

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

A/N: Leon infiltrates his own way~

-x-X-x-

“Well, well, well. Read ‘em and weep, boys!”

With a flourish, the grinning Sky Pirate reveals his cards... prompting a series of groans, growls, and grumbles from the rest of the rugged, grizzled men surrounding the small table. Despite their griping however, none raise too much of a fuss as the winner collects his haul, dragging coin over to his side of the table.

Carla Fou Wayne, meanwhile, does her best to keep her head down and be as unobtrusive as possible, even as she sweeps the same spot of floor over and over again, as she’s been doing for the last thirty minutes or so. To be fair, everything is clean as is, she’s done all of her normal tasks... but if there’s one thing Carla has learned since finding herself in the hands of the Winged Sharks, its that she’s better off looking busy.

“Hey... you guys ever worry that we’re backing the wrong horse?”

When one of the men suddenly says that, however, Carla blinks and can’t help but twitch in the direction of his voice. There’s a beat of silence for a moment before another pirate responds.

“The fuck is a horse?”

...

“Bahaha!”

“Oh c’mon you lousy bastard, you know what a horse is!”

The wisecrackin' pirate places a hand on his puffed out chest.

"The only mode of transportation I need is that of the trusted airship!"

There's some more laughter at that and Carla slowly turns back to her work, disappointed. Only... the original speaker isn't satisfied with just that. Once the laughter dies down, he clears his throat.

"I'm serious though. The Winged Sharks are powerful and all, but are we powerful enough to take on every other pirate in the skies? We're flagrantly breaking the code. Won't that cause the King and Lords to come down on our heads sooner or later?"

Another silent pause, this time a bit more lengthy. For a moment, Carla cringes, half-expecting them to just kill the complainer and be done with it. She hopes not though, if they do that she'll be the one expected to clean it up.

But fortunately he has enough good will with them all that they don't run him through or shoot him dead on the spot. Instead...

"S'not that simple, you see. Sure, we might look like we're outnumbered... but really, it's all smoke and mirrors. That's all the Pirate King, the Pirate Lords, and even that stupid code are. Smoke and mirrors. Devil's Smile comes flying in and forces us all to 'bend the knee'... but then what did he do? He fucked right off, didn't he? And you know why he did it? Because he knew if he stuck around, everyone would realize he was all hot air and no true substance!"

Everyone is listening raptly now, including Carla.

"Do you really think that those idiot 'Lords' are going to get together to try and stop us? Hah! Half of them are breaking the code themselves, just a bit more subtly! Nah, we don't got anything to worry about regarding all of that shite."

There's a beat of silence, before another pirate entirely suddenly speaks up.

“... I heard from Marv the other day that there’s a rumor the King came back and abdicated his throne. Gave it to some girl and is making everyone call her the Pirate Queen or something.”

Everyone stares... before bursting out into laughter. Even the pirate who originally raised the issue of breaking the code has a good laugh at the idea of a ‘Pirate Queen’. Carla just grimaces and goes back to her work, grateful that none of them noticed she’d stopped sweeping.

“Sides, it’s not like we’re breaking the code anyways, now are we? We’re just watching over this little outpost here on the edge of the Winged Sharks’ territory. No slave trading going on here. If anyone was to come along, there ain’t nothing they can pin on us!”

Carla’s grip tightens on her broom handle at that. Her lips thin out and her jaw clenches. And then, much to her surprise...

“What about Carla then? Not like she wants to be here.”

Her head snaps up, eyes widening in shock that anyone would even remember her, let alone point out her plight. Of course, bringing her up has the unfortunate consequence of causing half the eyes at the table to flick over to her. Carla immediately lowers her gaze again and works twice as hard, pretending to the best of her ability that she’s not paying attention or listening in.

“The serving wench? She ain’t no slave! She’s free to leave whenever she wants... bahaha!”

Another round of laughter from the pirate scum at the table. Carla tries not to flinch too hard. They’re technically right after all. It’s just that the island they’re based on is too small for her to go anywhere... and every airship belongs to the Winged Sharks, of course.

So while she’s not in physical chains or anything like that, she’s still all but trapped. And if she doesn’t do her ‘chores’, she doesn’t get food and water. In the end, it’s rather simple... she’s a slave.

How had this happened to her? How had she got to this point? She was technically nobility... the daughter of a Baronet, to be exact. They weren't the highest ranking of nobles by any stretch of the imagination, but still...

And yet here she was. She'd done everything asked for it, but that wasn't enough for Stephanie Fou Offrey. Nothing ever was with her; Carla had eventually come to realize. And now here she was, stuck in this place, slaving away for pirates... she'd truly fallen to the depths of hell. And maybe she deserved to be there, given her actions...

"Anyways, like I was saying, Devil's Smile is all hot air. He's just one man with a couple of powerful weapons. Even if he did come back and try to pick a fight with the Winged Sharks... well, we're a lot bigger than we were back when he showed up the first time. Thousands of men. Dozens upon dozens of ships. A hundred or so bases all scattered across our territory. He'd be a fool to try anything!"

Just as that last sentence is passing the Sky Pirate's lips... the lanterns in the area all suddenly go out at once, plunging the room into pitch black darkness. Carla's eyes widen and she freezes in terror, even as angry shouts come from the table.

"Hey! Who turned out the lights?!"

"Fuck is going on here? Get a damn lantern lit, can't see my nose in front of my face!"

"Oi, Jimothy, if I find out you cheated while the lights were out I'm gonna wallop you!"

"How the fuck would I? I can't see any more than you can!"

"GIRL! GET THE LANTERNS BACK ON, YOU DUMB BROAD!"

At being directly addressed, Carla jolts and panics just a tad. She fumbles in the dark, dropping her broom and looking for the bar so she can get behind it and get the things she needs to relight the lanterns. Luckily there's also a lantern on the bar itself, which she grabs and blindly works at for a moment.

Soon enough she's got that lantern back on, producing enough light to reach the edge of the table... where not a single Sky Pirate has gotten up to try and help. Instead, those who she can see in the lantern's light look impatient and angry with her.

"Well? Get over here and give us the lantern! Then, go light the others!"

But how will she light them if she gives the pirates her only source of sight? Carla bites her tongue, knowing better than to ask that question, no matter how relevant it is. She carefully makes her way over to the table, eyes darting back and forth as she catches sight of what lanterns she can while she can see properly, making a path in her head and sketching out the beginnings of a plan.

Finally, she reaches the table and sets the lantern down on it. Immediately, its shoved in the center of the table, illuminating everyone sitting down and a foot past them all as well.

"Bout fuckin' time. Now go and get the others dealt with too!"

Carla was going to do that. She really, really was. Instead... she stands frozen in terror. Because the lantern hadn't just illuminated all of the men sitting at the table when it was shoved into the center. It had also illuminated the man not sitting at the table.

There, cloaked in shadows, barely visible in the light, stands Leon 'Devil's Smile' Bartfort, a cutlass in one hand and a pistol in the other.

"Girl?! Why the fuck are you just standing there?!"

But even as one of them is yelling at her, the others are finally noticing the uninvited presence in their midst. Just as about half of the table is finally starting to register him... Leon Bartfort smirks and lifts up his pistol.

“Boo.”

BANG!

The shot takes the lantern, shattering it and snuffing it out in the same moment. Pandemonium ensues as chairs go clattering back, blind Sky Pirates finally standing up as they rush for their own weapons.

“Devil’s Smile! It’s fucking Devil’s Smile!”

“Kill him! Blast it all, kill h-urk!”

“He’s-ack!”

“You-!” BAM!

Carla, for her part, does the only thing she can do... she screams and drops to the ground, crawling under the table immediately where she subsequently curls up into a ball and prays she’s not going to get shot or stabbed or any other form of bodily harm in the ensuing crossfire.

Over her head, it sounds as though a battle of truly epic proportions is taking place. It’s one man versus about eight, but the lack of light and the complete darkness of the room makes it a lot more even, probably. Nobody knows who they’re fighting after all. It’s rapidly devolving into a free for all.

All Carla can do is wait. She lays under the table in the fetal position for who knows how long, whimpering and crying, tears streaming down her cheeks. Part of her can’t help but feeling like she brought this on herself... but another part of her, far more overpowering in its emotions, just wants to live. She doesn’t want to die here...

Until finally, quite suddenly in fact... it's over. Or at least, the sounds of fighting are over. No more firearms are discharged, no more shouts are heard, no more swishes and slices of swords through the air. It gets very, very quiet and though it takes Carla a long moment to realize it, eventually she uncurls enough to look out into the darkness from under the table.

Then... a flick and a click and there's brand new light as someone sets another lit lantern on the table. Carla's mouth goes dry as she sees once more... and beholds a massacre. Bodies are strewn across the floor, some of them not entirely whole and all of them bloody and very clearly dead.

Some are draped over the table, their legs dangling downwards. But only one man out of all of them still moves. Only one man still walks under his own power, his boots thudding on the ground as he slowly circles the table.

... Carla doesn't recognize those shoes or those pants. And given she does all of the base's laundry and shines their shoes for good measure, she really should... if it was one of the Winged Sharks who survived, anyways.

Just as that thought is crossing her mind, the owner of the boots, the only man still standing... suddenly crouches down and looks under the table. Carla comes face to face with Leon 'Devil's Smile' Bartfort, not a scratch on him nor a drop of blood that belongs to him on his person. That doesn't mean he's clean by any means, however...

She screams, of course... she screams and begs, putting up her hands in surrender.

"P-Please! Please don't kill me! Pleasepleaseplease!"

"Calm down, sweetheart. I'm not going to kill you."

"Pleasepleaseplea- what?"

Carla blinks, cutting herself off as she processes Bartfort's words. He's... not going to kill her. Then, much to her shock, he offers out a hand to her, clearly

willing to help her out from under the table. He also smiles though... and that smile is a smile of Pure Death.

Looking between the hand and his face for a long moment, Carla finally scrambles out from under the table... but she does so on the other side, coming up with the table and the bodies strewn across it between the two of them. Not that it really matters... he could shoot her dead just as easily from this distance as he could run her through from up close and personal.

... But at least this way she'd see it coming. For better or worse.

Looking at her from the other side of the table, Leon just arches a brow.

"I'm looking for records. Did any of these idiots write things down, by chance? Did the leader have an office, maybe?"

Carla swallows thickly... and slowly nods.

"Y-Yes. I can... I can take you to it?"

Bartfort's devilish grin grows, sending shivers of terror down Carla's spine.

"That would be lovely, darling. Lead the way."

... She was so fucking fucked.

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