

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Deirdre is going through it...

-x-X-x-

W-WHIP-CRACK!

Deirdre Fou Roseblade wishes she could say she doesn't scream. That she just grits her teeth, lets out a grunt at most, and bares with it. Alas, those days are far beyond her at this point. An involuntary agonized scream does indeed leave her lips, even as her back arches in a futile attempt to get away from the whip as it lashes her for the umpteenth time.

And yet, worse still than the pain is the laughter that follows.

"Ohohoho! That was a lovely cry, wasn't it Roseblade?"

As she slumps in her chains, dangling from the ceiling as she is, Deirdre tries her best to slowly regulate her breathing. It's not easy... every part of her back feels like it's on fire, this latest 'session' leaving her in just as much if not more pain than the others.

One would think her ability to even feel pain back there at this point would be greatly diminished, and yet here they were... here she was, trapped in this mad woman's dungeon.

"What's the matter, Deirdre? Cat got your tongue? Or perhaps you're finally learning your place and not to talk back to your betters."

Fortunately she's able to rally a bit of strength for a response by this point.

"... When one of my betters shows up... be sure to let me know, Stephanie."

There's a pause and Deirdre knows what's about to happen even before it does.

W-WHIP-CRACK!

Stephanie Fou Offrey brings the whip down upon her back again, provoking another scream from Deirdre's lips. Then she does it again and again, cursing all the while.

"Stubborn! Insolent! Bitch!"

Fortunately, Stephanie has never been the most physically active of girls. She tires herself out with that series of strikes, panting heavily as she stops and pulls back.

"You've always been a stuck up cunt, Deirdre. You and your entire family, really. Just because you Roseblades are a martial family, you've always looked down upon me! Even though both of our houses were of the same rank of Earl!"

Letting out a breathless little laugh, Deirdre turns as best she can to stare Stephanie right in the eye.

"You're wrong."

The other noblewoman looks taken aback by this, scowling in confusion for a moment.

"What?! You deny it?!"

Deirdre smirks.

"Of course I do. You say I looked down upon you... but that would have required me to think of you at all. You were a nobody back at the Academy, Stephanie. You're still a nobody now."

With her arm too tired from swinging the whip, Stephanie doesn't go for another blow. Instead she stomps forward and slaps Deirdre across the face with her other hand, turning the dangling blonde's head to the side.

“Fuck you!”

Stephanie’s slaps are a love tap compared to the torture Deirdre has experienced so far, so she just laughs a short, sharp laugh before leveling an unimpressed glare in the other noblewoman’s direction.

“Pathetic.”

Stephanie might have slapped her again... but she’s shaking her hand already, having clearly put her all into that first one. In the end, she just snarls and sneers at Deirdre.

“I’m not the one hanging from the ceiling in my dungeon, Roseblade! Your family is finished; do you hear me? For all that supposed martial prowess, House Roseblade was nothing before our agents! Your father is dead and your sister is captured, on her way to join you here! If you want to live, you’ll submit and accept that the best someone as pathetic as you can hope for is to live out the rest of your days as my maid!”

There’s spittle flying from Stephanie’s lips by the end of her ranting, some of which lands on Deirdre’s cheek. She ignores it though in favor of staring Stephanie down.

“You’re lying.”

She doesn’t bother saying anything more than that. Those two words, spoken with absolute certainty, are all she needs. Stephanie’s cheek twitches for a moment before she finally smiles cruelly.

“Fine. I was lying. You want the truth then? Here’s the truth. Your family’s precious fleet of airships have been destroyed and your castle is currently under siege by Sky Pirates. They’ll starve your father out if they have to. As for your sister... no, she’s not on her way here but that’s because the pirate tasked with retrieving her for me turned rogue and decided to keep her for himself.”

Sneering now, Stephanie leans in close until they're mere inches away from one another.

"Your sister is no doubt warming Captain Blackbeard's bed as we speak. I'm sure he's doing unspeakable things to her."

Unfortunately... this time Deirdre believes her. The embellishments have been stripped away, the unvarnished truth as Stephanie knows it has come out. Of course, the idea that House Roseblade is under siege by fucking Sky Pirates of all things is utterly intolerable. And her sister... no, Dorothea was strong. Deirdre had to believe that.

Staring Stephanie in the eye, Deirdre does not give the other blonde the despair she's clearly looking for. Instead, she just sneers right back.

"You've really never recovered from losing Brad to that Lafan woman, have you?"

Stephanie jerks back, caught off guard by the verbal attack. It had been quite the scandal at the Academy, so much so that even Deirdre heard all about it despite being two years older. However, the worst part for someone like Stephanie Fou Offrey wasn't even that she'd lost her betrothed to a Viscount's daughter. No, the worst part for her was that she was a mere footnote in the whole debacle.

After all, it wasn't just Brad Fou Field that Lafan had peeled away and managed to make break his engagement. It was him and all of his friends, among which was Prince Julius Rapha Holfort himself.

Stephanie hadn't just lost her betrothal, she'd been the least impactful part of the entire situation, barely even worth mentioning even as the scandal made its rounds across the whole of the Kingdom.

Perhaps then, it shouldn't be all that surprising when Stephanie's hands suddenly close around Deirdre's throat, the other blonde screaming like a

banshee as she lunges forward to wring her neck. Deirdre chokes, the passage of air abruptly cut off as Stephanie begins to strangle her.

Still, she does not panic nor beg for mercy. She does nothing except stare into Stephanie's eyes, making sure the other woman knows just how worthless she is even now. Deirdre was not going to break. She was never going to break. She would rather die... and as her vision starts to fade, as the black begins to creep in the edges, she realizes she just might...

KA-BOOM!

Only, before Stephanie can fully strangle her to death, the entire dungeon suddenly shakes with the sound of a distant explosion. Deirdre blinks as Stephanie is immediately pulled from her fury, dragging her hands away from Deirdre's throat and looking up in consternation.

"What? What was that?!"

Her query is followed by even more explosions, a full series of them that has the dungeon shaking and dust coming off of the stone walls. Yelping as she nearly stumbles from her footing becoming uneven beneath her, Stephanie scowls angrily.

"This... I'll be back! Don't think I won't!"

With those words snapped in Deirdre's direction, the entitled, spoiled bitch of a noblewoman races for the stairs. Deirdre watches her go, slumping in her chains, the exhaustion almost immediately overtaking her. While the sudden explosions are interesting and she does wonder briefly if maybe her family has come for her, Deirdre doesn't let herself start to hope. Not yet anyways.

Except... just as she's starting to retreat into her own mind to try and deal with the pain radiating from her back, something unexpected happens. Stephanie Fou Offrey comes walking back down the stairs backwards, her hands trembling at her sides... and the point of a cutlass against her chest.

Deirdre blinks through tired eyes as she watches a man holding Stephanie at sword point come into view after that. He stalks down the stairs with a wicked grin on his face, though it falters when he finally witnesses her.

“Deirdre Fou Roseblade. There you are.”

Huh. So someone has come for her after all. Her family is attacking House Offrey in order to save her? Incredible.

“You-! What are you doing here, Devil’s Smile?! You can’t be here! The Kingdom of Holfort won’t stand for this attack on one of its Earl Rank Houses!”

Wait what? Devil’s Smile? Deirdre blinks slowly, processing this. She recognized that name from somewhere. Wasn’t that... the moniker of a rather infamous Sky Pirate?

“Oh? Is that so? Well then, they’re free to take it up with me whenever they like. In the meantime, I’ll be taking that woman you have strung up there.”

Stephanie’s eyes dart between Devil’s Smile and Deirdre, and then down to the cutlass pointed at her. Finally, fear starts to break through the haughtiness that the stupid bitch always exudes.

“N-No... you can’t have her. She’s mine!”

Deirdre would scoff if she had the strength to do so. She knows it’s not possessiveness that truly drives Stephanie. No, she’s afraid of the consequences of her own actions. If Deirdre gets out of this place, if she makes it back to her family, then they can report House Offrey to the Crown.

Stephanie has admitted to numerous crimes and treasonous acts down here after all, presumably because she assumed Deidre would never again see the light of day. But now, that was no longer quite so guaranteed...

“I wasn’t asking. Either you can let her down or I can stab you and do it myself.”

Devil's Smile... that was Leon Fou Bartfort, wasn't it? Although he wasn't really a nobleman anymore... heck, wasn't House Bartfort defunct or something now? Deirdre struggles to remember, even as the Sky Pirate gestures with his cutlass rather pointedly, making it clear that Stephanie has no choice in the matter.

In the end, the blonde's cowardice wins out over her indignation. She doesn't want to die, obviously. Moving over to Deirdre under his watchful gaze, Stephanie pulls out the key and fumbles with the chains. It takes an annoyingly long amount of time, in which distant explosions continue to sound off. Maybe Stephanie thinks if she wastes enough time she can stall long enough for her House's guards to win the day and come to her rescue.

That doesn't happen though and Deirdre is so caught up in waiting to be freed that when it finally happens, she's not ready for it. She falls to her knees with a cry, her legs giving out under her. As she's curled over, her head bowed, Stephanie can't help but continue spouting nonsense.

"You don't understand, Devil's Smile. This bitch deserves this. M-My family is rich; we can pay you whatever you want! You don't have to do this!"

"Have to'? No... want to? Yes."

There's the sudden sound of a pistol being drawn and cocked and Deirdre lifts her head to watch as Leon Bartfort points it at Stephanie. The other noblewoman freezes for a moment before letting out a nervous laugh.

"You... y-you wouldn't kill an unarmed woman, s-surely."

That draws a scoff from the Sky Pirate.

"I surely have and I surely would again. You're no woman. You're scum, Lady Offrey. And I don't mind killing scum."

N-No... she needed to... Deirdre finds a well of hidden strength within her. She's not sure where it comes from, only that it sees her managing to stumble to her feet, taking a few teetering steps towards Leon Bartfort and his raised pistol.

She puts herself between him and Stephanie, drawing a choked sound of confusion from the woman behind her.

Meanwhile, Leon looks into her eyes... and reads her intent quite easily. His lips curl up into a wide, wicked grin that makes it clear why he was given his moniker.

“Fortunately for you, Stephanie Fou Offrey, I’m not going to kill you today.”

“You... D-Deirdre...”

The utter shock and wonder in Stephanie’s voice would be laughable if Deirdre had the strength for laughter. Did the stupid bitch really think Deirdre was effectively trying to save her? That she was aiming to see her tormentor and torturer spared out of some... misplaced sense of altruism and goodness?

No. Leon turns the pistol in his hand around and holds it out handle first towards Deirdre. And Deirdre wastes no time in taking ahold of it with both hands and turning it on Stephanie. The other noblewoman barely has time for her eyes to widen in horror before Deirdre pulls the trigger.

BANG!

Red blossoms upon Stephanie’s chest as Deirdre hits her center mass. The shot strikes with enough force that Stephanie is flung back against the wall, only to slump down it. She grabs at her chest with her hands, scrambling futilely as though she might be able to keep her blood in with them.

But... in short order, as blood leaks from her lips, Stephanie Fou Offrey expires, dead on the spot.

Deirdre quickly whips back around and points the pistol at her ‘savior’. To his credit, Devil’s Smile doesn’t falter even slightly, still grinning as he watches her.

“You... you are going to take me out of this place. You are going to return me to my family. You will be rewarded handsomely for doing so.”

Leon Bartfort chuckles.

“Sounds like we have a deal, Lady Roseblade.”

She needed to keep the upper hand. She needed to maintain leverage here. Except... her arms are already trembling from even this long holding the pistol up. She can't... she's too woozy to... with a groan, Deirdre collapses back to the ground, this time darkness overtaking her as she faints.

To pass out in front of her savior, a notorious handsome Sky Pirate that she was trying to extort with his own pistol... how embarrassing.

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A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!