgical instruments and various medications were arranged in rows. Given the different amounts left in each bottle, there was a good chance Ed had actually been using them rather than bringing them just to uphold his act as a doctor. When he was about to close the door, Cesar noticed a small bottle wrapped in a rag. He took it out and slowly tilted it in front of his eyes.

The yellowish liquid moved dully. One might think its just another potion, but Cesar had a hunch that Ed was only disguising it as such. When he opened the lid, an intense smell hit his nose. He immediately knew the use of this liquid.

Its scented oil that attracts messenger pigeons.

Cesar ran out of the cabin. In the time he was below, more and more sailors gathered on the deck. As he quickly walked toward them, he shouted a question.

Has anyone seen the Captain?

Yeah, I think so

When was the last time you saw him?

While the sailor who had answered him tilted his head in contemplation, the one standing next to him answered.

Oh, I saw him talking with Jericho.

Jericho? When?

It was after lunch, I guess?

Where is Jericho now?

I heard he was headed to the bar on 4th Avenue.

Okay, thats all.

Cesar knew that Lil still hadnt let go of her suspicion of Ed.

I cant blame her. Especially after Edgar disappeared the moment we arrived in Marchand Liloa couldnt follow Ed personally, so she probably made Jericho do it in her stead I can guess the outcome, there is no way Jericho could keep up with Eds tricks. Is that the reason she stepped forward herself? After lunch, Liloa would have had less work to do. If Alain took over for her, she could go out But ever since we set sail towards Marchand, she became more and more anxious. I have never seen her like that before. Knowing her mental state, why would she go alone?

Cesar came down from the Bell Rock and looked over the beach to the second harbour. The port on the other side of Marchand, which is closed off for merchant ships, was packed with naval battleships.

I didnt expect that Edgar would do anything to Liloa just yet, Im surprised hes taking it this far Will he use the Southern Navy? He is still trying to bond with her, but till now they have only spoken a few times. Did he give up? No, that would be too easy I know firsthand that there arent many people within the Empire able to defeat Edgar. He also isnt the type to quickly get sick of something that piqued his interest. Hes a person who likes to dig up to no end and toss through each and every detail To do so, he must eventually win Liloas trust Perhaps her disappearance has nothing to do with his correspondence through the pigeons.

Then, is she caught up in something completely different? But the assumption that Liloa, who always takes care of herself, is involved in something the second we reach Marchand, lacks probability.

Cesar was determined that Ed was involved in one way or another.

He entered the pub on 4th Avenue where Jericho was. He wasnt hard to find as the crew of the Bell Rock occupied the nearest table.

As soon as his eyes met with Jerichos, he beckoned him to follow.

Come out.

Jericho pointed to himself with a sullen expression.

Me?

He eventually followed Cesar out as he couldn't stand those blood-red eyes any longer.

What's wrong?

What did the Captain order you to do?

Uhm, well I don't know what you're talking about.

The person you have to keep silent too, is the one ordered by the Captain, not me.

He told me to keep my mouth shut about ugh.

Cesar glared at Jericho, who hastily covered his mouth. When their eyes met again, Jericho quickly looked away, unable to maintain eye contact.

I don't have the time to patiently wait for your answer

Cesar put his hand on the hilt of his sword. Jericho, terrified, started to blow sigh after sigh in a row.

The Captain said he told me to follow the doctor and report every detail. Yes No, I wasn't supposed to say that!

Where did he disappear?

Huh? How did you know?

Ah, yes. Well, I lost Ed in front of the bakery. He was quite fast and I got distracted in the crowd

What did the Captain say?

He said I did well.

Really?!

Cesar tossed him a coin and nodded, gesturing for Jericho to go back in. Jericho also nodded his head and went inside.

Disappearing in Marchand, near a naval outpost nonetheless. It's not fitting Lilo's personality at all. Wait, Alain might know something, I should go back and ask where he is

From somewhere, mingled voices laughed loudly. Three or four navy sergeants were walking towards Cesar.

I'm not kidding. I almost died. I got knocked out

Oh, you meant, when you were trying to save that lieutenant on a secret mission?..

Why did you follow him?..

He had taken our charts! I followed him to get them back! If our charts disappear, I'm the one responsible, so I can't lose them

Relax, he's Commodore Sagastar's brother. What's the point of your distrust, he'll probably give them back when he's done with them

Cesar was about to enter the pub, but paused at the door.

Commodore Sagastar is the only son of Count Sagastar

Oh, I found that weird, too. Who knew the Commodore has a brother that is already this old? Besides, he told me he was a lieutenant. It was my first time hearing that such a prestigious family had two sons in the Navy

So, could he be an imposter pretending to be a Sagastar?..

An imposter? Well, he did look unkempt and sounded pretty arrogant

Didn't you say he was in danger and had to be saved?..

The laughing officers passed Cesar and entered the bar opposite the street. Cesar followed them and held onto the wooden door that was about to close. After he hesitated for a moment, he followed them inside.